



NIAS Area Studies EUROPE MONITOR

NIAS-STIR Programme



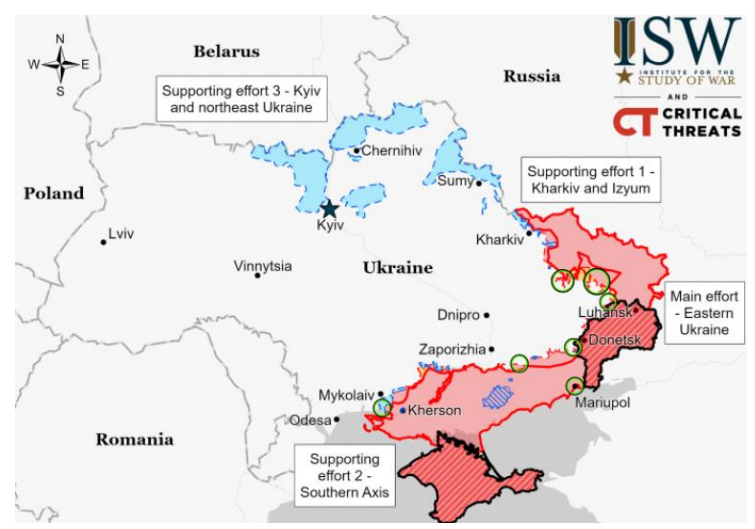
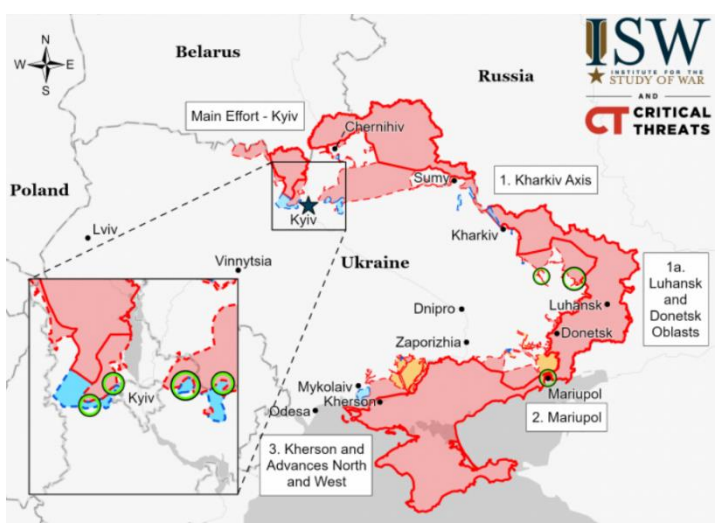
global politics

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Europe Monitor # 09 | Vol. 02, No. 06 | June 2022
An initiative of NIAS and KAS-India office

Cover Story

100 days of the Ukraine war



Map representation decreasing Russian offensive on ground. From left to right, dates shown are 31 March, 30 April, and 31 May. Image source: Institute for the Study of War / Critical Threats, 31 May 2022

About NIAS Global Politics

Global Politics is a primary focus of the NIAS Programme on Science, Technology and International Relations (STIR). The primary focus is on contemporary world affairs. The Programme publishes *The World This Week*, and *NIAS Fortnightly on Science Technology and International Relations*.

About NIAS Europe Studies

As a part of pursuing global politics, the programme has started area studies. Europe is a part of the NIAS area studies initiative. With an aim to nurture a pool of scholars working on issues related to Europe, the scope of the studies would range from regional/sub-regional cooperation to new technology and innovations and include gender studies, migration issues, and climate change.

NIAS Europe Studies will focus on capacity building amongst the young scholars, expert lectures by prominent academicians and diplomats, monthly discussions on Europe, and a Monthly Dispatch – *Europe Monitor*.

About Europe Monitor

Europe Monitor is an academic initiative by NIAS Global Politics and the KAS India Office.

The Monthly is an integral part of NIAS Europe Studies. It includes focused commentaries on Europe, short notes, and daily updates on contemporary Europe.

Editor

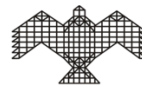
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National Institute of
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NIAS

About NIAS

National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) was conceived and founded in 1988 by the late Mr JRD Tata, who sought to create an institution to conduct advanced multidisciplinary research.

The objective is to nurture a broad base of scholars, managers and leaders who would respond to the complex challenges that face contemporary India and global society, with insight, sensitivity, confidence and dedication.



About KAS India Office

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as "Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education", in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. KAS promotes and preserves free democracy, social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. KAS also focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

Europe Monitor

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COVER STORY

**100 days of the Ukraine war:
More loss than gain for Russia,
determined Ukraine, Europe midst of
energy crisis, biting sanctions, and
expanding NATO, and increasing
footprint of the US response**

By Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan, Rishma Banerjee, Padmashree Anandhan, and Emmanuel Selva Royan

COMMENT

**The Ukraine Conflict: What does it mean
for Eastern Europe? Where does India
stand?**

By Mathew Sinu Simon

EM DAILY FOCUS



Source: Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amnesty International, REUTERS/Dado Ruvic/Illustration, Anders Wiklund/TT/picture alliance, Finnish Government, Reuters

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War in Ukraine: Daily Updates



Source: Presidential Press Service/Handout via Reuters, 80 Reuters/Dado Ruvic/Illustration, Reuters, Picture alliance/AA/D, Reuters, Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 96 to Day 66 in four dimensions. First, War on the Ground. Second, The Moscow View: Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war.

By Padmashree Anandhan, Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan, Rishma Banerjee, and Emmanuel Selva Royan

EM SHORT NOTES



Source: UK Government, NATO, BBC/ UK Government, UK Government, RSF World Press Freedom Index (2022 edition), Twitter/@narendramodi

BELARUS

FINLAND

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ITALY

MALTA

NORTHERN IRELAND

SERBIA

SWEDEN

SWITZERLAND

THE NETHERLANDS

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COVER STORY

100 days of the Ukraine war: More loss than gain for Russia, determined Ukraine, Europe midst of energy crisis, biting sanctions, and expanding NATO, and increasing footprint of the US response

Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan, Rishma Banerjee, Padmashree Anandhan, and Emmanuel Selva Royan

I More losses than gains: Russia

During the first hundred days, Russian troops launched an attack on Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Kherson. In mid-May, it shifted its interests toward Mariupol, and the civilian population in these areas was targeted. Railway stations, hospitals, schools, etc., were also under attack. The air force targeted its airstrikes on a maternity hospital and a theatre in Mariupol, which killed many civilians and caused a wave of backlash from the West and from within.

Over the 100 days, Russia used strategies of destruction, Blitzkrieg, and kept changing its tactics depending on the circumstances.

On 20 April, Putin wanted Russia's enemies to "think twice," as it tested its ICBM "Sarmat" as a warning to the West. This comes as the West continued to support Ukraine through aid and arms supplies. Putin added: "This truly unique weapon will strengthen the combat potential of our armed forces, reliably ensure the security of Russia from external threats and make those who, in the heat of aggressive rhetoric, try to threaten our country."

Russia has faced more losses than gains in the first 100 days. NATO estimated that Moscow had lost about 7,000 to 15,000 troops; however, Russia did not disclose the exact number of losses. Russia also received a major setback with the sinking of the Moskva, which was Russia's fleet flagship in the Black Sea.

What are the issues?

First, the political backlash. The US, UN, and the EU imposed sanctions on Russia as it invaded Ukraine. Russia was removed from the human rights council as crimes against humanity surfaced after reports from Bucha emerged. Air spaces were closed to Russian aircraft, while Moscow was also suspended from cultural and sporting events. The EU announced the sixth round of sanctions, specifically targeting Russia's oil exports in Europe. But, even with the political backlash, Russia secured 20 per cent of Ukraine and focused on the Donbas region.

Second, the economic repercussions. Russia's removal from SWIFT was a major setback for Russia, but after the evidence of war crimes, the West and the allies delivered more effective sanctions against them, causing Western companies to withdraw from the country. But, Russia had underwent sanctions post its invasion of 2014 and had prepared itself for similar repercussions. Therefore, Russia's currency has also firmed at a seven-year high as Moscow's capital control, tax period, and oil prices have contributed to its rise. The economic boom is supporting Russia to continue its war in Ukraine, but the sanctions would eventually impact the economy as it is likely to shrink by 8.5 per cent.

Third, Russia's energy exports. Russia weaponized its energy exports by blocking natural gas to Poland and Bulgaria after they failed to pay for gas in roubles. It has used energy exports to control the global demand for oil and gas, which has led to a boom for Russia. Russia has a surplus of USD 96 billion in its current account due to its energy exports amid sanctions. Even though Russia has profited from the global crisis, in the

long run, it will receive a setback as my European countries have shifted their dependence on Russian energy or have lessened their imports from Moscow.

Fourth, regional setbacks. With Finland and Sweden announcing their decision to join NATO, Russia suffered a setback as it would give NATO an edge over the Baltics. Russia experienced a wave of diplomats being dismissed from countries across Europe as a sign of protest for Moscow's invasion. The invasion pushed Denmark to join the EU defence policy and other countries in Europe to give up their neutrality.

“The economic boom is supporting Russia to continue its war in Ukraine, but the sanctions would eventually impact the economy as it is likely to shrink by 8.5 per cent.”

Fifth, dissent from within. Putin's war in Ukraine was not absolutely supported in Russia; many oligarchs like Oleg Tinkov, Roman Abramovich, and Oleg Deripaska have denounced the war. Similarly, small protests were held across Moscow as thousands of demonstrators protested against the war. Political analysts have mentioned how the last supporter of former president Boris Yeltsin, Valentin Yumashev stepped down from being Kremlin's advisor showing a rift in support from within. Thus, a possible fraction within the political parties was visible due to Putin's war in Ukraine.

Sixth, unachieved goals. Putin speculated that overtaking Kyiv would be quick; but the strong resistance by Ukrainian forces and support from the West disrupted his plans. On 12 April, Putin vowed to continue Ukraine's offensive despite the major withdrawal from Kyiv. Russia's goals have been vague; Putin mentioned the demilitarization and de-Nazification of Ukraine. But, Kremlin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Russia was able to achieve its main task of protecting civilians in the separatist-controlled areas and

assured working towards the liberation of Ukraine.

What next?

Consolidating the Luhansk and Donetsk regions

Russia is likely to focus on consolidating the Luhansk and Donetsk region as it faces counterattacks by the Ukrainian military. Russia has also decided to place nuclear-capable missiles in Belarus, on the border with Ukraine, to warn the West of its continuous weapons support to Kyiv. Russia is likely to focus on the eastern region to create a land bridge to Crimea and access the crucial warm water ports of Mariupol and Kherson.

Energy exports shift from Europe to Asia
Russia plans to shift its energy exports to Asia, with China, India, and the UAE as the major importers. Russia has even resorted to ship-to-ship loading and storing onboard oil containers for faster oil transactions.

Possible interventions in Georgia and Finland

With Putin warning of more ramifications for Finland and Sweden as they plan to join NATO, speculations arise about Russia's plan to create tensions with Finland. Finland would give NATO an added border of 800 miles and help the alliance create a NATO sea from the Baltic Sea. Moreover, with Georgia's separatist region rejecting the referendum on joining Russia, the Kremlin might move to intervene.

Stronger ties with China

On 23 May, Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov mentioned that Moscow would focus on “developing relations with China.” This comes as the US reaffirmed its support to Taiwan in its policy of “strategic ambiguity.” Thus, Russia and China would deepen their ties to counter the West and the allies. Additionally, China can help Russia circumvent its sanctions in the long run as current sanctions do not target Beijing.

II

Ukraine holds their own against Russia's aggression

Hundred days of war in Ukraine

More than 100 days have passed since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russia attacked Ukraine with a multi-pronged approach in its initial attack; towards Kyiv in the north, from Belarus, Kharkiv in the east from west Russia, and Kherson from Crimea. After facing unexpected backlash from Ukraine in these fronts, they gradually shifted their offensive towards the east in the Donbas region, and specifically Mariupol, the strategically important port-city.

In the 100 days of war, extensive shelling, bombing and airstrikes have reduced large parts of many cities and towns to rubble. Ukraine's parliamentary commission reported that Russia's military have destroyed almost 38,000 residential buildings, rendering about 220,000 people homeless. Nearly 1,900 educational facilities, 50 rail bridges, 500 factories and about 500 hospitals have been damaged. Reportedly, 6.8 million people have fled the country because of the conflict, and around 7.1 million were internally displaced.

While war statistics are often inaccurate and biased, Ukraine's military deaths are estimated around 37,000. Ukraine has lost about 44-47 per cent of its tanks/armoured vehicles 84 per cent of its aircraft/helicopters. UNHRC estimates civilian deaths to be around 4,100. Moreover, by the 100 days, Russian control over Ukraine's territory has increased from 7 per cent from before the war to 20 per cent.

Thus, the prolonged war has increased military and civilian casualties and deepened the economic and infrastructural disaster. However, their resistance against Russia, one of the world's strongest militaries, has boosted the pride and ambitions of Ukrainians. Even after 100 days, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his daily addresses seem determined to see Ukraine's victory.

What are the issues?

First, Ukraine's early losses and slow but steady fightback. Russia had assumed that it would be a blitzkrieg war where they would seize the capital, overthrow the regime and gain control of Ukraine. But Ukraine foiled their initial objectives, prompting Russia to regroup. In the initial days of the war, Ukraine's forces were successful in combatting Russia's aggression and emerged victorious in defending Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mykolaiv.

Second, the strategic shifting of the war fronts. Since Ukraine's victory at Kyiv and other northern territory, Russia begun the second phase of offensive in the east. As the situation stands now with the capture of Mariupol, Russia has been able to establish a land bridge from Crimea along the southern border of Ukraine. Ukraine's forces are struggling to hold off the Russian aggression, which in the east is being done by small concentrated units.

Third, the failure of a political dialogue with Russia. Zelenskyy has said that he is ready to negotiate with Putin. However, this needs to be unconditional, and Russia has to go back to the pre-war territorial configuration. Many countries like France, Italy, and Turkey have offered to mediate peace talks between Zelenskyy and Putin, but, that seems unlikely, as both the countries have been involved in a mutual blame game. Since, the only way to end this conflict may be through a negotiated peace, a resolution of the crisis in the near future looks unlikely.

Fourth, impact on the economy. The World Bank has reported that their economy is forecasted to shrink by almost 45 percent. The total economic loss accrued by Ukraine is estimated at up to USD 600 billion. It is estimated that Ukraine needs around 5 billion dollars in external financial assistance every month. To this end, the authorities are trying to obtain foreign support, primarily non-refundable grants, but also low-interest loans. With the current state of the budget, the government is only able to repair critical infrastructure, while the bulk of the funds are allocated to the needs of the army.

Fifth, Ukraine's food security and its global fallouts. Ukraine is also one of the world's biggest producers of food grains. Since Russia's blockade of the ports in Odessa and Mariupol, the export of around 22 million tonnes of grains to the global community has been stalled. This is exacerbating the imminent food security crisis. It has also resulted in food prices rising worldwide, especially in the developing countries. Ukraine has also claimed that the season to reap the harvests of this year is coming closer soon. So, unless the old stock is allowed to be exported soon, it is likely to get wasted.

“Though there have been considerable losses, with foreign assistance, Ukraine seems determined to counter Russian offensive.”

Sixth, the global responses. While in some cases the response of the international community has been dubbed as “too little, too late” it cannot be denied that many countries have pledged their support to Ukraine. The international community met Ukraine's appeals for help readily, but their assistance, whether in the shape of weapons, artillery, or financial aid, has been taking time to reach Ukraine. In a war, where time is of essence, this delay is hampering Ukraine's self-defence capabilities. Moreover, temporarily, all this help might be a necessity for Ukraine to continue its war efforts. But, the long-lasting ramifications might not be favourable for Ukraine as it increases their post-war dependence on these countries and organizations.

What next?

Gaining back lost territory

Zelenskyy recently said that Russia now controls 20 percent of the territory in Ukraine. Like they did around Kyiv, Ukraine now must look to recapture the territories occupied by Russia, without losing too much of its forces in the east. This includes the strategically significant Sievierodonetsk, where Russia has occupied about 70 percent of the city.

Call for further international sanctions and assistance

Ukraine has been emphasizing on how imposing sanctions on Russia is one of the most effective ways to stop the Russian war machine. EU countries, the US, other economies like Japan, Canada, Iceland, Taiwan, South Korea, Switzerland, and several other cultural and sports authorities have already imposed sanctions on Russia. But, Zelenskyy has welcomed the possibility of more, especially on oil and energy. In terms of international help, Ukraine has to ensure that the consignments promised to Ukraine by several international actors reach the country in time for them. Without continued western support, it will get difficult for Ukraine to sustain the war.

Ukraine's EU and NATO bid

While Ukraine might have been contemplating applying for a NATO membership before Russia's invasion, the current situation will definitely prompt the country to look more into such regional alliances. Zelenskyy has already started talks with the EU for a possible membership and has received positive feedback from Brussels. The way the West is responding to the crisis, it is likely that Ukraine will look westward for a West-backed security balance.

A continuing war of attrition

After 100 days of war, despite suffering considerable losses, Ukraine does not seem to be backing down. Their territorial control is ebbing and flowing. Neither Russia nor Ukraine looks likely to make a decisive breakthrough. It is unlikely that even with western weapons and finances, Ukraine will be able to curb Russia's forces completely. With the momentum at which the conflict is progressing, it is more likely that this will become a long war of attrition.

III What next for Europe?

24 February marked the start of the Ukraine war; it also marked the end of Europe's diplomatic efforts taken since the 2014 Crimean annexation. From peace treaties to the Minsk agreements to the Normandy format talks held with Russia to prevent the invasion from being nullified. Since then, NATO, the EU member states and the UK have been on a continuous spree in imposing sanctions on Russia, supplying Ukraine with war equipment, weapons, anti-tank missiles, intelligence reporting, and financial aid and have been accommodating the influx of refugees.

The effects of the Ukraine war and the stance against Russia's oil imports are causing an irrecoverable loss to the EU's economy and energy sector. Although Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Lithuania have tried to alternate their oil imports from Russia through new extraction sites, speeding up the existing energy hotspots within the region and supplies from the US. Most dependent member states such as Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are still struggling to close the gap. A larger question remains on how long will they be able to sustain without harming nature.

With the war escalating in different directions from eastern Ukraine to the far west border where Moldova, Finland and Poland are present, solidarity has been achieved across Europe to counter Russia using sanctions, defence and support to Ukraine. On the other hand, the sanctions have also had a reverse effect in shooting up inflation at the economic and eurozone levels. The IMF and European Central Bank warned about how the sanctions affected the eurozone economy.

The recent development post 75 days of war is NATO's renaissance; the Nordic countries which prioritized the neutrality principle have stepped from their historical practice and have applied for NATO membership. Denmark also reversed its opt-out to engage with EU's defence cooperation. While Russia is gaining territory in Ukraine, NATO is

expanding in eastern and northern Europe, with further access to the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Ocean.

What are the issues?

First, the energy insecurity. For Europe aiming to phase out Russian oil and meet its set climate goals, the growing energy demands are becoming a major challenge. With the speeding up of planned projects such as the Lithuania-Poland gas pipeline and Netherland-Germany oil pipeline, the long-term dependency is promising. Although Europe seeks to balance the supply from the US and hopes to get support from the Middle East, the current scenario of the rising energy demands and prices has led to inflation and frustration amongst the people.

“The Ukraine war has pushed the eastern European countries and the Nordic to rethink their security posture. This means the buffer between Europe, NATO and Russia is slimming.”

Second, the impact of sanctions. Various sets of sanctions packages, from state-owned to private companies, banks to individual investors covering mining, space programme, central bank, commodities, oligarchs, and shipping routes, have been imposed by Europe. The recent one was the oil embargo deterred by Hungary's vote. The cut-down of businesses has resulted in a threefold increase in eurozone inflation and skyrocketing energy and commodity prices. The continuation of sanctions and war will not only challenge the economic recovery of the EU, but it will also risk the union's unity which has gained ground due to the Ukraine war.

Third, increased threat due to NATO expansion. The Ukraine war has pushed the eastern European countries and the Nordic to rethink their security posture. This means the buffer between Europe, NATO and Russia is slimming. With Finland and Sweden growing close to NATO, Balkan states such as Turkey have threatened to be invaded or face the consequences. Under such provocation, Russia may not strike the

European countries, but militarization will occur. The Nordic stepping front for membership will bring more pressure on NATO to counter Russia. This also creates a space for doubt and chaos on NATO's capabilities amongst the EU member states due to fear of Russian aggression.

Fourth, the rise of odd member states. Before the Ukraine war started, the EU faced a challenge in the migration issue phase in bringing Poland and Belarus under control. Similarly, with the Ukraine war on set, Belarus, Hungary, and Turkey are seen as the member states creating a barrier in the decision-making process of the EU. Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko has completely stepped out from the EU order by supporting Russia in launching attacks on Ukraine, and Hungary has blocked imposing the oil embargo on Russia. In contrast, Turkey, previously the mediator of talks between Ukraine and Russia, has now turned against Finland and Sweden joining NATO. The count of the opposition may increase with rising economic pressure and lack of funds from the EU, threatening regional peace and cooperation.

What next?

First, on the energy front, Europe is far behind in meeting the immediate energy needs of the region. Although the Ukraine war was unforeseen, the energy alternates and measures to cut down on Russian energy imports must have opted soon after the 2014 annexation. The balance may be established after five years for Europe, and Germany might take longer, but Russia's Rouble rule and increased energy prices will cost Europe's economy.

Second, if Europe continues to keep the region bound by sanctions might lead to internal chaos, economic unrest and pressure to divert the European exports which were previously sent to Russia. In the upcoming months, Europe has to be even more tactical in imposing sanctions and its military spending on Ukraine, considering the long-term impact on its economy and subsequent economic crisis, which may lead to a split amongst the member states.

Third, on the military and financial aid, the EU, NATO, and UK have deployed arms and promised to strengthen their member states. It has been supplying weapons and has upgraded to sending the missile system to Ukraine, hoping to bring the war to standpoint soon. When comparing the amount of military and financial aid with economic aid to Ukraine and member states, significantly less measure has been taken in terms of economic aid and protective measures. Suppose the war extends to become a long-standing conflict. In that case, Europe must be prepared both militarily and economically. In the long run, the effect on the economy because of the war spending and sanctions will have an adverse effect on the recovery period, for which Europe remains unprepared.

IV

US Responses in the war

On 24 February, the US took substantial and unprecedented action in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine by imposing severe economic sanctions on its economy and banking system. President Joe Biden authorized USD 350 million for Ukraine's defense under the Foreign Assistance Act. Ever since the US has pledged a total of USD 3.9 billion to Ukraine in military aid. The US has also been training Ukrainian soldiers to use the Switchblade drones and other equipment to prove effective in the battlefield.

On the same day, Biden met the Group of Seven leaders to reiterate their commitment to rapidly respond to president Putin's aggression on Ukraine and expressed their sympathy with the Ukrainian people.

On 24 March, Biden visited Europe to attend a series of meetings with NATO, G7 and the European Council. All the groups seemed to welcome the return of US leadership and engagement in Europe.

On 11 May, the US House of Representatives passed a bill worth USD 40 billion of aid to Ukraine. The current bill exceeds by seven billion from the previous proposed by the US president Joe Biden to Congress on 29 April.

The Congress has been accelerating its approvals for aid to Ukraine, to help counter Russia. The US democratic representative Rosa DeLauro said: "This bill will protect democracy, limit Russian aggression, and strengthen our own national security, while, most importantly, supporting Ukraine."

What are the issues?

First, the expansion of sanctions. The first phase of sanctions since the invasion focused on financial institutions and markets to halt the raising of capitals. The second phase targeted where the world thought would hurt the most: on energy and oil. Further, the use terminated all scientific research and exploration with Russia in Antarctica and Space. The US also tried to narrow the sanctions on particular influential individuals related to the president of Russia. Although Western sanctions have failed to coerce Russia to reverse its actions and cease the aggression in Ukraine, they have had a significant impact on the Russian economy.

Second, implications of increased supply of arms and ammunition to Ukraine. The US is attempting to defend Ukraine through supply of anti-tank missiles against Russian aggression without igniting a wider war in Europe. Ukraine's success in stymieing Russia's considerably larger and better-equipped military, delaying its attempt to attack the capital, has been largely due to Western armaments. The US has supplied Stinger anti-aircraft systems which shifted the tide in Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Javelin anti-armour systems, Switchblade drones, air surveillance radars, Mi17 helicopters, 155mm Howitzers. However, with no US troops on the ground, the lack of traceability could arm the separatists and mercenaries of Russia against Ukraine.

Third, responses towards refugees from Ukraine. Since 24 February, the US has contributed more than USD 123 million to support European countries and the EU in their efforts to receive and host millions of refugees. Biden has also welcomed over a million refugees, however the refugees have to go through a broad range of legal processes. On 24 March, Biden announced the launch of European Democratic

Resilience Initiative (EDRI), which is expected to contribute at least USD 320 million in new financing, which aims to strengthen democratic resilience, enhance anti-corruption measures, and safeguard human rights in Ukraine and its neighbors.

"The US will steadily increase the military supplies and continue to keep the imposed sanctions intact until Russia surrenders."

Fourth, the oil crisis. On 08 March, president Biden announced the first sanction on oil and gas imports from Russia which was followed by the UK. The news led to the surge in oil prices, with Benchmark Brent crude oil for May rose by 5.4 per cent to USD 129.91 a barrel. In an attempt to cool the prices, Biden on 31 March announced the release of one million barrels a day of crude oil for six months from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). He also called on Congress to levy fines on oil firms which are idle on unused oil and gas wells. Biden attempted to reach out to the middle east countries to supply oil to Europe, but his calls were rebuked. The UAE and Saudi Arabia declined to help citing US unreliability in the region. Apart from this the US began looking for non-Russian options for Europe's oil supply before the invasion which also seem to have exhausted. Therefore pushing the US to extract and explore more oil reserves within its territory.

Fifth, the return of US presence in Europe. On 24 March, president Biden began his Europe tour by attending an emergency summit summoned by NATO, and meetings with the European Council and the G7. One the same day, the president of the European Commission Ursula reiterated the fact that the transatlantic ties stand stronger than ever. Since the start of hostilities, the US and NATO allies took steps to bolster allied force posture in Eastern Europe, enhancing deterrence against more robust Russian aggression and demonstrating the Alliance's ability to defend its eastern flank.

What next

First, the need for the US to address the oil and food crisis in Europe and worldwide. In the following months and years, the US will have to manage its domestic needs, internal pressure against US involvement in the war, European developmental banks and the World Bank to support Europe from oil and food shortage.

Second, the increasing footprint of the US in the region might evoke resentment among the EU states. Amid the war in Ukraine, while few member states in Europe have welcomed the US leadership and engagement, many have criticized the EU for letting the US intervene. However, post-war the US might start to influence the region's security strategy and membership calls to the EU. This may invoke resentment against the US.

Third, the war has now lasted 100 days and is expected to continue. The US seem to have exhausted its sanctions and has been tactically playing in supply of heavy weapons to Ukraine. In the upcoming months, there can be three probabilities for the US. First, uniting the world powers to isolate Russia in every possible way to bring down its economic reserves. Two, negotiating with

Russia to give away of Donbass region in exchange of peace and sovereignty to Ukraine through a peace treaty or agreement. Three, to steadily increase the military supplies and continue to keep the imposed sanctions intact until Russia surrenders.

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COMMENT

The Ukraine Conflict: What does it mean for Eastern Europe? Where does India stand?

Mathew Sinu Simon

Russia and Ukraine are involved in a protracted conflict that has caught the attention of international politics. Global politics stands adversely affected by constraints in supply chains (wheat, barley and sunflower oil) and oil, and natural gas supplies. European Union and the United States are thoughtfully exploring energy alternatives so as to reduce dependency on Russia.

Russia's Crimea annexation: Writing on the Wall

The Russian narrative was that its backyard stood vulnerable as most of its Eastern Europe neighbours were joining NATO and seeking associational membership from European Union. Russia was left with no other option but to secure its borders. The Minsk agreement was a futile attempt of West intervention that fell apart. The West narrative that is widely posed in international media showed the tendencies of Russia being the aggressor flouting all the international norms and laws. As a result, there were sanctions imposed on Russian individuals, business entities and State agencies, therein cornering and isolating Russia from finance, trade and international politics. It is indeed surprising that in today's interdependent, globalizing world, isolation rather than due engagement has become the state of play in international politics.

Russian offensive onslaught on parts of Eastern Ukraine would continue unless peace and urgency for dialogue are called forth by the warring parties concerned only without attaching conditionalities. The Russian claim that certain parts of Ukraine have pockets of ethnic Russian resistance in form of separatist tendencies does not hold ground. A 'referendum' in the said disputed region conducted to that effect to determine the policy of self-determination fails the higher test of sovereignty of Ukraine.

What about other Russian neighbors? Will they meet the same fate?

Is Russia's insecurity and its aggressive postures at the cost of the peace and order of Eastern Europe? The other question is whether Russia is flexing its muscles in Eastern Europe with the intent to confront the West in times to come. There clearly appears then a crisis of identity in Eastern European countries. Incidentally, it also opens the fissures of the East-West divide within Europe.

The sole dependence on the United States and Western European states to stave off Russia is no way forward in the longer term for East Europeans to realize their unique identity and assert their potential and independent presence in the geopolitics of the region.

What next for Ukraine?

Ukraine has borne the brunt of heavy casualties with several of its citizens killed, displaced, and seeking refuge and asylum in their neighbouring countries. Ukraine backed by the West in terms of military support however has so far been unable to successfully repel Russian advances strategically. Ukraine has received widespread support from the West and the majority of member states from the United Nations. It has received aid and assistance from international donor agencies. The citizens of Ukraine in the generations to come would never forgive and forget the tribulations and sufferings it has to bear due to Russian pressurizing tactics and maneuverings that the nation as a whole has been subjected to. Ukraine has every right in its jurisdiction as a sovereign state to join NATO or seek membership from European Union or get help from the United States. Ukraine does the same clearly for its self-preservation and national interest. However, that time is not afar when Ukraine has to take hard, strategic decisions without its dependence on the West in charting its foreign policy ahead.

What about India's position?

India's abstention from United Nations Security Council resolutions is by no means an open declaration of Russian support for the conflict. It also does not either mean we are not reading seriously about the developments in Ukraine. Europeans and Americans have left no stone unturned in attempting to convince India of her 'erroneous' diplomatic actions. India has made her stance clear. She called for a cessation of hostilities between the warring parties and advocated for due compliance with international norms, conventions and rule of law. She banks and values the principle of sovereignty and respects the territorial integrity of nation-states. She is following her national interest and is neither swayed by Russian, American and European concerns. She did well in prioritizing her interests by evacuating Indian students from conflict zones through Operation Ganga.

“India stands non-aligned and focused on charting her path of self-reliance and asserting her autonomy in international politics.”

In strategic circles, it is claimed that India may require Russia in terms of military

supplies and countering the China-Pakistan axis in the South Asian neighbourhood. India also at the same time would require the United States to fend off Chinese challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. However, it does not imply that India is dependent and less watchful of US and Russian foreign policy tactics. India follows her foreign policy and respects its partnerships across the world in accordance with her national interest.

India is a durable, strategic partner for the US, Russians and Europeans alike as evidenced by her steadfast support for the distribution of vaccines across the world. India stands non-aligned and focused on charting her path of self-reliance and asserting her autonomy in international politics. India of today does not stand to be manoeuvred by Great Powers in her foreign policy priorities and interests. India is watching closely the developments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its rippling effects on Eastern Europe with the utmost caution, and concern and analyzing its deeper implications worldwide.

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EM Daily Focus*



Source: Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amnesty International, Reuters/Dado Ruvic/Illustration, Anders Wiklund/TT/picture alliance, Finnish Government, Reuters

BELARUS

Belarus: A new front of war amid heightened nuclear tensions

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

On 26 May, Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko announced the creation of a new military command for the southern part of the country that shares a border with Ukraine. Lukashenko said: "A new front has opened and we can't fail to pay attention to it." This comes as Ukraine's general staff claimed that Russia had deployed Iskander-M nuclear-capable missiles in the Brest region of Belarus which are short-range ballistic missile systems with a capability to attack targets with ease. Since the area borders with Ukraine, threaten the security of Kyiv although West continue to supply arms.

Takeaways from recent developments

First, possible nuclear confrontation. Since Russia's president Vladimir Putin deployed nuclear-capable missiles on Belarusian territory, it has increased tensions for a possible nuclear war. As a result, the region

of Brest has become a potential flashpoint for a nuclear confrontation. The US has owned and deployed nuclear weapons in Europe since the mid-1950s and according to the *Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation*, the US has an estimated 100 nuclear weapons stored across five NATO member states. The US has these bases located in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Turkey. Even though these bases are not geographically placed to engage in the war, these nuclear missiles have the capabilities to intercept dual-capable NATO-designated fighter jets.

Second, a warning to the West. Putin has been warning of nuclear threats since the West started supplying arms and ammunition to Ukraine. However, the deployment of nuclear weapons on the border is a step ahead from just warnings and threats to a direct provocation. Lukashenko also stressed the West to halt their weapons supply to Ukraine to "prevent a regional conflict in Europe from escalating into a full-scale world war."

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Third, a new front of war. On 27 May, Belarus' defence minister Viktor Khrenin announced that Lukashenko had agreed to create militias to boost the country's defence. The decision comes along with the announcement for a new military command in the south. Thus, it could be speculated that Belarus and Russia are strategizing for a war from the north. This would mean, a shift from Russia's focus on the southern and south-eastern parts of Ukraine where the attacks are currently focus on.

Fourth, tactics of distraction. With Ukraine launching counterattacks and winning back areas slowly near the Mykolaiv and Zaporizhia regions. The buildup on the Belarus border could also be interpreted as a tactic of distraction to push the war from a single front to a two-front war straining Ukraine's resources and military. This comes as Russian forces were found to performing poorly on 27 May in urban terrain operations nor were they successful in advancing towards the Izyum area near the Kharkiv-Donetsk Oblast border on 26 May.

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HUNGARY

Hungary: EU's Budapest challenge on the Russian oil ban

By Padmashree Anandhan

Recent developments

On 05 May, Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán applied brakes on the EU proposal for an oil embargo on Russia. He said that the decision would affect Hungary as its economy is dependent on Russian energy imports by more than 50 per cent. Later, on 06 May, he said that the sanctions on energy would have an effect equal to a "nuclear

bomb," on Hungary and rejected the EU's proposal.

On 09 May, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met Orbán to discuss Hungary's objection to the EU's oil ban. Post the discussion she said: "This evening's discussion with PM Viktor Orbán was helpful to clarify issues related to sanctions and energy security."

Issues in the background

First, the EU and Hungary equations. The bilateral relations have never been static; especially under Orbán, there have been issues at the domestic, regional, and international level which has dented the bilateral relations. At the domestic level, the government's misuse of the EU funds, democratic backsliding, manipulation of media, undermining courts, and provisions against LGBT have caused a rift. At the regional level, neighbouring Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia tagging along with Hungary in misuse of the EU funds, and democratic backsliding, had also challenged the EU's operations. At the international level, Hungary's disagreement with the EU's sanctions on China during the crackdown on Hong Kong also created a similar situation where the EU was not able to step forward to support Hong Kong because of Hungary. Orbán, keeping the economic relations with China on the front, denied supporting the EU. The same is repeated with Hungary's dependency on Russia's gas and oil.

Second, Hungary's dependency on Russia. The relations between Hungary and Russia go back to 2010 when Orbán was re-elected. More than the economic ties, Moscow had focused on involving Hungary through politics, energy, and its elites. Keeping Hungary a member of the NATO and the EU, Russia has always concentrated on keeping the loop going with Hungary to block the EU's foreign policy decisions and sanctions against Russia.

Third, the bargain. EU's trump card to bring Hungary under its control has been always through funding adjustment. One, though promised to send cash and improve infrastructure from the richest EU countries. Two, by cutting down on EU funds keeping

the rule of law, and democratic backsliding as reasons. This situation is reversing back in favour of Orbán, as the EU wants his vote to pass the oil embargo. Hungary is currently demanding a five-year exception to phase out Russian oil import and a EUR 750 billion in exchange of a vote against Russia and indirectly to make EU funds flow back into Orbán's cronies' accounts which was restricted after the recent elections.

In perspective

First, Hungary's reluctance to support EU's sanctions will have an impact on the latter's proposal of the oil embargo, but this will also sideline Hungary from Europe. There has been a shift in relations with the regional neighbours of Hungary post the Ukraine war. Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic have turned in favour of the EU, the perception has changed positively with the intake of refugees and support to Ukraine. Hence Hungary's rejection of the oil ban might lead the EU countries to opt for the ban individually, which in turn lead to the isolation of Hungary for its stance favouring Russia.

Second, Russia has succeeded in breaking the European unity, but it will face the hardship of economic sanctions from the EU countries and a big challenge in diverting its gas and oil supplies from the European market.

Third, there is also another possibility that without a united EU ban on phasing out the Russian energy exports might lead to a larger split amongst the EU member states in taking an individual stance against Russia considering the loss to their economies. Which will turn in favour of Russia to play its big power politics over the small economy states of the EU.

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RUSSIA

Putin's Victory Day speech: Three takeaways

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

On 09 May, Russia's president Vladimir Putin gave a victory day speech commemorating the USSR's triumph over Nazi Germany's defeat in World War II. Putin mentioned how the victory united the Soviet people in "...its cohesion and spiritual power, an unparalleled feat on the front lines and on the home front."

Justifying Russia's intervention in Donbas

Putin highlighted the controversies in international relations and advocated that Russia always stood for an equal and indivisible security system. He claimed that Russia proposed security guarantees to the US and the West, but they did not respond. He further accused Kyiv of planning operations in Donbas and Crimea, justifying Russia's intervention in the region.

Putin further accused Ukraine of acquiring nuclear weapons and that neo-Nazis were steering Ukraine's politics. This comes just days after he apologized to Israel's prime minister Naftali Bennett for Russia's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov's comments about Adolf Hitler having "Jewish blood."

Call to unitedly fight for the Motherland Russia

Putin spoke about a threat from Ukraine, the US and the West to Russia. He said that the West no longer respected the faith, traditional values, ancestors' customs, cultures, and Russia's people. Furthermore, Putin addressed the armed forces and the Donbas militia who were resisting the West.

Finally, he mentioned how Russia's enemies used international terrorist gangs against

the country to incite inter-ethnic and religious strife to weaken Moscow from within. But their plans failed as the people from different ethnicities fought together as a great invincible power for the united multi-ethnic nation, Russia.

Response from the West

The world was anticipating for Putin's to officially declare war on Ukraine on the Victory Day. His speech on Russian nationalism gave respite to the US and Europe; however, the claims he made in the speech incited reactions.

Ukraine's presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak debunked a claim saying: "NATO countries were not going to attack Russia. Ukraine did not plan to attack Crimea." UK's defence minister Ben Wallace mentioned how the victory day could be no victory day as it only brought dishonour to Putin and a defeat in Russia. He added: "He (Putin) must come to terms with how he's lost in the long run, and he's absolutely lost."

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Russia shifting its oil exports from Europe to Asia, increasing its revenue

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

The sanctions imposed on Russia have led to a steep rise in the prices of oil and gas exports. This has impacted the Russian economy positively as its oil export revenue has increased by 50 per cent since the beginning of 2022. The International Energy Agency (IAE) stated that the Kremlin generated close to USD 20 billion per month in oil export sales. Russia's economy is primarily dependent on energy exports and thus has also increased the value of Russia's ruble as the top-performing currency against the dollar. However, with Europe planning to end fossil fuel dependency on Russia and the

West watching over the countries buying oil, the question arises, where and how is

Russia exporting its oil?

Where is Russia exporting its oil in Asia?

First, China. On 20 May, according to a report by Reuters, China has been quietly purchasing Russia's oil at bargain prices. This comes as Russia was selling barrels for USD 29, less than what it was compared to the pre-invasion prices. Moreover, China continues importing oil via its pipelines from Russia, bringing the total May imports to nearly 15 per cent of its domestic demand. Second, India. New Delhi's imports of Russian oil rose by 23.7 per cent, as Moscow became India's fourth-largest oil supplier. India primarily imported the cheaper Russian oil to replenish its strategic oil reserves. India also plans to use the cheaper crude oil for further refining and exporting purposes.

Third, UAE. Russia plans to export about 2.5 million barrels of fuel oil in May to the UAE, 125 per cent higher than April levels. These barrels were primarily heading to Fujairah, the world's third-largest bunkering hub. UAE is importing refined oil as it can be used to make various bi-products that Abu Dhabi plans to eventually export.

How is Russia exporting oil, amid pressure from the West?

First, storing it onboard containers. On 24 May, a report by Reuters mentioned how many Russian flagship vessels on the sea had crude oil stored on them. Reuters reported: "The number of Urals cargoes at sea with no set destination is 15% of the total, also a new high." This could be seen as a way of transferring oil through the ship-to-ship (STS), not under the radar of the Western countries. Parking these ships across the globe could help quicker sales and offload of Russia's crude oil.

Second, Ship to Ship loading. Russia is currently using ST's loadings off the coast of Greece to export fuel overseas. Since April, shipments of Russian fuel with the destination to Greece reached 0.9 million tons. According to reports, most tankers find their way to Fujairah, the UAE oil hub. A few other tankers also went towards Indian and

Chinese ports. In March, Russia had stored its oil in Singapore's hub to be able to sell its oil even if the West imposed sanctions.

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TURKEY

Turkey's unhappiness over Finland and Sweden's proposal to join NATO

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

Turkey's discontentment with Finland and Sweden

On 13 May, Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed his unhappiness with the decision of Sweden and Finland proposing to join the NATO. Erdogan added: "We are following the developments with Finland and Sweden, but we don't have favourable thoughts." His remarks came as Finland announced that it aimed to join the alliance, while Sweden's parliamentary security review mentioned that membership could deter the risk of conflict in northern Europe. Erdogan's comments further highlighted his dismay as he mentioned how the Nordic countries were "home to many terrorist organisations".

Turkey has always supported NATO's expansion. However, it has reservations for Finland and Sweden due to historical and political reasons. Concerning Sweden, Erdogan repeatedly slammed its handling of Kurdish militant groups such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

Regarding Finland, Turkey is worried that it would have a spillover effect as Finland shares an 810-mile-long border with Russia. On 12 May, Moscow warned of retaliation and a set of unspecified "military-technical" measures to Finland's announcement of joining the NATO.

What lies ahead?

First, Erdogan's power play. Erdogan is likely to use this opportunity to gain concessions from Sweden for hosting groups that are considered a terrorist movement by Ankara. Turkey is also scheduled to hold its presidential and parliamentary elections in June 2023, where Erdogan is likely to re-contest. Therefore, his comments are seen as a way to gain support from his domestic audience.

Second, a roadblock to NATO membership. Apart from the long and complex membership process, Turkey's stance would be another hurdle for Sweden and Finland to join the alliance. In addition, the procedure to join NATO includes a "five-step to accession process" that could take years for the two countries to complete.

Third, a potential retaliation by Russia. On 14 May, Putin with his security council discussed ways of reacting to Finland and Sweden joining NATO via a video link. This comes as Finland joining the alliance would increase Russia's direct border with NATO by 810 miles. Russia has not clarified its retaliations but has mentioned that it could turn them from neutral to enemy countries overnight. Making them potential targets for Russia.

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REGIONAL

Amnesty International Report: Death sentences and executions

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 24 May, Amnesty International released its annual report on the death penalty and executions given by countries across the globe with a comparison to 2021. It provides a detailed report on the death sentences, executions, and violations of international law practised by countries across the globe and analyses the trend of increase amongst certain states. As per the Amnesty report: "Amnesty International's monitoring of the global use of the death penalty in 2021 revealed an increase by 20% in recorded executions and 39% in known death sentences compared to 2020. Eighteen countries executed a total of at least 579 people, and 56 countries sentenced a total of at least 2,052 people to death. However, the 2021 global executions figure was the second-lowest recorded by Amnesty International since at least 2010, in line with the historical trend towards global abolition."

Key takeaways

First, targeted executions. The death sentences and executions were found to be declared on those who engaged in anti-government protests. To maintain power and support, political opponents, minorities, and ethnic groups were also the targets of the governments.

Second, the reasons behind increased executions. The following are the key reasons for the increase in executions and death penalties. One is to suppress the protestor groups and minorities leading to disregard of international human rights and protecting the state. Two, skipping arbitral proceedings and direct sentencing without the choice to appeal. Such direct sentencing was declared under ambiguous reasons, "enmity against god," political repression, terrorism, conspiracy to carry out violence, and participation in anti-government protests.

Third, abolitionist versus retentionist. The report found that close to two-thirds of countries (144) across the globe had removed the death penalty from its legal practice and only 55 countries remain to practise the execution. Amnesty also reported on parties who do not provide death sentences for any form of crime. The list contained all European countries except Belarus which still opts for the death penalty for ordinary crimes. Apart from this Central Asia region, South Africa and small-island nations had also opted for similar practices. A key development in Sierra Leone, Kazakhstan, and Virginia opting to eliminate the death penalty. While the retentionist countries continue to keep the death sentencing and execution as part of law till now against international standards. It includes Belarus which due to secret state practices, the actual data could not be collected, but it was found to have restarted the use of executions in 2019.

Where does Europe stand?

Belarus has been the one EU member state standing out from the region for the practice of death sentences and executions. Despite condemnations from the UN on sentencing and secret executions, Belarus is found to be continuing it under the Victor Orban government. In the recent report released by the UN, the execution of people without notice to the prisoner's family members was highlighted. It found Belarus to be violating the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) norms on three grounds. First, the right to life. Second, is the right to individual liberty, and the third right to a fair trial. Excluding Belarus, all the European countries are observed to have abolished the death sentencing and executions from their laws. The abolition has been implemented through three protocols. It facilitates the removal of the death penalty with a provision to bring it back in case of war to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Thereby the EU along with the UK adopts the best judicial and legislative practice compared to the US, China, and the rest of the world in dealing the ordinary crimes.

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Slovakia and Hungary's Slana river turns orange, causing environmental degradation

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

The Slana river, also known as the Sajó river in Hungary, is environmentally and historically significant. The river runs approximately 230 kilometers, of which 110 kilometers of the river is in Slovakia, and the rest is in Hungary. Unfortunately, the river started turning orange in February due to the outflow of mining waters from an iron ore mine that closed in 2008. The mining company called Siderit in Nižná Slaná operated from 1975 to 2008 until it went bankrupt. Slovakia's state-run mining company Rudné Bane took over the site and implemented necessary measures in 2012, but that did not stop the outflow from causing the ecological disaster. This has also revived calls for proposing groundwater outflows in Slovakia be registered as environmental burdens.

Implications on wildlife

The "orange river," with high iron ore and zinc content, has killed fish and wildlife downstream. However, authorities on both sides speculate if the river is dead as residents only found plentiful carcasses and dead crabs instead of trout, grayling, or chub fish that used to be readily on the Slovakian side. Slovakia's experts are predicting a large-scale ecological disaster as the high iron ore in rivers covers the fish gills, which leads to their death. However, Slovakia's state-run mining company Rudne Bane's director Peter Zitnan stated that this was not a poisonous leak.

On the Hungarian side, the state water authority has been monitoring the river as it only has turned brown occasionally. Nevertheless, due to the substantial dilution, the pollution has not changed the water quality or killed fish. Hungary's politician

Anna Donáth of the Momentum party has been spearheading the push for the two governments to take action on the crisis. She called on the governments and said they had "so far stood by idly and watched the ecological disaster unfold."

Steps were taken by authorities in Slovakia and Hungary

Slovakia's economy ministry stated that it would ensure water would not flow into deeper parts of the mine and let more iron ore-rich water overflow. The ministry also urged the finance ministry to release EUR 200,000 to tackle the situation. Citizens in Slovakia even wrote to the European Commission as local authorities initially did not take action.

Hungarian residents in the first few villages along the river have urged the government to put measures to deter a spillover of water pollution. In addition, residents are concerned about the wildlife and the fish supplies they use for their diet. Hungarian authorities have also been continuously taking samples at the Sajópüspöki, Miskolc, and Muhi to measure the toxicity of the river.

Hungary's agriculture minister Nagy plans to visit Slovakia and meet with Slovakia's environment minister. He added: "Let us not forget that it is our common duty to protect the world we have created and to maintain its biodiversity." The Slovak authorities also confirmed that they plan on preparing a procurement to divert the river. This would release the uncontaminated water from the higher levels of the mine directly into the river than overflowing into the mine and then polluting the river.

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Monkeypox in Europe: Measures, recommendations and implications

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

What is Monkeypox?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Monkeypox is a virus belonging to the Orthopoxvirus genus of the Poxviridae family. The virus is a self-limited disease, and the symptoms last for two to four weeks but is only three to six per cent fatal. It is primarily transmitted through close contact with a carrier, which could be a human, animal, or material infected with the virus. However, it can also be transmitted from one person to another by "close contact with lesions, body fluids, respiratory droplets and contaminated materials such as bedding."

It occurs majorly in tropical rainforests, especially in the West African region, and is occasionally found in other regions due to migration. There is no proven effective treatment for the virus. However, it can be controlled using smallpox vaccines and other antivirals, which boost the antibodies to fight against the self-limited disease.

Where is it spreading in Europe?

On 23 May, according to WHO, the spread of Monkeypox in Europe was likely caused by two large sex rave parties that happened in Spain and Belgium. The virus, which was usually contained to Africa and other tropical regions, was restricted as an endemic only to animals. But, it has spread across the globe due to the latest outbreak. Until 23 May, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, France, the UK, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, and Belgium have confirmed cases of Monkeypox in Europe.

Most of the cases have been connected to the two rave parties and other events held in Spain and Germany. In Germany, four cases were confirmed directly linked to exposure to the parties held in the Canary Islands and

in Berlin. At the same time, Spain's health officials are tracking the confirmed cases and checking if the outbreak was caused by the recent Gay Pride event and a Madrid sauna.

Preventive measures against the outbreak

The EU has been urging its members to take precautions on the outbreak by increasing contact tracking, availability of vaccines, finding possible treatments, and ways of diagnosing the cases. In addition, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has recommended a set of norms to be followed by members to focus on the quick identification of potential cases, management of the infected, and operational reporting on the new cases.

Antiviral and vaccine supplies are being stockpiled to combat the increasing monkeypox cases and to avoid shortages. The vaccine named Imvanex shot is approved by the US and Canada for protection against the Monkeypox virus but has only been approved by the EU to be used against cases of smallpox. The ECDC has also recommended managing pets at the houses of potentially infected people as it could lead to the transmission of the virus into the wildlife, which would then likely cause an endemic in Europe.

Recommendations by regional & international organizations

The ECDC has rolled out its preventive measures and recommendations to member states of the EU. Meanwhile, the European Commission and the health emergency response and preparedness authority (HERA), the European medicines agency, and the ECDC have been jointly collaborating to prepare against the rising number of cases. Furthermore, the EU health security committee also announced a meeting to discuss the spread of Monkeypox in Europe. The EU stated that it will also prepare an adequate stockpile of vaccines and work towards medical countermeasures as part of the mandate.

On 24 May, the UN stated that the outbreak could still be contained if the WHO and the member states worked towards containing the spread. The UN health emergency also warned of possible stigmatization as cases

were found primarily in men who have intercourse with men. But, clarified, that this was because they were more proactive in seeking healthcare advice than the others who might also be infected. The WHO head of the smallpox team, Rosamund Lewis, also mentioned that even though there were potential vaccines against the virus developed 40 years ago, the stockpiles might have to be refreshed to counter the rising cases.

The implications of the spread

First, racist reporting. On 22 May, the UNAIDS expressed concerns about the public reporting and commentaries on the spread of smallpox in a stigmatizing manner. The organization said that the public reporting on the outbreak reinforced homophobic and racist stereotypes and exacerbated the stigma against LGBTI and African people.

Second, stigmatization among the LGBTQ community. Since the cases have been found dominantly among bisexual, gay, and other men who have sex with men, the UN has warned of possible stigmatization. UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director Matthew Kavanagh, in response, said: "We appreciate the LGBTI community for having led the way on raising awareness – and we reiterate that this disease can affect anyone."

Third, discrimination towards the African people. An article in Quartz Africa highlighted the emergence of casual racism spilling over in the media due to Monkeypox cases. International media outlets used images of people from Africa to illustrate their news articles about the outbreak. The WHO said the virus was usually found in the tropics from Africa to the US. African journalists have been calling out the causal racism being used and warned them of the implications of racism that could be created due to their reporting. They further suggested using contemporary images from the outbreak in the UK or the US than older images from Africa.

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100 years of Estonia-Greece diplomatic relations: Four issues

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 19 May, on the completion of 100 years of diplomatic relations between Estonia and Greece, minister of foreign affairs, Eva-Maria Liimets said: "We value international law and the protection of democratic values and principles." Eva-Maria appreciated Greece's united stand for Ukraine and highlighted the well-connected bilateral cooperation between both in the digital sector, and joint cyber defence contributions.

The historic linkages

First, historic link. After the declaration of independence on 24 February 1918, Greece recognized the Republic of Estonia de jure on 19 May 1922 through a letter from Greek foreign minister Georgios Baltatzi. The first bilateral agreement was on goods and shipping signed on 04 January 1927. Later post the fall of the USSR Republic of Estonia was restored along with the diplomatic relations with Greece, as the Soviet annexation of Estonia was never accepted by Greece. In the next decade, with continued state visit exchanges in both Greece and Estonia, the relations boomed leading to a joint cooperation in safeguarding the external borders of the EU. Since then, Estonia border guards have been helping Greece to protect its sea borders.

Demography

The ESPON 2020 research analysis, projects a continued increase in the population in the Tallinn and hinterland, while a small increase in Tartu. It recommended

restructuring of the oil shale industry and state-level policies to invest more towards infrastructure and improving the quality of life. Whereas Greece stands in contrast to Estonia with a growing aging population. It composes 24 per cent of the older population in the total count in the EU. The EU Green Deal policies provide both an option to make use of the “transition funds from the EU.

Digital cooperation

Estonia is well-known for adopting e-governance methods, online voting, and possessing advanced digital systems for public and private services. It is in dire need of technological automation to improve its manufacturing and digitalizing its industries, similarly, Greece also faces the issue in tech automation, hence the collaboration between both in terms of technology building and evolving digital systems would be an area to further its relations.

Economic cooperation

Fourth, economic cooperation. Although Estonia and Greece have not signed any recent economic deals apart from security cooperation, the bilateral relations are observed to have been at peak in 1999. Both have signed close to four agreements for cultural, educational, and scientific cooperation, maritime transport, international passenger and goods transport, memorandum of bilateral Economic cooperation, and tourism.

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Circumventing its sanctions, the EU drafts legal plans to buy Russian gas

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

On 17 May, Reuters reported that the European Commission said it plans to open

payment accounts at a Russian bank. This would allow states dependent on Russian energy to pay for their gas without breaching the EU’s sanctions against Moscow. The EU clarified that its previous guidelines did not prevent companies from opening an account at Gazprom which would allow them to continue purchasing Russian gas.

Disclaimers included

While paying it to the Russian bank, the companies would have to make it clear that they were paying in EUR or USD. This was according to the obligations stipulated under the existing contracts between the company/entity and Moscow. However, according to Russia’s decree, two separate accounts would be needed, one to accept the foreign currency and the other to convert it into rubles. But, the new draft plan would place the ball in Russia’s court as Moscow would be legally bound to accept the payments made to a Russian central bank as per the contracts.

Thus, the draft plan would help states dependent on Russia’s gas to continue importing it. This comes as Russia cut Bulgaria and Poland’s supplies as they refused to pay in roubles, and the deadline for payments of other states was also closing in. Bloomberg further reported: “Gazprom provided buyers with additional assurances that the central bank would not be involved in the conversion process.”

Divisions within

On 17 May, Finland’s energy company, Gasum, said that it would not make payments under the proposed plan. Gasum CEO Mika Wiljanen said they would instead take arbitrary proceedings against Russia. While France’s energy firm Engie said that the next payment would be made in EUR by month-end. Germany’s Uniper stated that it would follow the EU’s draft plan to pay for gas in EUR.

Way forward for the EU

On 18 May, the European Commission also unveiled a EUR 210 billion plan to lessen the bloc’s reliance on Russian oil. The plan hopes to fasten the transition away from Russia’s fossil fuels to green energy by 2027. The

plan consists of three steps: First, a switch to import more non-Russian gas, second, a faster rollout of renewable energy, and third, more effort to save energy.

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Finland and Sweden: Implications of becoming NATO members

By Padmashree Anandhan

What happened?

On 12 May, a joint statement was released by Finland's president Sauli Niinistö and prime minister Sanna Marin on the application for NATO membership. It read: "NATO membership would strengthen Finland's security. As a member of NATO, Finland would strengthen the entire defence alliance. Finland must apply for NATO membership without delay." Sweden is expected to announce the same on 15 May.

According to Finland's former prime minister, Alexander Stubb the proportion of the Finns who were against Finland joining NATO had reversed from 50:20 to 20:50, favoring the decision. He also expects the support per cent to go up to 80 post-Finland's announcement to join NATO.

What does membership mean?

First, regional defence and people's safety. The neighboring Nordic and Baltic states which previously feared the threat of Russia over Finland and Sweden gaining membership from NATO will support the decision due to war. Finland and Sweden

joining NATO not only means a defence posture against Russia but the strengthening of security for Northern Europe and a confidence boost for the Baltic states. Apart from this, in the Nordic states which are top in the world happiness index, ensuring their people feel safe against Russia is a key goal. Therefore, to thwart the Russian threat and to meet people's satisfaction, Finland and Sweden will have to differ from their neutrality principle and increase their defence expenditure.

Second, security guarantees from nuclear states. Finland is part of all arms and nuclear weapons control agreements to support humanitarian goals, from the treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the EU's Strategy against the proliferation of WMD. Until now there has been no security guarantee because of its neutrality principle in involving militarily. Through NATO membership, Finland and Sweden will gain the guarantee from the nuclear-capable states.

Third, geographical shift. St. Petersburg, Kola Peninsula, and Murmansk are considered the closest areas to Russia and Finland. The Kola Peninsula is the only place that holds Russian nuclear submarines and Murmansk is located less than 200 kilometres from Finland. If Finland opts for the Norwegian model to restrict the positioning of nuclear weapons or force in foreign territory, it might lead to Russia improving its posture in northern Europe to defend the Murmansk region and its land communication with remaining Russia. Such moves could lead to NATO installing its forces in northern Europe and thereby resulting in a direct clash with Russia.

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CLIMATE

Eurostat reports rise in air emissions: Three takeaways

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 16 May, the EU's statistics agency, Eurostat, reported that greenhouse gas emissions had re-bounced to pre-pandemic levels of 2019 due to increased economic activity. In the fourth quarter of 2021, all of the EU's 27 member states witnessed an increase of eight per cent compared to 2020. In the fourth quarter of 2021, greenhouse gas emissions in the EU increased to 1,041 million metric tonnes of CO₂, from 1,005 million tonnes in 2019, which was before the pandemic.

Three takeaways

First, increased emissions from the economic sector. According to the fourth quarter report 2021, the emissions from households, manufacturing, electricity, agriculture, transportation, and storage accounted for a range of 11-22 per cent of greenhouse gases. Amongst them, transportation and storage marked the highest increase with 18 per cent, followed by mining, quarrying, and electricity. The increase is recorded due to the restart of economic activities which drastically reduced during the pandemic. In estimating the long-term effect of the increase, the greenhouse gas emissions in the EU show a stable reduction trend.

Second, the reverse trend across the EU member states. The report indicates an increasing trend in greenhouse gases across all EU member states, where it was negative in 2022. While emissions in a few states such as Cyprus, Slovenia, and the Netherlands seem to have increased at a much slower rate. Estonia, Bulgaria, Malta, Ireland, Latvia, and Belgium have shot up high ranging from 28-13 per cent.

Third, benefit of air emission reporting.

Eurostat reports data based on two types of air emissions, greenhouse gases, and air pollutants. Under the greenhouse gases, it covers seven gases that affect climate change and under air pollutants, it counts in seven dangerous substances that are a risk to human health and the environment. The key factor of the report is Eurostat's three perspectives which provide the emission data from production (emitted from domestic production of goods and services), territorial data (environmental pressure faced within the state borders), and consumption perspective. Through this method of reporting, it benefits the EU to carry out policy analyses to make investment decisions, it allows to compare the emissions with the climate change goals and develop guidelines.

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INTERNATIONAL

Ukraine and the US: The six billion aid

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

On 11 May, the US House of Representatives approved a bill worth USD 40 billion of aid to Ukraine. The current bill was seven billion more than what US president Joe Biden had proposed to Congress on 29 April. The Congress has been expediting its approvals for aid to Ukraine, helping Kyiv to defend itself from Moscow. The US democratic representative Rosa DeLauro said: "This bill will protect democracy, limit Russian aggression, and strengthen our national security, while, most importantly, supporting Ukraine."

The US aid: A brief note

The latest aid package includes USD six billion for security assistance, including training, equipment, weapons and military support. USD 8.7 billion to replenish stocks of equipment depleted in Ukraine and USD 3.9 billion for the European command operations. The new bill also increases the

budget of the presidential drawdown authority to USD 11 billion, which allows the US president to transfer aid in an emergency without the need for it to be approved by Congress.

Additionally, USD four billion had been allocated in foreign military financing, which is used to support Ukraine and other countries. A package of USD 3.5 billion worth of military equipment includes anti-aircraft Stinger systems, anti-tank Javelin missiles, howitzers and critical ammunition. The aid also includes USD five billion in humanitarian assistance to address food insecurity and USD nine million in monetary fund support to Ukraine.

What does the aid mean?

First, the war-centric package vis-à-vis domestic focus. The Ukraine package has sidelined the House's interests and the US budget allocations from domestic issues. Inside the US, the Democrats and the Republicans have not agreed on the extension of tax credit and a pre-pandemic response package. However, they have been approving the packages to Ukraine, with either side pushing for increased military

assistance or humanitarian aid.

Second, the dominant military aid. The latest bill has more than half of the aid allocated for military assistance. This can be seen as the US playing a more crucial role in supporting Ukraine militarily to defend itself against Russia. However, the sheer volume of assistance could escalate the conflict and increase US overseas expenditures.

Third, long-lasting ramifications. Ukraine will significantly benefit from the proposed bill as Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv had lost about USD 600 billion due to the war. However, with an increase in US assistance to Ukraine, Washington's investments are likely to have outcomes similar to its prolonged war in the Middle East.

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War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan, Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan, Rishma Banerjee, and Emmanuel Selva Royan



Source: Presidential Press Service/Handout via Reuters, 80 Reuters/Dado Ruvic/Illustration, Reuters, Picture alliance/AA/D, Reuters, Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP

War in Ukraine: Day 96

War On The Ground:

The governor of Luhansk, Serhiy Gaidai informed that two civilians were killed and five suffered injuries because of Russian shelling in the outskirts of Sievierodonetsk. He elaborated that only a part of the largest city in Luhansk was still under Kyiv's control. Gaidai also said that neighbouring Lysychansk was still under Ukrainian control but the main road connecting the two cities had been severely shelled.

On 30 May, Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said, "We need a clear legal affirmation that Ukraine is a part of the European integration project, and such an affirmation would be the granting of candidate status."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Russia's defence ministry announced their forces had struck a shipbuilding facility in Mykolaiv in southern Ukrainian. They also mentioned that their artillery had struck a hangar at the Okean Shipyard, and destroyed vehicles and other equipment. The ministry also said that the forces were regrouping to resume their offence toward the Sloviansk region.

A Russia backed separatist leader told the TASS news agency that Russian forces have seized control over almost one-third of Sievierodonetsk, but it was taking longer than they had anticipated to gain ground. It was reported that Russian troops have entered through the southeastern and northeastern fringes of the city, increasing their offensive in the Donbas region, as they go.

* War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from four dimensions. First, War on the Ground. Second, The Moscow View. Third, Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read them every day.

TASS also reported that the export of grains that were harvested last year, in Ukraine started from the Kherson region, which is under Russia's control. The product is now being shipped to Russia.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 30 May, the leaders of the European Union met at the summit and discussed how to enforce the terms of the sixth set of embargoes on Russia. Given the impasse, they had been at due to Hungary's opposition to the oil ban. According to the deliberations at the end of the first day of the two-day summit, it has been decided that the embargo from now till now will ban 90 per cent of all Russian oil. The remaining 10 per cent will be temporarily exempt, and Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which are landlocked, can receive oil for now. It was also decided that the EU countries will go forward with the rest of the terms of the proposal, like cutting Sberbank from the SWIFT messaging system.

US president Joe Biden told reporters at the white house that they will not be sending any missile system that could target Russia. It comes amidst Ukraine's continuous request to its allies for long-range systems like the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS).

On 30 May, Ibrahim Kalin, the chief advisor to Turkey's president, spoke to Jake Sullivan, the chief adviser to the US president. Turkey has been opposed to Sweden and Finland's application to NATO. Kalin reiterated the issue and said that unless "concrete steps" are taken about the "terrorist organisations" that Turkey alleges are housed by Finland and Sweden, they will not reconsider their NATO bids. Turkey's president, Tayyip Erdogan also had a phone call with Ukraine's president Zelenskyy and discussed creating a sea route for transporting Ukraine's agricultural produce to the global market. Erdogan also spoke to Russia's president Vladimir Putin and said that Turkey was ready to take on the mantle of a benign an "observation mechanism" to facilitate peace talks between Moscow, Kyiv and the United Nations if possible.

According to the state news agency of Belarus, *BELTA*, reported that they will be conducting military mobilization exercises in the Gomel Oblast in June and July. The region borders Ukraine in the south and also has places that come under the exclusion zone from the nuclear fallouts of Chornobyl.

On 30 May, a journalist from France, who was travelling in Sievierodonetsk died when shrapnel from Russian shelling in the region, hit his car. Frederic Leclercq-Imhoff was on his second tour of the conflict in Ukraine when he died. His colleague and cameraman also succumbed to the attack. France's new foreign minister, Catherine Colonna has demanded a probe into the circumstances of Leclercq's death, and the governor of Luhansk has said that after the hit, and due to further shelling by Russia, evacuation efforts in the region have also been halted.

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War in Ukraine: Day 94 & 95

War On The Ground:

On 29 May, regional governor Oleksiy Kuleba said that around 50 homes in the Demydiv village were still dealing with floods. It is because a nearby dam was destroyed by the Ukraine's forces to stop the Russian tanks from advancing to Kyiv. On 28 May, Ukraine's defence minister, Oleksiy Reznikov gave an update about the new set of weapons that were coming in from their allies and partner countries. He said that they have received Harpoon anti-ship missiles from Denmark and self-propelled howitzers from the United States. Reznikov said that this will monumentally increase the 'coastal defence' of the country.

The governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Gaidai, said that there were around 10,000 Russian troops in the east of Ukraine. It is in context of Russia stepping up their offensive in the region, as they try to capture territory in "any direction they can." In a televised speech, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also elaborated on the condition in Sievierodonetsk and said: "Some 90% of buildings are damaged. More than two-thirds of the city's housing stock has been completely destroyed. There is no telecommunication... Capturing Sievierodonetsk is a fundamental task for the occupiers ... We do all we can to hold this advance."

Zelenskyy also visited the troops in the Kharkiv region, marking the first time he has

made an official appearance at the frontline. He handed out medals, commendations and gifts to the soldiers.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia: Claims by Russia

On 29 May, the defence minister of Ukraine, Sergei Lavrov said that the "liberation" of the Donbas region of Ukraine was of utmost importance to Russia, given the current situation. In an interview with France's TF1 television channel, he referred to the operation in Donbas as an "unconditional priority."

On 29 May, Gazprom, Russia's gas producer, said that they were still supplying gas to Europe through their pipelines in Ukraine. They said that 44.1 million cubic meters of gas were applied through the Sudzha entry point in Ukraine.

President Vladimir Putin and the president of Serbia spoke via a phone call and agreed that Russia will continue to supply natural gas and work towards strengthening their ties. Kremlin reported that the two leaders have also spoken about Kosovo.

Ukraine's Eurovision winner, Kalush Orchestra have raised USD 900,000 for the war effort by auctioning their Eurovision trophy. The crystal microphone was auctioned off on Facebook and was led by Ukrainian TV presenter Serhiy Prytula. On 28 May, it was reported that the Russian forces have been increasing their offensive in and around the Sievierodonetsk. This also marks a shift in the momentum of the war, as Russia scales up their operations. As per *Reuters*, they are close to capturing all of Luhansk, which Russia had set as one of their war goals, after abandoning their campaign in Kyiv.

Russia's defence ministry said that they have successfully tested a hypersonic Zircon cruise missile. These missiles which president Putin describes as a new generation of arms systems was tested over a distance of about 1,000 kilometres and was fired from the Barents Sea. It hit a target in the White Sea.

On 28 May, a ship entered the Mariupol port. TASS reports that the vessel will load 2700 tonnes of metal and travel 160 kilometres to Russia. It is the first time since the siege began at Mariupol that the port will be used. Lyudmyla Denisova, Ukraine's human rights ombudsman, however, said that this was akin to looting the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

On 27 May, the finance minister Anton Siluanov said that Russia will need considerable financial resources, to maintain its military operation in the country. He said that the budget stimulus, at the rate at which they are going, will be around RUB 8 trillion.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 29 May, Germany's economy minister, Robert Habeck, said that the apparent unity in the EU, about imposing embargoes on Russia was "starting to crumble." It is in the context of the upcoming meeting of EU leaders on 30 and 31 May, to discuss the same.

On 28 May, France's president Emmanuel Macron and Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz conducted a joint call with Putin. Elysee Palace said that they had urged Putin to release the 2500 fighters who have been captured from the Azovstal Steel plant in Mariupol. They also spoke about the urgency in lifting the blockades on the Black Sea ports, so that Ukraine's stockpiled grains can reach the global market, ahead of the looming food security crisis. UK's prime minister, Boris Johnson also spoke about the same and in a conversation with Zelenskyy, he said that the UK along with their partners in the G7 are trying to "push for urgent progress."

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War in Ukraine: Day 93

War On The Ground:

On 27 May, the governor of the Kharkiv region, Oleh Synehubov reported that there was heavy fighting in the north and northeast of the city once more. He said that Russia's forces were again targeting civilians and that at least seven have been killed and 17 have been injured.

Ukraine's governor of the Kherson region, Hennadiy Laguta, said that Russian forces were fortifying their defences in the north of Crimea. He also said that the humanitarian condition of the region was in extremely bad shape, and other than a 200-car convoy that could leave on 25 May, no other humanitarian corridors could be established in the region to evacuate the people stuck there.

The governor of the Luhansk, Serhiy Gaidiia also gave an update about Russia's aggression in his region. He said that Luhansk has almost fallen to Russia and Ukraine's forces might have to retreat from the few pockets in the region where they are still trying to hold on. Referring to the near-surrounded cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk he said: "We will have enough strength and resources to defend ourselves. However, it is possible that in order not to be surrounded, we will have to retreat."

In an address to an Indonesian think tank, Zelenskyy said that Ukraine was definitely not eager to talk to Russia's president Vladimir Putin. But, he also acknowledged that given the condition of Ukraine and how the war was progressing, it might be necessary to talk to the Russian leader. He said: "What do we want from this meeting... We want our lives back... We want to reclaim the life of a sovereign country within its own territory."

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia: Claims by Russia:

Some people from the Russian-backed self-proclaimed Donetsk Peoples Republic said that they have gained full control over Lyman. Lyman is in the country's east in the Donbas region where forces from Ukraine and Russia have been fighting for several days. A separatist leader in East Ukraine also said that over 5000 Ukrainian prisoners of war were being held in the Donetsk People's Republic.

On 27 May, Russia's foreign ministry said that they will expel employees at the Croatian embassy. Which was a retaliatory move on Russia's part after Croatia ordered 24 members of the Russian embassy to leave.

115 members of the Rosgvardia have refused to fight in Ukraine. According to court documents, as a result of their dissent, these Russian national guardsmen have been fired.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 27 May, the Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said that Putin has spoken to him recently about benign ready to discuss a prisoner swap with Ukraine. In a 45 minute long phone call, the two leaders also discussed Russia's supply of natural gas to Austria. Nehammer said he viewed this as an opportunity to confront Putin about the war and its realities. He said that Putin also mentioned how Ukraine was "sabotaging" the process of peace talks and negotiations between the two countries.

Italy's prime minister Mario Draghi spoke to Volodymyr Zelenskyy about the impending food. They spoke about ways to get Ukraine's stock of grains to the rest of the world. Draghi also mentioned that their support is with Ukraine, as was the case with the rest of the European Union countries.

US president Joe Biden, in a speech, accused Putin of trying to wipe out the Ukrainian culture. He also referred to how, with his invasion of Ukraine, Putin had actually catalyzed the rest of Europe to be "Nato-ized."

The Global Fallouts:

Implications of the Ukraine war

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said that they have records that 4031 people have died, including 261 children, due to Russia's invasion in Ukraine. They said that most of these people were killed due to heavy artillery shelling or due to airstrikes. The OHCHR also mentioned that while the recorded number is 4031, the true number is likely to be higher.

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War in Ukraine: Day 92

War On The Ground:

On 26 May, Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba shed light on the situation in East Ukraine. He said that it was in terrible shape, given the intensity of the Russian aggression. This was a part of a live question-answer session that Kuleba was conducting with some Twitter users. The deputy chief of the main operations department, General Oleksiy Gromov, also spoke about the same issue. He said that Russia's forces were starting to encircle Ukraine's troops in the east, and seizing positions in the last cities that are being held by Ukraine. He also mentioned that Russia has the advantage, but Ukraine's troops were doing the best they can to hold on.

On 26 May, contradictory statements were released about Russian aggression in Lyman, in Donetsk. A presidential adviser in Ukraine said that he had unverified information about Ukraine had lost control over Lyman, while the armed forces said that the Russian forces were trying to further consolidate

their positions in the country. The governor of the region, however, reported heavy fighting in the region while the Russian authorities said that they had gained complete control over the region.

In the latest war crime trials, two Russian soldiers pleaded guilty of shelling a town in Eastern Ukraine. State prosecutors have asked Alexander Bobikin and Alexander Ivanov to be jailed for 12 years for their actions, while both the soldiers acknowledged that they were both a part of the artillery unit firing at the targets in Kharkiv. The verdict is expected to be heard on 31 May.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 26 May, Russia said that they should blame the West for the growing food crisis. They also reiterated that they are willing to get Ukraine's stored grains out in the world, if the US and their allies scrap the sanctions, which Russia has cast as illegal. President Vladimir Putin said that he was thankful that some foreign companies have stopped their business in Russia, as that meant that Russian businesses could now take their place. This comes in the context of companies like Starbucks, McDonalds, Nike and many other such companies withdrawing their services from the country.

Denis Pushilin, the leader of the Russian-backed separatists in the breakaway Donetsk region, said that the military operation in the Donbas region should be accelerated even further. He also said that Kyiv has blocked the water supply to some of the key cities in the north and asked for the military action there to be stepped up. As reported by RIA, Russia's defence ministry posted videos of an Iskander-K missile being launched against a "military target" in Ukraine. They also gave an update on the condition of the port at Mariupol and said that it has now been completely demined. As per the update, civil vessels are now free to use the port.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 26 May, the White House said that the Russian debt default will not be affecting the

economy of the country and the global economy too.. The spokesperson, Karine Jean-Pierre said that this was the case, since Russia has already been isolating financially. On May 26, Finland's prime minister Sanna Marin visited Ukraine, and met with Ukraine's president and prime minister. She mentioned that Russia's invasion of Ukraine will be seen as a turning point in world history. Marin visited Irpin and Bucha and said: "We, Finland, support all the actions of the International Criminal Court to consider these crimes, collect evidence for future proceedings and convict Russia."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 26 May, the WHO passed a motion, which condemned Russia, and mentions that it is due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine that a health emergency has been created in the region. USA had submitted a proposal originally, citing Russia's aggression, but Russia had responded by submitting a counter-proposal. The WHO rejected the resolution from Moscow, as it made no mention of their own role in the ongoing crisis.

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War in Ukraine: Day 91

War On The Ground:

On 25 May, Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba said that Russia is trying to use food security as their leverage. He is of the opinion that Russia is trying to blackmail the international community by talking about the possibility of unblocking the Black Sea ports. They said that they will do if the sanctions imposed by the international community on Russia are removed.

The defence ministry said that the country is trying to retain control of a major highway to Sievierodonetsk, where Russia's forces are trying to push in. According to defence ministry spokesman Oleksandr Motuzyanyk, they are trying to figure out alternate routes, so that the supply routes to Donbas can be maintained.

On 25 May, the military said that Russian forces have shelled more than 40 towns in the Donbas region.

A parliamentarian from Ukraine, Yevheniia Kravchuk said that around 22 million tonnes of grains are being stored in silos but time is running out to supply them to the rest of the world. This comes under the impending threat of a food security crisis and is primarily happening because of Russia's blockades of the Black Sea ports. She also said that since the next round of harvesting will start soon, there will be no space to store the fresh harvest, unless the older stocks are shipped out.

Another parliamentarian Anastasia Radina said that Germany and other countries in the West must be more prompt with supplying more weapons to Kyiv, as they are at risk of running out of stocks.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, she said, "We have only one choice, and this is to receive modern NATO-style weaponry because we cannot win the war with the Soviet-style weaponry that we have." President Zelenskyy also reiterated the same in his nightly address and said that getting the help of their partners was of utmost importance if they have to sustain the war efforts. He also said that ceding parts of his territory for peace with Russia was out of the question. This was in response to some "symptomatic editorials" that have been suggesting the same.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 25 May, Russia's parliament voted for a law that will remove the upper age limit for service in the country's military. This is in the context of the dwindling forces amidst the high casualty of soldiers in Ukraine. The Bill was approved by the State Duma, and the Federation Council. It now awaits the signature of President Vladimir Putin. Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko said that Russia will agree to set up a humanitarian corridor to let vessels carrying food supplies leave the Black Sea ports if some sanctions against the country are lifted. He also said that the food security problem requires a comprehensive approach.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 25 May, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) said that they will prepare to send additional aid to Ukraine, for its reconstruction. The EBRD has already pledged EUR 1 billion to the country but said that the donors understand that additional funding is required. Speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, President Odile Renaud-Basso said it was imperative that at least a part of the funding given to Ukraine is given as grants and not loans. The EU proposed that the member countries will have to face criminal charges if they are found breaking the terms of the sanctions against Russia. The European commission released a statement that said: "Today's proposals aim to ensure that the assets of individuals and entities that violate the

restrictive measures can be effectively confiscated in the future." The new law has to be approved by all the member countries, and also get a majority in the European Parliament.

Two fighters of the Wagner Group, from Belarus have been accused of murdering civilians near Kyiv. They are the first international mercenaries to face war crime charges in Ukraine.

The Global Fallout: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 25 May, China's defence ministry said that the joint aerial patrol they conducted with Russia was a part of their routine annual military exercise, and was not directed at any country. It was the first joint patrol they have conducted since Russia's invasion in Ukraine and took place near Japanese and South Korean air defence zones.

The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is the spiritual head of around 260 million Orthodox Christians in the world, said that the Russian Orthodox Church with their support for Russia's invasion in Ukraine has let the Christian Orthodox fathers down. Patriarch Bartholomew said: "I did not want the Church of Russia and Brother Patriarch Kirill to be this tragic exception. I do not know how he can justify himself in his conscience."

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War in Ukraine: Day 90

War On The Ground:

On 24 May, in a video address to the World Economic Forum, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said that the only Russian official he is willing to meet in order to negotiate is President Vladimir Putin. He expressed his unwillingness to accept meetings with anyone else regarding how to end the war.

As Russia’s offensive in the Sievierodonetsk region rises, the governor of Luhansk has said that it might be too late to evacuate the civilians from the area. Severe bombardment has been reported in the region, which has been surrounded by Russian forces.

Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba said that 15,000 residents are estimated to be in hiding in the shelters in the city and governor Sergiy Haidai has advised people to not try to escape, but rather stay in the shelters. It is because he believes, given the intensity of Russia’s shelling it will not be possible to gather people and safely evacuate them. The defence ministry reported that Russia’s forces have been trying to break through into Popasna, to capture Bakhmut, along with Lysychansk and Sievierodonetsk. Which will put the entirety of Luhansk under Russia’s control. A defence ministry spokesperson also said that the battles in the east can determine what the fate and outcome of the war finally will be.

Denis Pushilin, the head of the breakaway region of the Donetsk People's Republic in Russia has said that they are trying to work with Russia to form a tribunal to try to the Fighters captured from Azovstal Steel Plant.

Ukraine’s armed forces, are coordinating an effort to send back the bodies of Russian soldiers, who lost their lives in the war. These bodies are being excavated from underneath the rubble of the towns. They are using DNA testing as well as tattoos to identify their nationality. It was reported that the authorities are hoping to send the bodies back in a chilled train, in exchange for prisoners of war.

On 24 May, Kharkiv restarted their underground metro service. The underground was being used as a bomb shelter for the last three months, but now, is finally set to resume service. It marks one of Ukraine’s military's greatest successes in the last few weeks, as they have been successful in pushing Russia’s forces out of the city’s range.

On 24 May, the results from a poll conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology were revealed. It said that 82 per cent of the Ukrainian respondents did not want to hand over any part of their territory to Russia, as a part of any peace deal. This means that they are okay with war getting prolonged, but they do not want peace in exchange for Ukraine’s territorial integrity.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 24 May, the secretary of the Security Council in Russia, Nikolai Patrushev said that they will not be bothered by ultimatums when it comes to obtaining their goals in Ukraine. He reiterated that all the objectives outlined by President Putin will be achieved, and will be done without chasing any deadlines. It was reiterated by defence minister Sergei Shoigu, as who said that the slowing down of the offensive was a deliberate move on Russia’s part to give the civilians enough time to evacuate and also to avoid civilian casualties.

Amidst deteriorating relations between Russia and western countries, Russia has

said that they will ban the usage of the services of Russian surrogate mothers. Parliamentarian Vasily Piskaryov said that so far around 40,000 babies born out of surrogacy are being raised by foreigners. The Russian Parliament also passed a bill that gives prosecutors the power to close western news agencies, if their parent countries have been “unfriendly” to Russia.

The defence ministry said that they have completed the de-mining of the Azov seaport. In a statement, they said since the forces captured Mariupol and the port, they have removed mines from the port itself as well as the nearby waters.

On 24 May, Kremlin’s spokesperson Dmitry Peskov opened up about the Italian Peace Plan. Italian foreign minister Luigi Di Maio has said that they prepared a tentative peace plan, and also discussed it with the UN secretary general Antonio Guterres, but Peskov said that they have not seen it yet. He also mentioned that he was hoping it would be delivered to them soon through diplomatic channels.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 24 May, at the meeting of the Quad grouping in Tokyo, US president Biden said that the Ukraine war is far more than a European issue, it was rather an issue of global consequence. He also said that Russia’s invasion in Ukraine, draws light on the fundamental issues of international order, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Germany’s finance minister, Christian Lindner said that it will be impossible to estimate what the cost of reconstruction and rebuilding will be. He said that this will be especially difficult since the Ukraine has hardly been talking about reconstruction, as their priority is stopping Russia’s offensive and the removal of the Russian forces from Ukraine’s territory. Lindner added that much of the responsibility for providing reconstruction-related aid to Ukraine falls on Europe.

Canada’s defence minister, Anita Anand reported that they have bought 20,000 rounds of NATO standard artillery

ammunition from the US. The ammunition, was worth USD 76.32 million, will be sent to Ukraine to support their war efforts.

President of Poland Andrzej Duda spoke about the food shortage crisis, at the World Economic Forum in Davos. He said that Ukraine’s inability to export its grains will have wider consequences on Europe as it might force people from North Africa to migrate to Europe, creating a huge imbalance.

Hungary’s president Victor Orban said that they have introduced the amendment about the emergency powers to deal with the challenges and fallouts from the Ukraine War. Also, in a letter to the president of the European Council, Orban said that they should not be discussing the EU embargoes on Russia, at the summit, next week. He said that since it was unlikely that the bloc will come up with a solution until the current issues are resolved, discussing them would be rather ‘counterproductive.’

The Head of the European Commission also agreed with the same narrative and said that the summit might not be the best place to negotiate with the member states. Von der Leyen also said that Russia is leveraging the impending food shortage, and will be using it as a weapon in the war. She mentioned that they are using food the same way they use energy, as they know that this will have global repercussions.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

China’s defence ministry reported that as part of an annual military exercise, China and Russia have conducted their first patrol since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, in February. The air forces of the two countries conducted a joint aerial patrol over the Sea of Japan, the Western Pacific and the East China Sea.

On 24 May, South Africa’s president Cyril Ramaphosa said that the sanctions on Russia were resulting in the bystander countries suffering the most. During his meeting with the German chancellor Olaf Scholz, he said that the African Union was also preparing to foster talks between Moscow and Kyiv in

this regard. At a joint news conference, Scholz however, said that it was unacceptable for any country to side with Russia, when it comes to the Ukraine war. This may have been a subtle reference to South Africa's abstention from a UN resolution condemning the war.

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War in Ukraine: Day 89

War On The Ground:

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that in the last week, 87 people had been killed by an airstrike in the town of Desna. Which will be the biggest death toll, in terms of a single airstrike, and considerably more than when 52 people were killed in the attack on Kramatorsk in April. He also said that 50-100 Ukrainians could be dying in the Donbas region every single day that the war continues.

Ukraine's presidential chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, has said that they will not agree to a ceasefire deal that requires them to hand over territory to Russia. It came amidst an increased offensive in the eastern Donbas region and Russia's claims that Russia is willing to negotiate peace terms. Yermak said: "The war must end with the complete restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty."

On 23 May, Iryna Venediktova, Ukraine's prosecutor-general, said that as of that day, around 13,000 cases of war crimes were being probed by the country. A court also

sentenced Vadim Shishimarin, the 21-year-old sergeant, to life in prison as he was found guilty of killing a 62-year-old unarmed Ukrainian civilian in the Sumy region.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Boris Bondarev, a senior Russian diplomat stationed in Geneva, resigned in a rare political protest. He is the highest-level diplomat to resign publicly. He released a public statement saying that he was ashamed of his country's current stances and actions. He also said: "Today the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not about diplomacy... It is all about warmongering, lies and hatred. It serves the interests of few, the very few people, thus contributing to further isolation and degradation of my country. Russia no longer has allies, and there is no one to blame but its reckless and ill-conceived policy." He also mentioned that his decision had been taken in February itself, but it took him some time to gather the courage to actually uphold the decision.

On 23 May, the defence ministry said that they have fired 4 Kalibr missiles from a submarine in the Black Sea. The aim of the attack was to destroy military equipments of a Ukrainian mountain assault brigade. Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia will consider the suggestions of renewing ties when such suggestions come from the West. He mentioned the 'russophobia' and said that they will now focus on fostering ties with China.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 23 May, Poland's prime minister, Andrzej Duda became the first foreign leader to deliver a speech in Ukraine's parliament. He spoke about how Ukraine must have the right to decide its own future. He also spoke about how giving up any territory to Russia would affect the West too, and how it might be a "huge blow."

In an interview, Lithuania's finance minister, Gintare Skaiste appealed to the European Union to set up a fund to assist countries that are facing a deluge of Ukrainian refugees. He drew the example of turkey in 2016, in this regard. He said that setting up such a fund would help the nations

welcoming the refugees greatly, as the average cost of sustaining a refugee for a month is around EUR 500.

Belarus's president, Alexander Lukashenko, said that he feared that Poland, NATO, and their support for Ukraine were an ulterior motive to 'dismember' Ukraine, into the way it was, before 1939.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 23 May, the UNHCR reported that in a 'staggering milestone', the number of global refugees had crossed the red line of 100 million. The high commissioner for refugees, Filippo Grandi said: "This must serve as a wake-up call to resolve and prevent destructive conflicts, end persecution and address the underlying causes that force innocent people to flee their homes." The agency also said that out of this 10 million, 6.5 million were people from Ukraine, who have been forced to leave the country since February, with the majority of them entering Poland.

The director of the IMF, Kristalina Georgieva, said that while she was not expecting a recession for the world's major economies, she still could not really rule one out, given the war in Ukraine, and its economic fallouts. She said: "In a short period of time...the horizon has darkened."

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War in Ukraine: Day 87 & 88

War On The Ground:

On 22 May, Poland's president Andrzej Duda visited Kyiv and met President Zelenskyy. He said that Polish citizens visiting Ukraine will be granted the same status as the Ukrainian citizens in Poland. Since the beginning of the war, more than 3 million refugees from Ukraine, who have fled to Poland have been given the right to live, work and claim social security payments in the country.

On the same day, Ukraine's parliament banned symbols like 'Z' and 'V' that have been used by Russia's military to promote the war in Ukraine. An opposition party member, Yaroslav Zheleznyak announced through Telegram that 313 members of the 423 member assembly had voted in favour of banning the symbols. They, however, agreed to Zelenskyy's call for using these symbols for historic purposes or educational development.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 22 May, Russia's defence ministry said that they have attacked Ukraine's east and south, with a target of command centres, ammunition depots, and troops. Major General Igor Konashenkov, the defence ministry spokesperson, said the Russian rockets had hit the southern part of Mykolaiv.

Russia's state-owned news agency, RIA reported that the Russian-appointed head of Enerhodar town was injured in an explosion and is in intensive care. The town is next to Europe's largest nuclear power plant and had a pre-war population of over 50,000 people.

Russia has also stopped their gas supply to Finland, over their decision to join the NATO, and for not agreeing to pay in roubles. While the majority of Finland's gas comes from Russia, gas-only 5 per cent of their annual energy consumption. Finland's state-owned gas wholesaler Gasum said that they had been warned in advance about the impending stoppage, and then also confirmed after the supply had been stopped.

On 21 May, the defence ministry said that they had destroyed a major batch of weapons and equipment in Ukraine's Zhytomyr region. They said that the consignments were sent by the US and Europe and were meant for troops fighting in the eastern Donbas region. The attack had been done through Kalibr cruise missiles, launched from the sea.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 22 May, UK's prime minister Boris Johnson in a discussion with president Zelenskyy spoke about the blockade imposed by Russia on Odessa, one of Ukraine's shipping ports. A spokesperson for Johnson said that Johnson will redouble their efforts to send humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and do whatever is in its power to ensure that it can continue their export with the rest of the world.

On 21 May, US president Joe Biden signed the USD 40 billion aid for Ukraine. On the other hand, UK's foreign secretary, Liz Truss said that Britain wants to send weaponry to Moldova, to arm them against potential Russian aggression. She said that she would want to send weapons as per the NATO standard, and are discussing it with their allies.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

Youtube, the video streaming platform has taken down over 70,000 videos and 9,000 channels that have content related to the war in Ukraine. Some videos that were taken down referred to the invasion as a “liberation” movement.

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War in Ukraine: Day 86

War On The Ground:

On 20 May, Ukraine finance ministry said that they have received USD 530 million from a fund set up by the World Bank. The fund got grants from the US and the UK and has now reached the state budget. The statement released by the ministry also said that the funds will be used for social, humanitarian, and health-related issues, and to support the internally displaced people.

The prime minister of Ukraine, Denis Shmyhal confirmed that the EU has sent EUR

600 million to Ukraine. Which is a part of the Macro-Financial Assistance Program. Shmyhal also thanked the European Commission and president Ursula von der Leyen, for their continued support.

On 19 May, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that the Russian forces have wreaked havoc in the industrial regions of Donbas. He also mentioned the 12 casualties in Severodonetsk and how the areas were now akin to hell. He said: “(There are) constant strikes in the Odesa region, in the cities of central Ukraine. The Donbas is completely destroyed... this is a deliberate and criminal attempt to kill as many Ukrainians as possible, to destroy as many houses, social facilities, and enterprises as possible.”

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

President Vladimir Putin issued a warning that cyber attacks on their system have gone up considerably since their invasion in Ukraine. He said that they now have to reduce their dependency on foreign software and hardware, in order to mitigate the attempts on disabling Russia’s ‘critical information infrastructure.’

The defence minister, Sergei Shoigu said that almost 2000 soldiers from Ukraine, who were holed up in the Azovstal steel plant, have surrendered. Moscow has been revising their numbers every day, and Russia and Ukraine have given different estimates of the number of evacuees from Mariupol.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 20 May, the assistant secretary for aviation and international affairs, Carol Petsonk reported that a huge US cargo ship set sail from Belgium to Germany. The cargo has been divided into two sections. One will carry the personal vehicles of the people who will start serving as a part of the troops in Europe, and the other half includes military and defence equipment and vehicles to provide medical supplies. Canada said that it will be imposing sanctions on 14 Russian individuals who are close associates of Vladimir Putin. They mentioned that this additional set of sanctions will also ban the import and

export of some luxury goods from Russia. The export ban will include goods like footwear, luxury clothing, and jewellery, while the import ban will include alcoholic beverages, seafood, and non-industrial diamonds.

Germany's defence ministry said that they will deliver 15 Gepard tanks to Ukraine. The tanks will reach by July. The defence minister, Christine Lambrecht said that they reached that decision after a conversation with Ukraine's defence minister Oleksii Reznikov.

On 19 May, in an address to the UN security council, Blinken requested Russia to lift its blockades of the ports in Ukraine. Referring to the growing food crisis in the world, he said that Russia was using food as a weapon in Ukraine, but it was ending up harming not just the people of Ukraine, but the entire world at large.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

Amidst the growing food crisis brought on by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the African Development Bank has approved an emergency food production facility. According to a statement by the bank, the USD 1.5 billion worth facility will help 20 million farmers to avoid the crisis to a certain extent.

The finance ministers of the G7 countries came to an agreement about sending USD 18.4 billion to help Ukraine in paying its bills in the coming months. A draft communique released by the group says: "We will continue to stand by Ukraine throughout this war and beyond and are prepared to do more as needed."

On 20 May, the UN high commissioner for refugees, Filippo Grandi said that while focusing on the Ukraine crisis was of utmost importance, states should not ignore the other crises in the world. He said that the war has already raised the number of displaced people, and from the 84 million in 2021, it was progressing towards a 'red line' of 100 million people who have been forced to leave their homes. However, he urged countries to not compromise on their

overseas development aid. Which might exacerbate the crisis in other places and will backfire.

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War in Ukraine: Day 85

War On The Ground:

On 18 May, the first war crime trial was held. Vadim Shishimarin, a 21-year-old tank commander from Russia has been accused of killing an unarmed 62-year-old Ukrainian. Shishimarin pleaded guilty on Wednesday and even apologised to the widow of his victim.

On 19 May, Ukraine's minister of environmental protection and natural resources, Ruslan Strilets said that they will

ask for reparations from Russia for the huge environmental damage that their invasion has caused in the country. He spoke about how entire ecosystems have been destroyed and natural habitats of the wildlife have been contaminated due to the Russian advances.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 19 May, Russia's foreign ministry reported that they will expel five Portuguese diplomats from Russia. It is in response to Lisbon ordering the eviction of 10 Russians from their country. The foreign ministry said that the diplomats will have to leave within 14 days of them receiving the corresponding note.

Russia's deputy foreign minister also spoke about the food crisis and said that the sanctions against Russia were one of the primary reasons for the intensifying food crisis. Moscow has said that they will consider lifting the blockades from the occupied ports in Ukraine if the sanctions against their country are removed.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 19 May, the US Senate passed the bill which will provide USD 40 billion for additional aid to Ukraine. So far, they had given Ukraine USD 3.9 billion worth of military assistance, as weapons. The previous instalment included howitzers, anti-aircraft Stinger systems, anti-tank Javelin missiles, ammunition, and armed drones. USD four billion will be for international disaster assistance needed for the humanitarian crisis. The package also has USD nine billion for economic support; this is the money that can be used to combat the rising food security crisis. USD 200 million of this package is for the US state department's diplomatic programs that are to respond to the crisis in Ukraine. While a significant amount of money is also kept for security assistance, the package includes USD 8.7 billion for the US to replenish the equipment stocks sent to Ukraine. An additional USD 11 billion has been allotted in the Presidential Drawdown Authority, with which the president can authorize the transfer of articles and services without

congressional approval, in case of an emergency.

The chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, general Mark Milley had a phone call with Russia's chief of general staff Valery Gerasimov. While the specific details of their correspondence has been kept confidential, General Milley's spokesperson said that they talked about 'several security-related issues of concern'. They have also agreed to keep the communication lines open.

On 19 May, Switzerland's department of foreign affairs said that they will be reopening their embassy in Kyiv. Five staff members, including the ambassador, are set to return to the office.

Italy's prime minister, Mario Draghi, in an address to the Senate said that achieving a ceasefire in Ukraine was of utmost importance. He mentioned that Moscow must be brought to the negotiating table, but did not speak about whether Italy will continue to supply weapons to Ukraine.

On 19 May, the European Parliament suggested that the former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder be blacklisted. Schroeder is on the board of Russian state-owned oil company Rosneft. The suggestion is also a way to make him not take up a position with Gazprom. He is allegedly the one that sponsored the building of gas lines between Germany and Russia, thus increasing their dependence on Moscow. In a meeting with EU leaders, the current chancellor Olaf Scholz said that the EU must prepare to assist Ukraine in rebuilding their country after the war is over. He also pointed out that the reconstruction of Ukraine will be an extremely expensive process. He suggested collective action on the EU's part and said: "We as the EU must start laying the ground for a solidarity fund financed by contributions from the EU and its partners."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

Japan's prime minister Fumio Kishida said that they will double the financial aid to Ukraine. The revised amount will come to USD 600 million, and will be sent in a

coordinated move with the World Bank.

On 19 May, the G7 member countries came to an agreement about sanctioning USD 18.4 billion to Ukraine. At the meeting in Germany, it was reiterated that the G7 member states are standing behind Ukraine and are ready to provide any form of assistance that they need to "get through this." At the meeting, the German finance minister said that their country will pledge EUR 1 billion to help Ukraine with its short-term liquidity needs.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that they have begun registering the hundreds of Ukrainians who have surrendered at the Azovstal Steel Plant, in Mariupol. These people have been taken in by Russia as prisoners of war, and are being taken to Russia-backed territories in the country. The ICRC clarified that they are just tracking the fighters leaving the plant, including the wounded ones, but are not responsible for transporting them to where they are being held.

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War in Ukraine: Day 84

War On The Ground:

On 18 May, Ukraine's interior ministry adviser, Anton Gerashchenko, alleged that direct talks with Russia were not possible because president Vladimir Putin was not ready for it. On the Telegram messaging app, he said: "The only chance (for peace) is the destruction of the Russian occupiers. As for when they will be ready to accept defeat, I think it's a matter of months." Russia, in turn, blamed Ukraine for not cooperating enough to be able to hold peace talks. The last time the two countries had directly communicated with each other was on 29 March. Ukraine's state-owned grid operator Ukrenergo said the suggestion by a Russian official that a Ukrainian nuclear power plant would supply electricity to Russia was completely 'impossible.' It released a statement which said that there are no connections between Ukraine's grid and Russia's power system, which makes any supply completely impossible.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 18 May, Russia's foreign ministry said that they would expel 85 employees from the embassies of France, Spain, and Italy. It was in response to a similar move by France, Spain, and Italy, who collectively threw out 300 Russians since Moscow invaded Ukraine on 24 February. The foreign ministry also clarified that of the 85 diplomats, 24 were from Italy, 27 were from Spain, and 34 were from France.

Maria Zakharova, a spokesperson at the foreign ministry, said that 959 Ukrainian service personnel had surrendered at Mariupol. Of them, 50 were injured and are being treated for their injuries, while the rest have been sent to a prison colony in Olenivka, a town in the Russian-controlled area of the Donetsk region. The defence ministry also released a video of the wounded soldier in hospital beds receiving treatment. However, it could not be verified whether the captured people spoke under duress. However, most of the soldiers said that they were being fed well and taken care of.

Russia's finance ministry released data that illuminated that 40 per cent of their defence spending was up in the first four months of this year. According to the reports, Russia has spent almost half of the RUB 3.5 trillion budgeted for defence in 2022. The ministry had initially anticipated a surplus of RUB 1.3 trillion, but given the cost of the war, it seems that they can expect a deficit of at least RUB 1.6 trillion. The government will not use the National Wealth Fund (NWF), an emergency fund, to cover the deficit.

On 17 May, Russia said they were now using a new generation of powerful lasers that can burn up drones. Putin has mentioned that one was called Perevest, which is named after a medieval Orthodox warrior monk Alexander Peresvet. Apart from that, nothing much is known about the capacity of these weapons. However, the deputy prime minister, Yury Borisov, said that Perevest was currently widely in use and could be used to blind satellites 1500 kilometers above the Earth.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 18 May, the US senate foreign relations committee approved Bridget Brink as the ambassador to Ukraine. Joe Biden had nominated the veteran diplomat as the next ambassador, and the senate committee unanimously approved it. Brink, if confirmed, will be filling a crucial position that has been vacant for the last three years.

The US also reopened its embassy in Kyiv. The embassy had been closed since 14

February, ten days before Russia launched its full-scale offensive in Ukraine. However, the Charge d'Affaires Kristina Kvien returned to the country on 02 May, and since then, they have been preparing to open their offices. Spokesperson Daniel Langenkamp said that they would resume their operations but also mentioned that many diplomats will staff the office, and consular operations will not be resuming immediately.

On 18 May, Sweden and Finland formally applied to join the NATO alliance. While they have been historically neutral countries, their decision to join NATO was sparked by Russia's aggression in Ukraine. The step has gained widespread appreciation from most member countries; Turkey remains opposed to it. Ankara also objected to an expedited accession process that generally takes only a few weeks.

The Global Fallout: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 18 May, the UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres said that they were trying to restore the corridors to export grains as the threat to the global food crisis was rising. In a UN meeting hosted by US secretary of state Antony Blinken, Guterres requested Russia to enable safer corridors for the grains to be exported and the worldwide acceptance of Russian food and fertilisers. Otherwise, he said: "It threatens to tip tens of millions of people over the edge into food insecurity, followed by malnutrition, mass hunger and famine, in a crisis that could last for years."

The World Bank said that they would offer USD 30 billion to help the impending food security crisis, exacerbated by Russia's blockades of Ukraine's ports. The total will include USD 12 billion in new projects and USD 18 billion in projects based on food and nutrition that already exist.

India, the world's biggest buyer of Russian arms, is reportedly looking to diversify their supplies. They are also contemplating on making military equipment locally. Air Marshal Vibhas Pande said that given the turmoil in the geopolitical situation, they are looking for some stability. The only option in

that regard is to be self-reliant and self-sustained.

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War in Ukraine: Day 83

War On The Ground:

On 17 May, Mariupol, which had been under siege from the beginning of the war in February, finally fell to the Russian forces. The last of the Ukrainians holding out in the bunkers and tunnels below the Azovstal steelworks surrendered. Russia's defence ministry reports that 256 fighters have surrendered, among whom 51 were severely wounded, and will be taken to Novoazovsk in the Russian-backed breakaway Donetsk region. The remaining fighters were taken to

a prison in Olenivka, near Donetsk. Ukraine has acknowledged the terrific bravery of the defenders at Mariupol, who managed to hold the Russian forces at bay for 82 days, amidst severe bombardment and blockades.

Presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said: "Because Mariupol drew in the Russian Federation's forces for 82 days, the operation to seize the east and south (of Ukraine) was held up. It changed the course of the war."

Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported about his "long and meaningful" phone conversation with France's president Emmanuel Macron about the war in Ukraine. He said that they had spoken about the evacuation of the military from Azovstal, and how negotiation might be carried on in the future. The two leaders also spoke about fuel supply to Ukraine, France's assistance to the country, a potential EU membership, and the export of food grains to the world. On the same day, Zelenskyy mentioned that he had a productive discussion with Germany's chancellor Olaf Scholz. They spoke about the front line of the war, and about increasing further sanctions on Moscow.

On 17 May, the emergency service of Ukraine's Chernihiv region said that eight people were killed and 12 wounded due to a Russian airstrike on Desna village. It comes after the region's governor, Viacheslav Chaus, said: "Yes, there are no more occupiers in the Chernihiv region but it is easy for them to reach us. Don't ignore air raid warnings!" The governor of the northeastern region of Sumy, Dmytro Zhyvytsky said that the border guards have succeeded in repelling an attempted Russian incursion by a sabotage and reconnaissance group in the northeastern region of Sumy.

Kalush Orchestra, the band from Ukraine that won the Eurovision song contest, is planning a tour of Europe. The effort will be to raise money for Ukraine's army. Frontman Oleh Psiuk said at a news conference that they will soon announce the specifics of their tour on their social media profiles.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 17 May, TASS news agency reported that

a Russian investigative committee would question the fighters holding out at the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol and have finally surrendered. This will be done to investigate what Moscow calls “criminal cases and surrounding Ukrainian region crimes.”

The speaker of Russia’s parliament, Vyacheslav Volodin said that they will consider banning the exchange of Russian prisoners of war for members of Ukraine’s Azov Regiment, who were the last to hold out at Mariupol. Leonid Slutsky, another Russian lawmaker said that Russia should consider the death penalty for the fighters of the Azov regiment, “monstrous crimes against humanity.” The Azov regiment was once a nationalist militia but has since been integrated into Ukraine’s National Guard and were the last bastions of resistance against Russian troops in the strategically important port city. As per Russia’s ministry of justice, Russia’s prosecutor general has also asked the Supreme Court to declare the regiment as a “terrorist organisation.”

While addressing a meeting with domestic oil managers and government officials, president Vladimir Putin said that it would be impossible for some European countries to stop their dependence on Russian oil. The embargo has been proposed by the newest set of sanctions from the European Union. He said that by putting an embargo on Russian supplies, Europe will risk paying the most exorbitant prices for oil in the world in the long term. This will undermine the competitiveness of the industry.

On 17 May, Russia’s defence ministry reported that arms shipments to Ukraine’s western Lviv region from the US and Europe have been destroyed by their missiles.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 17 May, the US announced that it will launch a new programme to capture and analyze if war crimes and other atrocities had been committed by the Russian troops in Ukraine. The US state department made the announcement about the so-called “Conflict Observatory” that will engage in documentation, verification, and

dissemination of evidence of Russia’s acts of aggression. Their analyses and findings will then be made available on their website.

The US treasury secretary, Janet Yellen in a speech at the Brussels Economic Forum, said that Ukraine’s financial needs were extremely severe. She called for US allies to increase their financial support for Ukraine, saying that given the scale of devastation in the country, the assistance announced so far will not be enough.

Germany’s finance minister, Christian Lindner said that he is considering the idea of seizing Russian state assets to finance the reconstruction of Ukraine. He said that he is willing to seize the foreign assets of the Russian Central Bank and this was something that was being discussed by the Group of Seven economic powers.

In an EU meeting of the bloc’s defence ministers, Josep Borrell said that if reports are analyzed, it will be seen that Russia’s army has suffered huge losses. He said: “I wouldn’t dare to make a hypothesis about how long Russia can resist... If it is true that Russia has lost 15% of their troops since the beginning of the war, this is a world record of the losses of an army invading a country.” He also said that the EU will not let Ukraine run out of military equipment and weapons if the war continues.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

The chief of the World Health Organization spoke about how health care provisions in Ukraine have been under attack because of the ongoing war. Hans Kluge, who serves as the WHO regional director for Europe, said that every third patient in Ukraine has had issues with access to medicine, every fifth patient needed psychological help and sexual violence was also becoming a common affair. In a news conference, he said that WHO has identified 226 attacks on healthcare in Ukraine, and that these were unjustifiable, and needed to be thoroughly investigated.

UNICEF said that due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the cost of providing life-saving treatment to undernourished children will

rise by 16 per cent. Reportedly, the cost of ready-to-use therapeutic food has already become more expensive and without proper funding, 600,000 more children may miss out on necessary treatment in the next six months.

The finance ministers of the G7 countries deliberated on sanctioning a EUR 15 billion aid package for Ukraine. The package would extend over three months and have a short-term financing arrangement, mainly in the form of grants.

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War in Ukraine: Day 82

War On The Ground:

Ukraine's finance ministry reported that they have signed an agreement on a \$100 million loan with Japan. This loan will primarily help in supporting the vulnerable people in Ukraine. They also mentioned that the loan was for 30 years and had a grace period of 10 years.

On 16 May, Ukraine's defence ministry said that the troops defending the country's second-largest city, Kharkiv, had repelled Russian forces and advanced along the border with Russia. The ministry also posted a video on Facebook, which shows Ukrainian troops forwarding near the border post. According to the ministry it was the 227th Battalion of the 127th Brigade of Ukraine's Territorial Defence Force that had reached the border with Russia.

The governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Gaidai reported that at least 10 civilians have been killed by Russian shelling in Sievierodonetsk in eastern Ukraine. The governor of Ukraine's Donetsk region, Pavlo Kyrylenko on the other hand, said that nine civilians were killed and six were injured due to Russian attacks in the region.

President Zelenskyy spoke about his discussion with International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. He mentioned how he has asked for further financial support and said: "The IMF is our important partner. We look forward to further fruitful joint work in maintaining financial stability of Ukraine."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 16 May, the Russian defence ministry said that its forces have shot down a Su-25 aircraft near the settlements of Yevhenivka in the Mykolaiv region and Velyka Komyshevakh in Kharkiv, and a Su-24 near Snake Island. While the claims are yet to be confirmed by Russia, this comes amidst continuous missile strikes by Russia, in the eastern part of Ukraine.

On 16 May, Russia said that they agreed to evacuate wounded Ukrainian soldiers from the Azovstal steel works in Mariupol. As a part of the deal, 260 evacuees were moved to a medical facility in the Russian-controlled town of Novoazovsk.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 16 May, the European Commission deliberated on whether to approve a new package of financial aid to Ukraine. This will include loans that will help Kyiv by providing liquidity and the long-term financing of reconstruction, in the country. EU foreign ministers deliberating on the sixth round of sanctions on Russia, however, could not reach a consensus, as Hungary could not be persuaded to lift its veto. Josep Borrell, the EU foreign policy chief, spoke about how the member states have been unable to reach an agreement regarding the oil embargo said foreign ministers had decided, however, to provide an additional EUR 500 million, making the total sum of aid to EUR 2 billion.

Olaf Scholz, the chancellor of Germany said that Russia will not get away with its aggression and imperialistic actions in Ukraine. He also mentioned that the West will not be tolerating such a "diktat peace." It was also reported that protestors at a southern English port, have blocked the

entry of a Greek tanker carrying Russian fuel cargo.

On 16 May, Belarus's president, Alexandr Lukashenko, a key ally of Moscow, accused the West of supporting Nazi ideas. He addressed the Russian president and the leaders of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan at the summit of the leaders of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), in Moscow. Lukashenko called on members of the Russian-led military alliance to unite against the West, who he alleged was prolonging the conflict in Ukraine to weaken Moscow.

Turkey said that they will not be convinced to support Sweden and Finland's decision to join the NATO. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan mentioned that the delegations from these countries should not even bother coming to Ankara and said: "We will not say yes to those [countries] that apply sanctions to Turkey to join the security organization Nato."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

McDonald's, which has been in business in Russia for 30 years, will stop their operations in the country. The company will remove the McDonald's name, logo, branding, and menu, before selling it to a local buyer. They said that Russia's actions in Ukraine, and the unpredictable operating environment, were making work untenable, and did not align with the company's values.

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War in Ukraine: Day 80 & 81

War On The Ground:

On 14 May, one of Ukraine's regional governors, Oleh Sinegubov said that their forces have succeeded in launching a counteroffensive near Iziurm, where the Russian forces have taken over. He said: "The enemy is retreating on some fronts and this is the result of the character of our armed forces." This comes in the context of a possible momentum shift in the war, in favour of Ukraine, whereby they are recapturing territory in the northeast in Kharkiv.

On the same day, a large convoy of cars and vans reached Zaporizhzhia. It was carrying refugees from the port city of Mariupol, which has been under severe attack from the Russians. Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke about the grave situation in the Donbas region, where the Russian forces were still trying to establish their supremacy.

On 15 May, Zelenskyy congratulated Kalush Orchestra, the Ukrainian band that won the Eurovision competition. In a Telegram post he said: "Our courage impresses the world,

our music conquers Europe! Next year Ukraine will host Eurovision!"

The governor of Lviv, Maxim Kozitsky said that four missiles had struck hit military infrastructure in the Yavoriv area of western Ukraine, near to the Polish border.

The foreign minister of the country, Dmytro Kuleba elaborated on his meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken. He said that they have agreed to work closely together in order to ensure that Ukrainian food exports reach consumers in Africa and Asia.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 14 May, a senior parliamentarian from Russia, Anna Kuznetsova, visited Kherson, in Ukraine. Her visit to Kherson which has been occupied by Russian forces was to discuss the social and healthcare needs of the local population. Kuznetsova who is the deputy head of Russia's Duma or lower house of parliament discussed the supply of foodstuffs as well as medical and essentials necessary for children.

The Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov spoke about the 'total hybrid warfare', that is allegedly being waged by the West. He also said Moscow will survive the embargoes and sanctions by building a better and deeper relationship with China, India and others. He was talking about the 80th day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

On 14 May, Russia's defence ministry published a few pictures of a ship, which Ukraine's forces were alleging had been destroyed by them. Dismissing Ukraine's claims, the ministry said that the ship, in the Crimean Black Sea port of Sevastopol had not suffered any damage at all.

On the same day, president Vladimir Putin spoke with Finland's president, Sauli Niinisto. This was to discuss Finland's decision to apply for a NATO membership. Kremlin said that Putin has pointed out to Niinisto that abandoning their neutrality and joining NATO will be a mistake and it would affect their bilateral relationship negatively. President Vladimir Putin told his Finnish counterpart Sauli Niinisto on Saturday that

ditching neutrality and joining NATO would be a mistake that could damage relations between their two countries, the Kremlin said.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 15 May, Finland and Sweden who have been contemplating their application for a NATO membership for quite some time confirmed that they will go through with the application. This marks a major policy shift, in response to the Russian invasion, as both the countries have historically been neutral.

The prime minister of Sweden, Magdalena Andersson also said that they will be seeking broad support for an application to join NATO on Monday. This was significant because it marked her a change in the party's stance as well.

The US Embassy in Kyiv tweeted a Ukrainian military video of Kyiv's soldiers training to use the M-777 howitzer. These weapons are a part of the recent USD 800 million care package from the US. It was also mentioned that 89 of the 90 Howitzers had reached Ukraine and several of them are also being used at the front lines.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 14 May, Ibrahim Kalin, a spokesperson for Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that he had discussed carrying out a sea evacuation of wounded fighters holed up in Mariupol.

In their meeting in Germany, the foreign ministers from the G7 countries spoke about how the Russian invasion in Ukraine and the subsequent blockade of ports is increasing the food security crisis in the world. They warned that around 43 million people will starve to death unless Russia lifts their blockades.

On 14 May, they also reiterated that they will enforce Russia's economic and political isolation and continue providing aid to Ukraine be it military or economic, 'as long as necessary.'

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War in Ukraine: Day 79

War On The Ground:

On 13 May, in an interview, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that he was ready to hold direct talks with Russia's president Vladimir Putin. However, he mentioned that Russia's complete withdrawal from Russia would be the starting point for any discussion. The last face-to-face talks that Ukraine and Russia held were on 29 March. Zelenskyy said, "As president, I am ready to talk to Putin, but only to him. Without any of his intermediaries. And in the framework of dialogue, not ultimatums."

On 13 May, Vadim Shysimarin, a 21-year-old Russian sergeant, accused of war crimes went on trial in Ukraine. He has been accused of murdering a 62-year-old civilian in the northeastern village of Chupakhivka, who was unarmed. This is a landmark moment as this is the first time that one of Russia's soldiers is being tried for war crimes. If found guilty, Shysimarin faces life imprisonment.

Ukraine has requested the G7 member states to seize Russian assets and hand them over so that it can assist Ukraine in rebuilding the country after months of the war. Foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba said that they were talking about hundreds of billions of dollars, which Russia must pay for.

On 13 May, the First Deputy Agriculture Minister Taras Vysotski spoke about how Ukraine was not being able to export more than 1.5 million tonnes of agricultural products a month because Russia blocking their major ports. Before the war, the country exported 5 million tonnes of agricultural crops per month and has now resorted to sending their products by rail. Ukrainian human rights activist, Lyudmyla Denisova alleged that Russia had forcibly deported 210,000 children, since 24 February. She however did not provide any supporting evidence for this number.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Brittney Griner, a famous basketball player from the USA will face another month of pre-trial detention in Russia. Griner was arrested at the Moscow airport when the 31-year-old Olympics and WNBA star was found with cannabis vape oil in her luggage. While the Biden administration has said that she has been wrongfully detained, her lawyer has said that she was being treated well, and her health was okay.

On 13 May, Joseph Borell, the foreign affairs chief of the European Union said that the bloc would provide an additional EUR 500 million, in military support to Ukraine. With this set of aid, the EU's total support of Ukraine will come to EUR 2.08 billion. Borrell also spoke about how he was confident that they will be able to reach a consensus about the embargo on Russian oil soon.

Russia's foreign ministry reported that they have expelled 10 Romanian diplomats. They also mentioned that this was in response to a similar move undertaken by Bucharest. One member from Bulgaria's embassy has been expelled as well.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 13 May, Britain's defence secretary Ben Wallace and the U.S. defence secretary issued a joint statement about military aid for Ukraine. In a meeting that took place on 11 May, they discussed the next steps to help Ukraine, and issues about security, NATO, and the AUKUS, which is a defence pact between Australia, the United States, and Britain.

UK's defence ministry, in their regular Twitter bulletin, said that Ukraine's forces have been successful in preventing Russia from crossing the Siverskyi Donetsk river. Reportedly, Russia's losses include "significant armored maneuver elements" and deployed pontoon bridging equipment of one battalion tactical group.

German cabinet's security council has been deliberating on whether to provide Ukraine with IRIS-T SLM medium-range surface-to-

air defence systems. These weapons are reportedly made by Diehl Defence, which is a privately held German weapons maker.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

Gillian Triggs, the assistant high commissioner for protection at the UNHCR said that refugee women from Ukraine who have fled to Poland must be provided access to reproductive rights. Poland has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, and concerns have been raised about the issues faced by refugees who have been victims of rape in Ukraine. Triggs said: "(Victims of sexual violence) need counselling and they need assistance. In some cases, they will need abortions. We will raise this ... with the government."

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War in Ukraine: Day 78

War On The Ground:

On 12 May, during his visit to Berlin,

Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba appreciated how Germany has responded to the Russian aggression in Ukraine. He also mentioned that Germany's decision to send heavy weapons to Ukraine and to back the proposed EU sanctions have really made a difference for Ukraine.

On 12 May, the finance minister of Ukraine said that they have been forced to spend USD 8.3 billion on their war efforts with Russia. This is to illustrate the economic backlash that Ukraine is having to face, as the weather though the Russian attack on their country.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Former president and one of Putin's closest allies, Dmitry Medvedev, who now serves as the deputy chairman of Russia's security council, issued a warning to the West. He said that the increased support to Ukraine by the US and NATO also increased the risk of triggering retaliation by Russia. He said: "Such a conflict always has the risk of turning into a full-fledged nuclear war... This will be a disastrous scenario for everyone."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 12 May, Sweden's foreign minister Ann Linde said that they will be considering Finland's stance regarding the NATO application in their deliberations about sending their NATO application forward. Sweden and Finland have had a long history of diplomatic and military ties, and are likely to move in tandem. Public support for Finland's NATO membership application has grown three-fold. The president, prime minister, and senior cabinet ministers will be meeting on Sunday, to formalize their decision and make an official announcement.

British multinational oil and gas company Shell announced they will sell 411 petrol stations in Russia to Lukoil, which is the country's second-largest oil producer. Shell Neft, which is the Russian subsidiary, will sell all its stakes in joint businesses as well as a protest against the country's invasion of Ukraine. The German industrial manufacturing company Siemens also made an announcement along similar lines. They

said that they will stop their 170-year-old business in Russia, given the current situation.

On 12 May, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) announced that they are likely to ramp up investments in Ukraine and its neighbourhood. They said that the donors indicated pledges of almost USD 1.04 billion. President Odile Renaud-Basso said that this decision was reached at the recent board of governors' meeting.

The Global Fallouts:

Implications of the Ukraine war

A UN agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that over 6 million people have fled from Ukraine since the war began on 24 February. They also mentioned that more than 8 million people have been internally displaced within the country, in what is Europe's worst-ever refugee crisis.

On 12 May, the UNHRC passed a resolution about starting an investigation into the rights abuses by the Russian troops in parts of Ukraine that is allegedly controlled by them. While 33 members voted in favour of the resolution, 12 members abstained and 2 members, China and Eritrea voted against it. Michelle Bachelet, the UN human rights chief also mentioned that about 1,000 bodies had been recovered in and around Kyiv, in recent weeks. She said that these verify that many of the violations by Russia amount to war crimes.

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War in Ukraine: Day 77

War On The Ground :

Ukraine, which has made allegations of war crimes against Russian soldiers, is starting their first war crimes trial. 21-year-old soldier, Vadim Shishimarin, who was a member of the elite 4th Guards Tank Division will be the first one to be tried. Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy informed that he had a fruitful discussion with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. They spoke about cooperation in the energy sector, aid for defence and the increment of sanctions on Russia.

Since the beginning of the war, Ukraine's pipeline operator halted the Russian shipment of natural gas through a hub in Eastern Ukraine. They said that they have been trying to reroute the gas, but Gazprom has said that it would be too complicated a process.

The deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk said that they were negotiating with Russia about swapping Russian prisoners of war for the badly injured defenders in the Azovstal plant.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 11 May, Russia said that the people living in Kherson will be deciding if they want to join Russia or not. Kherson, in southern Ukraine, is one of the Russian-occupied regions in Ukraine. Kirill Stremousov, the deputy head of the military administration in Kherson, made the annexation call and said: "... There will be a request to make [Kherson] into a full-fledged region of the Russian Federation."

On the same day, Russia asked for a formal apology from Poland, in the context of Moscow's ambassador to Warsaw being attacked with red paint on 09 May. They have warned that without the apology, Poland can expect future reprisals.

After the new USD, 40 billion package was approved by the US House of Representatives, former president of Russia Dmitry Medvedev accused the United States of waging a "proxy war" against Russia. Russia's State Duma speaker Vyacheslav Volodin also spoke along the same lines and said that the US was just using this opportunity to 'indebt' Ukraine.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

The US House passed the measure to provide USD 39.8 billion in aid to Ukraine. The package now will now need to be passed by the Senate, before it is sent for president Joe Biden's signature.

Deliberations are going on about EU sanctions that are to be imposed on Russia. But, Hungary said that a deal was out of the question unless the EU could offer a solution for the hundreds of millions of dollars necessary to replace Russian oil in the Hungarian economy.

Finland and Sweden have been deliberating about joining the Nato for quite some time now. On 11 May, Finland's president Sauli Niinisto and prime minister Sanna Marin said that they are in favour of applying for the membership. In a joint statement, they said: "Now that the moment of decision-making is near, we state our equal views, also for information to the parliamentary groups and parties... Nato membership would strengthen Finland's security." Neighbouring Sweden is also expected to state their positions soon, as both the countries want to apply for membership together. The Swedish prime minister, Magdalena Andersson met with Boris Johnson, and both of them said that following Russia's aggression in Ukraine, relations with Vladimir Putin can never be normalized again.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 11 May, the UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres said that he was deeply concerned about food security given the current situation in Ukraine. He also mentioned how the war in Ukraine was exacerbating issues of hunger in different parts of the world.

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War in Ukraine: Day 76

War On The Ground:

On 10 May, Russia's Black Sea port of Odesa came under a new set of attacks. Seven hypersonic missiles hit a shopping centre and a depot, killing one and injuring five. The air raids at Odesa also interrupted a meeting between the European Council president Charles Michel and Ukrainian prime minister Denys Shmyhal.

Also on the same day, the press officer, Tetiana Apatchenko stated that Ukrainian troops have recaptured the villages of Cherkaski Tyshky, Ruski Tyshki, Borshchova, and Slobozhanske, located in the northern region of Kharkiv. The counterattack might indicate the start of a new phase in the war, with Ukraine going on

the offensive after weeks of Russian assaults have failed in any breakthroughs.

On 10 May, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the parliament of Slovakia and its people. Zelenskyy said that Russia's assault against Ukraine is more than just an attempt to capture the country and obliterate national identity. Zelenskyy appreciated Slovakia for donating defence equipment to Ukraine at a crucial time and acknowledged the country's inability to ban all Russian oil imports. However, Zelenskyy warned Slovakia that its dependency on Russian oil may threaten its sovereignty as well.

In his evening address, He addressed parliament of Malta and its people in a video conference. He drew comparisons between Ukraine's struggle in the face of Russia's assault and that of the Battle of Malta 80 years ago. He urged for more weapons and defence equipment and further called on Malta to end the privileges given to Russian citizens like Golden passports and dual citizenships. The speaker of the House Anglu Farrugia responded by stating that Malta's neutrality, which is engrained in the institution, prevents the nation from intervening militarily. However, Farrugia said that Malta would continue to give humanitarian help.

The Energy sanctions Roadmap

On 10 May, the head of the office of the president of Ukraine Andriy Yermak, and director of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI) ambassador Michael McFaul, presented the second document on recommendations for sanctions against the Russian Federation. The document includes policy ideas for depriving Russia of energy revenue while avoiding market and global economic disruptions. Maritime export service providers are scrutinized and targeted for circumventing the sanctions.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 10 May, Russia's defence ministry claimed that Ukraine's forces had tried to claim the Snake Islands in the Black Sea. This small outcrop in the Black Sea has been a

stage of clashes between Russia and Ukraine since when the war began in February.

On the same day, the deputy foreign minister of Russia, Alexander Grushko said that the decision of using nuclear weapons will not be haphazard, and will follow the military doctrine of the country.

The Russian video platform *Rutube* remained offline for the second day in a row. This is following a cyberattack that made the platform defunct, hours before they were supposed to stream the Victory Day parade in Moscow. In a Telegram message, the platform said that it will take more time to restore the platform than the engineers had originally thought.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 10 May, *BBC* reported on the UK's prime minister, Boris Johnson scheduled to visit Sweden and Finland, to discuss 'border security issues.' This is in light of the two country's deliberations on applying for a NATO membership.

On 10 May, the US House voted 368-57 in favour of sending military, economic, and humanitarian aid worth nearly USD 40 billion to Ukraine. The measure will now be sent to the Senate, where the Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has promised to act swiftly on it.

Lithuania became the first country to designate Russia as a perpetrator of terrorism. In a unanimous vote, they also declared that Russian action in Ukraine was 'genocide.' Germany and Netherlands' foreign ministers, Annalena Baerbock, and Wopke Hoekstra visited Ukraine on a surprise visit. They visited Kyiv which had been devastated by the war.

On 10 May EU Chief Ursula von der Leyen said they have made 'progress' in the talks with Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban. This is in the context of Hungary holding up EU's plans for an oil embargo in Russia and Orban comparing the deal with an 'atomic bomb.' Regarding the same issue, France has said that a deal can be struck by the end of this week.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 10 May, Japan's industry minister said that they will deliberate on how to implement an embargo on Russian oil, considering the economic fallouts from such a decision.

On 10 May, International Organization for Migration (IOM) published a report on the survey of internally displaced people in Ukraine. The report estimates that over eight million people are internally displaced in Ukraine since the Russian invasion. This implies a 24 per cent rise from the previous estimates. The survey was conducted between 27 April and 03 May and assessed the needs of internally displaced persons (IDP) as well.

On 10 May, the head of the UN human rights monitoring mission to Ukraine, Matilda Bogner stated that far more civilians have been killed since the start of the war than previously estimated. The mission has verified 7,061 civilian deaths so far, with 3,381 dead and 3,680 wounded, but the actual number is said to be far higher. On the same day, Europe's regional director of the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that at least 3000 people in Ukraine, have died due to the lack of treatments and medications for chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS and cancer.

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War in Ukraine: Day 75

War On The Ground:

On 09 May, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy commemorated Victory Day over the defeat of Nazism and addressed the people of the country. He said they are proud of their forefathers, who fought Nazism alongside other nations in the anti-Hitler alliance and will not allow the triumph to be appropriated by anyone. He further stated that the thousands of Ukrainians who fought and expelled Nazi's from Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Melitpol, and Mariupol will inspire and give hope to drive out the occupiers again.

In his evening video address to the people of Ukraine, Zelenskyy briefed about all the meetings and events held in Kyiv during the day. He also expressed gratitude to all the defenders and international organizations for their support. Zelenskyy raised concerns about the possibility of famines and price rises in Africa and Asia caused by the invasion of Russia.

On 09 May, Zelenskyy and prime minister Denys Shmyhal held a video conference with the president of the European Council Charles Michel to discuss further humanitarian aid and military support provided by the EU. Michel also visited Odesa to witness the devastation caused by the war in Ukraine. He expressed gratitude to Michel for his physical presence in Odesa and appreciated the sanctions against Russia by the EU. Michel stated that he admired the resilience and courage of Ukrainians. He also acknowledged that the Ukrainians today are fighting not only for their country but also for the values of democracy and freedom in Europe.

On the same day, president Zelenskyy announced that he had submitted the second questionnaire to obtain EU membership to the head of the EU delegation to Ukraine, Matti Maasilta. He stated: "I think these answers are also a small victory for our team. We are waiting for the consideration

and conclusions of the European Commission. I would like these conclusions to be positive. And I would like these conclusions to be provided faster thanks to you." President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen appreciated Zelenskyy's eagerness and prompt response; she further mentioned that the commission would work diligently to review the submission and reach a decision by June

On 09 May, Zelenskyy met with the secretary general of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić. The leaders discussed measures to build a group of legal experts to help the prosecutor general's office and establish a new online platform called Cities4Cities to serve local communities in Ukraine. He also urged the Council of Europe to make every effort to prevent Russia from illegally deporting Ukrainian people from temporarily occupied territories and war zones. He further asked the council to engage with other international partners to guarantee that Ukrainians are returned to their homeland.

On 09 May, Zelenskyy urged the international community to assist Ukraine in removing the Russian blockade of shipping ports to export wheat and prevent food shortages worldwide. He stated: "For the first time in decades and decades, in Odesa, there is no regular movement of the merchant fleet, there is no routine port work. This has probably never happened in Odesa since World War Two." The call for help came following the Food and Agriculture Organization report released on 06 May stating that about 25 million tonnes of grains are stranded in Ukraine and unable to leave owing to infrastructural problems and blocked Black Sea ports.

On 09 May, the commissioner for Human Rights in the Ukrainian Parliament Lyudmila Denisova stated that over a million Ukrainian people had been deported to Russia. She further added that the Ukrainians in the Russian-occupied regions are being sent to filter camps, and those who pass the procedure will be unlawfully deported to Russia. Denisova claims that 200,000 children are among the 1,185,000 Ukrainians who have been forcefully

deported across the border.
Awards and honours

On 09 May, a mine-sniffing dog named Patron and his owner Myhailo Iliev were awarded the medal of honour by president Zelenskyy at Kyiv for helping to find over 200 mines. The Jack Russel terrier dog has become a national hero and a symbol of resistance against Russia.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 09 May, Russia's president Vladimir Putin gave his address for the Victory Day in the Red Square. Victory Day, which marks Soviet Union's win over Nazi Germany, Putin applauded each veteran present on the day. He began his remarks about the Russian fighters fighting in the war. He expressed concerns about the soldiers who had died. In the speech, he called the war in Ukraine a special military operation and said it was the right decision for a "strong and sovereign country." Although there were no major announcements on the war or Russia's strategies, he portrayed that Europe had denied Russia's requests despite Russia asking Europe to find a common cause to negotiate. He added: "In Kyiv, they were saying they might get nuclear weapons and Nato started exploring the lands close to us and that became an obvious threat to our country and our borders. Everything was telling us that there is a need to fight."

The day marks the offensives launched by Russia and the mass extraditions carried out due to Nazi crimes. It is celebrated by the Russians to remember the sacrifice of its citizens and the loss that was incurred by the country. On 09 May, the parade by the Russian military in Russia was a display of its troops, weapon systems such as self-propelled artillery, ground-launched ballistic missiles, heavy armour, and combat vehicles. Apart from this, the parade also included Russia's paratroops formation, long-range missiles, and Russia's nuclear arsenal.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 09 May, the US announced its plans to provide Ukraine with USD 39.8 billion in aid. This comes as the house of representatives

said it was planning to pass the previous bill of USD 33 billion. The new proposal included an additional USD 3.4 billion for military aid and USD 3.4 billion in humanitarian aid and the USD 33 billion proposed.

The US adopted the Lend-Lease Act to smoothen weapons and aid transports to Ukraine. On the same day, US president Joe Biden said he eased the acceleration of US weapon shipments to Ukraine. He further mentioned how 09 May marked the anniversary of Europe Day, which celebrates the founding of the EU in 1950.

Also, on 09 May, the US department of defence said Russia's president Vladimir Putin's remarks included the usual bluster, falsehoods, and untruths. Concerning the war in Ukraine, the pentagon's spokesperson John Kirby stated that there was no stalemate in Ukraine as artillery attacks continued. He further added: "We do not see the Russians making a lot of progress and we believe they are behind their schedule and are not making much geographic gain." On 09 May, Germany's chancellor Olaf Scholz met with France's president Emmanuel Macron in Berlin. The two discussed how the war in Ukraine was a turning point in history as it united the countries in Europe. Macron mentioned that the two countries had to work together to tackle more significant challenges as the countries continued their support of Ukraine.

On the same day, Macron had addressed the European parliament and proposed a formation of a new political European community that would be inclusive of countries outside the EU to join the bloc's core values. Macron also mentioned how Ukraine's proposal to join the EU would take several decades due to the process of a country integrating into the EU. Thus, he suggested that the European political community increase political cooperation, security, cooperation in energy, transport, investment in infrastructure, and movement of people.

On 09 May, Italy's parliamentary committee stated that it had begun its investigations concerning the spread of disinformation on its television networks. Italy had aired an interview where Russia's foreign minister

Sergei Lavrov gave controversial remarks about Ukraine's president. The committee is looking into the issue not to discourage press freedom but to deter the spread of disinformation, interference, the production of fake news, and influence.

On 09 May, protestors doused Russia's ambassador to Poland in red paint as he attended the 77th anniversary of the end of the second world war. The protestors also waved Ukraine flags and white-red-white flags as a symbol of the Belarusian opposition movement.

On 09 May, the EU's commission president Ursula von der Leyen said the bloc aimed to deliver its decision for Ukraine to join the EU by June. Von der Leyen had earlier pledged to Zelenskyy to speed up Ukraine's bid to become an EU member. She is also planning to visit Hungary to meet prime minister Viktor Orbán and discuss the complications that arose due to the proposal of the sixth package of sanctions by the EU. The EU's council president Charles Michel who was on a visit to Odessa was forced to take cover from incoming missile strikes. His meeting with Ukraine's prime minister, Denys Shmyhal, was interrupted by missile strikes as the two hurried to take shelter.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 09 May, China's president Xi Jinping warned Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, of an unmanageable situation if the Ukraine war continues. Xi stated that the ongoing war had to be controlled to avoid the war from intensifying and expanding. Xi also invited Germany to participate in the Global Security Initiative.

On 09 May, Japan's prime minister Fumio Kishida mentioned that the country would take time to phase out Russian oil imports. This comes as Japan had agreed to ban Russian oil imports along with the G7 countries. He further added: "As for the timing of the reduction or stoppage of (Russian) oil imports, we will consider it while gauging the actual situation. We will take our time to take steps towards a phase-out."

On 09 May, a Fiji court said that it suspended the execution of the USD 300 million superyachts. The yacht is still currently under Fiji police's custody and is blocked from leaving the country. The US had earlier won custody of the yacht, but the company obtained a temporary stay on the warrant.

On 09 May, the UN secretary-general António Guterres in his visit to Moldova mentioned that the consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine were escalating. He added how the impact of the war "is profound and far-reaching." Guterres further added that he was deeply concerned about continuing the war and its spillover to the neighboring countries. Concerning Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity, he said that the country must not be threatened or undermined.

On the same day, the UNHRC stated that it would hold a special session to address Russia's human rights violations in Ukraine. This comes as more than 50 countries had called on the UNHRC to examine the deteriorating human rights situation in Mariupol.

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War in Ukraine: Day 73 & 74

War On The Ground:

On 08 May, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a video conference with the Group of Seven (G7) countries appealed for more weapons for Ukraine. He stressed the need to sanction all Russian authorities, police, soldiers, judges, and citizens and urged financial support during the war and post-war reconstruction. Zelenskyy estimated USD 600 billion to rebuild everything after the war and USD five billion per month to handle the ongoing war situation.

On the same day, Zelenskyy addressed the country to commemorate the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation for those who lost their lives during the second world war. He stated that evil and darkness had returned to Ukraine after decades, in a different uniform and slogan. His video message was filmed in front of burnt and destroyed buildings in black and white to emphasize the grief and return of winter in Ukraine. Throughout his video message, Zelenskyy avoided mentioning Putin, but he used evocative language to show his grief at the devastation.

On 08 May, president Zelenkyy met with the prime minister of Canada Justin Trudeau in his unannounced visit to Irpin and Kyiv. They discussed Canada's support for Ukraine and numerous bilateral matters as well. Zelenskyy mentioned that negotiations are underway to lift trade restrictions, abolition of customs duties, and limit the visa regime for citizens of Ukraine. Trudeau stated he would provide anti-tank weaponry, satellite communications systems, demining equipment, and arms assistance. Trudeau also visited the suburbs of Kyiv to witness the devastation.

The first lady of the US had also visited Ukraine without prior notice to demonstrate solidarity for the country's people in the wake of Russia's invasion. She visited a school that was functioning as a temporary

shelter and met Ukraine's first lady, Olena Zelenska.

President Zelenskyy met with the president of Norway's parliament Masud Gharahkhani on his visit to Ukraine. They discussed increasing Norway's security support for Ukraine and cooperation in the field of energy as well. Gharahkhani expressed grief over the atrocities done by Russia in Irpin and Bucha.

Also on 08 May, Zelenskyy met with the president of the Bundestag of Germany Bärbel Bas in Kyiv. He appreciated the resolution of the Bundestag, asking Germany to expand and hasten the provision of heavy weapons to Ukraine. He also expressed his expectation that Berlin would favour the candidature of Ukraine in the EU.

President Zelenskyy also met the prime minister of Croatia Andrej Plenkovic to discuss defence and energy cooperation. Following the meeting with Andrej, he stated that he would like to receive modern and powerful weapons to gain knowledge and experience. He said: "Croatia is a principled member of our anti-war coalition. Together we defend the right not only of our citizens, not only of the citizens of Ukraine but also of every European nation to an independent and democratic life." He further mentioned that Ukraine does not have access to European modern technologies in other spheres as every EU or NATO member state has.

On 07 May, president Zelenskyy presided over a meeting on the matters of the executive branch. Head of the president's office Andriy Yermak and his deputies, prime minister of Ukraine Denys Shmyhal, and members of the cabinet were present. The conference focused on developing a strategy for Ukraine's post-war rebuilding and growth. Minister of finance Serhiy Marchenko, briefed on the national budget's implementation under martial law. He stated that the government had a UAH 125 billion deficit in April. At the same time, tax and customs receipts surpassed expectations, totalling UAH 53 billion. It is expected to get UAH 57 billion in May.

The minister believes that the monthly shortfall would be covered by foreign grants and loans. International funds worth USD 11 billion are still being negotiated, with Ukraine having already received USD five billion.

On 08 May, buses transporting the last wave of civilian evacuees from the besieged Azovstal steelworks arrived in Ukrainian-controlled territory Zaporizhzhia, concluding an international effort to free those trapped in bunkers under the Mariupol facility. The vehicle, carrying roughly 175 refugees, arrived at the camp after dusk. They comprised about 40 civilians who had been holed up in Azovstal's huge network of subterranean bunkers for weeks with the Ukrainian military under intense fire.

On 08 May, the regional governor of Luhansk Serhiy Gaidai reported that a Russian bomb hit a school where 90 people were given shelter. She stated that after extinguishing the fire caused by the bomb, 30 people are rescued but two were found dead under the rubble. It is feared that 60 people who remain under the debris are probably dead.

On 07 May, president Zelensky reported that a museum devoted to the 18th-century philosopher and poet Hryhoriy Skovoroda was destroyed by Russian artillery. The museum's roof was set ablaze by an overnight attack in the village of Skovorodynivka in eastern Ukraine, wounding a 35-year-old curator. The regional governor of Kharkiv Oleh Sinegubov stated the most precious exhibits had been evacuated earlier for safety reasons.

On the afternoon of the same day, four missiles hit the city of Odessa. The Ukrainian authorities have confirmed that areas around the airport, including a runway and a furniture manufacturing plant, were hit.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Weapons of the West and the US were destroyed at Sol railway station and Kharkiv region

On 08 May, Russia's defence ministry spokesperson Igor Konashenkov mentioned

that the army was able to use high-precision air-to-surface missiles to hit Western military equipment at the Sol railway station. Russia claims to have also killed a few army reserves of the Ukrainian military. On 07 May, the armed forces stated that they used Iskander missiles to eliminate Ukrainian troops and weapons supplied by the US and the EU. Konashenkov mentioned that the 58th mechanized infantry brigade of Ukraine's armed forces was eliminated using the high precision missiles near the stations of Krasnograd and Karlovka.

Russia's aviation destroys Ukrainian project 1241 corvette

On 08 May, Konashenkov stated that Russia's air defences downed more than two Ukrainian Su-24 bombers and one Mi-24 helicopter overnight. They additionally destroyed communications posts at the Chervonoglinskoye airstrip and a project 1241 corvette using precision air-based missiles. Konashenkov said: "During the night, Russian Aerospace Forces destroyed a mechanize brigade command post near Pyatikhatka, Kharkov Region, and a communications post at the Chervonoglinskoye airstrip near the settlement of Artsyz." He further stated that the airstrikes eliminated up to 420 nationalists and 55 combat vehicles.

Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin on the US participating in the war

On 07 May, Russia's state дума speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said that the US had admitted to being involved in coordinating Ukraine's combat operations. He added that this meant the US was directly involved in participating in the military actions against Russia. He further mentioned that the US should also be held accountable for the war crimes committed by the Kyiv Nazi regime in Ukraine.

On 07 May, Volodin stated that the Western companies leaving Russia would face issues as domestic and Asian firms were replacing their market share. He further mentioned that foreign companies in Russia needed to have certainty about their activities in the country. He said that Russia was an open country and would always welcome investment in its economy.

Russia's air defences down 17 Ukrainian drones

On 07 May, Russia's missile and artillery forces claimed to have hit 240 targets overnight. Konashenkov said they downed 17 Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles, nine Smerch missiles and three Tochka-U missiles. He further stated that the drones were downed in Signalnoye, Luganskoye, Krasnkogorovka, Yasinovatoye, Zugres and Nikolaev regions. Defence ministry spokesman added: "Missile and artillery forces targeted 44 command posts and 196 strongpoints of the Ukrainian army and areas where Ukrainian troops and military equipment were deployed."

At the UN, Russia presents evidence of war crimes by Ukraine's military

On 07 May, Russia's diplomats at an informal meeting of the UN Security Council showed video evidence of the Ukrainian military hampering evacuation of the civilian population. Russia's ambassador Vasily Nebenzya stated that Ukraine and the West were trying to prevent this from coming under the spotlight and the global attention. Nebenzya stated that they had enough evidence to show that the Ukrainian army and paramilitaries had systematically violated human rights and used civilians as hostages and human shields.

Russia's deputy prime minister Marat Khusnullin visits Mariupol

On 08 May, Khusnullin's visit marked the first senior government official's entry into the southern port city after weeks of Russian bombardment. Khusnullin said Russian forces had liberated the city. However, Ukrainian forces are still holed up in the city's Azovstal steelworks plant.

**The West View:
Responses from the US and Europe**

On 07 May, the US first lady Jill Biden visited the Romanian capital of Bucharest and met with a group of refugee mothers and educators and Ukraine. She praised them for their resilience and strength in overcoming this ordeal.

On 08 May, Jill Biden made an unannounced trip to Ukraine and met with Ukraine's first lady Olena Zelenskaa. She also visited a school that has been converted into a

temporary shelter, currently housing 163 displaced Ukrainians. She met Ukrainian refugees and volunteers in Slovakia completing the last leg of her tour to Romania and Slovakia.

The US president, Joe Biden met with the G7 leaders and Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy and revealed new sanctions on 27 employees in Gazprom, several banking executives from Sberbank and three Russian television stations. It also banned Americans from providing consulting services to Russians. These news sanctions will be imposed on over 2,600 Russian and Belarusian military personnel too, who have been accused of war crimes in Bucha.

Kristina Kvien, the US Chargé d'affaires ad interim to Ukraine, and her team returned to Kyiv with the aim of reopening the US embassy in the capital soon. This comes after Anthony Blinken, the Secretary of State promised last month that the US embassy will resume its work in Ukraine soon.

The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson pledged that they will provide an additional USD 1.6 billion to Ukraine, in aid and military support. He made the announcement ahead of his video conference with Zelenskyy and the leaders of the G7 countries. This pledge almost doubles UK's previous commitments, and Johnson said that the money will come out of the reserve the government uses for emergencies.

On 08 May, Britain announced that they will increase the tariffs imposed on platinum and palladium imported from Russia and Belarus. Not only will the tariffs be raised by 35 per cent points, but Britain will also ban the export of goods like chemicals, plastics, rubber, and machinery to Russia, worth a combined USD 310 million.

On 7th May in Berlin, criminal investigators and prosecutors studied an explosive device that has been found and destroyed at a residential building that houses Russian news agency staff. A Berlin police spokesperson said that they are now looking into how dangerous the device was and who it might have been aimed at. Russia's foreign ministry said that this was a direct consequence of the harassment that Russian

media is facing in the West. This is regarding the new European Union sanctions and the decision to disconnect Russian media from their airwaves.

On 08 April, the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz gave a televised address marking the anniversary of the end of World War II. He referred to Russia's aggression in Ukraine and said: "Putin will not win this war. Ukraine will persevere."

Canada's prime minister, Justine Trudeau made a surprise visit to Irpin and Kyiv and said that the world will do anything that they can to ensure that Russia loses the war in Ukraine. After his talk with Zelenskyy, he addressed a news conference and confirmed that Canada will impose a fresh set of sanctions on individuals and organizations connected to Moscow. He also promised to provide more assistance to Ukraine, in the form of military aid and equipment.

Considering the new set of sanctions that are being discussed by the European Union, Bulgaria's deputy prime minister, Assen Vassilev said that they will not be able to support the ban, unless they are granted a derogation for now.

On 06 May, under the new European Union sanctions, Italy ordered the seizure of a 459-foot motor yacht, allegedly owned by a person with "significant economic and business connections," to Moscow. Italian media reports that the vessel, Scheherazade is owned indirectly by president Vladimir Putin, and is the 12th largest privately owned yacht in the world.

On 07 May, Moldova reported on several blasts near the village of Vărăncău, it predicts it by explosives that could have been dropped through drones. This is alarming because this is the second week when similar incidents have been reported in the Transdnistria breakaway region, raising concern that Ukraine and Russia's war is spilling over to the frontier. While Transdnistria's interior ministry said that no one has been injured in the attacks, they also released photos of craters that the overnight strikes have allegedly created.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 08 May, after a virtual meeting with president Zelenskyy, the G7 leaders said that they will be reinforcing the economic isolation of Russia. They said that they will phase out the usage of Russian oil. A joint statement released by the G7 read: "We will continue and elevate our campaign against the financial elites and family members, who support president Vladimir Putin in his war effort and squander the resources of the Russian people."

The World Health Organization has said that they are gathering evidence against Russia for possible war crimes committed on healthcare facilities in Ukraine. Mike Ryan, the Emergencies Director of WHO said warring parties had to explicitly try and avoid attacks on health facilities but who has still documented over 200 attacks on hospitals and clinics in Ukraine.

On 07 May, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that they were hopeful that the civilians in the Azovstal steel plant could be successfully evacuated. A senior official Dominik Stillhart, said: "Experience shows that a successful action helps further evacuations because now both sides have seen that it works. We hope that we can now build on this minimum of trust."

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War in Ukraine: Day 72

War On The Ground:

On 06 May, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a video conference addressed the UK based think tank Chatham House on

challenges posed by Russia in the region. He accused Russia's armed force of extreme brutality and contempt for international conventions and human rights. He also claimed Russia of nuclear blackmail through their propaganda media by using graphic descriptions of how the attack would play out. He further stated that Russia is deliberately disrupting world food markets by seizing several Ukrainian shipping ports for export.

On the same day, president Zelenskyy addressed the people and the parliament of Iceland. Even though Iceland and Ukraine are located on opposite ends of Europe, with very different weather and economic conditions, he emphasized that both countries appreciate liberty. He also claimed that over 500,000 Ukrainians have been illegally deported to remote regions of Russia.

Also on 06 May, Zelenskyy awarded various titles to the military and members of the families of fallen defenders on the occasion of Ukraine's Infantry Day. Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine General Valerii Zaluzhnyi was titled the first Knight of the Cross of Military Merit for successfully organizing the defence of the state from the start of Russia's armed aggression and personally leading the heroic resistance of his forces to the invasion.

Lieutenant General Yevhen Moysiuk, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Colonel Oleksandr Okhrimenko, Deputy Commander of the mechanized battalion of the 72 separate mechanized brigades, Captain Vladyslav Kaliyevsky, combat medic of the 72nd separate mechanized brigade, Sergeant Dariya Mazurenko also received the same award. The Golden Star Order was awarded to six heroes and the family of a soldier posthumously, Zelenskyy stated that these individuals' heroism, wisdom, and military success to resist the Russian invasion will give all our citizens a special hope for triumph.

On 06 May, Ukrainian officials accused Russia of breaking a truce meant to evacuate dozens of civilians trapped in the bunkers of

Azovstal steelworks by firing at a car. Zelenskyy stated if Russia kills civilians or injured soldiers who could otherwise be released, Ukraine would no longer hold peace talks with Moscow. Ukraine's deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk, reported that 50 civilians including children were evacuated from the Azovstal steel plant to a camp in the Russian-occupied town of Bezimenne. Russian news agency TASS said a third bus was on the way to the camp.

On 06 May, the deputy infrastructure minister Mustafa Nayyem stated Ukraine expects to increase export capacity by 50 per cent in the months ahead by developing facilities along its western border, however, it will still be below pre-war levels. The country was forced to trade through minor Danube river ports and railway terminals along its western border, after the Russian Invasion. He mentioned that in April, 3.5 million tonnes of goods were moved through the western borders by rail alone, and national railway operators are building border terminals for general and liquid goods, as well as reloading from broad to narrow gauge and vice versa.

On the same day, Zelenskyy met with the foreign ministers of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to stress the significance of increasing sanctions on Russia. He further expressed gratitude to the Baltic states for their strong support and advocacy in the EU and worldwide.

On 05 May, the deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk appealed to Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) to assist in the evacuation of soldiers trapped in the Azovstal steelworks. The letter of appeal stated she had asked the organization to "Assess their physical and mental condition, collect evidence of the conditions they are in, and provide medical assistance to Ukrainians whose human rights have been violated by the Russian Federation."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Russia's defence ministry reported that they have destroyed two ammunition depots, one in Kramatorsk, to the east of Ukraine, and the other one in Popasna. They allegedly also

managed to take 31 areas where Ukraine's troops had been deployed. Russian missiles. Moreover, they mentioned that their air defences have shot down two of Ukraine's warplanes, a Su-25, and a MiG-29, in the eastern Luhansk region.

Russia's foreign ministry recently said that they have summoned Deborah Bronnert, Britain's ambassador to Russia, as a sign of protest against the new sanctions that the UK plans to impose on Russian media organizations and individuals. The ministry also said that they will continue to react "harshly and decisively" to all future sanctions by the UK.

On 06 May, RIA reported that two buses, one carrying 12 people and the other carrying 13 civilians had left the Azovstal complex and brought to Bezinenne, a town under Russia's control. On the other hand, Russia's deputy U.N. ambassador, Dmitry Polyanskiy alleged that a report by Reuters on 01 May had censored parts where one evacuee from Mariupol say how Ukraine's forces had kept them in the steelworks against their will. He alleged that Natalia Usmanova's account of her experience had been misreported, but the Reuters spokesperson said that the organization stood by the reporting and was looking into verifying the claims.

Russia is readying itself for the upcoming celebration on 09 May, which they celebrate as the Victory Day. Russia's president Vladimir Putin is all set to send a warning to the West when he leads the celebrations on Monday, commemorating the 77th Victory Day. The Red Square will see a parade of troops, tanks, rockets, and ICBMs which will follow a speech by the president. Speculations have been growing if Russia is planning any power move regarding their invasion of Ukraine, for that day, but so far no such inclination has been observed. On 06 May, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that the allegation that Russia is stealing food grains from Ukraine is likely to be false. A UN food agency has alleged that Russia has been moving trucks of grains out of the occupied regions in Ukraine.

Peskov also gave an update with regards to the Victory Day celebrations in Ukraine. In a

press briefing, he said that a parade will be taken out in Mariupol to commemorate the day when in 1945 Russia has celebrated victory against the Nazi forces. Peskov also referred to Poland and their call to the EU to strengthen the sanctions in the face of this Russian aggression. He said that this narrative that is developing in Warsaw could be a potential "source of threat."

On 06 May, a Moscow court ordered the arrest of the prominent Russian journalist Alexander Nevzorov, for spreading fake news about the war in Ukraine. He has alleged that Russia's military had shelled a maternity facility in Mariupol. Nevzorov has 1.8 million subscribers on his YouTube channel and has written a letter to Russia's spokesperson to close the case, and has called this investigation ridiculous. According to the court, he will face two months of detainment for two months, if he returns to the country. Nevzorov's wife has informed via Instagram that they are currently in Israel, even though they do not have any plans to shift permanently.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 06 May, US president Joe Biden announced the next round of security aid to Ukraine which will include "artillery munitions, radars and other equipment." Previously Congress had declared USD 13.6 billion as military, humanitarian and economic aid. Post the announcement, he also remarked that the government had exhausted its funding to large extent for Ukraine. He said: "Congress should quickly provide the requested funding to strengthen Ukraine on the battlefield and at the negotiating table."

On 06 May, as per the reports from unnamed US media, US intelligence had provided information on the location of the Moskva to Ukraine which helped it to launch missiles. Till now the Pentagon has not responded, but US spokesperson, John Kirby rejected such a report. Another spokesperson said: "We do provide a range of intelligence to help the Ukrainians understand the threat posed by Russian ships in the Black Sea and

to help them prepare to defend against potential sea-based assaults.”

Germany’s tank and artillery maker, Rheinmetall has predicted its sale to grow double or triple-fold as many countries are at the peak of increasing their defence. According to Rheinmetall, it expects orders close to EUR 31 billion by 2023 which was only EUR 4.68 billion as of 2021.

The manufacturing sector of Germany has been reported to have declined due to the effect of the Ukraine war and the lockdown in China. Since Europe’s manufacturing and Germany’s supply chain are interlinked. With lockdown imposed in China has affected Germany’s exports of cars and auto machinery. Till now the production per cent has fallen by 3.9 per cent compared to March 2022, which is seen as the largest decline since April 2020 pandemic.

On 06 May, Hungary’s prime minister Viktor Orban expressed his disagreement with the oil embargo imposed by the EU on Russia. He remarked that the move would trigger problems for Hungary which is equivalent to launching a nuclear bomb into Hungary’s economy. Although the European Commission has provided an additional year for Hungary and Slovakia to stop the oil and gas imports from Russia, Orban has asked for an extension of time and transition of EU money. For the oil embargo to be passed, it requires the consent of 27 member states of the EU. With Hungary opposing the embargo, it is likely for the deal being disapproved.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

The fear of market instability, volatility, and rising inflation have pushed investors to switch to commodity Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs). Since 2022, commodities, gold and other metals have performed well in the stock exchange with a 57.5 per cent inflow. The rate marks the highest in 40 years. Out of all, SPDR Gold Shares ETF (GLD) is reported to be the highest inflow with USD 7.4 billion. As per the CFRA returns reports, ETFs ranked second, followed by agriculture and industrial metals.

On 06 May, SAP SE, CEO reported that the war in Ukraine along with the pandemic has challenged the forecast of the financial companies. Which has led to relying on Artificial intelligence for forecasts. According to the CEO, “This predictive analytics model has proven to be quite accurate and is giving us pretty good visibility.” The technology is not high-end yet to predict the invasion of Russia or pandemic, but it helps in assessing the impact of such event on companies within a 24 – 48 hours period.

On 06 May, the UNSC released a statement for the first calling for a peace process in Ukraine. It expressed its “strong support” for the efforts taken by the UN chief, António Guterres. It asked for the UN chief to find a solution to the Ukraine conflict. In response, Guterres appreciated the statement of the UNSC and welcomed its support to save lives in the war and its initiative to find a way for peace. He said: “Today, for the first time, the Security Council spoke with one voice for peace in Ukraine.”

The UN reported that it was involved in evacuating people from the Azovstal steel plant, where close to 500 civilians were recused in the last two UN operations. It estimates that many hundreds of people have been stuck in the steel plant.

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War in Ukraine: Day 71

War On The Ground:

On 05 May, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy created a worldwide crowdfunding portal United24 to assist Kyiv in the conflict with Russia and rebuild the country's infrastructure. He said that the first step was to raise funds and other projects or programs will be added soon. All funds will be transferred to Ukraine's national bank and distributed to the necessary ministries. He vowed that the administration would also provide a report on the expenditure every 24 hours. Apart from this, Zelenskyy also met the 43rd US president, George W. Bush. Where both exchanged on the state of Ukrainians and their courage in the war. Bush also re-iterated the support of the US for Ukraine.

In his evening speech, president Zelenskyy addressed the participants of the Brave Ukraine charity event and mentioned that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has destroyed hundreds of hospitals and other facilities, leaving physicians without medications or the equipment to perform surgery. Zelenskyy also addressed the high-level International Donors' Conference hosted by Warsaw for Ukraine. He emphasized the need for Ukraine to obtain EU membership amid the war through a special procedure. He further expressed gratitude to all the participants of the conference for creating a support plan similar to the historic Marshall Plan.

On 05 May, Zelenskyy reported the death of a popular television reporter. Oleksandr Makhov, who volunteered for war was found killed in the battles near Izium. He also confirmed the evacuation of 344 people

from Mariupol and its suburbs to Zaporizhzhya in the second operation.

On 05 May, Zelenskyy awarded seven employees of the National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) for showcasing courage, selfless action, territorial integrity, and exuberant performance of their duties. It was reported that the activities carried out by the NABU detectives had helped to save many warriors from being killed in the Kyiv attacks. According to Zelenskyy: "I am grateful and have the great honour to greet real Ukrainians today, real heroes of our state."

On 05 May, the political advisor to president Olesiy Arestovych, stated that Ukraine is unlikely to initiate a counter-offensive in its war with Russia before mid-June, when it expects to have received additional weaponry from its allies. On the same day, foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba said if any European country opposes the embargo on Russian oil, it will be accused of complicity in crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine.

On 05 May, several civilians remain trapped under the Azovstal steel plant that has been rattled by explosions as Russian forces pressed for the last stronghold in Mariupol. President of Russia Vladimir Putin stated that they were willing to guarantee safe passage for people, but reiterated demands for the Ukrainian military on the ground to disarm.

On the same day, the UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres informed the Security Council that a third evacuation operation with the Red Cross was underway to remove civilians from Mariupol.

A special report by Reuters

On 05 May, *Reuters* released a special report titled "The Bucha Brigades" investigating the remnants of Russia's hurried withdrawal from Bucha and discovered crucial clues to the identity of specific Russian soldiers and military units involved throughout the brutal takeover. A paratrooper named Aleksandr Logvinenko was tracked down owing to a love letter discovered amid the rubble. Journalists spent three weeks in Bucha interviewing over 90 individuals, analyzing

photographic and video evidence shared by the villagers, and examining Russian records left behind. For the first time, numerous information regarding the military troops and the line of command was revealed in the report.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Putin's call with Israel's prime minister

On 05 May, president Vladimir Putin held a phone call with Israel's prime minister, Naftali Bennett. The leaders discussed developing bilateral ties and developing mutual relations. During the discussion on the humanitarian issue, Putin guaranteed Bennet to provide a free passage to the civilians seeking evacuation from the port of Mariupol. Both the leaders recalled the memories of 09 May 1945, Putin highlighted the Nazi killings of 40 per cent of the Soviet people and wished for the wellness of "war veterans" in Israel.

On 04 May, the defence ministry said that they had successfully hit several Ukrainian positions, through their artillery strikes and killed over 600 Ukrainian soldiers. They also reported that 61 units of military equipment and weapons have been destroyed. Along with that, the Russian missiles have also struck aviation equipment at the Kanatovo airfield along with a large ammunition depot.

On 05 May, amidst reports of continuous attacks on the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, Kremlin said that the humanitarian corridors were operating there. They denied the claims of increased aggression and referred to president Putin's earlier orders to not storm the plant.

On 05 May, as per a TASS report, Leonid Slutsky, a Russian negotiator, and lawmaker, taking part in talks with Ukraine said that Kyiv was "rolling back" on their agreements. He said that this was making it difficult to conduct negotiations.

Allegations against NATO countries

Kremlin alleged that the United States, the UK, and the other NATO countries were helping Ukraine by 'constantly' providing them with information. They said that it was

this information that had enabled Ukraine to kill 12 Russian generals. Dmitry Peskov spoke about this and referred to the supply of weapons to Ukraine as well. About the weapons, he said these: “do not contribute to the quick completion of the (Russian) operation, but at the same time are not capable of hindering the achievement of the goals set.” Peskov also dismissed the speculation that they were planning something even more aggressive in Ukraine, to commemorate Victory Day on 09 May.

On 05 May, Russia said that they have declared seven employees in the Danish embassy to be 'persona non grata'. The foreign ministry said that since Denmark had opted to go along with their anti-Russian policies, a similar response was obvious from Moscow as well. Denmark's foreign ministry further confirmed that they have been informed about this decision and said that it was a “completely unjustified and deeply problematic decision.”

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 05 May, US first lady Jill Biden announced her plans to visit Romania and Slovakia to highlight Washington's commitment to Ukraine and to extend her support to the women suffering due to the war in Ukraine. She would be meeting US service members and embassy personnel along with Ukrainian parents, children, aid workers, and teachers during her visit.

On the same day, the US mentioned that it had provided intel to Ukraine that helped it target Russian warships more effectively. The intel is speculated to have helped Ukraine target Russia's Moskva.

On 05 May, UK's prime minister Boris Johnson spoke to Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the supply of arms and ammunition. Johnson discussed a possible supply of longer-range weaponry to Ukraine's armed forces by the UK. A spokesperson said the two leaders also discussed the “provision of longer-range weaponry to prevent the bombardment of civilians.”

On the same day, the UK said it would provide GBP 45 million to help the

vulnerable in Ukraine. This brought the UK's total GBP 220 million to an end as the package was dispersed between UN agencies and charities delivering vital aid.

On 05 May, Hungary mentioned that the new sanctions by the EU on Russia would harm Budapest more than Moscow. Hungary's prime minister wrote a letter to EU's commission president Ursula Von Der Leyen stating Hungary's concerns about the sanctions. Budapest depends on Russia for more than half its crude oil and oil products imports.

On 05 May, France announced that it would increase its overall financial aid to Ukraine to about USD two billion. France's president Emmanuel Macron further called out the international community to renew their support to Ukraine to help it build civilian infrastructure.

On 05 May, Italy's parliamentary panel opened an investigation into the disinformation shared on television. The parliamentary committee for the security of the republic summoned the head of the state TV network. The panel stated it was looking into foreign interference and disinformation activity with particular reference to the war in Ukraine. Italy's public broadcaster RAI regularly hosts Russian journalists.

On 05 May, Turkey's president Tayyip Erdogan spoke to Macron on a call and discussed the war in Ukraine. Erdogan's office released a statement saying that Turkey was doing everything it could to end the war through diplomacy. Erdogan also congratulated Macron for being re-elected as the French president.

On 05 May, the EU's aviation safety agency (EASA) warned of increased risks to airlines due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. The agency said there was also an increased risk of cyberattacks. In addition, civilian airlines and airports were at high risk of potential spill overs from the conflict.

On 05 May, NATO's secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg mentioned that the bloc would increase its presence around Sweden's borders and in the Baltic Sea as the country's

application to join NATO is processed. Sweden and Finland have been seeking military protection assurances from NATO. Stoltenberg said: "I am convinced that we will find solutions for the security needs Sweden will have in a transitional period."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 05 May, an analysis by *Reuters* mentioned how officials in Iran were in no rush to revive the 2015 JCPOA agreement as they saw it as an opportunity to increase revenues from exporting oil. The war in Ukraine and the destabilized energy prices opened a window of opportunities for Urban to provide more substantial leverage to negotiators whenever the talks are resumed.

On 05 May, Israel stated that Putin apologized for Russia's foreign minister's remarks claiming that Hitler had Jewish origins. Israel's prime minister Naftali Bennett said Putin had apologized on the phone. Putin also assured Israel that he would create a safe passage for civilians from the besieged Azovstal steelworks plant.

On 05 May, Japan's prime minister Fumio Kishida warned that the situation in Taiwan could be replicated in East Asia if leading powers do not maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Kishida commented on this as he spoke to Johnson and added: "Peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait are critical not only for Japan's security but also for the stability of international society." On the same day, Kishida mentioned that Japan would use nuclear reactors and energy to reduce its dependence on Russian energy. Japan became more reliant on Russia after the 2011 Fukushima disaster that triggered a meltdown in the north-eastern region. Kishida added: "We will utilize nuclear reactors with safety assurances to contribute to the worldwide reduction of dependence on Russian energy."

On 05 May, authorities in Fiji seized a USD 300 million yacht of Russian oligarch Suleiman Kerimov. The authorities acted on a request by the US justice department as Washington has been pressing its allies to

impose sanctions and restrictions on Russia. The Fiji court ruled in favor of the US and agreed to hand over the superyacht.

On 05 May, the World Health Organization stated that it would consider holding a resolution against Russia next week. The organization plans to close its regional office in Moscow. The move is seen as a political step to isolate Moscow further.

On 05 May, the UN said it would continue trying to evacuate Ukrainian civilians from Mariupol. The authorities said a third operation was going on to evacuate civilians from the city and the steel plant. The UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have successfully helped 500 civilians flee the areas.

On the same day, the UN also found 188 abductions being carried out by Russian troops. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said: "As of 04 May, my office has documented 180 such cases, of which five victims were eventually found dead."

On 05 May, Shell reported that it was able to increase its quarterly profits due to the high demand for oil and gas across the globe. Shell had withdrawn from Russia following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, which costed the company USD 3.9 billion. But, it was still able to triple its profits to USD 3.2 billion in the last quarter due to the ongoing war and the increasing demand for oil and gas.

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War in Ukraine: Day 70

War On The Ground:

On 04 May, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his daily speech addressed the people of Denmark virtually on their 77 anniversary of liberation from the Nazis. He mentioned that he hoped for peace and called on the people to remember and mourn the 220 children killed in the Ukrainian war by Russians.

On 04 May, spokesperson for Ukraine's state border service Andriy Demchenko stated that Kyiv would be prepared if Belarus joined Russian forces. The statement came following large-scale military drills performed by Belarus' armed forces. However, the Belarus defence ministry said the exercise presented no threat to its neighbors or the European countries.

On the same day, Ukraine's intelligence service claimed that Russia is planning a military parade in the besieged city of Mariupol to celebrate its 'Victory Day' held annually on 09 May. The city's central streets are being cleaned swiftly of rubble, bodies, and explosive munitions. The intelligence described the parade as a "large-scale propaganda campaign" by Russia to sway the remaining 120,000 residents in the city, which is now mainly under Russian control.

On 04 May, the UK's defence intelligence reported that Russia had positioned 22 battalion groups near Izyum, an attempt to advance into the northern part of Donbas. Russia is likely to capture the cities of Kramatorsk and Severodonetsk. This would reinforce their military control of the north-eastern Donbas and serve as a frontier for their operations to block Ukrainian forces in the region.

On the same day, Ukraine's army general staff (AGS) stated that Russian forces were pressing hard along the Siviersky Donets River line, but Ukrainian defences had withstood the onslaught and suffered heavy losses. Other battles for control of river bridges were still underway. Also, on 04 May, Mariupol's mayor Vadym Boychenko reported that a new operation to evacuate residents from the city, and neighboring areas had begun. A convoy of buses carrying people left for Zaporizhzhia in the morning; however, it did not appear to contain any of the trapped civilians in the Azovstal steel plant. More than 30 youngsters are awaiting evacuation from the factory. He further stated that fierce combat is in progress and communication with Ukrainian fighters inside has been lost.

A new analysis estimates 600 killed in the Mariupol theater bombing

On 04 May, a new investigation led by *Associated Press* reported that over 600 civilians taking shelter in the Mariupol theater were killed by the Russian bombing on 16 March. The testimonies of over two dozen survivors, rescuers, and individuals who were near the theater, have made it evident that the assault killed far more people than the previous estimate of 300.

Survivors claimed that 1,000 people were inside the theater at the time of the attack, but only about 200 people were seen escaping. The investigation also denounced Russian accusations that the theater was demolished by Ukrainian forces or that it was used as a military base. As no soldiers were seen by the witnesses in the area and everyone was aware that the theater was being used for shelter and aid.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Russia discusses the war in Ukraine with Israel

On 04 May, Russia's foreign ministry reacted to Israel's diplomat Yair Lapid, as he demanded that foreign minister Sergei Lavrov should apologise for his remarks against Jerusalem. Lavrov mentioned that Russia's special military operation in Kyiv was towards the denazification of Ukraine. Furthermore, Lavrov accused Israeli of supporting the "neo-Nazi regime" in Kyiv.

Concerns about Russia's possible debt default stalled

On 04 May, foreign creditors mentioned that they would accept Russia's international debt payment obligations. This would allow Russia to avoid a technical default. However, Russia paid off its two sovereign bonds in USD, but it still has to be approved by the US and the UK. This comes as the West had imposed sanctions on Russia that froze its USD 300 billion gold and foreign currency reserves.

Kremlin dismisses claims that Putin would declare war on Ukraine

On 04 May, Kremlin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov clarified that Russia's president Vladimir Putin would not wage war against Ukraine on 09 May. He added: "There is no chance of that. It is nonsense." 09 May is Russia's most important national event as it serves as a remembrance of the Soviets defeating Nazi Germany and is commemorated as the "Victory Day."

Russia targets NATO convoys of arms shipments to Ukraine

On 04 May, Russia's defence minister Sergei Shoigu warned that it would hit shipments of NATO weapons to Ukraine. The defence

ministry stated that it had fired two Kalibr cruise missiles at Ukrainian targets from a submarine in the Black Sea. He further mentioned that next the military would consider NATO transports carrying weapons as military targets.

Concerning the fighters in the Azovstal plant

On 04 May, Shoigu mentioned that the Ukrainian fighters in the Azovstal plant in Mariupol were being kept under a secure blockade. This comes as Putin ordered that the fighters were to be hermetically sealed off.

Russia bans 63 Japanese officials

On 04 May, in response to Japan's involvement in unacceptable rhetoric against Moscow, Russia banned 63 Japanese officials and the prime minister. The sanctions bar the entities from entering Russia indefinitely.

Ukrainian forces shell an oil depot in Makeyevka

On 04 May, Russia stated that one person was killed due to shelling by Ukrainian forces at the oil depot in Makeyevka. Russia's defence authority stated: "Take care of yourself and your family; try not to leave the house unnecessarily."

The West view:

Responses from the US and Europe

UK's military intelligence reported that Russia had deployed 22 battalion tactical groups, in Izium, to the east of Ukraine. They said that this was to help their advance along the northern axis of the Donbas region.

On 04 May, Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, requested Ukraine's help to untangle a diplomatic impasse that has been caused by Germany's president's supportive relations with Russia. Scholz said that it was a diplomatic problem that he was asked to visit the country while the president was not. This awkward twist in relations comes at a time when Ukraine tremendously needs Germany's support.

On 04 May, it was reported that Belarus had suddenly started their large-scale drills to test its readiness for combat. As per Belarus's defence ministry, the exercise will

include 'significant numbers of military vehicles,' but should not be any concern for their neighbours or the larger European community, as it was part of a routine drill.

The ruling party of Sweden, the Social Democrats, said that they would be holding another meeting on 15 May, to decide whether the party will switch their stance and support the application to join NATO. The Social Democrats, who have been the biggest party in every election for the last 100 years, are the major obstacle to Sweden's NATO application.

On 04 May, the Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte said that the Netherlands would be assessing if they can join the UK, Germany and Belgium in supplying more weapons to Ukraine. He said that they would continue to support Ukraine's fight for democracy. He also conducted a phone call with Zelenskyy and praised how he handled the battle against Russia.

On 04 May, Bulgaria's parliament, voted to allow the repairs of heavy military equipment from Ukraine in exchange of Ukraine's grains and electricity. This proposal won over the proposal to send direct military aid to Ukraine. Bulgaria is one of the few countries in the Black Sea region not to send arms to Ukraine, directly.

Patriarch Kiril of the Russian Orthodox Church has been added to a draft blacklist, that included many Russian officers and businessmen accused of supporting the war in Ukraine. The European Commission has also suggested freezing the Patriarch's assets. The sanction, which will also include a travel ban, has to be approved by the EU member states.

The EU Council president, Charles Michel also said that the EU is considering providing additional military support to Moldova. This would be on top of the cyber and logistic support that will be given to Moldova. While he did not go into the specifics of the support to be provided, he said that it was crucial to avoid any escalation in the region.

In an interview, Pope Francis recently said that he has asked for a meeting with Moscow

to discuss the war, but has not received any affirmative reply. Francis, who made an unprecedented visit to the Russian embassy when the war started, said that his message to Russia's top diplomat has still not been delivered. He said: "I fear that Putin cannot, and does not, want to have this meeting at this time. But how can you not stop so much brutality?"

The Global Fallout: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 04 May, the Mexican president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said that they would not be imposing sanctions on Russia. He instead called for dialogue and said that they would prefer to remain neutral in the face of this crisis.

On 04 May, the presidential frontrunner Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva alleged that the Ukrainian president Zelenskyy bears equal responsibility for the war with Vladimir Putin. In an interview with *Time* magazine, the former president said it was even the Western leaders who should be promoting closed-door negotiations instead of encouraging Zelenskyy and his war efforts.

On 04 May, Japan's prime minister Fumio Kishida said that Russia is to blame for the situation of their bilateral ties. Kishida and 62 other Japanese citizens have been banned by Moscow from entering the country; this is something that Japan has found unacceptable. The ban comes after Japan decided to enforce the sanctions on Russian political and business leaders. When asked about countermeasures, Kishida said that he was scheduled to meet the UK's prime minister on 05 May and that Japan will be cooperating with the international community and respond to Russia accordingly.

The Global Network Against Food Crises, an agency set up by the UN and the EU released their annual report. It said that conflicts in various parts of the world and the fluctuating weather and economy had already increased the number of people facing a food shortage to 193 million. As per the report, the crisis in Ukraine will only increase this number further. Global food security will definitely be hampered by the

fact that both Ukraine and Russia are major food producing countries, and will exacerbate the crisis in countries like Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Haiti, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

It was also reported that another convoy of buses, carrying evacuees from Mariupol left for Zaporizhzhia. This evacuation has been coordinated by the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

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War in Ukraine: Day 69

War On The Ground:

On 03 May, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the Albanian Parliament, expressing gratitude for Albania's clear stance against Russia and for the assistance provided. Zelensky also wished the people of Albania and other Muslims worldwide as they celebrated Eid al-Fitr.

Attack on steel factory and military airfield

On 03 May, Russia fired rockets at the encircled Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol

with around 200 civilians trapped underground after breaking the ceasefire on the same day. Captain Sviatoslav Palamar of Ukraine's Azov Regiment stated: "As of this moment, a powerful assault on the territory of the Azovstal plant is underway with the support of armoured vehicles, tanks, attempts to land on boats and a large number of infantry."

Russia also fired missiles at a military airfield in Odesa, Ukraine's southern city, destroying drones, missiles, and ammunition supplied by the US and its European allies. The Russian defence ministry reported hangars holding unmanned Bayraktar TB2 drones, missiles and ammunition from the US and Europe were destroyed. Various military facilities across the country were also hit by Russian missiles and artillery, including command centres, arsenals, and an S-300 anti-aircraft missile system. In central and western Ukraine, missiles hit six railway stations with severe damage and disrupted train services.

On 03 May, a Russian assault on a coke plant in Avdiivk, the eastern part of Donetsk, killed at least ten people and injured 15 others. The attack was substantiated by Metinvest, the country's largest steel company, which said Russian troops opened fire on a busload of its employees shortly after their shift ended.

On 03 May, Russian missiles destroyed three electrical substations disrupting power and water supplies in Lviv, a relatively peaceful western city far from the war frontiers.

Evacuees from the Avastal steel plant arrive at Zaporizhzhia

On 03 May, several evacuees who had been hiding for weeks in the bunkers of a steel plant in Russia-occupied Mariupol arrived in Kyiv-controlled Zaporizhzhia, where medics attended to them for burns and malnutrition. The UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) organized the five-day operation to evacuate women, children, and the elderly from the steel plant.

On 03 May, an information and analytical agency, APK-Inform, predicted that Ukraine would face a serious shortage of storage

facilities in the 2022/23 season as a result of a substantial drop in exports following Russia's invasion. According to data from the state statistics office, Ukraine's overall storage capacity is 75 million tonnes, with 44.5 million tonnes owned by agricultural producers. However, a portion of this capacity is located in war zones, reducing the accessible volume to roughly 61 million tonnes, implying that 35 per cent of the capacity will be used by the 2021 harvest. Ukraine may harvest 55.9 million tonnes of grains and oilseeds in 2022, with a 16.3 million tonne shortfall in capacity.

On 03 May, the Kyiv School of Economics released a report estimating the cost of war to be USD 600 billion. It is reported that the Russian invasion is costing the country USD 4.5 billion each week in infrastructural damages. The cost of direct infrastructure damage is estimated to be over USD 92 billion.

On 03 May, Ukraine's ambassador to London, Vadym Prystaiko urged the UK home secretary Priti Patel to ease the "unnecessary, long, bureaucratic" visa procedure for refugees from Ukraine. As many Ukrainians remain stranded and lost in the system. According to recent government figures, 59,000 people have been granted visas but are yet to arrive in the UK. Moreover, only 15,000 of the 74,700 Ukrainians who applied for the sponsorship scheme have made it to Britain.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

Putin's call with the presidents of Belarus and France

On 03 May, Russia's president Vladimir Putin held a call with Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko. In the talks, issues on bilateral agenda, promotion of union formation, Eurasian space, a special military operation in Donbass, and meeting of collective security treaty organization were discussed. Besides, measure to improve relations between Russia and Belarus also took place.

On 03 May, Putin held another call with France's president Emmanuel Macron. Putin congratulated Macron on the election victory

and various issues relating to the Ukraine war were discussed. Putin highlighted that the special military operation in Donbass, the liberation of Mariupol and the evacuation process of civilians from the Azovstal plant was in terms with the agreement signed with the UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres. He also noted that the war crimes committed by Ukraine forces and the death of the civilians in areas of Donbass could be brought to an end if the West stopped its supply of weapons to aid Ukraine. Despite the arguments about the attacks in Kyiv, Putin said that Russia was still open to dialogue with Ukraine. In the talk, Macron brought up the emerging food crisis, and Putin countered by saying that it was a result of heavy sanctions by the West. He also added that, the sanctions had destroyed the operations of logistics and "transport infrastructure."

Apart from the call with the leaders, president Putin signed a decree aimed at unfriendly nations and international organizations. Through the decree, Russia enforces to ban the export of its products, and raw materials to those countries which are imposing sanctions. Further, it also proposes to exit from the existing contracts with MNC companies that are under sanctions.

On 03 May, the foreign ministry alleged Israeli minister for bringing the "anti-historical statements" to the front. The Israel minister had accused Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov of making remarks on Hitler as part of Jewish. He demanded an apology for making such a statement. He said: "both an unforgivable and outrageous statement as well as a terrible historical error. Jews did not murder themselves in the Holocaust." The word clash has turned the relations between Israel and Russia into a serious crisis.

As per the RIA News Agency, "Azov and Ukrainian servicemen, who are stationed on the plant, took advantage of it. They came out of the basement; they took up firing positions on the territory and in the factory buildings." It also reported that Russia's army along with the Donetsk People's Republic had been using artillery, aviation and weapons to demolish the firing position held by the Ukraine forces.

On 03 May, an internet service disruptor firm NetBlocks claimed to have rerouted its internet traffic in Kherson using its communication infrastructure. Earlier a UK based organization had confirmed on tracking down the internet shut down in Kherson. According to NetBlocks: "Connectivity on the network has been routed via Russia's internet instead of Ukrainian telecoms infrastructure and is hence likely now subject to Russian internet regulations, surveillance, and censorship."

The West View: Responses from Europe

On 03 May, the government said that they would be donating 13 armoured vehicles to reinforce the war efforts in Ukraine. It was reported that the vehicles are steel plated, and can resist mines, explosive devices and high-velocity bullets. They can also be used to transport officials and workers as well. The foreign secretary Liz Truss said: "This latest donation of armoured vehicles will help protect innocent Ukrainians attempting to flee Russian shelling and support Ukrainian officials carrying out vital work."

On 03 May, addressing Ukraine's parliament, prime minister Boris Johnson said he believed that Ukraine will emerge victorious against this invasion by Russia. Taking a leaf out of UK's wartime leader, Winston Churchill's speech he said: "Ukraine will win, Ukraine will be free... This is Ukraine's finest hour, that will be remembered and recounted for generations to come." He is the first western leader to address Ukraine's parliament since the beginning of the war. He also announced a further USD 375 million to Ukraine, for military aid, including electronic warfare equipment as well as a counter-battery radar system.

On 03 May, the German Chancellor has a meeting with the German cabinet and the prime ministers of Sweden and Finland, at the government's guest house. There he issued a warning that Russia might attack any country given the imperialistic nature of their president and the fact that they do not hesitate to violate international laws. He also said that Germany would extend their support to Sweden and Finland should they choose to join NATO.

French president Emmanuel Macron in a phone call with Vladimir Putin said that he is open to working with international organizations to negotiate and lift the Russian embargo on exports of food via the Black Sea. Macron also reiterated that a ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia was of utmost importance, and mentioned that he had spoken to Putin about the situation in Mariupol and Donbas. A statement quoting Macron said: "I have called on Russia to live up to its international responsibility as a UN Security Council member by putting an end to this devastating attack."

On 03 May, Austria's foreign minister said that if EU was indeed serious about Ukraine's membership, the organization must consider radical treaty change. He also mentioned how this was a 'geostrategic moment' for Europe, and that they would have to do more than impose sanctions on Russia or provide aid to Ukraine.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 03 May, prime minister Modi, who is in Copenhagen for the India-Nordic summit, issued a statement about the Ukraine war, in a press briefing. Keeping in line with India's neutral stance, he said: "We appealed for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and for the adoption of dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the problem."

On 03 May, *BBC* reported that the leader of South Africa's opposition party, John Steenhuisen is in Ukraine for a six-day fact-finding mission. He is the first African leader to visit Ukraine since the war began, and he criticized the neutral stance taken by the South African government. He said, "Our defence minister and the head of the army were toasting the Russian army on the night of the invasion at the Russian embassy in South Africa... It doesn't make sense that they would use that as the excuse for sitting on their hands while a humanitarian crisis like this is raging."

On 03 May, analysts associated with the Stimson Centre, said that North Korea's isolated economy will bear the brunt of the economic instability caused by the Covid 19 crisis and the Ukraine War. On top of that, natural disasters like floods will only be

exacerbating the economic crisis in North Korea. With regards to how this might affect the country, Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, an economic expert, said: "As food prices in North Korea do often move in tandem with global prices, we're likely to see current food price hikes mirrored in North Korea as well over time,"

On 03 May, the UN special representative on sexual violence in war, Pramila Patten said, that men and boys have been rape victims by Russian soldiers in Ukraine. This comes after several reports of sexual violence by the invading forces have already been made. Patten said: "It's hard for women and girls to report [rape] because of stigma amongst other reasons, but it's often even harder for men and boys to report ... we have to create that safe space for all victims to report cases of sexual violence."

On 03 May, a spokesperson from the WHO informed that the organization will hold a special meeting to discuss the impact of Russia's war on Ukraine's health infrastructure, and healthcare systems. The meeting that was requested by Ukraine, and was signed by 38 other countries, is supposed to be held on 10 May.

On 03 May, the head of the Red Cross in Ukraine spoke about the people still stuck in the Mariupol region who are awaiting evacuation. He said that there was signs that intense fighting was continuing amidst humanitarian efforts to gain access to the civilians stuck there. Pascal Hundt, from the International Committee of the Red Cross, said: "We would have hoped that many more people would have been able to join the convoy and get out of hell. That is why we have mixed feelings."

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War in Ukraine: Day 68

War On The Ground:

On 02 May, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned of the threat of a food crisis across the globe. He reported that Ukraine was close to losing tens of millions of tonnes of agricultural products due to the port block it faces at the Black Sea. Ukraine

is one of the top grain and food exporters, face a hard challenge from Russia, thereby affecting its economy.

On 02 May, Russia launched a new set of attacks on Azovstal steel works after a complete evacuation of civilians from the industrial area. According to a Ukrainian national guard commander: "A ceasefire has been declared for the past two days during a civilian evacuation operation. Two days passed quietly. As soon as the last civilian left the plant, shelling from all kinds of weapons began" He predicts 500 soldiers to have been wounded and the evacuated civilians are expected to reach Zaporizhzhia.

Ukraine Military reported on attacks of the Russian military on Odesa using a missile strike. A loud explosion was recorded in the city. According to the press centre for the Security and Defence Forces of the South: "the strike has also damaged a religious building, information about the wounded is being clarified."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 02 May, the White House said US president Joe Biden would "love to visit Ukraine," but no current plans." White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said the US would continue assessing the situation before agreeing to Biden visiting Ukraine. US first lady Jill Biden said she would be visiting parts of eastern Europe. She added: "I know that we might not share a language, but I hope that I can convey, in ways so much greater than words, that their resilience inspires me, that they are not forgotten, and that all Americans stand with them still."

On 02 May, the UK promised to send an additional USD 375 billion in military aid to Ukraine. The aid will include electronic warfare equipment and a counter-battery radar system apart from the GBP 200 million. The UK has sent Ukraine more than 5,000 anti-tank missiles and five air defence systems since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February.

On 02 May, Denmark said it plans on reopening its embassy in Ukraine. Denmark's foreign ministry mentioned: "It's

a very strong symbol of the Danish support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people that today we are reopening the doors to the Danish embassy."

On 02 May. Two German ministers mentioned that Germany would be ready to back the EU in banning Russian oil imports. Germany's economy minister Robert Habeck stated: "Germany is not against an oil ban on Russia. Of course, it is a heavy load to bear, but we would be ready to do that."

On 02 May, Poland said it was preparing to be fully independent of Russian oil. Poland even offered to support other countries in cutting their fuel supplies from Russia. Poland's environment and climate minister Anna Moskwa added, "Poland is proud to be on Putin's list of unfriendly countries."

On 02 May, a local Finnish newspaper *Ilta-lehti* stated that Finland would apply for NATO membership on 12 May. The article further mentioned that the process would consist of two steps. First, president Sauli Niinisto would announce the country's approval to join NATO, followed by the approval of the parliamentary groups.

On 02 May, Hungary stated that it was still opposed to any EU embargo on Russia's oil and gas imports. Hungary's spokesperson Zoltán Kovács said: "The Hungarian stance regarding any oil and gas embargo has not changed: we do not support them." This comes as the EU plans to propose a phased ban of Russia's oil imports as a part of their sanctions. Hungary also stated it had moved its embassy back to Kyiv from Lviv.

On 02 May, Sweden said it plans to reopen its embassy in Kyiv. Sweden's minister Ann Linde mentioned: "Sweden will continue to #StandWithUkraine, and are delighted that @SwedeninUA's diplomatic presence will be back where it belongs."

On 02 May, the EU's chief Josep Borrell said the bloc would be passing the sixth round of sanctions at the next foreign affairs council meeting. Borrell mentioned that the bloc hopes to curb Russia's energy exports. He added: "But I am confident that, at least with regard to oil imports, this agreement will be

possible between now and the next Council meeting.”

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 02 May, Israel condemned comments by Russia’s foreign minister Sergei Lavrov that claimed Adolf Hitler had Jewish origins. Israel called it an “unforgivable” falsehood. The comments sharply deteriorated relations between Israel and Russia as Jerusalem’s foreign ministry summoned Russia’s ambassador and demanded an apology.

On 02 May, an analysis by *Reuters* mentioned how the Iran nuclear deal was slowly dying as the world was focusing on the war in Ukraine. The EU played a significant role in reviving the pact in March; however, the talks did not happen as Russia proposed last-minute demands.

On 02 May, Saudi Arabia said it felt let down by the US, which had promised to help tackle security threats. This comes as the US has been focusing on Ukraine as the war continues. The war in Ukraine has highlighted the declining commitment by the US as Saudi Arabia, and the UAE rely on its security umbrella. The OPEC countries resisted calls by the West to help isolate Russia. They also did not increase their oil production to help control the energy prices.

On 02 May, Taiwan mentioned that it would start looking for alternatives as the US stated a delay in their howitzer supply. The US stated that a crowded production line caused the delay, and the delivery would not happen until 2026. The US has been ramping up its military support and supply to Ukraine; however, they did not cite this as a reason. On 02 May, South Korea’s embassy said it resumed its embassy operations in Kyiv. South Korea’s ambassador to Ukraine and a part of the delegation returned to Kyiv. The ministry said: “The South Korean embassy is preparing to resume operation from 02 May and intends to conduct diplomatic work in Kyiv in even closer cooperation with the Ukrainian government in order to protect its citizens in Ukraine.”

On 02 May, the UN announced that more than 3,000 civilians had been killed in Ukraine. The toll had reached 3,153, according to the UN human rights office (OHCHR). Most of the victims were killed by explosions caused by missile strikes and airstrikes.

The UNHRC claims that more than 5.5 million people have fled Ukraine since 24 February. The statistics were compiled from multiple sources, but mainly from the authorities at the official border crossing points.

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War in Ukraine: Day 66 & 67

War On The Ground:

On 01 May, Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's foreign minister said that the next round of European Union sanctions must include the oil embargo. Speaking to Josep Borell, a top diplomat in the EU, he also discussed the situation in Mariupol. He said: "I also emphasized there can be no alternative to granting Ukraine EU candidate status. We paid separate attention to further safe evacuation from besieged Mariupol."

On 30 April, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke about how around 100 people have been evacuated from the region safely. This has been possible because there were two days of ceasefire in the region. The evacuees will be brought to Zaporizhzhia. This news has been confirmed by the UN and the Red Cross who are also helping in coordinating the evacuation efforts.

President Zelenskyy said that a newly-constructed runway at the main airport in Odesa was destroyed by Russian forces. The mayor of Odesa, Gennadiy Trukhanov spoke about how the airport has taken 10 years to build, only to be destroyed by Russian aggression. He said: "Thanks to the new runway we were expecting a colossal influx of tourists from all over the world. Instead, we got a rocket strike... But Odesa is not a city which surrenders to difficulties. We will absolutely restore the runway after our victory and even more tourists will come to

us." The Russian ministry said that they used high-precision Onyx missiles to strike the airfield.

On 30 April, in an online posting, Ukraine's deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk informed us about the prisoner exchange with Russia. As a part of the exchange, seven soldiers and seven civilians would be coming back. She, however, did not mention how many Russians would be transferred.

On 30 April, Kyiv police found the bodies of three bound men, in Bucha, which they claim are civilians. The bodies had also sustained gunshot wounds.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 01 May, foreign minister Lavrov said that, unlike popular belief, the upcoming anniversary of Russia's liberation after World War II on 9 May 1945, will not be having any consequence on the military operations in Ukraine. Lavrov, in an address to the Italian television. He said: "Our soldiers won't base their actions on a specific date... We'll commemorate our victory in a solemn manner but the timing and speed of what is happening in Ukraine will hinge on the need to minimise risks for civilians and Russian soldiers."

Lavrov in his comments to China's news agency Xinhua said that Russia and Ukraine were discussing a possible treaty, on a daily basis over videoconferences. He said as a part of the peace talks, they have been discussing the issues of denazification and the lifting of sanctions. Ukraine's negotiator Mykhailo Podolyak however, has denied these statements. He also mentioned that since the beginning of the war, around 2.8 million people in Ukraine have asked to be evacuated to Russia.

On 30 April, Russia's defence ministry said that four of their missiles have hit ammunition and fuel depots in Ukraine. They also mentioned that their artillery units had hit 389 Ukrainian targets overnight, which included 35 control points, 15 arms and ammunition depots, and several concentrations of Ukraine's troops and equipment. In an online post, the ministry also said that an air force strike has killed

200 of Ukraine's troops and destroyed 23 armoured vehicles.

On 01 May, Russia's defence ministry provided an update about successfully striking a depot stocked with weapons supplied to Ukraine by the United States and European countries.

On 30 April, Russia's western Kursk region witnessed the firing of several shells, at a checkpoint near the border. The governor Roman Starovoit, on his Telegram channel reported that there were no casualties or damage. *Reuters* also reported that Russian air defences have prevented one of Ukraine's aircraft from entering Bryansk region, but the resultant shelling has hit portions of an oil terminal and an adjacent territory.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 01 May, house of representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi said the US pledged to continue its support to Ukraine until Kyiv wins the war. Her statements come as she visited Kyiv and met with Ukraine's president Zelenskyy and said the US stands with Ukraine as it defends itself against "Putin's diabolic invasion." Pelosi added: "Our delegation travelled to Kyiv to send an unmistakable and resounding message to the entire world: America stands firmly with Ukraine."

On the same day, US senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said he would request the Biden administration to add provisions in the new proposal for the USD 33 billion Ukraine aid package. He said he wanted the US to seize and sell the Russian oligarch's assets and use the money for Ukraine. Schumer said: "Ukraine needs all the help it can get and, simultaneously, we need all the assets we can put together to give Ukraine the aid it needs."

On 30 April, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby lashed out at Putin and called out Moscow's justification for invading Ukraine. He said: "I don't think we fully appreciated the degree to which Putin would visit that kind of violence and cruelty and depravity on innocent people, on non-combatants, on civilians, with such utter disregard for the lives he was taking."

On 30 April, the UK military reported that Russian forces were forced to merge as many units had depleted due to their failed advances in northeast Ukraine. The military reported: "Shortcomings in Russian tactical coordination remain. A lack of unit-level skills and inconsistent air support have left Russia unable to fully leverage its combat mass, despite localised improvements."

On 30 April, Norway announced that it would be closing access for Russian trucks and ships as it joined the EU's sanctions against Moscow. However, they said the Russian fishing vessels that have been landing at the ports in the northern region would be exempted from the sanctions. Norway is currently not a part of NATO but is a part of the Schengen Area.

On 01 May, Sweden's foreign minister Ann Linde mentioned that Finland would undoubtedly apply for membership in NATO. Linde added: "We know more or less that they (Finland) will apply for NATO membership. And that changes the whole balance...If one of our countries joins, we know that tensions would increase." This comes as Finland's foreign minister Pekka Haavisto said he hoped both Finland and Sweden would join the military bloc at the same time.

On 30 April, France's president Emmanuel Macron said the country would increase military and humanitarian support to Ukraine. Macron spoke with Zelenskyy and reiterated his "strong concern" over Russia's bombing of Ukrainian cities.

On 01 May, Germany's chancellor Olaf Scholz defended his decision to not send heavy weapons to repel Russia's invasion. He argued that he would be more cautious than make any hasty decisions. He added: "I take my decisions fast and in concert with our partners...I find hasty actions and maverick German efforts questionable." According to the recent polls, this further led to his approval rate falling by 32 per cent.

On 01 May, Greece experienced widespread protests in the May Day rallies. The protestors demonstrated against the rapidly increasing energy and food prices because of

the war in Ukraine. Greece is also experiencing a surge in gas and power bills as the sanctions against Russia exacerbated its inflation rate to an all-time high.

On 30 April, Serbia showed off its new Chinese made surface to air missiles and hardware it had bought from Russia in a display of support. The country seeks to show a balanced act over the War in Ukraine. President Aleksandar Vucic said: "We're going to significantly strengthen our fighter air force ... Serbia is a neutral country and Serbia must find solutions enabling it to preserve its sky and its state."

On 01 May, Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he would continue undertaking efforts to organise meetings between Putin and Zelenskyy. Turkey's diplomat Mevlut Cavusoglu said: "Our president is holding negotiations with both leaders."

On 01 May, Pope Francis discussed the war in Ukraine as a "macabre regression of humanity" that makes him "suffer and cry." He urged for humanitarian corridors to evacuate the people trapped in the Mariupol steelworks. He added: "My thoughts go immediately to the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, the city of Mary, barbarously bombarded and destroyed."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war

On 30 April, Australia's Olympic Committee (AOC) said it would help and support Ukrainian athletes seeking to resettle in Australia on humanitarian grounds. AOC president John Coates said: "Today I announced that the AOC executive has by circular resolution last week, determined that the AOC will support humanitarian visa applications by Ukrainian athletes and will seek the assistance of you, our member sports, in their settlement requirements."

On 01 May, China's regulators held a meeting to prepare and protect China's overseas assets from potential US sanctions. China wants to prepare for US-led sections that it imposed on Russia.

On 01 May, Kenya's president announced that he would hike the country's minimum wage by 12 per cent. He said he had

increased the minimum wage to help workers cope with the surge in consumer prices which were caused by the war in Ukraine. The president's office said: "There is a compelling case to review the minimum wage so as to cushion our workers against further erosion of their purchasing power."

On 01 May, UN chief Antonio Guterres called for a debt relief package for countries in Africa. The debt relief package would help the countries to recover from the devastation caused by COVID-19, climate change and the War in Ukraine. He mentioned how the supply chain disruptions had caused a simultaneous increase in food, energy and inflation in Africa. Guterres added: "International financial institutions must urgently put in place debt relief measures by increasing liquidity and fiscal space, so that governments can avoid default and invest in social safety nets and sustainable development."

On the same day, the UN said it was trying to create a safe passage for civilians stuck in Azovstal steelworks. UN spokesperson Saviano Abreu said: "The operation began on 29 April and is being coordinated with the International Committee of the Red Cross, Russia and Ukraine."

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EM Short Notes*

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Source: UK Government, NATO, BBC/ UK Government, UK Government, RSF World Press Freedom Index (2022 edition), Twitter/@narendramodi

BELARUS

Lukashenko claims Poland intends to seize pre-world war two territories from Ukraine

On 23 May, president of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko expressed concern over what he described as Western attempts to "dismember" Ukraine, referring to NATO. He further accused Poland of intending to seize the Western part of the country in a virtual meeting with the president of Russia Vladimir Putin. Lukashenko stated: "What worries us is that they are ready, the Poles and NATO, to come out, to help take western Ukraine like it was before 1939." Referring to the non-aggression pact of 1939 when Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union carved Poland up between them. The majority of Moscow's acquired land is either in Belarus or Ukraine. Kaliningrad, once German East Prussia, became a Russian exclave. ([Lukashenko accuses Poland and NATO of plotting to partition Ukraine](#), Reuters, 23 May 2022)

FINLAND

Parliament approves application proposal for NATO membership

On 17 May, Helsinki's parliament voted yes to join the NATO military alliance. According to the speaker Matti Vanhanen, out of 200 parliamentarians, 188 voted in favor of the motion while eight voted against it. Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto stated that the decision would not change Finland's values of seeking peaceful and diplomatic solutions to conflicts. Haavisto added: "Our border would become the border between the military alliance and Russia. New tensions would not be a risk only during the application process but rather a new and permanent condition of our foreign and security policy." Chairman Jussi Halla-aho also mentioned that the decision was taken after considering many experts and noting the opinions of ten parliamentary committees. ([Finland's parliament votes yes to NATO](#), Reuters, 17 May 2022)

* EM Short Notes are notes published along with Daily Focus on Europe, every evening by the NIAS Europe Monitor team. The short notes provide a brief overview of the latest developments in Europe, and provides the sources from which they are compiled. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read them every day.

FRANCE

Former head of Louvre Museum accused of art trafficking

On 27 May, French investigators accused the former head of Louvre museum, Jean-Luc Martinez for art trafficking. As per the reports, a granite stele engraved with ancient Egyptian pharaoh, Tutankhamun was found to be transferred to Louvre Abu Dhabi. The investigation also revealed: "Louvre Abu Dhabi applies a strict international protocol for artworks entering the collection, as outlined in the intergovernmental agreement between Abu Dhabi and France, signed in 2007." Martinez is charged with "complicity in fraud" and "concealing the origin of criminally obtained works by false endorsement." Till now Martinez has denied all the charges and accusations. ("[Louvre museum's ex-president charged in art trafficking case](#)," *BBC*, 27 May 2022)

Left bloc slightly below of Macron's party in a recent poll

On 23 May, France's president Emmanuel Macron's "Renaissance" party pulled ahead of the left coalition "Nupes" in the June parliamentary election, according to a recent poll. They are likely to win the lower parliamentary election as they are 28 per cent ahead of 27 per cent of the left bloc consisting of far-left La France Insoumise, the green party and the socialist party. There would be two rounds of the election taking place, one on 12 June and another on 19 June. It's been a week since Macron appointed Elisabeth Borne as his prime minister, the first woman to be appointed in the position in thirty years. ("[Poll: Macron's group slightly ahead of left-wing rival in French June parliament vote](#)," *Reuters*, 23 May 2022)

Cabinet reshuffle takes place ahead of parliamentary elections

On 20 May, president Emmanuel Macron reshuffled his cabinet and retained his finance minister Bruno Le Maire and interior minister Gerald Darmanin. France's current ambassador to the UK, Catherine Colonna, was appointed as the new foreign minister. In addition, Agnes Pannier-Runacher was promoted to energy minister

from junior minister for industry. She will be in charge of recovering the country's struggling nuclear sector, speeding up the deployment of additional renewable energy, and formulating France's response to the gas crisis and public outrage over rising energy prices. (Elizabeth Pineau, "[France's Macron opts for continuity in government reshuffle](#)," *Reuters*, 21 May 2022)

Elisabeth Borne takes over as the prime minister of France

On 16 March, president Emmanuel Macron appointed labor minister Elisabeth Borne as the new prime minister for France following Jean Castex's resignation. Borne's reputation is likely to help Macron appeal to radical-left voters who supported Jean-Luc Melenchon in the first round of the presidential election in April, without upsetting the followers of Marine Le Pen on the right. Her first responsibility would be to guide Macron's centrist coalition through the upcoming legislative election to be held in June. Despite her previous ties to the Socialist Party, Borne demonstrated her commitment to the president by serving as transport, environment, and eventually labor minister during his first term. Macron also stated that the new prime minister will be in charge of "green planning," with the goal of hastening the implementation of climate-related policies in France. ("[Macron appoints Elisabeth Borne as France's new prime minister](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 16 May 2022)

Zemmour seeks a parliamentary seat in Saint-Tropez after failing presidential bid

On 12 May, France's far-right pundit Eric Zemmour said that he would be seeking a seat in the Saint-Tropez constituency. He also announced that he would be standing up for the upcoming parliamentary elections and said: "I will lead our beautiful and major fight along with our 550 candidates." Zemmour recorded his highest vote share nationally from Saint-Tropez, giving him a higher chance of winning the upcoming elections. Earlier, he had stood as a presidential candidate to unseat incumbent president Emmanuel Macron but was eliminated in the first round of the

elections. ("[French far-right pundit Zemmour seeks parliamentary seat in Saint-Tropez constituency](#)," *France24*, 12 May 2022)

Left join together to win against Macron in parliamentary elections

On 04 May, the left decided to unite and stand against president Emmanuel Macron in parliamentary elections in June. The Socialists, Greens, Communists, and the new far-left France Unbowed party of Jean-Luc Mélenchon joined together and reached a draft agreement after all-night negotiation. According to the left, this moment would be a historical one if all the parties unite and form a coalition. Instead of running against each other in the parliamentary election, the left-leaning parties would try to come under one banner to increase their odds of gaining a majority. The Socialists are yet to sign the deal. Jean-Luc Mélenchon would become the leader of the left as he was the most successful in the first round of the presidential election with 21.95 per cent of votes. It is a dream of his to block Macron's reforms in the parliament with the majority. (Hugh Schofield, "[France elections: Left forms coalition to fight Macron](#)," *BBC News*, 04 May 2022)

GERMANY

The finance ministry agrees to constitutional change, enabling USD 110 billion defence fund

On 29 May, Germany's finance ministry stated that Berlin would undergo a constitutional change to accommodate the credit-based special defence fund of EUR 100 billion. The money will eventually increase Germany's defence budget to more than its EUR 50 billion benchmarks. This would further help Germany achieve the NATO targeted spending of two per cent of economic output on defence. Germany's ruling coalition, centre-right opposition with centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), pro-business Free Democrats (FDP), and Greens said they had reached the required two-thirds majority to exempt the defence fund from a constitutional debt brake. ("[Germany to change constitution to enable \\$110 billion defense fund](#)," *Reuters*, 30 May 2022)

Former chancellor Gerhard Schroder striped off state privileges

On 19 May, the Bundestag's budgetary committee decided to strip the former chancellor Gerhard Schroder of post-office privileges for not terminating his ties with energy firms in Russia. Schroder was the head of government between the years 1998 and 2005; he was stripped of his office and staff as well. The vote by the Bundestag's budgetary committee came following the European parliament's call to the European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen to sanction Schröder for his links to the Kremlin. On the same day, the European Parliament approved a resolution calling for sanctions against European members of the boards of significant Russian firms and politicians who continue to receive money from Russia. (Philip Oltermann, "[Gerhard Schröder to be stripped of privileges for not cutting ties with Russia](#)," *The Guardian*, 19 May 2022)

Conservatives and Greens win elections in the most populous state

On 15 May, Christian Democrats and the Greens are said to win the state elections held in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany's most populous state. The projections by public broadcaster Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) placed incumbent state premier Hendrik Wüst's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in first place with 35.7 per cent of the vote. Chancellor Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), who presently govern the country in a coalition with the Greens and the Free Democrats (FDP) secured second place with 27 per cent. In contrast, the FDP, which has governed in North Rhine-Westphalia as part of a CDU-led coalition, is expected to drop seven points. The far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) failed to make it into the state legislature, only garnering 4.4 per cent of the vote. (Hans Von Der Burchard, "[Conservatives and Greens win in key German state election](#)," *POLITICO*, 15 May 2022)

HUNGARY

Viktor Orban prolongs the state of emergency in Budapest

On 24 May, prime minister Viktor Orban

announced the extension of the state of emergency in Hungary due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Orban extended the constitutional amendment giving him the emergency powers, which would have expired by the end of May. The "State of Danger" was already implemented on the accounts of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that he would protect Hungary and Hungarian families from physical security and financial threats due to the war in Ukraine by any means necessary. Being an ally of president Putin, Orban stated that it would be best for Hungary to take a neutral stance in the war. Many human rights activists opposed Orban's decision to impose the state of emergency as it would reduce the parliament's power and eventually become a new normal. ("[Hungary's Orban extends emergency powers, points to Ukraine](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 May 2022)

ITALY

Italy introduces new schemes for rising energy prices

On 02 May, Italy devised a package of measures to safeguard companies and families from the rising energy costs. In the package, EUR 14 billion was set aside for state-guaranteed bank loans and EUR 200 bonuses for low and middle-income Italian citizens. Due to the Russian-Ukraine crisis, energy prices and the cost of living has increased in the EU's third-largest economy. The energy producers and sellers were being taxed at a higher rate and were also taxed on their extra profit. According to the economy minister Daniele Franco, Italy expects EU 10 billion of tax in 2022. The GDP of Italy has dipped by 0.2 per cent due to the sanctions against Russia. Italy is hoping to overcome its dependency on Russian gas by mid-2024 with this scheme. (Giuseppe Fonte and Gavin Jones, "[Italy unveils new stimulus plan as economic outlook darkens](#)," *Reuters*, 03 May 2022)

MALTA

ILGA-Europe announces Valletta as the best country for LGBT+ rights

On 12 May, the ILGA-Europe association said Malta maintained the best policies, laws and practices to discourage

discrimination against LGBT+ communities. Malta has been at the top of the Rainbow Europe chart since 2016. Denmark rose seven places to be the second-best country, crossing Belgium. However, Belgium has announced plans to ban its conversion therapies by the end of the year to become more inclusive. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey were rated at the bottom of the charts as they were the worst European countries at protecting LGBT+ rights. ("[Malta remains best European country for LGBT+ rights, says report](#)," *Euronews*, 13 May 2022)

NORTHERN IRELAND

DUP halt the re-establishment of Stormont over the NI protocol

On 09 May, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) halted the formation of a government in Northern Ireland (NI) by nominating not even one minister. While holding the second-most seats in the assembly and the chair of the deputy first minister, DUP has not taken any action due to its concerns over the Northern Ireland protocol. All the party leaders met with NI Secretary Brandon Lewis in Belfast on 09 May to discuss the quick re-establishment of Stormont. He urged all party leaders to respect the election results. The free trade agreement on the Irish border post-Brexit is the main reason for the concern for DUP and that the party would nominate its ministers only after a decisive action on the protocol is taken. Michelle O'Neill, the would-be first minister from Sinn Féin said that DUP and the UK government must respect the outcomes of the election, and Boris Johnson and the EU should resolve the issues over the protocol. Other parties like the Alliance Party said in a statement that DUP should either nominate their ministers or should become opposition and let them do their job. (Chris Andrews, "[NI election 2022: DUP blocks new NI government in Brexit protest](#)," *BBC*, 10 May 2022)

Republican party Sinn Féin set to win most seats for the first time

On 07 May, the resumption of counting of votes in Northern Ireland's assembly election shows that the republican party Sinn Féin is set to win the most seats for the

first time. A unionist party had been the largest in the government since the formation of Northern Ireland in 1921. This election was said to be making history as Northern Ireland wants to join with the Republic of Ireland leaving the UK if the majority of its people voted for it. The parties in Northern Ireland are competing for the seat of the first minister. With Sinn Féin at the lead with 29 per cent, Democratic Unionist Party follows it with 21.3 per cent, its vote falling by 6.7 per cent from 2017. The Alliance Party is third with 13.5 per cent. The result of this election will have a significant impact on the future of the Northern Ireland protocol. (Colm Kelpie, "[NI election results 2022: Sinn Féin set to win most seats in historic poll](#)," *BBC*, 07 May 2022)

SERBIA

President Vucic inks three-year gas deal with Putin

On 29 May, Serbia's president Aleksandar Vucic announced the agreement about a three-year gas supply with Russia. He said: "I can not speak about the price now, all details will be agreed upon with Gazprom." Russia's Gazprom gas supply contracts with Serbia expire on 31 May. Serbia also aims to join the EU; however, its current policies with Russia have brought it under pressure. Serbia, back in 2008, had handed over its gas and oil sectors to Russian entities of Gazprom Net and Gazprom. ("[Serbia's Vucic says he agreed a three-year gas supply contract with Putin](#)," *Reuters*, 29 May 2022)

Serbia flaunting its Chinese and Russian imported weaponry

On 30 April, Serbia flaunted Chinese and Russian military weaponry publicly. Serbia displayed the weapons at the Batajnica military airfield near Belgrade. Serbia imported defence systems from Russia, China, the US and France. It showed off its defence to the media and the public. Even though Serbia wants to join NATO, they also have a long relationship with Russia. Most of the defence system that Serbia uses now is that of ex-Soviet technology. Most of the European nations especially Germany warned Serbia to align its interests with the EU if Serbia wants to become its member.

Serbia is seen showing signs of distancing itself from Russia and China by buying weaponry from the UK and France. (Aleksandar Vasovic, "[Serbia shows off new Chinese missiles in display of military power](#)," *Reuters*, 2 May 2022)

SPAIN

Donana National Park in Spain faces the threat of declining water levels

On 27 May, Doñana National Park located in southern Spain which is one of the largest wetlands in Europe is under extensive farming threat. The scientists have warned that decreased water supplies and depletion of water from strawberry farms have risked the national park. According to Doñana Gate Farmers, spokesperson: "In the municipality of Almonte we have over 4,000 hectares of irrigated land, if they reduce the water allocation by half, we would have to reduce the crop by half, and we would have to reduce over 2,000 hectares of cultivation. That is a real ruin." The reason behind the effect on water levels was the result of drastic climate change, the national park holds the most special flora and fauna species along with 100,000 hectares of lagoon forests. ("[Spain's Doñana National Park under threat as groundwater pumping continues](#)," *Euronews*, 27 May 2022)

Pegasus spyware detected in the prime minister's phone

On 02 May, *Reuters* reported that the mobile phones of Spanish prime minister Pedro Sanchez and defence minister Margarita Robles were infected with the Pegasus spyware. According to the government minister for the presidency Felix Bolanos said, the spyware was detected in May 2022 and at least one data leak had occurred. It is suspected to be the work of external non-official bodies. The High court has taken charge of the case. This issue may have a link with the members of the Catalan separatist movement, who were also the targets of Pegasus. The EU has called for a ban on Pegasus as there were allegations of it being abused to spy on rights activists, journalists and politicians. ("[Spanish prime minister's mobile phone infected by Pegasus spyware, government says](#)," *Reuters*, 03 May 2022)

200 plus mobile phones were believed to be monitored by Pegasus spyware

On 03 May, more than 200 mobile numbers from Spain were speculated of being possible targets of data leak by the Pegasus spyware. Morocco has suspected the NSO group to be behind this incident. It was reported that mobile phones were hacked in 2021 and were revealed only recently. Amongst the tracked, including French president Emmanuel Macron and other leaders. The Spanish government was found to be using the Pegasus software to monitor members of the Catalan independence movement. The government ruled out internal spying and is convinced of an external force behind the incident. (Stephanie Kirchaessner and Sam Jones, [“Over 200 Spanish mobile numbers ‘possible targets of Pegasus spyware’,”](#) *The Guardian*, 03 May 2022)

SWEDEN

Sweden's youth show reluctance on Stockholm to join NATO

On 18 May, prime minister Magdalena Andersson's decision to join NATO marked the end of Sweden's 200-year military neutrality policy. While most Swedes favour their country joining NATO amid the war in Ukraine, many young people are more reluctant about Sweden joining NATO. Some youngsters marched on the streets of Stockholm, condemning the loss of military neutrality as a step that would result in greater global warfare. According to a security policy analyst at Sweden's defence research agency Alina Engström, the benefits of quitting the military non-alignment status include the possibility of Sweden being more involved in NATO's defence planning and receiving security assurances. The disadvantages of participation would make Sweden more adaptable in adjusting its security policy. In contrast, it would have to lose some flexibility in its foreign and security policy. (Priyanka Shankar, [“Why some young Swedes remain uneasy about joining NATO,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 18 May 2022)

SWITZERLAND

Half a ton of cocaine was seized in a Nespresso factory

On 06 May, 500 kilograms of cocaine were confiscated by the Swiss police from a shipment of coffee that was sent to a Nespresso factory. Labourers of the plant in Romont found white powder in the sacks of coffee beans and immediately notified the authorities. Police later found cocaine in five more containers. After the initial investigation, it was discovered that the shipment had come from Brazil. The company reassured us that none of the coffee was contaminated and was safe for consumption. The estimated street value of the cocaine was expected to be close to 80 per cent purity worth EUR 50 million. The police traced that the cocaine was prepared to be sent into European markets. ([“Cocaine found in coffee sent to Nespresso plant,”](#) *BBC*, 06 May 2022)

THE NETHERLANDS

Cabinet plans to collaborate to construct windmills

On 19 May, the ministry of economic affairs and climate announced the collaboration plan of the Netherlands with Germany, Denmark, and Belgium to build wind farms. According to the ministry, the target will generate 150 gigawatts by 2050. The given target is expected to increase production by ten times. Although the contribution rate of the Netherlands in the 150 gigawatts remains unclear, four states assure to work together to standardize the regulations. As per the EU is concerned, it aims to achieve 300 gigawatts of electricity through hydro by 2050, but the current capacity stands at 16 gigawatts. ([“Netherlands teaming up with Germany, Denmark for more offshore wind farms,”](#) *NL Times*, 19 May 2022)

Protest to be held against overturning of US abortion law in Amsterdam

On 05 May, a solidarity protest was announced to be conducted in support of the abortion law at Dam Square in Amsterdam. The demonstration is scheduled to be conducted on 07 May, which will be carried out by many human rights groups and organizations. The message of the protest is to fight for the right to abortion which is at stake in the US. Around 1000 protesters are expected to participate at Dam Square. Earlier,

thousands of people protested against the draft by the supreme court which abolished federal law of abortion in the US. (["Solidarity protest for right to abortion in Amsterdam Saturday,"](#) *NL Times*, 05 May 2022)

THE UK

Government plans to re-open its gas storage facility

On 30 May, the UK's government said it was planning on opening its gas storage facility as a contingency plan amid the war in Ukraine. Energy firm Centrica owns a gas storage facility that closed down in 2017 after the government cancelled its subsidies in 2017. According to the *BBC*, the UK government now plans to revive its strategic gas reserves in case of supplies from Russia are cut off. Additionally, the government plans to extend the life span of the coal-fired power plants. However, the UK receives only a minute amount of supplies from Russia. Yet, the government is concerned that its Norwegian supplies might be diverted to other parts of Europe if Moscow cuts its supplies to the EU. (Simon Jack, ["UK in talks to re-open giant gas storage facility for winter,"](#) *BBC*, 31 May 2022)

Preparations to celebrate Queen's Platinum Jubilee underway

On 30 May, a report by *Reuters* stated that the UK was preparing to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's 70 years on the throne. The celebration would include a range of military parades, church series, street parties, and a pop concert right outside the Buckingham Palace. The UK has scheduled a four-day weekend for the events from 02 to 05 June. Prime minister Boris Johnson said: "I hope that in the coming days we can ... show with every bonfire, with every concert and street party and aerobatic display, a love and a devotion to reciprocate the love and devotion and leadership she has shown to the whole country over seven decades." (Michael Holden, ["Britain prepares to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee,"](#) *Reuters*, 30 May 2022)

UK signs first state-level trade agreement with a US state

On 28 May, the UK signed its first trade agreement Memorandum of Understanding with Indiana. It is expected to boost the trade relation up to GBP 1.1 billion. The UK also aims to expand the direct state-level trade agreements with 20 other states in the US. This step has been mainly taken as a showcase to the post-BREXIT process and also to break the barriers of direct trade with the US. Since Joe Biden's position as president has been restrictive on signing a trade deal with the UK due to the Northern Ireland clash. According to Liberal Democrat MP, Sarah Olney: "utterly failed to secure the US trade deal he said he would, being left to negotiate with one state at a time with his tail between his legs." (Joshua Nevett, ["Brexit: UK signs first US state-level trade agreement with Indiana,"](#) *BBC*, 28 May 2022)

Volkswagen agrees to settle the diesel emission scandal case

On 25 May, Volkswagen (VW) said it would pay GBP 193 million as a settlement of the class action suit put forward by 91,000 drivers in the UK. The September 2015 "Dieselgate" scandal is the reason for the case against VW by the claimants in the UK. VW cars cheated the official diesel emission test using special software in 2015, which was later discovered in the US. VW had to suffer a high loss in business due to the scandal and lost more than 32 million GBP in-vehicle refits, fines, legal costs, etc. In addition to the settlement, VW also promised to take care of the legal cost of the plaintiffs. Both the parties agree that a settlement would be a better option than a long-drawn, expensive case. However, VW avoided making any admission of liability that could damage the company's reputation by accepting the settlement. ("["VW pays millions in 'Dieselgate' settlement in Britain,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 26 May 2022)

Identity and language bill announced for Northern Ireland

On 25 May, the UK government introduced the identity and language (Northern Ireland) bill at Westminster to recognize

and protect the Irish and foster Ulster-Scots. The bill will grant official status to the Irish language, authorise the use of Irish in courts, and establish two commissioners and an office of identity and cultural expression. The bill is expected to be debated in detail on 07 June. Nationalist party Sinn Féin hailed the proposal as a step forward in fulfilling obligations made in the 2006 St. Andrews Agreement, which preceded the creation of the first Democratic Union-Sinn Féin coalition government. (Shawn Pogatchnik, "[UK to make Irish an official language in Northern Ireland](#)," *POLITICO*, 25 May 2022)

Mining company accepts bribery and corruption charges

On 24 May, the mining and commodities trading firm Glencore pleaded guilty to bribery charges in a Westminster Magistrates' Court and is willing to pay USD 1.5 billion as a settlement. It also admitted to one count of conspiracy to manipulate commodities prices in connection with past market activity, particularly US fuel oil markets. The UK Serious Fraud Office (SFO) reported that it had discovered "profit-driven bribery and corruption" in Glencore Energy UK's oil operations in five African countries. Between 2011 and 2016, the company's agents and employees paid bribes totaling more than USD 25 million in exchange for preferential access to oil. According to the report, the bribes were paid in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and South Sudan. ("[Mining giant pleads guilty to UK bribery charges](#)," *BBC*, 24 May 2022)

Aberdeen's transition to green energy impacts engineering students

On 24 May, *BBC* examined the evolving oil industry of the North Sea and its repercussions. Scotland's Aberdeen city was forced to abandon a sector that has provided half a million employees and immeasurable riches to the region as it faced a climate emergency. After the discovery of North Sea oil in the 1960s, Aberdeen boomed. The city now aspires to be a renewable energy capital and a paradigm for how carbon-dependent cities might adapt. Drilling and well-engineering

students at Aberdeen's Robert Gordon University (RGU) are still hopeful of pursuing a career in the oil and gas industry. However, most students come from countries where energy transition is not high on the political agenda, and many do not intend to stay in Scotland after graduation. (Kevin Keane & Nichola Rutherford, "[The changing face of the North Sea oil industry](#)," *BBC*, 24 May 2022)

Police conclude inquiries into the Downing parties scandal

On 19 May, the UK's Metropolitan police said they had ended the investigations into violations of the lockdown rules at parties attended by prime minister Boris Johnson. The inquiry resulted in 126 penalties, but the identities of individuals who got them were not revealed. Between 20 May 2020, and 16 April 2021, eight events were found to have broken the lockdown restrictions, according to the police statement. 53 men and 73 women were penalized, with some receiving multiple fines. After being penalized for violating lockdown regulations, Johnson and Treasury head Rishi Sunak drew widespread criticism, even from his own Conservative Party. The Metropolitan Police's acting deputy commissioner Helen Ball said: "Our inquiry was comprehensive and impartial, and we conducted it as swiftly as we could." ("[UK: Police end inquiry into 'Partygate' scandal at Downing Street](#)," *BBC*, 19 May 2022)

Regular pay increases to 4.2 per cent as the unemployment rate falls to 3.7 per cent

On 17 May, *Reuters* reported that the UK's unemployment rate was at an all-time low of 3.7 per cent. The low unemployment rate has accentuated the increase of pay and bonuses to keep and attract staff. Pay increased to seven per cent, which was far above the average forecast of 5.4 per cent. However, this had also led to the rise of consumer price inflation in March to seven per cent. Officials forecast a rise in prices due to the rise in energy tariffs. The price rise could lead the economy close to a recession by the end of 2022, eventually increasing unemployment. (David Milliken and William Schomberg, "[UK](#)

unemployment hits 48-year low, pushing up pay," Reuters, 18 May 2022)

Rise in food prices announced by the Bank of England

On 17 May, the governor of the Bank of England Andrew Bailey cautioned that there might be a possibility of an increase in food prices in the UK and other countries. There have been concerns about the rise in food and energy prices due to the war in Ukraine. Bailey warned that a very big income shock would occur as there would be an increase in global goods prices and a rise in unemployment. World wheat prices had gone up by 25 per cent over the last few weeks due to the war. Some of the cabinet ministers are unhappy with the Bank's performance and the rise in inflation. Meanwhile, Bailey defended the bank stating that most of its economic issues stem from external factors such as the war in Ukraine, the COVID wave in China, etc. ("Bank governor in 'apocalyptic' warning over rising food prices," BBC, 17 May 2022)

Prime minister Boris Johnson is set to change the Northern Ireland protocol

On 16 May, the UK prime minister Boris Johnson is planning to visit Belfast to encourage the restoration of Northern Ireland's government. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has refrained from nominating ministers to the assembly as well as for the position of vice-chair due to the Northern Ireland protocol issue. Even though Johnson himself signed the post-Brexit treaty, he agreed for amendments in it. A majority of those who won the recent Northern Ireland assembly election accepted the protocol including Sinn Féin but were opposed by DUP. If the UK act unilaterally it might cause retaliation and eventually a trade war from the European nations which concerns a lot of people in this cost of living crisis. All the other Northern Ireland leaders consider this a priority to restore the government at Stormont. Sir Jeffrey Donaldson of DUP has said that he will remove the block of the formation of the Northern Ireland assembly after the UK resolved the issue with the EU. ("Northern Ireland: PM poised for protocol

change ahead of crisis talks," BBC, 16 May 2022)

Boris Johnson to visit Northern Islands amidst rising tensions

On 13 May it was reported that Prime minister Boris Johnson is slated to visit Northern Ireland on 16 May. This coincides with the rising tensions caused by the Democratic Unionist Party's move to block the election of a Speaker to the new assembly. Speculations about the government's plan to strip away parts of the Northern Ireland Protocol are rising. The protocol was a part of the UK-EU Brexit deal, which ensures the continuation of free trade across the Irish land border, also aligns Northern Ireland with the EU single market for goods and has been opposed by unionist politicians. ("NI Election 2022: Prime minister to visit NI as DUP blocks assembly," BBC, 13 May 2022)

London experiences a shrinking economy amid recession despair

On 12 May, according to a report by *Reuters*, the UK's economy shrank in March. This comes as the UK faced a fall in the gross domestic product by 0.1 per cent in February, while the Bank of England had forecasted a 0.9 per cent growth. The bank further forecasted inflation to surpass ten per cent in the final quarter of 2022. But, the inflation rate was up by seven per cent in March, which is already more than the three times its two per cent rise target. UK's chief economist at capital economics Paul Dales said: "The economy had less momentum than we thought even before the full hit from the cost of living crisis has been felt...The risk of recession has just risen." (David Milliken and William Schomberg, "UK economy shrinks in March as recession risks mount," Reuters, 12 May 2022)

The UK researchers predict a rise in global temperature in the next five years

On 10 May, researchers from the UK Meteorological (Met) office warned that the global temperature may increase temporarily by more than 1.5 celsius for the next five years due to greenhouse gasses.

2016 and 2022 marked the record for the warmest years causing El Niño. In 2015, the world saw a rise in the global warming threshold being more than one Celsius leading to the formation of the Paris agreement. Researchers expect fifty-fifty odds of the world becoming warm again temporarily with the temperature between 1.1 celsius and 1.7 celsius higher than the pre-industrial 19th-century levels from 2022 to 2026 resulting in a record-breaking rise in global average warmth. The world is already experiencing serious impacts in regards to climate change, spontaneous wildfires, and heatwaves in countries like India and Pakistan with around one celsius of global warming. According to the Met office researchers, the Arctic region will be the warmest and will have a rise in sea level. (Matt McGrath, "[Climate change: 'Fifty-fifty chance' of breaching 1.5C warming limit](#)," *BBC*, 10 May 2022)

Local authorities aim to develop climate action plans to reduce emissions

On 01 May, the *BBC* examined the role and powers of local councils in the UK to control emissions and tackle climate change. It may play a significant part in the upcoming municipal elections. The council's first step after declaring a "climate emergency" is to create an action plan outlining the measures to reduce emissions. *BBC* suggests local authorities can build charging ports in lamp posts and parking spaces for electric vehicles to help residents. Most local councils have their own housing development companies and private partnerships, enabling them to install insulation and other energy-saving measures for energy-efficient housing. Further, the report suggested the promotion of onshore wind turbines and local green networks to reduce energy costs. Councils can also reduce the climate impact by systematic waste collection and recycling. ("[Elections 2022: How are local councils tackling climate change?](#)," *BBC*, 01 May 2022)

REGIONAL

Three new countries join NATO CCDCOE for their cyber defence

On 06 May, Canada, South Korea and

Luxembourg joined the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Center of Excellence. This organization's main goal is to safeguard its members as well as NATO nations from cyber security threats and support them with their expertise in digital defence. To mark the occasion of the three countries joining NATO CCDCOE, a ceremonial flag hosting took place at its headquarters in Tallinn, in which representatives from the three nations as well as Estonian officials also attended. They focus on training, exercises, applied research, analysis, information sharing, etc. in the field of cyber security and defence. All three countries are pleased to strengthen their cooperation in the cyber sector and raise awareness about it. The organization also combats any cyber threats and tries to prevent them. It gives a 360-degree look at the cyber defence and shares its expertise with its member nations. ("[3 countries join NATO CCDCOE](#)," *The Baltic Times*, 06 May 2022)

EU leaders reach an agreement on banning oil imports from Russia

On 31 May, European commission chief Ursula von der Leyen mentioned: "I am very glad that the leaders were able to agree in principle on the sixth sanctions package." She added that the bloc will now be able to finalize a ban of up to 90 per cent of oil imports by the end of 2022. Concerning the remaining ten per cent, Von der Leyen said the commission would soon be addressing the issue. ("[EU leaders agree 'in principle' on Russia oil embargo - von der Leyen](#)," *Reuters*, 31 May 2022)

Turkey's president Erdogan calls Finland and Sweden terrorist-supporting countries

On 29 May, Turkey's president Tayyip Erdogan said Ankara would not agree to "terrorism-supporting" countries joining NATO. He added: "For as long as Tayyip Erdogan is the head of the Republic of Turkey, we definitely cannot say 'yes' to countries which support terrorism entering NATO." His latest comments indicated a continued opposition of Turkey to the two countries joining the Western alliance. Sweden's foreign minister Ann Linde said that the diplomatic efforts were continuing.

Turkey has been challenging Sweden and Finland for harbouring groups related to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and other militant groups. (Daren Butler, "Erdogan says he won't let 'terrorism-supporting' countries enter NATO," *Reuters*, 29 May 2022)

NATO-Russia 25 years of the founding act comes to an end

On 27 May, NATO and Russia marked the 25 anniversary of the Founding Act. The step was taken as a rapprochement to facilitate cooperation and smoother relations. It was signed in May 27, 1997, where NATO announced to disregard the countries that came under Warsaw Pact. Post which the first NATO-Russia council was established to start military cooperation. As a first step, France decided to deliver Mistral assault ships to Russia. Upon Russia's annexation of Crimea, the deal was called off and the ships were traded to Egypt. In the recent council summit in 2022, which was NATO's attempt to prevent Ukraine's invasion, the act and the years of cooperation came to a standstill with Russia launching the war in Ukraine. ("25th anniversary of the NATO-Russia Founding Act," *Deutsche Welle*, 27 May 2022)

G7 minister gather to discuss on addressing climate goals amidst Ukraine war

On 26 May, G7 ministers gathered to discuss the climate goals, energy and rising food prices amidst the Ukraine war. Germany's economy minister Robert Habeck urged at the G7 talks for stopping the use of coal, and fossil fuels and push towards the use of green energy. Apart from green energy, the talks also focussed on steps towards achieving net-zero electricity sector by 2035 and banning the use of inefficient fossil fuels. According to EU's Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson: "We have to send a clear message that we agree here in Berlin that our green transition remains our priority." The commission also decided on providing more time to Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to stop the energy imports from Russia. ("G7: Germany urges leading role in coal phaseout," *Deutsche Welle*, 26 May 2022)

Germany astonished at Poland's accusation on Berlin's reluctance to send tanks to Ukraine

On 25 May, Germany's spokesperson, Steffen Hebestreit, responded to the president of Poland, Andrzej Duda's accusation that the Bundestag had broken its promise to send tanks to Ukraine. These tanks would replace those that Warsaw had supplied earlier. Hebestreit stated that Germany's government had been obvious that it would "have to see what we can deliver." He further added a definite request from Warsaw to send state-of-the-art Leopard 2A7 main combat tanks to Poland. However, he mentioned that the Bundeswehr has only 50 of these tanks, and more are yet to be manufactured. (Laurenz Gehrke, "Germany 'flabbergasted' at Poland's accusation of broken promise on tanks," *POLITICO*, 25 May 2022)

OSCE expressed regrets over its failed mission in Ukraine

On 23 May, in an interview with Deutsche Welle in Vienna, secretary general of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Helga Maria Schmid described the termination of the programme's special monitoring mission to Ukraine as unfortunate and "heartbreaking." When Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February, Schmid decided to evacuate international staff and relocate local employees to Ukraine. The OSCE's largest mission to date was in Ukraine. The mission's interim head, Antje Grawe, said that the unarmed monitors had been on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They went on patrols, mostly in eastern Ukraine, to observe and report on developments on the ground. The OSCE was established during the Cold War in the 1970s as a means of improving ties between East and West. Since then, it has concentrated on problems such as arms control, press freedom, human rights, and free elections. (Marina Strauss, "OSCE, crippled in Ukraine, could fulfill its potential after the war ends," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 May 2022)

Turkish leader disregards Greece's prime minister's existence

On 23 May, Turkey's president Tayyip Erdogan released a statement saying that he does not consider the existence of the Greek prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. His statement was a response to the Greek prime minister allegedly blocking the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey following his visit to the US and meeting president Joe Biden. This comes as both countries' leaders had agreed not to include a third party in their feud. According to Erdogan, Mitsotakis will no longer exist to him, and Turkey will conduct its business with honourable politicians. Greece will start the procedure to procure F-35 fighter jets from the US by 2030. Greece's spokesperson Giannis Oikonomou said Mitsotakis defends Greece's national interest and rights. He further added that their foreign policy would be a "policy of principles," indicating that there was no foul play. ("Turkey's Erdogan says Greek PM Mitsotakis 'no longer exists' for him," *Reuters*, 24 May 2022)

US delegation to visit Ireland amid post-Brexit trade disputes

On 23 May, the UK foreign secretary Liz Truss was urged by US Democratic congressman Dan Kildee to participate in negotiations with Brussels to settle the unresolved disputes concerning the Northern Ireland Protocol. Premier of Ireland Micheál Martin. Kildee urged the UK not to take unilateral action and stated: "The only way we can come to agreement, the only way we protect the incredible progress that's represented with the Good Friday Agreement, is face-to-face negotiation." The statement comes as a US congressional delegation led by senior Democrat Richard Neil is visiting Ireland and Northern Ireland on 23 May to discuss the post-Brexit trading arrangements. ("NI Protocol: Unilateral action 'will not work', say US politicians," *BBC*, 23 May 2022)

The UK and Lithuania sign a defence and security collaboration

On 23 May, the UK and Lithuania signed a joint declaration to boost defence and security cooperation amid the fear of

invasion by Russia. The Baltic countries fear that president Vladimir Putin would not stop with just Ukraine but rather might hope to redraw the map of Europe.

Countries like Lithuania, which is a NATO member, fear that the Russian aggression would turn toward it next. The declaration would be a defence collaboration among both nations and also would increase its resistance to threats from Russia and China. They strongly stand up against the Russian invasion and support Ukraine amid the war. Both countries avidly support and voice out freedom, sovereignty and democracy. ("UK, Lithuania boost defence collaboration amid fears of Russian aggression," *Reuters*, 23 May 2022)

NATO organizes large scale military drills in Estonia

On 17 May, NATO organized one of the most extensive military exercises in the Baltic regions, involving ten countries. The exercises named Hedgehog were held in Estonia and will continue till 03 June. NATO said the exercises were aimed to enhance the readiness and interoperability of its forces and were planned even before Russia invaded Ukraine. About 15,000 troops are involved in the exercises marking it as one of the largest military drills held in Estonia since 1991. According to the *BBC*, the exercises were taking place 64 kilometers from Moscow's military bases and were intended to simulate an attack from Russia on Estonia. (Malu Cursino, "Nato begins its military exercises in Baltics," *BBC*, 17 May 2022)

The UK and EU likely to start a trade war

On 16 March, an article in *BBC* examined the possibility of a trade war between the EU and UK following hints that the UK government may scrap parts of the Brexit deal regarding Northern Ireland. Economists warn that the EU could target politically-sensitive products like Salmon from Scotland for tariffs to maximize the impact. An all-out trade war may be mutually devastating at a time when the EU and UK economies are already severely unstable. The Brexit Opportunities Minister, Jacob Rees-Mogg has described such a scenario as an "act of self-harm," possibly

betting that the EU will not take that risk. However, Brussels may decide that beginning the retaliation procedure is necessary to gain leverage and force the UK to concede in the Northern Ireland dispute. (Dharshini David, "[Northern Ireland: Could the EU and UK face a trade war?](#)," *BBC*, 17 May 2022)

G7 leaders meet to unite Ukraine and Moldova

On 13 May, the foreign ministers of the G7 countries started a meeting in the German resort of Weissenhaus. The objective of the meeting is to discuss the war in Ukraine, the spillover of its impacts on Moldova and the increasing crisis of food security. Germany, which is holding the G7 presidency in 2022, is hosting the top diplomats from Canada, France, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US. Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba and Moldovan Foreign Minister Nicu Popescu are the guests for this session. The foreign minister of Indonesia is also slated to join virtually and they will be discussing China's position vis-a-vis the war and their ties with Russia. ("[G7: Germany seeks 'powerful sign of unity' for Ukraine](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 May 2022)

Macron calls for a new organization to unite European democracies

On 09 May, France's president Emmanuel Macron wants to create a new body to unite European democratic nations under one roof. The organization was called for the sake of Ukraine as it would take years for it to join the EU. Macon said that it would enable democracies in Europe to find a space for political cooperation. Ukraine's application for membership in the EU would take time as it has to go through a series of processes such as candidacy status, accession, and whether the country meets all the criteria. Kyiv submitted a 5,000-page document to Brussels answering its suitability in the EU but the response was yet to be given. If the membership process is quickened for Ukraine, other Balkan states that had been on the waiting list for years would become upset. So, to tackle the problem, the new body would look into these issues, and also it would stand with Ukraine in the war for it to win. (Jennifer

Rankin, "[Macron calls for new European body and warns Ukraine of EU wait](#)," *The Guardian*, 09 May 2022)

May Day demonstrations held across Europe turns violent in Paris and Berlin

On 01 May, traditional May Day demonstrations were held across Europe, while Paris and Berlin witnessed political and violent protests. On the eve of the peaceful march in Paris, a small group of people dressed in black, called "black bloc" anarchists, shattered windows of businesses and attacked cash dispensers while lighting dumpsters on fire. Simultaneously, a feminist march, known as Walpurgisnacht, started their rallies in Berlin, with a group of 2,500 marching to "take back the night." According to the organisers, the rally's purpose was to reclaim the night for women, lesbians, intersex, and transgender people. Thousands more took to the streets around the country to protest various issues, including the conflict in Ukraine, the rising cost of living, workers' rights, rental regulations, and plans to increase military spending substantially. (Angelique Chrisafis, "[May Day marches across France send pensions message to Macron](#)," *The Guardian*, 01 May 2022; Kate Conolly, "[Feminist 'witch' protest kicks off May Day protests in Berlin](#)," *The Guardian*, 01 May 2022)

Berlin files a case against Rome on filing compensation for Nazi-era war crimes

On 30 April, Germany lodged a case against Italy at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for allowing its domestic courts to try Nazi-era war crimes and claim compensation. A 2012 ICJ ruling confirms that Germany has legal immunity from being sued for reparations in foreign courts by victims of Nazi war crimes in breach of their human rights. Despite the 2012 ruling, more than 25 additional compensation claims against the German state were filed in Italy. Berlin claims it is filing the complaint now because of two ongoing trials in which German state-owned properties in Rome might be auctioned to fund compensation payments. The ICJ can take years to rule; however, Germany has

urged the court to take steps to prevent Italy from auctioning any property while the case is being tried. ("Germany takes Italy to UN court over Nazi-era compensation claims," *BBC*, 30 April 2022)

Russia's response to the EU sanction troubles Europe

On 28 April, the European Commission warned Russian gas buyers to not breach sanctions if the payments are converted into Roubles. Gazprom, a Russian gas company had cut supplies to Poland and Bulgaria, earlier last week after they refused to pay for gas in Roubles. This was a statement against the sanctions imposed by the West for Russia invading Ukraine. Last month, a decree was issued by president Vladimir Putin stating that any country that Moscow deems unfriendly has to pay in roubles for gas. Buyers have to deposit into an account at Gazprombank which then converts Dollars or Euros into Roubles and then proceedings are placed in another account of the buyer which makes it possible for the payment in Russian currency. This system will brake some of the EU sanctions imposed on Russia. The EU countries demanded clearer information from the officials on this issue. (Kate Abnett and Francesco Guarascio, "Europe struggles for clarity on Russia's roubles-for-gas scheme," *Reuters*, 2 May 2022)

Hungary and Slovakia may be exempted to join EU's embargo on Russian oil

On 02 May, the European Commission stated it might exclude Hungary and Slovakia from an embargo on Russian oil purchases. The commission cited the two countries' significant reliance on Russian petroleum. Hungary is mainly reliant on Russian oil and has repeatedly mentioned that it will not participate in energy restrictions. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Slovakia and Hungary, both on the southern route of the Druzhba pipeline transporting Russian oil to Europe, are particularly reliant, acquiring 96 per cent and 58 per cent of their crude oil and oil products imports from Russia. The commission might offer Hungary and Slovakia "an exception or a long transition period" to keep the bloc united. (Jan

Strupczewski and Kate Abnett, "EU may offer Hungary, Slovakia exemptions from Russian oil embargo," *Reuters*, 03 May 2022)

Apple faces the accusation of being anti-competitive by the EU

On 03 May, Apple was accused of breaking the competition law by the European Commission. Apple was charged for preventing third-party companies from accessing its online payment "tap and go" technology. Apple denied the accusations stating that it has been fair and equal access to all mobile wallet apps. The accusation looks into iPhones having restrictions with third-party access in regards to payment and Apple pay reaping all benefits. It further said that Apple pay was designed for privacy and security. But the European Commission has not found any evidence of security threats or risks. The tech giant had already faced anti-competitive accusations from the Commission when it launched Apple pay in 2015. (Beth Timmins, "EU accuses Apple of breaking competition law over contactless payments," *BBC*, 03 May 2022)

CLIMATE

Climate change poses the most significant challenge to migratory birds

Climate change is wreaking havoc on various ecosystems, but migratory birds are among the species worst hit by it. About half of the world's total 10,000 species of birds are migratory in nature, and about 4000 of them travel back and forth between their breeding grounds and wintering grounds. Sometimes these journeys stretch over huge extend of land, often up to 20,000 kilometers, and climate change is making these migrations harder and longer for the birds. ("The perilous life of migratory birds," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 May 2022)

The UK aviation industry's not positive about climate change measures

On May 10, airlines in the UK missed all the goals and targets set since 2000 to reduce their carbon footprint except for one. The aviation industry is responsible for seven per cent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. Many companies set targets to

achieve greener and more efficient fuels but those were forgotten after a few years. The only company to accomplish a target was EasyJet, which reduced fuel burn per passenger kilometre by three per cent by 2015. However, it missed other targets like building "ecojet" which would emit 50 per cent less carbon dioxide than its current planes. The government is also trying to tackle the issue of climate change by decarbonizing airlines through its Jet Zero strategy. Ie Murray from an international NGO said that the government should prioritize other modes of transportation to reduce its carbon footprints. (Georgina Rannard, "Climate change: Airlines miss all but one target - report", *BBC*, 10 May 2022)

ENERGY

The EU agrees to implement the Russian oil embargo within a few days

On 23 May, Germany's economic and climate protection minister Robert Habeck in a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum mentioned that the EU would likely approve the Russian oil embargo in a few days. He said that there would not be any immediate impact on Russia's revenue. He pointed out that capping the global oil price would be a massive blow to Russia's economy as it primarily depends on energy exports. The European Commission and the US are now working on a proposal that suggests they not pay unfixed prices for the oil but rather cap the global price. He said that the response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine would happen in a few days in the form of the EU's embargo on Russian oil. ("German economy minister expects EU embargo on Russian oil 'within days' - ZDF", *Reuters*, 24 May 2022)

Energy firms refuse the government's plans to levy a windfall tax

On 19 May, oil and gas producers rejected proposals to levy a windfall tax on exceptional profits for the year 2022. The sector's representative, Offshore Energies UK (OEUK), estimates that producers are paying EUR 7.8 billion in taxes this year, which is up from EUR 3.1 billion in 2021. According to the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, the levy on UK fossil fuel energy producers is likely to be about

twenty times higher this year than it was in 2020. Prices plunged in 2020, at the outset of the epidemic, and manufacturers suffered losses. However, profits have surged now due to steep rises in energy prices, prompting proposals for a windfall tax on such "exceptional" gains. (Douglas Fraser, "Oil and gas industry pushes backover windfall tax", *BBC*, 19 May 2022)

GENDER

Feminists protest against the retention of rape-accused minister in the new cabinet

On 24 May, the feminist organization Observatory of Sexist and Sexual Violence in Politics held a protest in Paris as the minister for solidarity and persons with disabilities, Damien Abad, was retained. Abad was reassigned his post despite the rape allegations against him. The feminist group also accused president Emmanuel Macron of breaking his pledge to end violence against women by retaining a minister who was accused of rape. The spokesperson for the government, Olivia Grégoire, stated that, like in his first term, combatting violence against women and girls will be a priority for Macron's second term. However, she added that Abad would remain in government and that the judicial system would determine the truth. (Angelique Chrisafis, "Macron accused of betraying pledge to stamp out violence against women", *The Guardian*, 24 May 2022)

Demonstration against abortion in Croatia

On 15 May, thousands came together in protest against the abortion law in Croatia. The demonstration gathered to support a woman who was refused an abortion despite being diagnosed with foetal abnormalities. Following the increased public outrage Croatian health authorities gave permission to terminate the foetus. She had to go to Slovenia for the procedure as the availability is decreasing in the country. Croatians being catholic and conservative have voices for their opinions against abortion. Abortion is legal after ten weeks if it poses any threat to the mother or the foetus health. The law which was passed

during the communist Yugoslavian era is now being defenestrated due to increasing pressure from influential conservative and religious groups in the country. Many doctors refuse to perform abortion as a matter of conscience. ([“Croatia abortion: Thousands protest against termination,” BBC](#), 15 May 2022)

Italy gradually limits its abortion access and rights

On 13 May, an article in Politico reports that Italy is discreetly restricting abortion access in a campaign fueled by the US’s dramatic culture war over reproductive rights. Regional healthcare authorities have been funding anti-abortion organizations in hospitals and clinics. Some municipal governments have even provided monetary rewards to women who cancel their abortion arrangements. The US Supreme Courts decision to likely tear down their constitutional right to abortion has fueled anti-abortion activists in Italy. Mario Adinolfi, the leader of Popolo della Famiglia, a conservative Christian anti-abortion movement, said his organization was “ready to ride the wave from the United States, in a vigorous war against the right to kill a kid in the womb.” (Hannah Roberts, [“Italy slowly erodes abortion access, riding US wave,” Politico](#), 13 May 2022)

Spain drafts law on medical leave for women with severe period pain

On 12 May, politicians in Spain said they discussed introducing medical leave for women who suffer from severe period pain. The draft bill mentions that women could avail three to five days of leave a month for period pain. If passed, the bill would be the first legal entitlement in Europe. Spain’s legislation has been recently working towards the broader reproductive health reforms, bringing a change to the country’s laws on abortion. However, the law would not apply to women who suffer mild discomfort. ([“Spain plans menstrual leave in new law for those with severe pain,” BBC](#), 12 May 2022)

MARITIME

Concerns raised over the vulnerability of Endurance to plundering

On 15 May, a marine archaeologist, Mensun Bound who discovered the wreckage of Sir Ernest Shackleton’s Endurance, warns that its protection may be harmed by global warming and underwater robotic technology that can plunder the historic site. The Shackleton ship was discovered in March, creating polar history by solving one of the world’s great nautical mysteries. It is in such excellent condition preservation that elements like the bell and steering wheel can be seen clearly. He raised concerns that ocean acidification and melting ice would make it easier for illegal incursions by rogue organizations. He added that if underwater robotic systems progress to the point where they may be programmed from afar to move “invisibly” beneath the ice of the Weddell Sea, it would make the ship more vulnerable. (Dalya Alberge, [“Endurance shipwreck threatened by global heating, says marine archaeologist,” The Guardian](#), 15 May 2022)

SPACE

JPL predicts the shutdown of Elysium Planitia mission by July

On 18 May, NASA’s InSight deputy project manager at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) estimated that the French-UK seismometer installed in the mission will soon be turned off. In 2018 NASA sent a mission called Elysium Planitia to observe the inner layers of Mars. The seismometer which helped in collecting data was found to be affected due to Marsquakes which have led to the accumulation of dust. Due to the settling of dust, the meter has become dysfunctional as it no longer can take solar energy, a main source to operate the machine. Hence the scientists despite their efforts to clear the dust have predicted the mission to be shut down by July 2022. ([“Nasa InSight: ‘Marsquake’ mission in its last months,” BBC](#), 18 May 2022)

Super blood moon is observed on lunar eclipse in 2022

On 15 May, BBC reported a rare occurrence of a super blood moon was witnessed during this year’s only full lunar eclipse. In this event, the earth comes in between the sun and the moon which slowly darkens the latter before turning dusky red. The event

where the natural satellite will appear unusually nearer to earth as it will be its closest point to the planet giving rise to the name super moon. The surface of the moon gets a reflection of all the sunrises and sunsets on earth turning the colour of the light blood red. Europe gets to see this phenomenon on Monday early morning however the Americas can witness it on Sunday evening as the moon rises. The event can be witnessed through naked eyes while the clarity of the red colour would be better through binoculars or a small telescope. (Georgina Rannard, "[Full lunar eclipse to bring super blood Moon](#)," *BBC*, 15 May 2022)

SPORTS

International Ice Hockey Federation bans Russia from the World Championship

Many sports associations have banned Russian players from competing in international competitions, and that is the same for the International Ice Hockey Federation as well. Russia which historically has a strong Ice Hockey team will miss this year's IIHF World Championship. At the Winter Olympics, the Russian team had played under the banner of the "Russian Olympic Committee" (ROC). This was because they were banned from using the Russian flag or uniforms after evidence of state-sponsored doping became public. However, now, they have been banned from participating altogether. ("[2022 IIHF World Championship: 'Like a World Cup without Germany or Brazil](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 May 2022)

INTERNATIONAL

Beijing and Bern decide on halting trade talks due to human rights issues

On 29 May, the free trade talks between China and Switzerland stalled because of Bern's critical view of Beijing's human rights issues. In 2013, China and Switzerland had agreed and signed a free trade agreement, making it one of the first such deals in Europe. The agreement helped both the countries mutually and contributed to an increased trade over the years. Switzerland has been pushing for the extension of tariff reductions on products

and sustainable futures. However, according to Switzerland's secretariat for economic affairs, China has not engaged in the same. The issues arose as Switzerland's parliament denounced the forced labour issues of Uyghurs in China. ("[China-Switzerland trade talks stall over rights issues, Swiss newspapers report](#)," *Reuters*, 29 May 2022)

Turkey and US relations in stressed due to its objection to Sweden and Finland joining NATO

On 20 May, the US state department said Turkey's objection to Sweden and Finland joining NATO is not a bilateral matter between Washington and Ankara. While the dispute is technically between Sweden, Finland, and Turkey, analysts believe the president of Turkey, Tayyip Erdogan, is seeking to manipulate the situation to get Washington to address some of the long-standing concerns that have strained bilateral relations between the two NATO members. These problems include eliminating US assistance for Syrian Kurdish militias that Ankara considers terrorists, easing US sanctions imposed after Ankara purchased the Russian S-400 defence system, and perhaps expediting Ankara's request for F-16 fighter jets. (Humeyra Pamuk, "[U.S. says Turkey's approach to Sweden, Finland NATO bid not a bilateral topic](#)," *Reuters*, 21 May 2021)

Report by climate scientists states the drawbacks of drilling and mining new sites

On 18 May, a new study by climate scientists showed that the extraction of oil, natural gas, and coal in new drilling and mining sites could cause an increase in global temperature by more than 1.5 degrees Celcius. The authors stated that drilling and mining new sites were not the answer to the Russia-Ukraine war. The findings also suggested that countries reject licenses to new drilling and mining sites. According to the study, all countries should turn toward renewable energy sources and move away from oil and gas. It also said that there has already been an excessive amount of extraction of oil and gas till now from the earth's surface. The calls were aligned with

the objectives of the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow. (Tim Gallagher, "[Mining and drilling outside Russia is 'not a viable response' to Ukraine war, climate scientists say](#)," *Euronews*, 18 May 2022)

Conservative parties of Hungary and the US attempt to strengthen ties

On 18 May, Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orbán will be the keynote speaker at a special session of America's Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Hungary. The conference is held in an effort to strengthen ties between the radical right on both sides of the Atlantic under the banner of the "great replacement" ideology. Orbán made explicit mention of the ideology in a speech on 16 May, claiming that there is a liberal conspiracy to dilute the white populations of the United States and European countries through immigration. This comes as the murderer who opened fire at a store in a predominantly black neighborhood of Buffalo invoked the creed, which is becoming increasingly popular among US Republicans. (Flora Garamvolgyi and Julian Borger, "[Orbán and US right to bond at Cpac in Hungary over 'great replacement' ideology](#)," *The Guardian*, 18 May 2022)

India's anti-terror agency suspects US made bomb was used against pilgrims in Kashmir

On 18 May, India's anti-terror body national investigation agency said it suspected the use of a Sticky Bomb in the attack on the bus carrying Hindu pilgrims on 13 May. The use of sticky bombs by Kashmiri militants is a relatively recent phenomenon. In February 2021, during searches in Kashmir in February 2021, Indian security officers seized numerous similar devices. Militants often used these devices against NATO soldiers in Afghanistan. The Indian military discovered US-made M4 carbine rifles from multiple foreign militants dead in different sections of Kashmir after NATO soldiers withdrew from Afghanistan. (Samaan Lateef, "[How NATO weapons from Afghanistan are impacting Kashmir's militancy](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 18 May 2022)

Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall visit Canada

On 18 May, UK's prince Charles and Camilla met with prime minister Justin Trudeau in Canada. The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall are on a three-day visit to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Charles also mentioned that the two would meet indigenous communities and initiate a process of reconciliation with them. The prince added: "look forward to listening to you and learning about the future you are working to build." Their visit comes as the uncovering of mass graves at former church-run schools caused a national reckoning. The government schools back then were used as a medium to assimilate indigenous children and destroy indigenous cultures. (Andre Rhoden-Paul, "[Charles and Camilla visit Canada on royal tour to mark Platinum Jubilee](#)," *BBC*, 18 May 2022)

Iran as an alternative to supply oil to Europe

On 15 May, the government of Iran is thinking about the possibility of exporting gas to Europe. Iran has one of the largest gas reserves in the world which has been hit by the US sanctions that were reimposed in 2018. It is considering replacing Russia as Europe's oil and gas exporter. The rising energy prices due to the Russian invasion have increased the opportunity for Iran as many European countries were dependent on Russian energy imports. Recently Iran and Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding on the same, which might circumvent Iraq from the US sanctions. ("[Iran considers exporting gas to Europe: Official](#)," *ALARABIYA News*, 15 May 2022)

France's foreign ministry condemns baseless arrests of citizens in Iran

On 12 May, France's foreign ministry confirmed that two of its citizens were detained in Iran. Iran's intelligence accused them of planning to cause "chaos, social disorder and instability." However, the French education union said the two individuals had gone for a holiday in Iran. This comes as international organizations and human rights activists have been accusing the authorities in Iran of arresting Western citizens and using them as

bargaining chips at negotiations. Sweden's foreign ministry too confirmed that one of its citizens was arrested in Iran while on holiday and was also similarly accused of espionage. ("France condemns arrest of two citizens in Iran," *BBC*, 12 May 2022)

UK and Japan form a defence partnership for the first time

On 05 May, UK prime minister Boris Johnson met with Japan's prime minister Fumio Kishida in Downey Street to sign a defensive partnership. Japan also condemns the Russian invasion and sides with the western nations in support of Ukraine. They had talked about joint exercises and increasing relationships with regard to disaster relief. The agreement also follows the UK government's defence and foreign policy integrated review, which was published in 2021. It looks into the Indo-Pacific region, apart from this UK and Japan are considering reducing the dependency on Russian oil and gas and aim to utilize Japan's nuclear reactors. They also plan to create highly skilled jobs and ensure they are technologically superior. This is the first time that prime minister Kishida is visiting the UK after being elected in October 2021. ("UK and Japan sign military agreement amid Russia concerns," *BBC News*, 05 May 2022)

France pulls out of the P-75I project of Indian Navy

On 04 May, France's Naval Group withdrew from the P-75I project of Indian Navy before the visit of prime minister Narendra Modi to France to meet the re-elected president Emmanuel Macron. The project's goal was to build six conventional submarines domestically for the Indian Navy. The request for proposal (RFP) was related to the air-independent propulsion (AIP) system, which allows a conventional submarine to stay underwater for a longer duration and travel faster. RFPs were issued to the shortlisted two Indian companies, private Larsen and Toubro, and state-run Mazagaon Docks Limited. It also ties up with five foreign companies. Failure to forward the requests by the two companies has led to the withdrawal of the Navy Group. ("France's Naval Group pulls out of

India's P-75I submarine project ahead of PM Modi's visit," *The Hindu*, 04 May 2022)

Modi returns to India after Europe visit

On 05 May, prime minister Narendra Modi returned to India after concluding his Europe visit. During the tour, he held a series of bilateral meetings with the leaders of Norway, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark. The discussion took place in the areas of trade, energy, and green technology. Modi had extensive talks with the French president Emmanuel Macron during the end of his tour. He had also attended the India-Nordic summit in Copenhagen, Denmark where they discussed on the Ukraine issue, post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, renewable energy, and the evolving global security scenario. ("PM Modi returns home after concluding three-nation European tour," *The Hindu*, 05 May 2022)

Sweden is appalled by the decision of Iran to execute Djalali

On 05 May, Sweden's foreign minister Ann Linde, condemned the death penalty issued by an Iranian court to Ahmadreza Djalali, a Swedish-Iranian doctor. He was charged with espionage and would be put to death by 21 May for the same. Sweden and the EU condemned the death sentence and demanded the immediate release of Djalali. He said that he was brutally tortured and subjected to inhumane treatment and Iran officials have been forcing him to confess to something that he didn't do with a threat to harm his family in Sweden. Iranian Human Rights group accused the country's officials of threatening the execution of Djalali as a form of retaliation against Sweden which held the war crime trials of the former judiciary of Iran, Hamid Nouri. Nouri was convicted of international war crimes and human rights violations that took place in 1988. ("Ahmadreza Djalali: Sweden alarmed by Iran's reported plan to execute doctor," *BBC*, 05 May 2022)

US light crude oil: An alternative to Russian oil

On 29 April, Europe had been importing light crude oil from the US as an alternative to Russian energy imports. Buyers and

refiners from Europe have imported almost 1.5 million barrels of crude per day from the US. Most are light sweet grade crude oil which is exported to countries like Spain, the UK, Denmark and Italy. Due to Russia invading Ukraine, Europe has struggled to embargo the Russian energy supply as it constitutes 45 per cent of its energy imports. To reduce importing oil from Russia, they turned towards the US for the favour. The flow of oil from the US to Europe has decreased the flow bound to Asia, Latin America and Canada. European countries are buying this crude oil in large quantities at lower prices. (Arathy Somasekhar and Stephanie Kelly, "More of Europe's crude supply is coming from deep in the heart of Texas," *Reuters*, 29 April 2022)

Crude oil futures are on a strong bull rally

On 02 May, oil prices reversed course to close on a positive note, leading to a rapid increase in the diesel market. This comes amid concerns that supply could be hampered by a potential EU ban on Russian crude oil. Brent crude futures rose 44 cents to close at USD 107.58 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures jumped 48 cents to settle at USD 105.17 a barrel. Diesel futures rose five per cent to USD 4.0172 a gallon. Both benchmarks had fallen more than USD two earlier in the session on news that the European Commission may exclude Hungary and Slovakia from a Russian oil embargo as it prepares to complete its sixth round of sanctions on Russia. (Laura Sanicola, "Oil settles up on distillate strength, supply concerns," *Reuters*, 03 May 2022)

Press freedom index rate negative for 28 countries

On 03 May, 28 countries were rated as "very bad" in the World Press Freedom index. Many countries are hindering

journalists from doing their job. The annual list of press freedom was released by the campaign group Reporters Without Borders has blamed the internet and globalization for the spreading of fake news that has affected the media. Myanmar has fallen the most in the press freedom index after the military coup last year. The UK was placed 24th on the list despite having issues in Northern Ireland and the US was placed 42nd. The Nordic countries are once again at the top. Among the worst performers was Greece from Europe at 108th on the list, Hong Kong at 148, and Russia receiving one of the lowest rankings. (Jim Waterson, "Record 28 countries rated 'very bad' in press freedom index," *The Guardian*, 03 May 2022)

The Caribbean states issue warning over UK's proposal for direct rule

On 03 May, seven Caribbean states condemned the UK for a retrograde proposal that takes democracy a step back. Due to corruption in the government of the British Virgin Islands (BVI), London has decided to take charge of the islands. The UK proposed to disallow local democracy to tackle corruption. The premier of BVI was arrested and sent to prison in Miami, Florida following his involvement in a drug smuggling case. After the sting operation, Andrew Fahie was replaced by the acting premier, Natalio Wheatley. The acting premier opposed the move while seven members of the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS) issued a firm warning against it. They said that the UK operating BVI directly is similar to colonization and it will be a sign of regression of democracy. They also said that the people of BVI should decide on their government and the responsibility of strengthening their governance should fall on the shoulders of the people of the island. ("Patrick Wintour, "Caribbean states warn against direct rule of British Virgin Islands," *The Guardian*, 03 May 2022)

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