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An initiative of NIAS and KAS-India office

## Cover Story

# War in Ukraine: What next?



The Economist

Map represents members of the EU and NATO in comparison to the area controlled by Russia. Image source: The Economist, 12 February 2022

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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*.

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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*.

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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.

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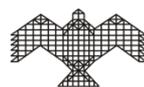
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National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) was conceived and founded in 1988 by the late Mr JRD Tata, who sought to create an institution to conduct advanced multidisciplinary research.

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.



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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.

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**EM DAILY FOCUS**



Source: REUTERS/Jason Cairnduff, AFP, Reuters/Yara Nardi/File Photo, UN DESA / Helen Daun Rosengren, Turkish Presidency/ AP, Euronews/Finnish Navy/Merivoimat

**Europe Monitor**

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**WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES**



Source: BBC, nato.int, nato.int, Kremlin.ru, Tyler Hicks-The New York Times, AP Photo/Michal Djuk/The Washington Post

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 126 to Day 97 in four dimensions. First, The 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 International implications of the Ukraine war.

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

**EM SHORT NOTES**



Source: BBC/EPA, Alberto Pezzali/Pool/Reuters, Graphic news, The Guardian, AP Photo/Valentina Petrova, Reuters/Dado Ruvic/illustration

EM Short Notes provide a brief overview of the latest developments in Europe, and provides the sources from which they are compiled. The daily developments cover from the UK, western Europe, Nordic, Baltic, Balkans to the far east Russia.

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

## COVER STORY

## Interview with Ambassador Pankaj Saran

### War in Ukraine: What next for Russia, Ukraine, Europe, South Asia & India, and China

Harini Madhusudan, Rishma Banerjee, Padmashree Anandhan, Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan, and Avishka Ashok



## I Russia

**Harini Madhusudan:** *While EU, NATO have come forth and announced sanctions, the larger international organizations (except UNHRC) have remained silent over the war in the region. Is there a reason to this silence? Should we then assume that the war is between NATO and Russia? (This is referring to the active support of many countries in supplying intelligence, weapons and other things.) This is because many of these countries are giving Ukraine access to high-end ammunition and weaponry.*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** As far as the United Nations is concerned, there are laid down procedures on which organizations will be responsible for international peace and security. The primary organization is the Security Council. Other organs and specialised bodies like on trade or health or migration have their own mandates. For example, when you look at the flow of refugees, then the UNHCR has a role to play because there is a flow of refugees from Ukraine to its neighbours along with the question of the internally displaced persons.

As far as the reaction of the world is concerned countries across the globe have by and large maintained silence over the conflict. Countries that have taken frontal

positions are basically the parties to the conflict, which are the Europeans, members of NATO, the US and its allies such as Japan, Australia and South Korea. There is a contest underway to shape an architecture of European security in which Russia is a major stakeholder. What is happening in Ukraine today is the culmination of several years of a proxy war to establish or promote the security of one country at the expense of another. The Russian position is that security cannot be one-sided. Russia wants security to be equal, and indivisible. The first warning signs came from the Russian perspective in 2014 when the pro-Russian President was dislodged and replaced by someone who wanted close relations with Europe. From 2014 to 2022, there have been several negotiations between the Russians and Europe, including France and Germany and NATO. The fact that we have reached this stage today is a reflection of the failure of diplomacy and the fault for that lies on all sides. There is a NATO-Russia standoff, in which Ukraine has become a battleground. Additionally, there are differences between Europe and the United States, and within Europe itself. It is also a function of domestic politics within the United States. The US had a fairly different policy towards Ukraine under the Trump Administration as compared to Democrats. But India should be able to step aside and take an objective of the situation. You will not find a solution or an equilibrium unless and until all sides are reasonably assured that their vital security interests are protected.

**Harini Madhusudan:** *The Global Energy crisis began before the tensions that preceded the War. We know that the European countries had already been spending a lot to ease energy related inflation. Isolating Russian oil imports in the context of Biden*

*stopping one of their pipelines and the drilling of natural gas in the US... would be a grave scenario for the oil and petroleum industry. One can see this energy supply being controlled. And we're also seeing them applying sanctions on Russia. While Russia remains the biggest supplier of oil, the sanctions attempt to stop supplies from the Russian side. How do we see this as an energy crisis? And how will it impact the rest of the world, India or China?*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** Historically, Russia was the largest supplier of gas to Europe, even when it was the Soviet Union. A whole network of pipelines and dependencies was built. Some countries like Germany were much more dependent. Ukraine was a transit point for taking this gas to Europe. Consumer countries are now using energy as a weapon to weaken Russia and its economic base. It is difficult to say what is the end objective of weakening Russia or crippling its oil and gas industry. Europe's decision to reduce its dependency on Russia is going to take time to take effect and will not happen overnight. The Nord Stream II pipeline between Russia and Germany has been under construction for ten years. It is a multi-billion-dollar pipeline. In fact, there were problems between Germany and the United States due to this pipeline.

Russia was never a major supplier of energy to India, although India always saw Russia as an important energy partner. We have invested close to \$15 billion in the last 10 years in getting stakes in Russian oil fields in Siberia and the Far East. For example, the first major acquisition of Russian gas and oil that India made was in Sakhalin-2 in 2002. And these investments made are with an eye on the future. India's per capita consumption of energy is among the lowest in the world. If India wants to grow at eight to ten per cent a year, we will need every single drop of oil from every single corner of the world. We will not have the luxury of choosing. Thus, when some party tells India to import from A and not B it becomes difficult to concede to such an argument. India will always treat Russia as a potential source of energy for our growth and future requirements. In the short term, there is a certain disruption in energy prices and all players look to advance their

interests. The other big change is that America itself has now become an energy supplier because of shale oil and it has become one of the major suppliers of oil, gas and LNG to India. In the medium and long term, India should use this crisis as an opportunity to transit to non-hydrocarbon, non-fossil and green sources of energy such as solar, wind and hydro in an attempt to become energy independent.

## II Ukraine

**Rishma Banerjee:** *The western weapons, which Ukraine's forces have already been trained on are gradually coming in now. Do you think this will shift the momentum in Sievierodonetsk, or broadly speaking Eastern Ukraine? Or are we more likely to see it fall to a similar fate as Mariupol, after prolonged fighting?*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** The supply of weapons to Ukraine is a double-edged sword. If the war keeps getting prolonged the worst victims will be the people of Ukraine. So while Ukraine may like and welcome Western military supplies, the victims of the collateral damage are going to be the Ukrainians.

A second aspect is that Ukraine also has an absorptive capacity problem. How much of these weapons can it absorb? How well-trained is its military to utilise these and will this flow be sufficient to repel the enemy and defeat the Russian forces? And if not, will the demands for more sophisticated weapons grow? Should it escalate into more lethal weapons? It must be remembered that the Russian Armed Forces are structured and equipped not to fight Ukraine, but to fight NATO. Therefore, the scale and the magnitude of the Russian armed military machine can be imagined. To imagine that there will be a Ukrainian victory which will not be contested by Russia is difficult. It should be assumed that the Russian Army will, in the long term prevail.

**Rishma Banerjee:** *We know president Zelenskyy has said that to Ukraine, victory will be, going back to the pre-2014 configuration*

*of the country. Meanwhile, Russia initially had the aim of a regime change in Ukraine. Then they said their goal is to liberate Donbas. So, after over 100 days of the war, what do you think victory now looks like to Russia? Or what kind of achievement in the country should Russia consider a victory?*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** What is the basis of the assumption that this is a conflict which can be counted in days and not in months? Why is it being assumed that the Russians are not ready to stay there for one year or two years? On what basis is it being presumed that Russia wanted to do something in one week? We have no evidence to prove this assertion. After all, in Afghanistan, the NATO was there for 20 years. The US and western powers were there in Iraq, Syria and Libya for years. There was huge loss of life particularly on the civilian side. What distinguishes a major military power from the rest of the world is that it has the capacity and the will to fight and use hard power. Russian forces will continue to stay. They do not seem to be in any hurry to come out until such time as they have calculated that they have reached a point of diminishing return and that the primary objectives have been fulfilled.

They have also had Russian military operations in Afghanistan and in Syria. The Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan but the Russian military operations in Syria were a success from their point of view. They realise that they should not fall into should not fall into the trap of a second Afghanistan. The final Russian objectives are unclear. Is it to occupy the Donbass and Luhansk? Is it to comprehensively defeat the Azov battalion and the anti-Russian forces so that they do not attack Russian citizens and civilians, say for the next 10 or 20 years? Is it to completely destroy Ukraine's military infrastructure? What President Putin seems to be doing is to convey a signal to the current government in Ukraine and to the Europeans and NATO that Russia has a problem with the current situation in the Donbass region. I do not believe Russia is targeting any other European country. It is not a classical military conflict but an overlay of ethnic and religious and cultural tensions and a lot of historical baggage. In some

ways, Russian victory is already there, because Russia has shown to Europe and to NATO that they are prepared to take the extreme step to preserve and to defend their security interests in Ukraine. The Minsk agreements were a negotiated agreement. But they were complicated and extremely difficult to implement. They had a component of internal devolution of power, similar to the proposed 13th Amendment in Sri Lanka's Constitution which sought to give autonomy to the Tamils in the Northern and Eastern provinces. The logic accepted by all sides was to recognise the cultural differences of the Russian population in the Donbass region.

**Rishma Banerjee:** *North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, all these countries have been looking to expedite their accession to the EU. Sweden and Finland are doing the same for NATO. How far do you think the conflict in Ukraine is responsible for this increased haste, and has Russia's invasion been counterproductive to their interests in the region? Which organization between NATO and the EU do you think Ukraine will be able to join first?*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** If you look at the European Union's history, they started with the Steel and Coal Community and gradually went on to economic and then political integration. They realised after the Euro crisis that they had problems. The European ability to govern itself came under question. Brexit added to the loss of confidence in the EU. The EU's internal mechanisms and structures are complicated. Even today, among the 27 of them, decision making is difficult. So, it is not as if the Ukrainian application will be accepted today or tomorrow. Turkey has been waiting for thirty years. During the economic crisis in Italy, Portugal, Greece and Spain, there was a significant divide between Southern Europe and Northern Europe. The EU will be careful about unbridled expansion.

The European Union's expansion is not, in my view, a great problem for Russia. When the Soviet Union was dissolved, one of the visions that they had was of a common Euro-Atlantic community which included Russia

as part of Europe. There was this famous speech by President Putin about a European community stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok. It was a kind of a visionary thing that never happened. But the paradox is that the economic integration of Europe has taken place much more with China than with Russia. This is a reflection of the failure of the Russian economy, that despite being a neighbour of Europe, its integration with Europe is limited. China's trade and economic ties with Europe on the other hand have boomed. In terms of which organization Ukraine is likely to be admitted first, some sort of association with the EU seems more likely, rather than NATO membership. Even when it comes to the EU, there are doubts within Europe about Ukraine's internal governance, corruption, democracy, neo-Nazi racist ideology, etc, which are not in sync with "European values". NATO is a treaty based military alliance whose member states have legal obligations. These could even lead to war with Russia. The NATO will therefore be cautious in taking in Ukraine atleast at this time.

### III Europe

**Padmashree Anandhan:** *How do you think Russia would respond or should respond to NATO's expansion in the eastern, northern Europe especially in the Baltic and Nordic region? How will the future cooperation be in terms of Arctic research between NATO and Russia?*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** On the question on NATO's expansion, one of the Russians had commented the other day that insofar as Russia is concerned they already treating neighbours like Finland and Sweden as de facto NATO countries. I do not think Russia has many choices if these countries actually become members of NATO because there is not much Russia can do about it. The only thing which will happen is that Russian military expenditure will grow and so will the importance of the security establishment within the Russian Government. So you might perhaps see a more militarised Russia. You will just have a more dangerous Europe

and it will not be good for us as India or for global stability.

The Arctic is a futuristic area of geopolitical and geostrategic contestation, because the Russian Arctic coastline constitutes fifty per cent of the entire Arctic area. India has just released its Arctic Policy document. The Northern Sea Route is something that needs to be studied by us to assess its implications. There are differences between Russian and Chinese interests, apart from the dynamics between the US, Russia and the Nordic countries.

**Padmashree Anandhan:** *Belarus, Hungary, and Turkey are few European countries causing a challenge to the EU's integration and decision-making progress, how will Russia's influence take shape or will it intensify to deepen the divide.*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** Each of these countries has a different history. The EU did not accept the results of last year's elections in Belarus in which President Lukashenko was re-elected. The relationship between Belarus-Russia today is strong. The greater the European pressure on Belarus, the more Russia and Belarus will coalesce. Turkey is the odd man out. It is a member of the NATO. In some ways it is the opposite of Ukraine. It has already got NATO membership but the Europeans are not admitting it. Despite advocating human rights and universal values of equality, the EU has reservations about Turkey on account of its religious character. Turkey is also playing all sides by keeping good relations with Russia and cooperating with it in Syria.

Hungary is an interesting case, which shows the problems within the EU. The Hungarian Prime Minister basically said no to everything else the EU was saying on Russia. There were similarly sharp differences among the European countries during the Syrian refugee crisis a few years ago, when they were welcomed by Germany but there was opposition by many other countries. As India, we should study and be aware of the internal contradictions within Europe which are not being reflected adequately in our public discourse.

**Padmashree Anandhan:** *Minsk agreements, peace treaties or the Normandy format talks held after the Crimean annexation failed. If any such agreement is signed post-Ukraine war or after the conflict slows down, how far Russia will stand put. The gap between Crimean annexation and Ukraine invasion is less than a decade, if Russia would launch war in the next decade, which state would be its target?*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** There is a concept in international politics of frozen conflicts. There are some conflicts for which there are no solutions. I do not see Crimea going back to Ukraine. But in every war, you always have agreements, treaties, and Accords which provide an honourable exit or a face saver to all sides. The negotiations will be difficult, and whatever settlement is reached has to be acceptable domestically to the people in Russia, Ukraine and to the Europeans. This is the only sustainable solution. In the Minsk agreements, Russia was not a signatory. Now that this war has happened, it will take years of negotiation to find a successor agreement to Minsk. It will require real leadership from Europeans. We will have to see if a leader or a group of leaders from Europe or outside can emerge who are in a position to be genuine mediators between Russia and Ukraine. Like a Contact Group of the kind there was during the Korean War when India was also involved.

I do not think Russia is targeting any other country. Its primary goal seems to be to ensure security on its periphery. At the broader military level, both sides, ie Russia and NATO will continue to ensure conventional balance and nuclear parity between them. This is not going to change. Neither side will allow any new asymmetries to develop.

## IV South Asia & China

**Ashwin Immanuel Dhanabalan:** *With the war in Ukraine continuing and the growing authoritarianism rising in South Asia, be it with Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, what role could India play within the region?*

*And what role could India play globally, as even Lavrov had mentioned that India could be a mediator in the war a few months back? Not looking at the war as a crisis but more as an opportunity, what is your perspective?*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** Rather than a trend towards growing authoritarianism, the trend is more towards growing nationalism, away from the idea of a global village which India believes in. The behaviour of major powers in the last few years has been narrow and self-centered. This is true of the policies and actions we have seen from the US or China and now from Russia. They have kept their national interests uppermost while taking decisions on matters that affect the world. For example, the American decision to withdraw from Afghanistan was taken not to serve any larger good but because it was a domestic political issue. This is when it was well known that sudden US withdrawal would create serious problems for Afghanistan and the region.

The other feature of the current crisis is that you cannot identify a leader or a nation which can step up and try to find a solution. It is of concern that the traditional “guardians” of the global international order are today the ones who are at loggerheads with each other. The five permanent members of the Security Council were the ones who were supposed to be the sole arbiters of global peace and security. Of those, two that is Russia and China are on side and three are on the other side. If that inner sanctum sanctorum is in conflict with itself, where would countries like India or anyone else go to with their problems? It is a crisis of international management. It is a reflection of the inability of the United Nations system to solve contemporary problems. Cynically speaking, every country is on its own. And if you have a problem, you better be equipped to deal with it. We learned this the hard way during COVID-19, and it led to the concept of Atma Nirbharta or self-reliance. One needs to strengthen national power to deal with a crisis, whether it is a health related one or military aggression of the kind we saw from China in 2020.

With regard to South Asia, India's role is always going to be a dominant and leading one. Sometimes it is welcomed; sometimes, it is not welcomed, but India is there to stay. Our neighbours are there to stay. The phenomenon of authoritarianism in Afghanistan, Myanmar, or Sri Lanka is real but it does not have any linkage with Ukraine. Each of these countries has its own dynamics and its own history. We should treat each of them on their own. The situation in Myanmar revolving around the takeover of power by the military junta has its own unique characteristics and impact on India's security along the border. In Afghanistan the impact on India of the takeover by the Taliban is different. One of the biggest casualties of the Ukrainian war is the Afghan people. Their plight has been forgotten. Afghanistan is a disaster waiting to happen. Its economy has collapsed, the administration has collapsed....the impact of Afghanistan will be felt in India in terms of security, radicalization, extremism and drugs. Therefore, in this milieu we must continuously enhance our national power in all dimensions.

**Avishka Ashok:** *Considering the unconditional friendship between Russia and China, the past few years have however seen much closer relations, primarily because of the heads of the two states. However, Xi and Putin may be closer to the end of their tenure and there may be a change in leadership in both these countries. What kind of future leadership can we expect in Russia and how would this affect the bilateral relations between the two countries?*

**Amb Pankaj Saran:** The evolution of Russia's political system has a common thread running through it, that of a strong centre and a strong leader. The Communist Revolution tried to democratize governance through the creation of Soviets or local parliaments, the cooperatives and collective farms. Despite Lenin's vision, the country had a leader like Stalin for over three decades. Even the Gorbachev phenomenon was not a result of a democratic election. He was the product of the Communist Party who had a meteoric rise in the party at a young age. The closest Russia has come to a democratic election is during the tenure of

Boris Yeltsin in 1991. That system, however, did not endure after Yeltsin's failing health. The selection of Putin as Yeltsin's successor is also shrouded in mystery.

When we speak of the future of Russia after Putin, we should see if there is a realistic mechanism that provides for transfer of power and gives genuine democratic choice to the people of Russia to choose their political leader. There have been numerous amendments to the Constitution and it is undecided if President Putin will, at some point, step down or ask the people to elect a new leader. What we do know is that Russia has a young a modern population. The post-1991 generation has close affinity with Europe and a desire for a good lifestyle and access to the world. On the other hand, the security apparatus and other related sections of the establishment in Russia are powerful. They will also have a major say in the running of the country in the future.

Russia and China have become closer in the past few years, mainly because of Western pressure on Russia which pushes the country towards China. There is however also the latent feeling in Russia that unlike it, China did not go through a 1991 type catharsis and is at present an economic powerhouse and global leader. It hurts Russia's pride at being considered a junior partner to China. It is simplistic to assume that the China-Russia relationship is smooth and without problems. China is increasingly challenging Russia's defence export markets and its position as a technology power. Russia will always look to diversify its foreign policy options and that is where India plays a significant role.

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Source: REUTERS/Jason Cairnduff, AFP, Reuters/Yara Nardi/File Photo, UN DESA / Helen Daun Rosengren, Turkish Presidency/ AP, Euronews/Finnish Navy/Merivoimat

## BULGARIA

### **Bulgaria: Government loses no-confidence motion in six months**

*By Rishma Banerjee*

On 22 June, members of the parliament voted for a no-confidence motion against Bulgaria's prime minister Kiril Petkov's government. Of the 240 seats, 123 voted for the motion, while 116 voted against it. The coalition government comprises Petkov's centrist We Continue The Change (PP) party, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the anti-establishment There is Such a People's Party (ITN), and right-wing Democratic Bulgaria (DB). The coalition was voted to power six months ago, in December 2021.

There has been a growing discontentment with Petkov's governance. His pro-Europe and pro-NATO election mandate had sought to combat the endemic corruption in Bulgaria. However, after Russia invaded Ukraine, the fault lines in the unstable four-party ruling coalition started to emerge.

#### **Issues leading to the no-confidence motion**

First, the governments' consideration for

North Macedonia's EU accession. Bulgaria has been opposing North Macedonia's membership bid because they want North Macedonia to acknowledge a Bulgarian minority in its constitution. However, Petkov recently indicated that Bulgaria might consider lifting its veto due to pressure from the EU and NATO. The move incited significant disagreement with the coalition, where the There is Such a People's Party (ITN) felt that Petkov was ignoring Bulgaria's interests.

Second, Petkov's strong anti-Russia stance. In February, Petkov fired his defence minister because he had refused to call Russia's invasion a war. Bulgaria has also supported the EU sanctions against Moscow. Moreover, to show their support for Ukraine, they have also agreed to repair Ukraine's military machinery. Historically, Bulgaria has been an ally of Moscow. Thus, Petkov's strong position against Russia has also catalyzed politicians in Bulgaria to promote neutrality.

Third, Bulgaria's economic crisis was due to Petkov's fiscal policies. In the budget approved in January 2022, Bulgaria said it

\*EM Daily Focus is published every evening by the NIAS Europe Monitor team on the day-to-day contemporary developments. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read it every day.

would double its capital investment to boost economic growth and living standards. However, the ITN has accused the government of pushing the country towards bankruptcy by raising the new debt. Bulgaria, the EU's poorest member, has also been dealing with rising inflation due to the country's expansionary policies. Last month, it reached 15.6 per cent, which is the highest increase in consumer prices since 2008. Fourth, withdrawal of ITN's support. PP's coalition partner ITN quit abruptly this month, complaining about fiscal mismanagement and Bulgaria's stance on North Macedonia. Even though five legislators defected to Petkov's party, his coalition still fell short of surviving the motion.

### What lies ahead after the no-confidence vote?

The no-confidence motion was lodged by the main opposition GERB party. President Rumen Radev will offer the PP party a second chance to propose a government. However, two more attempts will be given to different parties if they fail. However, if those fail, the president will appoint a caretaker government and call for fresh elections. If elections do take place, it will mark the fourth parliamentary election in Bulgaria since April 2021.

Petkov pointed out two significant issues causing his coalition's troubles: the pro-Russian influence in Bulgaria and the corrupt interests. He said: "It's a tough few days ahead. We are fighting hard to stay on the right side of history." He also mentioned that he feared Bulgaria would again take up the "traditional role of a soft state." Petkov has also rejected any coalition talks with opposition parties in the chamber. Instead, he will seek defections from lawmakers in the parliament to form a new government and avoid early elections.

### Implications of the government's fall

First, the economic burden of conducting parliamentary elections. Given the current fiscal condition of Bulgaria, the fourth election since April 2021 might cause tremendous pressure on Bulgaria's already stretched economy. Second, Bulgaria's relation with the EU. The

fall of this government can hinder Bulgaria's adoption of the Euro, which is scheduled for 2024. Moreover, the current crisis might also delay the EUR 6.3 billion that Bulgaria is supposed to receive as a part of the EU's Covid-19 Recovery Funds. Petkov's removal from power will also affect the EU's efforts to break a deadlock over North Macedonia and Albania's accession efforts.

Third, concerns about energy supply. The government's fall can also hinder Bulgaria's efforts to secure stable natural gas inflows. The country was heavily dependent on Russian gas but had refused to play in Rubles. In April, Russia stopped its gas supply to Bulgaria, and the EU has since supported the country.

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## FRANCE

### French Parliamentary elections: Three issues

*By Padmashree Anandhan*

On 19 June, French president Emmanuel Macron's Ensemble coalition with a difference of 44 seats lost in the legislative elections. When compared to the other party's the coalition secured the largest share with 245 seats, but to form a majority government it needs 289. President Macron will now face a challenge in meeting the demands of his opponents and winning the support of potential members of parliament from Republican, far-right, and left-wing parties.

### Election results: The divided majority

France reformed the term of presidency from seven years to five years in 2002 and

follows a tradition of conducting legislative elections weeks after presidential election. The elections are of national level in nature but organized by the local constituencies, the National Assembly contains 577 seats in total with 11 nationals outside France. Macron's party previously held 350 staging the majority. The opponent parties, Nupes consisting of socialists, communists, radical left, and the greens from the left-wing secured second with 131 seats, and the far-right National Rally (RN) alliance parties came third with 89 seats. Apart from the above, the Les Republicans could gain only 64 which is low compared to previous years. The reason is low turnout from young and middle-income households.

### Proposal and demands

Upon the election loss, Macron's domestic reform agenda on addressing the cost of living, raising of pension age, and food vouchers will be put to test for Parliamentary approval. Most importantly the position of prime minister Elisabeth Borne is under threat as the Parliament can plan a no-confidence motion. To form the government, rebuild confidence and not let France slip into political chaos, Macron has to ensure meeting the demands of the opponent's majority and push his reform agenda. Till now the key demands kept by left-green are lowering the retirement age from 62 to 60, increasing the minimum wages to 15 per cent, a freeze of the price of essential commodities, and creating more jobs.

### Domestic and regional impact

At the domestic level, the power is set to shuffle between the presidency and parliament challenging the political stability and reform make. Although the word compromise and French parliament are far-off, it remains in Macron's hands to negotiate with the other parties to form the majority government. On the other hand, if the left-wing alliance and far-right fail to cooperate in the process, it will lead to a political deadlock resulting in snap elections. At the regional level, in line with the fear of the EU and member states which favoured Macron's win will have to adapt to the new situation, where the far-right and hard left are rising. France might no longer be a

spearhead to unite the member states to settle regional issues.

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### POLAND

## Poland's pregnancy tracking database renews debate on women's rights to abortion

By Rishma Banerjee

### Recent developments

On 03 June, Poland's health minister, Adam Niedzielski signed an ordinance that will require doctors to register all pregnancies that they treat. This register had been in the pipelines since the beginning of 2021, but there were significant delays in its implementation of the same. As per this new order, Poland will start maintaining a central digital database, which will require doctors to note down allergies, blood type, medications taken, and underlying medical conditions of any of their pregnant patients. A health ministry spokesperson, Wojciech Andrusiewicz said that this move is to improve the treatment available for pregnant women, as this registry will let any doctor in the state or the EU know if they can administer any type of medication or order tests like x-rays.

### Gradual deterioration of women's rights in Poland

Abortion was legalized in Poland in 1932 when the state was under communist rule. A woman could terminate her pregnancy, if it posed a risk to her health and life, or was the result of a criminal act. This law was further extended in 1956 when those "experiencing difficult conditions" were brought under the

gamut of women who could request an abortion.

However, since the end of the communist rule, Poland's abortion laws have become increasingly restrictive. In 1993, the term "experiencing difficult conditions" was dropped from the law, and abortion was made legal for only those pregnancies facing a serious health risk, which were a result of rape or incest, or those where there was irreversible damage to the fetus. In 2020, Poland's Constitutional Tribunal ruled that abortion in cases of fetal defects was also unconstitutional, and by January 2021, the court's ruling entered into force, after being published in the Journal of Laws.

Now with the introduction of the database, it is anticipated that the body autonomy of women will be compromised further. Poland is facing criticism for the new provision, and opposition MPs have termed the digital database as a "pregnancy register".

Agnieszka Dziemianowicz-Bąk, a left-wing parliamentarian, and activist said: "Polish women no longer get pregnant for fear of being forced to give birth in any situation. The reasons for fear have just arrived...The pregnancy registry in a country with an almost complete ban on abortion is terrifying."

### What does this mean?

First, the effect of the strict measure on women. It might lead Polish women to take up medically unsafe methods to terminate a pregnancy, or travel abroad to Germany, the Czech Republic, or other countries where the procedure is allowed. Since abortion of a fetus with congenital defects is not allowed, having to carry such a pregnancy to term often has severe effects on the mother's mental and physical health. Doctors too are often unwilling to consider abortion, even if the pregnant woman's life is at risk, fearing intense follow-up questioning and prosecution. The situation is even bleaker for the countless refugee women from Ukraine in Poland, who have been victims of sexual violence. While it is true that Poland allows termination of pregnancies that are results of rape, proving so must be a traumatic affair for the women who already are facing challenges due to their displacement and the war in their own state.

Second, the issue of privacy and agency. The primary fear about the new database is with regards to privacy and increased surveillance. Medical data can be given to the police or to state prosecutors which can lead not only to harassment, but also legal action by the state. While at home abortion pills or soliciting an abortion abroad cannot be pursued legally in Poland, anyone found helping a woman access this can face prosecution. This database might further exacerbate the atmosphere of intimidation that women wanting to terminate their pregnancies face.

Third, the renewal of my body is my choice debate. The ordinance for the database comes at a time when the US is also seeing protests against abortion rights. While many states in the US have strict anti-abortion laws in place, the overturning of the *Roe v. Wade* ruling that is expected in the coming weeks will render a federal ban on abortion in 26 states. Even in the 21st century, such policing of women's bodies, especially in developed states, might herald an era of further regression in women's rights.

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### RUSSIA

#### Russia's renewed attack on Kyiv: A change in strategy?

By Rishma Banerjee

On 26 June, Russia renewed its offensive in Kyiv when four missiles hit the capital. One of the missiles hit residential buildings, killing one person and injuring five. The last attack on Kyiv was on 05 June, when Russia destroyed a factory on the outskirts of the city.

On the same day, the G7 leaders met in Germany for the summit. The main agenda

was the war in Ukraine and the resultant necessity to present a united bloc.

Also on the same day, Sievierodonetsk fell to Russia's forces. It had been under heavy siege for weeks, with significant infrastructural and humanitarian damages. Russia now has control over most of the Donbas region except Lysychansk. The objective of this 'special military operation' in Ukraine was to liberate the Donbas. Thus, as expected, Russia's forces were seen moving towards Lysychansk, to secure the entire region.

### The renewed attack on Kyiv: Three explanations

First, warning attacks by Russia. Putin may view the G7 meeting as an anti-Russian grouping. The attacks on Kyiv can therefore be his attempt to show the G7 leaders that he has the power and upper hand in Ukraine. This attack could also be a delayed response to the EU granting candidacy to Ukraine by accepting their membership bid. Moreover, NATO is also supposed to begin its summit in Madrid on 28 June. Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko said that this was a "symbolic attack" to pre-empt the NATO leaders from further uniting against Russia. He also mentioned that the recent attacks were reminiscent of the Russian attacks on Kyiv during the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres's visit to Ukraine.

Second, a distraction tactic. The attack on Kyiv can be seen as an effort to shift the global attention from Sievierodonetsk and the Donbas. This makes it easier for Russia to carry out its 'operation' in eastern Ukraine. Russia had said that it will target depots and stores of weapons and ammunition supplied by the West. However, other than striking these depots in the north and west of Ukraine, Russia does not have any immediate military objective in targeting these places.

Third, Putin's changing strategies. With most of Donbas under its control, Russia will now look into its long-term plan in Ukraine. Even though Russian troops were concentrating only on eastern Ukraine, there have been sporadic attacks on Kyiv, Lviv, and Sumy. This indicates Putin's going back to the

initial strategy to occupy Ukraine's key areas which were under Ukraine's control.

Moreover, Russia's ambassador to the US, Anatoly Antonov spoke about how the West sending heavy artillery to Ukraine is only intensifying the conflict. While the US objective may be to weaken Russia, in reality, it is only increasing the threat of escalation. With the West's support still unwavering, this attack on Kyiv and other places in the north and west of Ukraine might be a preview of what is coming next in terms of Russia's strategy.

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### **"It is special military operation" and not invasion: Says Russian Foreign Minister in an interview to the BBC**

*By Rishma Banerjee*

On 16 June, Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov met Russia's editor for the BBC, Steve Rosenberg for an interview. This marks one of the very few interviews that Lavrov has given since 24 February 2022. He spoke about Russia's role in Ukraine, and the interference of NATO, elucidating Russia's narrative about the conflict. He also shed light on the deteriorating Russia-UK relations.

### Four takeaways

First, Russia's emphasis on "special military operation" in Ukraine. Reiterating president Putin's previous statements, Lavrov maintained that the conflict in Ukraine was not an invasion. He said: "We declared a special military operation because we had absolutely no other way of explaining to the West that dragging Ukraine into NATO was a criminal act." This comes as NATO countries

have increased their support to Ukraine, but the military alliance itself has not deployed any combat troops. The alliance maintains that the build-up of their troops in Eastern Europe was simply a response to Russia's own build-up along Ukraine's border.

Second, Russia's accusation of spreading of fake news. Rosenberg referred to a report by the United Nations, about 360 people in Yahidne village, who were being held hostage by Russia's forces. Lavrov responded to it by saying that multilateral bodies like the UNHCR and the UN Secretary-General have been pressured by the West to spread and promote fake news to vilify Russia.

Third, Russia's souring relations with the UK. Russia has put the UK on their list of unfriendly countries. Lavrov spoke about the foreign ministry's sanctions on prime minister Boris Johnson, foreign secretary Liz Truss, and 11 other politicians, over their "hostile actions". Additionally, he extended a challenge to them, saying that he would like to see the UK trying to bring Russia 'to its knees.' He added that the government in the UK was sacrificing the people's interest for political gains. Concerning the two UK nationals sentenced to death by the Donetsk People's Republic court, Lavrov mentioned that he was not concerned with the narrative the West depicted. Instead, he said Russia referred to international law and further mentioned that the court would decide if the two men were mercenaries or combatants.

Fourth, Russian accusation of genocide by Ukraine. Lavrov referred to the failure of Kyiv in implementing the Minsk agreement, which protects the Russian people in the Donbas region. Lavrov pointed fingers at *BBC* and also accused them of misreporting facts about pro-Russian civilians being bombed for eight years. Russia maintains that Ukraine has been committing genocide in the separatist-held region in the east, since 2014. Throughout the interview, Lavrov referred to Ukraine's aggression against their own citizens with pro-Russian sentiments. He said, this operation is thus the only way to de-nazify Ukraine, and liberate the people residing in the Donbas region.

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## THE UK

### UK's Rwanda asylum plan and plane get delayed: Five impending issues

*By Ashwin Dhanabalan*

#### The legal complications and economic implications

On 14 June, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) intervened in UK's Rwanda asylum plan, halting London's first flight carrying asylum seekers to Kigali. The flight was on the runway when the European judges issued a last-minute injunction that stopped the deportation of the four migrants onboard. The ECHR's intervention has also undermined the UK's highest court. This comes as the Supreme Court, the High Court, and the Court of Appeal had already approved in favour of the ruling government. This failed deportation plan has also cost the government about GBP 500,000 due to legal issues. The failure has further highlighted the economic viability of the Rwanda asylum plan. On the same day, over 300 migrants had crossed the border, adding to concerns about the UK's taxpayers' money.

#### Five issues

First, issues with the European court. The intervention by the European court has sparked outrage among the Tory Members of Parliament. The UK earlier could not leave the ECHR due to it being a part of the EU. However, now under Boris Johnson and BREXIT, the recent issues could revive the UK's plans to leave the ECHR.

Second, long-term economic viability. The government in the UK stated that it would grant Rwanda about EUR 120 million and

bear the operational costs and amount for each migrant. The UK pays about EUR 4.7 million per day to accommodate approximately 25,000 asylum seekers within the UK. Thus, it argues that outsourcing the migrants to a third country under the Rwanda deal could reduce the costs. However, Australia has a similar plan set up with Nauru but has had to pay about 10 billion to 3,127 offshore migrants to date, raising questions on the UK's plan's long-term viability.

Third, similar outcome to the Canberra and Port Moresby model. Australia and Papua New Guinea had a similar deal, but in 2017 the Papua New Guinea supreme court ruled the processing center on Manus Island "illegal and unconstitutional." Drawing parallels to the UK-Rwanda deal, there are likely legal issues that can arise as monitoring the day-to-day activities of the migrants would be the responsibility of the government of Rwanda. Issues of sexual abuse against women and children, self-harm, and other issues with the migrants are concerns that need to be addressed.

Fourth, more dissent from within. With the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Prince Charles expressing their displeasure to the plan, speculations of more substantial dissent on the UK's plan with Rwanda. A recent YouGov poll stated that the people in the UK were divided as only 44 per cent supported the policy while 40 per cent opposed it.

Fifth, falsifying the argument of stopping illegal migration. Out of 130 asylum seekers, only four were boarded in the last few hours, while more than 300 migrants crossed the English Channel on the same day. This indicates a possible falsification of the argument that creating a passage through Rwanda would deter gangs and traffickers from stopping the illegal smuggling of asylum seekers. In the end, the traffickers would send the migrants across the channel to allow them to pursue the five-day appealing process failing which they would be sent to Rwanda.

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## UK's new provisions to alter the Northern Ireland Protocol invoke tensions in Europe

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 14 June, the UK government submitted its plans on revising the clauses of the Northern Ireland Protocol in the Parliament. It aims to alter the provisions by inventing green lanes and red lanes to facilitate a smoother trade flow between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In response, the EU has accused the UK as it considered the move a breach of international law. UK's Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said: "a reasonable, practical solution to the problems facing Northern Ireland, we are very clear that we're acting in line with the law." At the same Prime Minister Boris Johnson expressed his willingness to fix the protocol in line with the Belfast Good Friday Agreement.

### What are the key provisions proposed by the UK?

First, provision on the movement of goods and custom duty. Under this UK plans to exclude Article 5(1) and Article 5(2) which will restrict the custom duties on the goods that enter from any of the UK territories. It includes Great Britain, the Isle of Man, any of the Channel Islands, and any other place that is outside the EU that goes under the "qualifying movement." It also proposes to bring a provision to make new laws and changes to section 4 of the Northern Ireland Protocol on the administrative processes and treatment of goods that are no more "UK or non-EU destined goods."

Second, provision for the regulation of

goods. The term means, making the goods available in the market, putting them into service, production, licensing, testing, trial, inspection, market surveillance, compliance, and enforcement. With regards to this section, the UK proposes an option for the passage of goods into Northern Ireland. One is the UK regulatory route, the EU regulatory route, and both the regulatory routes, where the person can choose either of the routes to trade goods to be compliant. When the goods are sent through the UK regulatory route, they will be subject to only domestic law, whereas in the case of the EU regulatory route the goods will have to abide by separate "agreement law." This means Article 5(4) of the protocol will be excluded. Under this UK has again given a provision to make new laws as per its own consideration of the protocol.

Third, provision on the European Court. The section targets the provisions agreed upon previously in the EU withdrawal agreement. In the new bill, the UK suggests that it will no longer be bound by the principles and decisions that come from the European Court and shall not refer to it on any matter. It proposes to proceed with any kind of trade dispute through a court or tribunal and shall consider the EU law only when there is a particular necessity to involve the European Court to conclude the trial.

#### How will the proposed new bill impact?

First, the passing of the bill. Although Truss assured that the bill remains compliant with the law and Johnson has expressed his will to alter the protocol to settle the instability in Northern Ireland, from the suggested proposal, a drastic change to key clauses can be observed. Considering the legal warning issued by the EU and the divide in the house of commons from the recent party gate scandal approval of the bill by the parliament will be challenged.

Second, the EU's action. The most important articles and sub-clauses of the Northern Ireland Protocol that provides the EU the regulatory authority on keeping a check on goods to legal proceedings seem to be remodeled by the UK in its favour. Going back on an agreement that was signed by the UK and the EU will create tensions leading to legal action and a trade war.

Third, political chaos infused economic instability in Northern Ireland. The start point of the recent tensions is due to the Democratic Unionist party's opposition to the Northern Ireland Protocol and upon the election win of Sinn Fein, the issue escalated. Hence along with the political chaos of the inability to form a government and the UK's interference in proposing the new bill to alter the protocol, Northern Ireland will also face an economic downturn from the probable trade war between the UK and the EU.

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## Partygate scandal comes to a halt as Johnson wins no-confidence vote

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

### A watershed moment for Johnson

On 06 June, UK's prime minister Boris Johnson faced a no-confidence vote due to the partygate scandal held during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Partygate refers to the alcohol-fueled parties at Johnson's Downing Street office as the UK was under strict COVID-19 restrictions. At the no-confidence vote, 41 per cent of lawmakers voted against Johnson while 59 per cent supported him. Thus, giving Johnson an impetus to continue as UK's prime minister till the 2025 elections. Johnson further mentioned that winning the vote would help him unite the government and work towards strengthening the economy. He added: "I think it's a convincing result, a decisive result and what it means is that as a government we can move on and focus on the stuff that I think really matters to people."

### Is this the end of the party gate scandal?

The partygate scandal-related investigations have not ended as there were likely more events around Downing Street that have not been uncovered. But, Johnson can't face

another no-confidence motion for 12 months under the Tory party rules, which gives him adequate time to prepare. Johnson was also able to play a crucial role in the War in Eastern Europe which led to him gaining favor from the Conservative party stalwarts. Moreover, the war in Ukraine diverted the people's and the government's attention toward Russia's invasion and with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the partygate scandal has been shadowed.

### What lies ahead for Johnson

First, fissures within the party. The current no-confidence vote shed light on the previous votes against Margaret Thatcher in 1989 and Theresa May in 2018. Both resulted in a split and weakened Conservative party as oppositions within the party were brought to the forefront in the votes, even though both won the no-confidence voting. Similarly, in the case of Johnson, 41 per cent voted against him, which compared to May's votes of 37 per cent was on the higher side.

Second, domestic concerns. Johnson would have to now focus on issues with Brussels over Northern Ireland, COVID-19-related backlogs, and disruptions. Furthermore, rapidly increasing inflation of nine per cent has led to higher energy prices. The demand for affordable housing are issues that Johnson's government would have to tackle.

Third, reviving alliances. The war in Ukraine has given Johnson's government the opportunity to launch back the UK in Europe post BREXIT. The UK's deployment of additional troops and equipment along NATO's borders and its pledge of USD 1.6 billion hints toward the UK's long-term plans for Europe.

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### TURKEY

## Turkey's persisting problems with Sweden and Finland joining the NATO

By Rishma Banerjee

On 12 June, the NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg met Finland's president, Sauli Niinisto; he reiterated Turkey's genuine concerns about Sweden and Finland's NATO bid. Turkey has been opposed to the entry of Finland and Sweden as full NATO members. Turkey's main concerns are the Kurds' issue and a few organizations that Turkey considers terrorists mainly, the PKK.

According to Article 10 of NATO's founding treaty, the approval for membership must be unanimous. Sweden and Finland have to convince all 30 countries for joining. Ankara has already vetoed its application for an expedited membership. Turkey's president said: "make it clear that they have stopped supporting terrorism."

There has been a series of bilateral talks between the three countries; other member states have also tried to negotiate. No concrete decision has been reached so far.

### Four reasons, why Turkey wants to blocs Sweden and Finland from entering the NATO

First, Sweden's links with the PKK. Sweden declares the PKK a terrorist, in 1984. With regards to Turkey, any Kurdish group, it does not approve by PKK. In the case of Sweden, it has a history of providing refuge to Kurdish asylum seekers, especially political refugees. Turkey alleges that these people are allied with the PKK, but Sweden has denied such allegations. Sweden has also supported the political wing of the PKK's Syrian branch, called the PYD, and the same applies to the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political wing of the Syrian Democratic Front. Regarding Finland, Turkey's issue is based more on their association with Sweden and the fact that they follow a similar foreign policy. Turkey has said that for them to accept the

membership bids, Sweden and Finland will have to officially stop their support of the PKK and not provide them refuge. They will also have to extradite 30 people who Turkey identifies as terrorists.

Second, Sweden's PKK links; it declared the latter as a terrorist organization in 1984. For Turkey, those groups it does not agree with, is seen as a part of the PKK. On the other hand, Sweden has been providing asylum to Kurdish refugees, whom Turkey consider as PKK supporters, hence terrorists. Turkey also consider Sweden supporting the PKK's political wing in Syria- the PYD. Turkey wants Sweden and Finland from supporting the PKK, and expects the latter to extradite 30 people. Second, Turkey wants to use the issue to bargain with the US. In 2020, US sanctioned the sale of F-35 fighters for Turkey on the purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defence systems.

Third, Erdogan's attempt to increase his bargaining power and electoral popularity. There has been a decline in his ratings due to rising inflation, falling Lira, and increasing cost of living. A grandstanding on the above may boost support for Erdogan.

Fourth, the Ukraine fallout. Turkey is attempting a precarious balancing act on Ukraine. While it refused to join the sanctions against Russia, it also sent Bayraktar TB2 armed drones to Ukraine. Turkey has since been trying to negotiate between Ukraine and Russia for a corridor to export Ukraine's grains to the world.

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## UKRAINE

### Ukraine faces an ammunition shortage as the battle for the Donbas rages

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

On 10 June, a report by the *Washington Post* mentioned the rising concerns of Ukraine losing on the battlefield due to the acute shortage of ammunition. While Russia, on the other hand, has been increasing its firepower against Ukraine and has been outgunning Kyiv's forces. According to Ukraine's deputy head of military intelligence, Vadym Skibitsky, Russia was firing about 60,000 artillery shells and rockets daily. While Ukraine could only muster 5,000 to 6,000 artillery rounds a day with almost depleted stocks.

#### Four reasons for an ammunition shortage in Ukraine

First, absorbing the West's military equipment. Ukraine's army has been facing shortcomings in absorbing the military supplies from the West, NATO, and the EU as they have not used them in their training exercises. For example, NATO's supplies of 155-millimetre artillery shells have reached Kyiv, but the army faces logistical challenges in taking them to the frontline and firing the munitions. Ukrainian forces have received training to use the advanced military supplies, but the army does face issues while maintaining them.

Second, incompatibility issues. Ukraine has been dependent on Soviet weapons since the inception of the war. This made it difficult for the West to acquire Soviet-related ammunition to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia, as the Warsaw Pact and NATO countries used different calibers of ammunition. Ukraine's defense minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, stated: "Relying solely on Soviet weapons was definitely a losing strategy."

Third, a delay in supplies. Even with the West, NATO, and the EU assuring weapons supply to Ukraine, the weapon system has been arriving too slowly to keep up with the war. Due to this delay in supplies, Ukraine's armies are facing more casualties in

comparison to the initial days of the war. For example, the US-made HIMARS multiple-rocket launcher systems are on their way to Ukraine. However, the Ukrainian forces would have to first be trained to use them and thus, delaying its active deployment by a few weeks.

Fourth, storing ammunition. The storage of ammunition, tanks, and other military supplies has not been carried out efficiently as Moscow has been targeting the incoming supplies from the West by airstrikes. Additionally, since the Ukrainian army is dependent on Soviet-era ammunition, if these supplies are not stored correctly, there is a higher chance of them turning into duds. The forces complained that the Czech-supplied rockets were faulty as they successfully fired only three out of 40 rounds.

### What lies ahead?

The shortage in ammunition has shadowed Ukraine's plans to take back the East. The shortcomings have also demoralized the army as the Ukrainian forces were being intimidated by Russia's 24/7 shillings and artillery superiority. Knowing about Ukraine's disadvantages, Russia has shifted its tactics to using close air support and dismounted infantry to tackle the Ukrainian forces more effectively. Russia has been able to regenerate its army as it refurbished its units, deployed new forces, and increased the age of the reserve force to enlist more men. Thus, the battle of Sievierodonetsk would be a turning point for both Russia and Ukraine.

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## Sievierodonetsk: The bastion of the east

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

After the fall of Mariupol, the eastern city of Sievierodonetsk emerged as the next bastion for Ukraine. But, On 30 May, Russian troops entered the city through the eastern front while shelling the southern region of Sievierodonetsk. The city is strategically important for Ukraine and Russia as they both fight to decide the fate of the Donbas region. For Moscow, it would be a win to secure Luhansk and Donetsk, while for Kyiv, it would decide the fate of the war in Eastern Ukraine.

### The strategically important region of Sievierodonetsk

The region is at a geographical junction near the Donets river, in the Luhansk region on the border with Donetsk. It is also nine miles south of Russia's border. Sievierodonetsk is one of the last cities of defence for Russia to take control of the Donbas region, after which it could focus more on Lysychansk and then eventually the Luhansk region. However, the Donets river remains a natural barrier for Russian forces to capture Lysychansk. For Ukraine, it is equally essential after Mariupol and could prevent Russian forces from achieving its goals of liberating the entire Donbas region.

### Russia's endgame for the city

First, a pivot to capturing Donbas. On 03 June, according to the UK's defence ministry, Russia was concentrating its forces around Sievierodonetsk to capture the city and eventually take control of the Donbas region. Sievierodonetsk is the current administrative capital for Ukraine after the city of Luhansk fell to the Russians. Taking control of the city would push Russia's line of capture further into the Donbas region, cutting off supplies for Ukrainian forces who were trying to win back control of territories. Second, the symbolic importance of the city. The city has always been a bone of contention for Ukraine and Russia since 2014. In 2014, Russia briefly held the city as it moved to take control of Crimea. Thus, winning the city again would revive the morale of the Russian forces, who had been

receiving setbacks in its war since February. Moreover, the people of Sievierodonetsk majorly speak Russian, and victory over the city would reinvigorate Putin's plan of liberating the people of Donbas.

Third, securing the hinterland for the land corridor. Russia has already secured a land corridor and has control of the water supply to Crimea and the biggest power plant in Europe. But, securing Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk would give it more hinterland to set up its defenses and secure administration for a more extended period. This could help Russian forces push further south and east, encircling Ukraine.

### Ukraine's strategies for Sievierodonetsk

First, a possible retreat. On 08 June, Luhansk's governor Sergiy Gaiday stated that Ukraine's troops might have to retreat from the city of Sievierodonetsk. He added: "No one is going to surrender Sievierodonetsk even if our forces have to fall back to better-fortified positions." Fierce fighting continued as Ukrainian soldiers controlled the industrial zone and the surrounding settlements, but Russia's 24/7 shelling has left the soldiers vulnerable. Second, a prolonged battle like Mariupol. The situation might prolong as the people of Sievierodonetsk or the forces do not want to give up on the strategic city. Mariupol held out for two months, three weeks, and five days, Sievierodonetsk, also an industrial town, could hold on for a more extended or a shorter period.

Third, a stalemate. With Russia controlling the residential parts of the city and Ukraine holding on to the industrial zone and a few settlements, there could be a likely stalemate. This comes as Ukraine plans to send fresh battalions to defend the lines with foreign fighters and equipment from the West. Thus, it is leading to a possible stalemate scenario as a new front of resistance by Russian forces just as they did in Kyiv for months.

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## The weaponization of wheat as the war in Ukraine continues

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

On 01 June, Pope Francis addressed the people on the worsening global food crisis accentuated by the war in Ukraine. He mentioned how grain could eventually be used as a "weapon of war" and called on the authorities to lift the blockade imposed on Ukraine's grain exports. Pope Francis has been condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but this was the first time he emphasized on the global food crisis as Kyiv and Moscow are the largest wheat exporters to countries in Africa and the Middle East. Russia and Ukraine account for about 29 per cent of the world's wheat exports.

### Negotiating the wheat crisis

The UN has proposed to release Russia and Belarus from sanctions on their fertilizer exports if Moscow unblocks Ukraine's grain exports through the Black Sea. UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres mentioned that the UN urged the West and Russia to show "goodwill on all sides" to control the global food crisis.

However, on 28 May, Putin, on a call with France's president Emmanuel Macron and Germany's chancellor Olaf Sholz asked the West to remove all the "biting sanctions it slapped on Moscow after its invasion." Furthermore, the Kremlin stated: "An increase in the supply of Russian fertilizers and agricultural products will also help reduce tensions on the global food market, which, of course, will require the removal of the relevant sanctions."

### Russia's efforts to deter a global food crisis

On 30 May, Putin stated that Moscow would bring in systems to facilitate the unhindered grain export from Ukrainian ports. Russia plans to export its wheat by coordinating with Turkey. Putin also mentioned that Russia would export more significant

volumes of agricultural products such as wheat if sanctions were lifted. This led to accusations from the UN and the West that Russia was the reason for deepening the global food crisis and blamed Moscow for blocking Ukrainian ports. Russia further claims that sanctions by the West had affected their exports to access vessels or caused impediments to countries importing from Russia. Regardless of the situation, Putin plans to increase wheat exports to 87 million tonnes between June and July to counter the wheat crisis.

### Ukraine's recourse to exporting wheat

Ukraine used to export most of its agricultural products through its Odesa port. However, it can only send 1-1.5 million tonnes through freight trains and river transport due to the war. Even with the government planning to push for shipping through trains, the country faces logistical setbacks due to the lack of fuel, trucks, broader rail gauges, and freight wagons. Ukraine's agriculture ministry official Roman Rusakov said: "Ports are necessary. But having said that we certainly will improve our railway logistics. Meantime, (river) ports will be in place to do a good job. But will it be enough to reach the target of like 6, 7 million a month? No way."

Ukraine plans to export 700,000 to 750,000 tonnes of wheat through ports on the Danube river through Romania, destined for North Africa and Asia. They also plan to send the rest of the grain by road, but in the last 22 days, only 28,000 tonnes were exported by roadway. Another challenge is storing grain in Europe, as Ukraine can send its grains through European ports, a logistical issue of storage infrastructure has emerged. Countries through which Ukraine sends its grain do not have the infrastructure to support its exports and store the wheat.

### Global movements to control the emergency

The African Union's (AU) head and Senegal's president Macky Sall stated that he would be visiting Russia to speak to Putin on the impending food crisis. The AU also plans to discuss issues with Zelenskyy and the EU concerning the increasing prices of commodities. This comes as the African continent is dependent on Ukraine for wheat and fertilizer from Russia.

UK's prime minister Boris Johnson assured Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy that the UK, with the G7 members, would push for grain exports and try to get Russia to relax its blockade. The G7 is also planning to initiate a massive public diplomacy campaign to spread awareness of the worsening wheat crisis and the reasons for the shortage. The campaign was launched to bring the issue to the UN General Assembly and call for an end to the naval blockade in the Black Sea.

### Additional challenges ahead

First, India halting grain exports. On 14 May, India announced that it would be halting its wheat exports to counter domestic food prices and support neighboring countries. India placed wheat exports under the "prohibited" category as prices in the international market spiked exponentially with the war in Ukraine. However, India drew backlash from the international community and the G7 for its action as it could influence other countries to take similar steps.

Second, logistical shortcomings. Even though Ukraine plans to export its grains through Europe, it would take twice the time for the wheat to reach its destination countries. This could lead to acute shortages in certain countries. Additionally, due to the detour, the grain prices would inherently rise, and amid a fuel price hike, the countries importing the wheat would have to pay substantially higher prices.

Third, civil unrest. The war in Ukraine threatens the African and Middle Eastern region's food security as the countries are dependent on Kyiv and Moscow for wheat supplies. The UN has issued warnings of rising food insecurity that could induce civil unrest similar to the Arab spring. Egypt, the world's top wheat importer, could face political unrest as the war has strained its subsidized bread supplies.

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## REGIONAL

### **Lithuania's rail transit to Kaliningrad, a new flashpoint of contention**

*By Ashwin Dhanabalan*

#### **What is the ban about?**

On 17 June, Lithuania announced a ban on Russian goods transiting through its territory to Kaliningrad, following the guidelines of the EU's sanctions. Kaliningrad is a strategic enclave of Russia geographically located between Lithuania and Poland on the Baltic coast. The banned goods included construction materials, advanced technology, metals, and coals which were crucial for Kaliningrad and made up 50 per cent of its imports. Lithuania's announcement has increased tensions between Russia and NATO as both Poland and Lithuania are member states. However, Lithuania has also argued that Russia knew about the sanctions and only used the issue to wage a possible information war.

#### **Moscow's retaliation**

On 18 June, in response to Lithuania's announcement, Kaliningrad's governor Anton Alikhanov said: "We consider this to be a most serious violation ... of the right to free transit into and out of Kaliningrad region." The governor said the enclave had prepared to increase the number of ships' carrying goods to compensate for the shortages from Saint Petersburg. On 21 June, Russia's Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev stated that Russia would respond to Lithuania's actions with hostile measures. He added that the consequences would also

have "a serious negative impact on the Lithuanian population."

#### **Five concerns of contention on the Kaliningrad blockade**

First, the Suwałki land corridor. The Suwałki gap is considered the Achilles' heel of NATO as it is geographically vulnerable to a joint attack by Russia and Belarus. This would also cut Lithuania's border with Poland and fracture NATO's land Baltic access.

Second, escalating Russian aggression. On 27 June, Russian hackers claimed responsibility for the cyber-attacks targeting private institutions in Lithuania. In addition, Russia in February announced that it had positioned nuclear-capable Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad. These missiles would be able to target NATO countries in the Baltic seas and are now an immediate threat to Lithuania if issues escalate.

Third, NATO's article five. Russia's declaration of retaliation has drawn the US to be involved in the Russia, Lithuania, and Kaliningrad issue. US state department spokesperson Ned Price stated that the US fully supported Ukraine under NATO's article five. Any escalation would result in a collective NATO response which would push the conflict away from Ukraine to Lithuania.

Fourth, reviving the debate on Lithuania's independence. Lithuania has been supporting Ukraine since Russia invaded Kyiv. In retaliation, Russia and the Duma deputies suggested revoking Lithuania's independence that the Soviet Union agreed upon in 1991. This would further disrupt the relations between Vilnius and Moscow.

Fifth, isolating the militarised region. Isolating the enclave would likely lead to stagnation as the region has an underdeveloped economy and is dependent on mainland Russia for imports. Russia has also argued that Lithuania's blockade would exacerbate global food shortages and increase inflation.

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## EU's strategies countering rising inflation

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

On 22 June, according to the Daily Express, the EU's inflation has hit 8.8 per cent, the highest since the creation of the Euro in 1999. The EU's finance chief Mairead McGuinness has blamed the rising costs on the bloc's heavy reliance on Russian oil and Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The EU relies on Russian energy supplies for up to 27 per cent, and the recent sanctions have driven up prices. Estonia is the worst-hit EU member with a 20 per cent inflation rate, while Latvia and Lithuania face a rate of 16.9 and 18.9, respectively. In contrast, non-EU members such as Switzerland and Liechtenstein have recorded their lowest interest rates of 2.9 and 2.5 percent.

The World Economic Forum said it blamed the inflation rate on the post-pandemic recovery plans and the sudden change in spending habits in the Eurozone. This comes as the EU had allocated a EUR 672.5 billion economic plan to benefit the EU's member states. This is similar to Washington's USD 1.9 trillion American rescue plan and stimulus checks which have been blamed for causing rapid inflation in the US. The EU speculates prices to increase by the year-end as the demand for lower cost of living and higher energy prices would increase during the winter season.

### The EU's strategies to contain the inflation

First, raising the interest rates. On 09 June, the European Central Bank (ECB) announced

to increase its interest rate for the first time in 11 years. The increase in the interest rate would encourage people to deposit their money into the central banks and help curb inflation in the Eurozone. The central bank plans to increase its interest rates by July and then September saying the bank would have future increases in a "gradual but sustained path." This comes as the ECB faces a deposit rate of minus 0.5 per cent which would gradually change once the interest rates increase.

Second, curbing the sale of bond yields in unstable economies. ECB president Christine Lagarde stated that to tackle inflation "in the bud," they had to curb bond yields of unstable economies. This comes as Italy and Spain's bond yields reached their highest level for eight years and asked the government to stop selling more bonds and start raising interest rates to help curb inflation in the Eurozone. The ECB is worried that a bond market panic could further push up the borrowing costs of unstable and weaker economies, which could then drag the entire Eurozone into a financial crisis.

Third, the EU's QTQE approach to fragmentation. The EU is also trying to balance its contractionary monetary policies by applying quantitative tightening (QT) with quantitative easing (QE) in the already fragmented economic landscape. In addition, it plans on using the pandemic emergency purchase programme (PEPP) to control the market of member states where it is needed and to limit spending only where needed. The ECB said: "The pandemic has left lasting vulnerabilities in the euro area economy which are indeed contributing to the uneven transmission of the normalization of our monetary policy across jurisdictions."

Nevertheless, policymakers are still concerned about the EU's policies backfiring as they could cause market concerns in the Eurozone's growth outlook. As a result, the bank stated that the Eurozone would only grow 2.8 per cent instead of the forecasted 3.7 per cent. Lagarde, in response, mentioned, "Inflation will remain undesirably elevated for some time," as the bank forecasted growth of only 2.1 per cent in 2023 and 2024.

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## Poland and the EU's COVID-19 aid impasse ends

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

### Judicial reforms accepted by Poland

The issue between Poland and the EU's COVID-19 package began in November 2020, when Warsaw and Budapest blocked the Union's economic recovery plan. Poland and Hungary were skeptical of the EU's intervention in its member states' media and judiciary systems. The two countries later accepted the EUR 672.5 billion economic plan that would benefit the EU's member states.

On 14 June, Warsaw accepted a new accountability panel replacing the controversial body that disciplined judges. This comes as the EU's commission conditionally accepted Poland's pandemic recovery plan that would disburse EUR 36 billion to Warsaw. Under the plan, Poland has accepted to get away with its "disciplinary chamber" for judges and has accepted their cases to be heard by courts that are compliant with the EU's law. In addition, the new reforms make it easier for Poland's judges to ask the EU court of justice to rule on specific issues. This also comes as the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) fined Poland EUR one million per day since 27 October 2021 for maintaining a

disciplinary chamber for judges.

### Poland, Hungary, and the EU triangle

The EU has accused Hungary and Poland of eroding their governance standards and has been troublesome to the bloc. The two countries wielded their veto rights whenever Poland or Hungary was subjected to disciplinary processes. An EU diplomat said: "The bond between [Poland and Hungary] has been a safety net for them, meaning they had no fear of being stuck in the Article 7 procedure and having to bear the consequences."

However, the relations between the two countries have received setbacks due to the war in Ukraine. Since Hungary is greatly dependent on Russia for its energy needs, it has softened the EU's approach to energy sanctions against Moscow. On the other hand, Poland has been accommodating Ukraine's 3.5 million refugees and is playing an active role in the war, which has brought it under the favor of the EU. In contrast, Hungary's EUR 7.2 billion remains stuck as the EU withheld its funds because of corruption charges.

### Poland and the EU: Three issues ahead

First, the EU's push to reshape the Eastern Europe. The EU has been facing issues in uniting its Eastern most members to a uniform European identity based on similar norms and values. It faced issues with Ukraine refusing to sign its broad trade and security agreement. Thus, with Poland accepting EU's judicial changes, it has revived the EU's push for European unity in the East. Poland accepting a political compromise would set off Hungary to follow suit and eventually rest of EU's eastern member states.

Second, resistance from the European parliament. The changes by Poland's president Andrzej Duda were mainly seen as superficial. The judge who had been highly critical of the government's actions was reinstated under the new policies but was appointed to a different court and was then sent on leave. This drew criticism from the centrist lawmakers in the European parliament. The lawmakers argued that Poland failed to address the issues at hand and that EU's conditions were premature.

Third, spending the recovery funds. Poland would not receive the funds at once, as Warsaw would have to complete certain milestones described in its national plan. Thus, this would lead to occasional audits and transparency mechanisms that both Poland and the EU would have to work towards together.

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## Bulgaria's and Croatia's accession into the Eurozone

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

On 27 May, Bulgaria's coalition government approved the country's plan to join the Eurozone by 01 January 2024. However, their attempt to join the zone has been shadowed by political uncertainty and the coalition government's issues toward joining the Eurozone. Croatia, on the other hand, plans to become the 20th country that adopts the Euro. The European Central Bank (ECB) stated that Croatia had cleared the economic criteria to join Europe's single currency. Croatia is set to join the bloc by 01 January 2023.

### Roadblocks ahead

Concerning Bulgaria, the country is likely to have setbacks in achieving its goal to join the Eurozone by 2024. This is because the

country's inflation has averaged 5.8 per cent, which is above the maximum limit of 4.9 per cent. Additionally, Bulgaria is falling short on its legal governance and structural reforms. It does have an advantage compared to Croatia, as its government's debt is below the recommended 60 per cent of its GDP.

Bulgaria's socialist and populist parties have been calling for a more measured approach to the Euro's implementation. Chairman of the parliamentary finance committee Lubomir Karimanski highlighted that the party wanted to make people aware by organizing "a large-scale information campaign, certain criteria must be met, the benefits and risks must be defined." Corruption is another factor that Bulgaria has to curb to meet the nominal criteria for joining the Eurozone.

Croatia would not have issues joining, but it would become the below-par level country in the bloc due to its GDP per capita of USD 14,000 in 2020, while the other countries of Greece and Latvia, also considered as sub-par economies, have a GDP per capita above USD 17,500. Croatia does not have inflation challenges but does have a government debt equal to 7.98 per cent of its GDP.

### Consequences of Bulgaria and Croatia joining the Eurozone

Bulgaria's Pro Russian nationalist party leader Kostadin Kostadinov stated that the consequences of joining the Eurozone would have negative connotations for Bulgaria's economy. He added that the Euro adoption would lead to double-digit inflation, reduced salaries, income, and savings. But, for Croatia, it would benefit the country as tourism contributes to one-fifth of its economy. Croatia is also planning to join the Schengen border-free travel zone, encouraging tourists from Western Europe to traverse across freely.

Joining the Eurozone has its own drawbacks: the countries have to adopt standard economic policies, establish joint institutions to coordinate monetary and economic policies and follow a uniform trade policy for non-member countries. Moreover, once Bulgaria and Croatia join the bloc, they would be equally susceptible to economic shocks such as the European debt crisis.

### EU's Eurozone strategy in reintegrating the Balkans

The war in Ukraine has shifted Europe's attention to its Balkan states and is looking to integrate countries through the EU's enlargement process. With Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia applying for EU membership, it is evident that Europe is looking to push for a more homogenized European identity. However, the Balkan region specifically faces resistance to Europeanisation due to strong ethnic differences and the ongoing issues of migration.

Thus, the Eurozone could be seen as an economic strategy to reintegrate the Balkans. The Eurozone membership of the two countries aligns with the EU's Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) of EUR 30 billion for 2021-2027 to increase cooperation within the region. In addition, China has been pivoting toward the geostrategic region through its 16+1 initiative. This comes as China has invested about USD 9.1 billion in loans and plans to sign more comprehensive strategic partnerships with countries to foster bilateral relations.

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## Turkey and Greece: The age-old animosity of the Aegean neighbours

By Rishma Banerjee

On 01 June, Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Ankara will put an end to their bilateral talks with Athens, considering his discontentment about Greece's recent actions. While they have always had a long and testy relationship, the leaders of both the countries had talked about mending their cooperation in March. But recently, Turkey accused Greece of violating its airspace by holding air force exercises over islands in the Aegean Sea, likewise Athens also claimed that Turkey violated their airspaces. Further, the Greek prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's comments on a recent trip to the US seemed to have triggered the pivot for Erdogan.

### Fault lines in Greece and Turkey's relations

The crisis and dispute between Greece and Turkey is not a new one. It can be traced back to the early 19th century, when Greece was fighting for independence from the Ottoman Empire, which is in present-day Turkey. However, since then, their bilateral ties have seen little improvement.

1930 marked an important time in their relationship as the Treaty of Lausanne was signed, which demarcated their respective borders. They also pledged that they will not join opposing economic or military blocs and try put an end to the disagreements between them.

However, the next crisis came with Cyprus, and both the countries aspirations to usurp the territory. While they have been contesting over Cyprus for a long time, because of the significant presence of both the Greek and Turkish diaspora in the country, the situation reached its peak in 1974. Greece's military regime staged a Cypriot coup d'état, which was followed by a Turkish response in five days. As a result of this crisis, Turkey established the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, but even to this day, it is recognized as a sovereign territory only by Turkey.

Both the countries also disagree when it comes to the control of the Aegean Sea. The delimitation of territorial waters, the national airspace over the Aegean Sea, and the use of the common continental shelf has not been agreed upon. Since the 1990s, the Aegean countries have tried to encircle each

other causing fallout and the EU's intervention. In 1987, they came close to all-out war, when a Turkish survey ship was ordered to be sunk to the bottom of the Greek waters if it floated too close. Again, in 1995 there was a flare-up in tension, regarding the jurisdiction of Imia, the uninhabited rock island.

### Contemporary issues in their bilateral relations

The relationship between the two countries has still been quite tumultuous. They have made little progress in the 60 rounds of talk they conducted from 2002 to 2016. Recently, in 2020, they came close to confrontation, when Turkey sent a drilling ship to the contested Mediterranean waters. Last year, after a five-year hiatus, the two NATO members resumed talks to address their differences in the Mediterranean Sea among other bilateral issues, but again to no great success.

Erdogan said on 01 June that Turkey has canceled the bilateral cooperation platform, dubbed as the High-Level Strategic Council with Greece, which was created in 2010 for their rapprochement. This has been catalysed by mutual allegations of airspace violations, and Mitsotakis's comments that the US should not sell the F-16 fighter jets to Turkey.

Moreover, the Special Forces of Turkey and Azerbaijan recently conducted a joint military exercise, 'EFES-2022' by simulating a landing on a Greek Islands, thus adding to the already strained relations. The scenario includes training in penetrating behind enemy lines through the sea, clearing coastlines and attacking coastal enemy's military positions as well as neutralizing coastal targets.

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## Russia-Norway: Nuclear safety cooperation paused

By Harini Madhusudan

On 02 June, Rosatom, the Russian state nuclear agency stalled further cooperation with Norway on Nuclear Safety. This brings to close three decades of partnership, during which, Norway gave Russia more than two billion euros for helping with its nuclear dump sites and to improve safety at icebreakers and power plants. Rosatom announced on 31 May that Norway would no longer be welcome to participate in projects which were financed by Oslo until recently. Norway has said that the contact channels, emergency preparedness, and information sharing would continue.

Russia and Norway share a coastline on the Barents Sea with a common interest to prevent radioactive leakage into the marine environment. In an area of about 60-kilometers from the Russian land border with Norway, some of the largest dump sites for radioactive waste, and spent nuclear fuel from Soviet-era submarines are stored. For example, at the spent nuclear fuel storage in Andreeva Bay, the shipment of spent nuclear fuel from the storage tanks holds some 10,000 spent nuclear fuel elements stored in concrete tanks. The bay works on the removal of non-problematic fuel elements, first by ship to Murmansk and then by train to a reprocessing plant in Mayak near Chelyabinsk, most of which is paid for by Norway. At every stage of this process, there remains a threat of the damaged elements or the fear of accidents during lifting and re-packing into new containers.

Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Norway froze all of its financings for nuclear projects agreed upon under the joint commission between Russia and Norway. One of the reasons for the current response by Russia indicates their statement, 'no pay = no access.' After a meeting of the Norwegian-Russian Commission on nuclear safety in Oslo on 31

May, the Russian Foreign Ministry said, “Nuclear security cooperation between Norway and Russia is a key dimension in our bilateral relationship. It is in our common interest to reduce the risk of accidents and radioactive contamination,” and while the state secretary of the Foreign Ministry heads these meetings, this year, the Norwegian representative was led by the director of the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (DSA). The response was because Norway no longer maintains political contact with Moscow.

Additionally, Naturvernforbundet (Friends of the Earth Norway), an organization that follows the nuclear safety work in Russia, decided to stay away from the Commission meeting this year. Naturvernforbundet has been working in cooperation with local non-governmental groups for years, and these NGOs have played a significant role since the 1990s in bringing attention to the urgency of nuclear safety in the north. While the meeting promised to continue the exchange of information and keep the channels of communication open, this incident could be seen as a collateral fallout of the War in Russia in the decades-long systems that have existed in the region.

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## **Baltic States push towards Natoization of Baltic Sea: Implications for Russia**

*By Ashwin Dhanabalan*

On 16 May, NATO conducted one of its most extensive exercises in the Baltic regions called the Exercise Siil 2022 (Hedgehog, 2022) which went on till 03 June. Finland and Sweden also joined the allies in the Baltic seas for the training, which revived the large-scale military exercises by NATO and brought a visible change in the security paradigm. The activities involved allies from

14 countries and about 15,000 NATO military personnel.

The joint exercises and Finland and Sweden’s application to the security bloc invigorated the Baltic states’ push to convert their sea into a NATO sea. Additionally, the Baltic Sea is strategically important as it iterates an identity for people and provides employment opportunities to about 85 million people. This comes as, on 22 May, Estonia’s President Alar Karis mentioned to Poland’s president Andrzej Duda that the war in Ukraine and Finland and Sweden joining NATO would likely make the Baltic Sea into NATO’s inland sea.

### **Why are the Baltic states pushing for NATO to get more involved in the Baltic Sea?**

First, a stabilized Baltic Sea. If the two countries are accepted into NATO, the overall security architecture in the Baltic sea will be strengthened as the other members could depend on Finland and Sweden’s support. The two countries would contribute their land, airspace, water, and, more importantly, their naval capabilities to defend against potential attacks by Russia.

Second, Finland’s and Sweden’s added support. The two countries could contribute tremendously to the relatively weaker navies of the other members. Sweden maintains a large submarine fleet, while Finland has extensive experience in minesweeping activities and in-shore patrol expertise. Their support would also lead to confidence-building measures that could strengthen security cooperation between the Baltic states.

Third, closing strategic gaps in the Baltic Sea. The Baltic states have always been worried about the islands owned by Finland and Sweden. Concerns arose about using these islands as potential bases to attack the Baltic states due to their geographic proximity. Sweden’s island of Gotland, which it had briefly demilitarised post the cold war, is a vulnerable flank for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

### **Implications for Russia**

If the Baltic Sea becomes a NATO sea, there would be a check on Russia’s fleets docked in St. Petersburg and the Kaliningrad exclaves. Russia is likely to increase its military

deployments in the sea, but that would not impact NATO's strengthened collective security. Furthermore, Russia would feel threatened as Finland would help NATO extend its border to the Kola Peninsula. The Kola Peninsula is a central military hub for Russia; it also has the world's largest concentration of nuclear weapons. The peninsula is also home to Russia's northern fleet, which includes the country's nuclear-powered submarines.

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### MARITIME

## One Planet Summit 2022: Spotlights Blue Carbon Coalition and New Plastic Economy Global Commitment

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 26 June, the UN along with Portugal and Kenya organized the "One Planet Summit," for the second time after the one ocean summit held in February. The summit was held with an exclusive agenda toward the ocean looking from Brest to Lisbon which is the largest maritime space shared by Portugal and France in the EU. In the first day, representatives from Colombia, Australia, UNEP, Kenya, and the US attended the summit. The discussion will mainly review Blue Carbon Coalition and New Plastic Economy Global Commitment which were the Brest Commitments in the One Ocean Summit. According to Minister of State for Marine Affairs, Portugal, José Maria Costa: "Building new international partnerships is a political priority for

Portugal. We are willing to invest in increased relationships with France and combine necessary experience to develop a sustainable blue economy, to develop marine science and technology."

### Focus of the Summit

First, focus on blue carbon. The summit brought out the following key pointers on the need to conserve the marine ecosystem with regard to blue carbon. While decades of action is being taken towards bringing the carbon emission down to the earth's surface, the damage done to the ocean surface also contributes to the release of carbon into the atmosphere. The marine ecosystem includes the mangrove forests, salt marshes, and seagrass, even if they are in one percent proportion in the ocean, they have the capacity to store 50 per cent of the carbon accumulated for millenniums. Therefore, when such ecosystems are disturbed by human activities, they lose their tendency leading to the release of "sequestered" carbons that have remained in for centuries. Such marine systems can be turned around for the benefit of humanity by cultivating them and protecting them which can promote carbon-free oceans, lessen the climate change effects, and avoid the loss of wetlands, and vegetation. The representative from Conservation International, a non-governmental organization highlighted how the marine systems are 35 times better at acting as carbon syncs when compared to tropical forests. Its significance to humanity not just ends with combating carbon but also in protecting against violent storms, promoting marine life, and wave action.

Second, approach towards plastic pollution. The speakers at the summit spoke on how the transformation of plastics must shift from being linear to circular. Emphasis was also laid on banning recyclable plastics and bringing innovation to recycling. It also brought out the effect on marine life such as dolphins, turtles, and saltwater crocodiles due to the dumping of plastics in the oceans and seas. The most important recommendations made toward New Plastic Economy Global Commitment were on installing more recycling units and continuous negotiations with global countries to bring all under a legally binding

agreement.

Third, the actors of the summit. The discussion panel present at the summit included all levels. Starting from individual field experts, environment, forestry, and marine affairs ministers and heads from France, Portugal, Colombia, Indonesia, Australia, and Kenya at the state level and UNEP New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, heads at the international level. Apart from this, heads of several investment banks for bringing the financial and funding aspect to such blue carbon and plastic re-cycling initiatives took part in the discussion. The summit also included non-governmental organizations such as Conservation International which work with various governments on ocean protection and marine biodiversity.

Fourth, global commitments and progress in Blue Carbon. With regards to the blue carbon coalition, Executive Director, AFD (French Development Agency), Gilles Kleitz vowed for adopting a higher ambition to protect the “carbon-rich marine ecosystem” and ensure commitment from banks to source in 200 billion under “carbon finance and ecosystem restoration.” Colombia’s Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development presented the progress of Colombia’s first blue carbon project on the Caribbean coast certified by Verra, a blue carbon group that has targeted sequestering one million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 30 years’ time. He said that the project has benefitted more than 400 families living in the area after six years and the Colombian government plans to start similar projects along Indo-Pacific Coast soon. As far as Indonesia, it has implemented a “Blue economy development policy” which aims to protect marine areas, increase effectiveness, and “empowering of local communities.”

Apart from this Australia committed to initiating five blue carbon projects at the domestic level to promote carbon sequestration and biodiversity. It also plans to double the indigenous population as it values their traditional care towards the conservation of land and sea. On the same line the NGO, Conservation International head proposed to encourage and promote

the living of the Afro-defendant population who are found to be contributing less to climate change effect but support the most in mitigation.

Fifth, global commitments and progress in plastics. New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, UNEP Head spoke on how the UN seeks to bind all countries into the commitment by aligning the vision and including private and government units. The head reported that the UN has achieved 500 signatories now more have stepped forward after the one ocean summit. Kenya which started the plastic ban in 2007, has now progressed in pushing 19 waste management companies to be held responsible for producing and import of plastics. As far as Australia is concerned the plastics in the ocean have affected the marine species vastly and the government proposed to raise USD 800 million to invest in recycling infrastructure and encourage its university to innovate new ways to suck carbon dioxide and make plastics 100 per cent reusable. Apart from the existing countries, Sao Paulo, Brazil, the Federal government of Belgium, the Kingdom of Thailand, the government of Mexico, along with several other Brazilian and Mexican states joined the Global commitment to plastics.

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#### INTERNATIONAL

### **Pressurizing Moscow’s transactions in the global financial system: The G7 countries plan to ban gold imports from Russia**

*By Ashwin Dhanabalan*

#### **The G7 countries plan to ban the import of gold from Russia**

On 26 June, US president Joe Biden announced a new ban on importing Russian gold. He added: “The United States has imposed unprecedented costs on Putin to deny him the revenue he needs to fund his war against Ukraine.” UK’s prime minister

Boris Johnson also mentioned that the ban would directly affect the oligarchs in Russia and cut funding to “Putin’s war machine.” The G7 countries have not officially announced the ban, but are likely to release a joint statement once the summit ends.

### Targeting Russia’s global incomes

According to statistics from 2020, Russia exported gold worth USD 19 billion, accounting for five per cent of the global gold exports. Out of which, 90 per cent of Russia’s gold was consigned to G7 countries, with the UK being the largest importer. The ban, once imposed, would cause a significant loss of profits for Russia. On 26 June, *The White House* released a statement stating that gold was the second important source of revenue for Russia after energy, and its ban would further isolate Russia from the global economy.

### What was Russia’s plan of action in using gold?

First, an economic defense strategy. Since the economic restrictions of 2014, Russia has prepared economic defense strategies to circumvent sanctions. For example, by 2022 Russia tripled its reserves of gold to USD 140 billion, which makes up about 20 per cent of the country’s central bank’s overall reserves. Russia also has one of the largest proven gold deposits and mined gold reserves. Second, pegging ruble to gold. On 29 April, Kremlin suggested pegging the ruble to gold after sanctions against Russia increased. Russia’s spokesperson Dmitry Peskov mentioned that linking the Russian ruble to gold would cut Moscow’s dependence on the dollar as a global reserve currency. This resulted in strengthening the ruble’s value. Third, converting ruble to gold. On 25 March, Russia’s central bank announced that it would buy a gram of gold for RUB 5,000 from 08 April until 30 June. The announcement encouraged the stabilization of the ruble against the dollar. This also helped Russia’s inflation rate as the bank converted the roubles received from energy exports to gold.

In an article, *Forbes* mentioned this was “Russia’s golden move.” The three-step plan of Russia asking countries to pay in roubles for energy imports, then converting the

roubles to gold and pegging the ruble to gold, helped its economy stay afloat amid sanctions from the West.

### Russia’s potential strategies to circumvent the gold ban

First, using sanctioned countries. Countries like Venezuela have been helping Russia to circumvent the sanctions on gold since 2017. In 2021, Russia sent chartered planes to pick up gold from Venezuela and then got it refined in Mali, which was resold in UAE.

Russia might use similar tactics as it sent a shipment of three tons of gold to Switzerland.

Second, using cryptocurrency. Using cryptocurrencies backed by gold could also help Russia to continue trading internationally and avoid economic isolation. Since the cryptocurrency would be pegged to gold, it could be used as a medium to settle import and export transactions restricted for international purposes. This is a similar strategy used in Iran to mine cryptocurrencies and circumvents sanctions by the US.

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### Turkey and Saudi Arabia mending ties, what lies ahead?

By Ashwin Dhanabalan

### **Mohammed bin Salman's visit to Ankara**

On 22 June, Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammed bin Salman visited Ankara and met with Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Prince Mohammed was welcomed with all-state honors and visit marked the end of the animosity between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Bilateral ties were disrupted between the two countries due to the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. However, the relations seem to be changing with Prince Mohammed's visit and Turkey handing over Khashoggi's case to Saudi Arabia in April.

US president Joe Biden is also scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia in July and will meet Prince Mohammed. However, this raised accusations of "betrayal," as Biden had earlier agreed to de-classify an intelligence report that found prince Mohammed's direct involvement in the murder of Khashoggi. This would cause him to step back from his vow to treat Saudi Arabia as a "pariah."

### **Erdogan and Prince Mohammed fixing their issues: Three reasons why**

First, consolidating regional influence. Turkey's support to Qatar increased after Saudi Arabia and other countries blockaded relations with Ankara over its relations with Tehran. Additionally, the murder of Khashoggi in Ankara was an added contention between the two countries which severed political and economic ties between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. However, now both the countries want to play a more proactive role in the region by moving away from regional divisions and economic isolation. Saudi Arabia has been pushing to mend ties with Qatar and Turkey as it is concerned about Iran's role within the region.

Second, US' tilt toward Iran. With Saudi Arabia declining to increase crude oil production and the US trying to revive the 2015 JCPOA agreement, relations between the two have soured. The US pivot to the Indo-Pacific has raised concerns as it would shift in focus of the US away from the Middle Eastern region leaving commitments to Saudi Arabia vulnerable. Following the increase in Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia,

the Washington and Riyadh relations have further strained.

Third, expanding economies. As Erdogan and Prince Mohammed turned frenemies, the two countries halted their economic ties, which had affected regional trade. Saudi Arabia had announced an unofficial embargo on Turkish exports, which had disrupted bilateral trade worth USD five billion. Bilateral investments were also directly affected as Turkey invested USD 660 million in Saudi Arabia, as Riyadh invested USD two million in Ankara. Thus, the two countries initiated mending ties to improve bilateral trade and investments.

### **A boon for Turkey's economy and Erdogan's political image**

Saudi Arabia has been economically faring well as its foreign reserves are expected to climb upward, and its energy revenue is set to reach USD 400 billion. This indicates the possibility of Saudi Arabia investing in Turkey and allowing bilateral trade to return to normalcy. Erdogan also hopes that the mending of ties could encourage investments from Saudi Arabia and other gulf countries since Turkey has been facing an economic crisis. Improved relations would also help Erdogan get re-elected in the upcoming general elections in 2023.

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### **Denmark and Canada sign deal ending the 49 years dispute over Hans Island**

*By Padmashree Anandhan*

On 13 June, Denmark and Canada reached a deal over an uninhabited island in the Arctic. The foreign affairs minister Mélanie Joly signed the deal officially with Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod and Greenland's Prime Minister Múte Bourup Egede marking the

end of the Hans Island dispute. Kofod said: "As we stand here today, we see a gross violation of international rules unfold in another part of the world. In contrast, we have demonstrated how long-standing international disputes can be resolved peacefully and playing by the rules."

Through the agreement, both Denmark and Canada will divide the island from the rift that goes from north to south which will establish the world's longest maritime border of 3,882 kilometers.

### Hans Island dispute: Three things to know

First, the geography of the Island. Hans Island is located in the Kennedy Channel between Canada's Ellesmere Island and Denmark's semi-autonomous territory of Greenland. Till now no mineral sources or oils have been found. It has been used only by Greenland's Inuit community for hunting purposes. The Island's mass extends to 0.5 square miles which became the start point for flag wars as it forms part of the oil and reserves of the Nares Strait.

Second, deals signed till now. Starting from the 1973, when Denmark and Canada began the talks over Hans Island to discuss the boundary and underwater rights. In 1984, Canada stepped further by installing its troops on the rock and planted a maple leaf flag and a bottle of whisky indicating the land belongs to Canada, which turned into a war of symbols when Denmark replaced it with the Danish flag and schnapps. After continued clashes in 2002 and 2005, by 2018 both Denmark and Canada established a joint committee to settle the Island dispute. Currently, both parties have signed the agreement, post parliamentary approval the Island will be divided in 60:40 proportion where Denmark will take have the bigger share.

Third, the actors in the dispute. The three main actors in the deal are Denmark, Canada, and the Greenland Inuit community. Although the Islands hold no good resources, prolonging the conflict close to 50 years shows the leadership and conflict resolution capacity of both Denmark and Canada. Both the actors have been acting on tit for tat basis and have ignored to resolve the dispute in simpler means. This also brings a question on the future value Hans Island holds, which has made Denmark and Canada

clash. Apart from the two actors, the Inuit community has a direct connection with the Island as it is used for fishing and hunting activities. Although their rights have been taken into concern during the agreement, the upcoming decades will decide their accessibility.

### What does the deal mean?

First, the question of diplomacy and conflict resolution. The leaders of Denmark, Canada, and the international community view this war over Hans Island as the friendliest of all disputes. They also said that it sent a strong signal amidst the Ukraine war on how diplomacy and rule of law can well play and set an example for conflict resolution. On one hand, as it seems very believable, on the other hand, it also lays the base for larger fear. When two most friendly countries can take close to 49 years to split an island that does not contain any resources, what will be the scenario if it was an essential piece to deal with their energy issues, or what will be the state of the Island if is found to be resourceful in future. The signed deal might have the chance to be violated by either of the countries. If this has to be taken as an example then one can expect the Ukraine war to extend for decades.

Second, a precursor to Arctic wars. The dispute gives a precursor to the intensity of conflicts in the Arctic zone between countries. Although the agreement between Denmark and Canada has provided a clear division, the geographic significance of the Island and the oils the seabed holds below were the underlying factors for the dispute to prolong. In such a case with the border drawn now there are other actors like Russia, China, and the US which are equally interested and much equipped to extract oil through offshore drilling. Hence until a legal framework or Arctic policy to regulate the experiments and explorations is established the Arctic will remain prone to similar conflicts.

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## Report on the future of EU-Africa trade relations: Four takeaways

By Emmanuel Royan

On 23 June, the European Parliament advocated a report on the future of African trade relations with the EU published by the Committee on International Trade. The report, which will now be considered by the European Commission (EC), demands that African nations be treated more fairly in their present bilateral trade agreements. Based on pledges of a more fair, respectful, and human-centered trading partnership between the two regions made during the EU-African Union summit in February, the report presents a number of recommendations and motives for future investment to be based in Africa. The report has the recommendations of the Committee on International Trade and additional suggestions by the Committee on Development.

### Four takeaways

First, recognition of trade, investment, and environmental sustainability. The EU is yet to recognize the sustainable, and inclusive economic developments of Africa and upon recognition will not only stop with AU but will benefit the entire continent. Which in turn increases the investment policies and helps it to achieve the set goals under the UN's Agenda 2030.

Second, call for the transfer of technology and knowledge. Since colonial times wealth has continuously flowed from the African periphery to the industrialized regions in Europe. Africa has only been supplying raw materials and primary goods, the lack of wealth creation through industries has resulted in unemployment and poverty in the region. Therefore, the report stresses

how the EU has to be fair and responsible to share its technical expertise with Africa to promote manufacturing in the continent. The Committee on Development suggested a good transition towards a partnership on an equal footing, founded on reciprocity and mutual benefit, which goes beyond a "donor-recipient relationship" and allows both parties to pursue their own interests while also identifying potential areas of cooperation. It further insists that the EU must attempt to offer technical assistance to prevent EU trade standards from being perceived as non-tariff trade obstacles.

Third, call for joint decision-making. If the critical decisions are taken together by the two unions, it will provide each party a sense of empowerment over the process of deciding what the goals of the commercial and investment policies should be. To restructure the economy to be self-reliant calls for increased involvement of civil society, including business, industrialists, and, in particular, the small and medium enterprises.

Fourth, The need for evaluation of the impact of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). The Committee on Development called on the EU to increase African nations' capacity to take advantage of trade opportunities in the fields of food security, health care, and poverty alleviation through EPAs. It further calls for the inclusion of human rights, labor, and environmental mechanisms in trade and sustainable development chapters to be negotiated in the present and future EPAs. In addition, it affirms the need to assess the impact of how EPAs and trade agreements affect African nations, intra-African markets, and local economies, as well as the requirement that they are compatible with the SDGs.

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## War in Ukraine: Daily Updates\*

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



Source: BBC, nato.int, nato.int, Kremlin.ru, Tyler Hicks-The New York Times, AP Photo/Michal Dyjuk/The Washington Post

### War in Ukraine: Day 126

#### The War on the Ground:

On 28 June, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the NATO summit and said that it needed more advanced weapons and financial assistance to sustain its war efforts. He reiterated that Ukraine will require about USD five billion every month to rebuild the country. Zelenskyy also mentioned that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not only to not only destabilizes Ukraine but also to "dictate conditions in Europe."

Also on the same day, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba appreciated NATO for taking a clear stance on Russia, regarding their invasion of Ukraine. He said: "Today in Madrid, NATO proved it can take difficult, but essential decision... We welcome a clear-eyed stance on Russia, as well as accession for Finland and Sweden. An equally strong and active position on Ukraine will help to

protect the Euro-Atlantic security and stability."

On June 29, the mayor of Mykolaiv, Oleksandr Senkevych said that eight missiles had struck the city. He also mentioned that an X-55 cruise missile allegedly hit residential buildings and urged the citizens to evacuate.

Ukraine's military intelligence agency said that Ukraine had its biggest prisoner of war exchange since the beginning of the war. 144 soldiers who have defended Mariupol's Azov Steelworks have been released. Amongst them, 43 members were from the Azov regiment that Russia considers a dangerous far-right battalion.

On 29 June, the Russia-backed military-civilian administration in Kherson reported that it has started preparations for a referendum about joining Russia. However, the deputy head of the administration, Kirill

\* War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from four dimensions. First, The 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 International implications of the Ukraine war. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read them every day.

Stremousov said that a date has not yet been chosen.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 29 June, Russia's diplomat Maria Zakharova accused the UK's defence secretary Ben Wallace of spreading fake news and making remarks about her. Zakharova said: "cite at least one example of how I am threatening to nuke everyone every week." This comes as Wallace had made offensive remarks about Russia's officials and the president.

Russia's government mentioned that it had not dropped the idea of taking over Western-owned assets and businesses in response to the actions imposed. Zakharova warned the West to keep away from the USD 300 billion of frozen funds else Russia would "act accordingly." In addition, a Russian cola company stated that with the suspension of Coke and Pepsi in Russia, it plans to increase the production of the indigenous coke called Cola Chernogolovka.

Also, on 29 June, Russia's president Vladimir Putin warned of retaliation if NATO deployed troops and infrastructure in Finland and Sweden. He added: "if military contingents and infrastructure are deployed there, we will have to respond in kind and create the same threats for the territories from which threats towards us are created." Putin's comments come a day after Turkey accepted to lift its veto over Finland and Sweden's bid to join NATO.

On the same day, Russia's supreme court postponed the hearing on designating Ukraine's Azov regiment as a terrorist entity. The hearing is now scheduled for 02 August. Moscow has characterized the regime as "Russian-hating neo-Nazis," but the court had not added the regiment to the list of terrorist organizations.

On the same day, TASS reported on NATO, saying it considered Russia the current "most significant and direct threat." NATO adopted its strategic concept at the meeting in Madrid, where it recognized Russia as the primary threat to its security alliance.

Also, on 29 June, Syria announced its recognition of the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republic. On 16 June, Russia's presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov in a meeting with Syria's president Bashar Assad said Moscow would hail Damascus' decision to recognize the DPR and the LPR.

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

On 29 June, NATO released details about their new strategic concept and identified Russia as the most significant threat to Western security. The organization said that it will assist in modernizing Kyiv's armed forces. It also decided on a seven-fold increase in combat forces along its eastern flanks to pre-empt any future Russian attacks. Reportedly, the number of troops will be raised from 40,000 to 300,000.

On the sidelines of the NATO summit, Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz said that NATO will support the war efforts of Ukraine for as long as possible. He said: "It is good that the countries that are gathered here but many others, too, make their contributions so Ukraine can defend itself - by providing financial means, humanitarian aid but also by providing the weapons that Ukraine urgently needs."

US president Joe Biden pledged more American troops in Europe, especially to reinforce the Baltic states and Poland. He also promised to supply more warplanes and warships to the alliance.

The US director of national intelligence, Avril Haines said that President Putin will still be aiming to annex most of Ukraine. However, Haines mentioned that it is likely that Russia's combat forces are depleted and thus they can only hope to achieve incremental gains. She said: "We perceive a disconnect between Putin's near-term military objectives in this area and his military's capacity, a kind of mismatch between his ambitions and what the military is able to accomplish." She also elaborated that Russia will be more likely to be reliant on asymmetric tools like cyber attacks, controlling energy, and even nuclear weapons to "project power and influence globally."

Poland's president Andrej Duda said that they support US's decision to establish the 5th Army's Headquarters and send more troops. He said, "This is news that we have been waiting for a long time... It is a fact that strengthens our safety a lot... in the difficult situation which we are in."

The British government said that it will provide an additional GBP one billion in military support. Prime minister Boris Johnson said in a statement that UK's training and equipment are transforming Ukraine's defence. Hundreds of Ukraine's troops have been receiving military training in the UK, especially on the Multiple Launch Rocket Systems that the UK is supplying Ukraine with. This new support will be to further boost Ukraine's defence capabilities, including its air defence systems, unscrewed aerial vehicles, and new electronic warfare equipment.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 29 June, the G7 leaders mentioned that they urged China to mediate and use its influence on Russia and seek an end to the invasion. The G7 also asked China to drop its "expansive maritime claims" in the South China Sea. China also responded and stated that sanctions on Russia would not be able to resolve the crisis in Ukraine and criticized the US for supplying arms and ammunition to Kyiv.

On the same day, the UN's atomic watchdog, the IAEA, said it had lost transmission from Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine. The IAEA has been asking Russia to dispatch a mission to Zaporizhzhia for the past few weeks, and the recent disruption showed the urgency.

Also on 29 June, Indonesia's president Joko Widodo visited Kyiv and met with Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Widodo offered to convey any message that Zelenskyy had for Putin. Widodo added: "Even though it's very hard to achieve, I expressed the importance of a peace resolution." Widodo is also due to go to Moscow and offered to mediate between Putin and Zelenskyy.

On 29 June, South Korea's president Yoon Suk-yeol expressed his concerns about Russia's intensified attacks on Ukraine. Yoon also mentioned Russia's responsibility in the war and China's role in the international community. This comes as NATO's strategic concept mentioned China as a security challenge to the military alliance.

On the same day, the UN's food agency food and agriculture organization (FAO) and the organization for economic cooperation and development (OECD) mentioned the looming global food crisis as the war in Ukraine continues. Russia and Ukraine are the world's top five exporters of wheat, and Moscow's blockade of Kyiv's ports has disrupted the wheat exports. As a result, the two agencies, FAO and OECD, forecast the wheat prices to reach 19 per cent above the pre-war levels in 2022 and 2023.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 125

### The War on the Ground:

On 28 June, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a telephonic conversation with the NATO chief, Jens Stoltenberg, ahead of the NATO summit. They spoke about Ukraine's position and the necessity for a powerful

missile defence system for Ukraine. He also addressed the UN security council, where he accused president Vladimir Putin of being a "terrorist" and requested for Russia's expulsion from the council. To reiterate his argument, he also called the UN to visit the site of the recent missile strike in Kremenchuk.

On 27 June, Kharkiv's governor, Oleh Synehubov, reported that Russia's forces had shelled the city. Apartment buildings and a primary school were hit. As a result, five people were killed and 22 were injured, among which 5 were children. On the Telegram messaging app, Synehubov emphasized the fact that all the people affected by the shelling were civilians.

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) reported the arrest of a former KGB agent who had revealed the location of the Yavoriv military facility in Ukraine to an unspecified Russian agency. SBU maintains that this led Russia's forces to strike the facility in March, killing over 50 service personnel and injuring around 150.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 28 June, in response to Vilnius's decision to stop the transit of some commodities subject to the EU sanctions to Russia's Kaliningrad exclave, the cyber-attack group from Russia, Killnet informed *Reuters* that it was conducting a significant cyberattack on Lithuania. The prime minister of Lithuania, Ingrida Simonyte, stated that her government's institutions are working around the clock to solve the problems as they are uncovered.

On the same day, Russia's space agency, Roscosmos disclosed the location coordinates of Western defense headquarters and NATO's summit in Spain, claiming that Western satellite operators were working for Russia's adversary, Ukraine. Russian satellite images of the NATO headquarters in Brussels, the Pentagon, the White House, the British government buildings in central London, the German Chancellery and Reichstag parliament building in Berlin, the summit venue in Madrid, the French president's

residence and other government buildings in Paris, the White House, and the Pentagon were also posted.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 28 June, the US treasury department reported the imposition of sanctions on 70 entities and 29 people who are allegedly important to Russia's industrial base. This includes Russia's state aerospace and defense conglomerate, Rostec; the United Aircraft Corporation (UAC), which makes MiG and Sukhoi fighter jets; Tupolev which makes strategic bomber and transport aircraft and the largest truck manufacturer, Kamaz. It also confirmed US's move to ban Russia's gold, as was discussed at the G7 summit. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said: "Targeting Russia's defense industry will degrade (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's capabilities and further impede his war against Ukraine, which has already been plagued by poor morale, broken supply chains, and logistical failures."

70 Russian diplomatic staff were expelled from Bulgaria on espionage charges. The move was announced by the foreign ministry and the outgoing prime minister Kiril Petkov. This is by far the largest expulsion by Sofia, which decreases the presence of Russian diplomats to half of what it was. While describing the expulsions, Petkov said: "This is not an act of aggression towards the Russian people...When foreign governments are trying to meddle in our internal affairs, we have institutions that will respond."

The defence ministers of both the Netherlands and Germany said that they will send more howitzers to Ukraine. Speaking at the sidelines of the NATO summit, they mentioned that they were prepared to 'do their share' in supporting Ukraine. Germany's defence minister, Christine Lambrecht, also spoke about the announcement of having NATO troops combat-ready. She said that Germany is likely to provide one division of 15,000 troops, along with 65 planes and 20 ships.

On 28 June, the US climate envoy, John Kerry said that the Ukraine war was showing the world why it should not be held hostage by

oil-rich states for their energy needs. He spoke about how the current crisis is a warning to everyone to not be "prisoners of petrostate dictators who are willing to weaponize energy."

### **The Global Fallout:**

#### **International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 27 June, the Group of Seven (G7) agreed to commit USD five billion to increase global food security as a response to concerns in developing countries about the possibility of starvation brought on by the conflict in Ukraine. The US is said to provide more than half of that amount, which would support regional organizations and efforts to combat hunger in 47 nations. The G7 has also agreed to evaluate the possibility of prohibiting the transit of Russian oil that has been sold above for a certain amount.

The prime minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, announced that he will provide an additional USD 100 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine at the G7 summit. In addition, as harvest time approaches Japan would also support Ukraine's efforts to increase its grain storage capacity.

G7 members urged China to use its influence with Russia to stop its invasion of Ukraine and cease "expansive maritime claims" in the South China Sea. They cited a decision by the International Court of Justice ordering Moscow to halt its military action and relevant UN resolutions calling on China to pressure Russia to withdraw forces from Ukraine quickly and unconditionally.

On 29 June, the prime minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese stated that he is considering reopening the Australian Embassy in Kyiv. As it seeks to join several of its allies that have resumed operations after evacuating its ambassadors over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 124

### The War on the Ground:

On 27 June, Luhansk oblast's governor, Serhiy Gaidai, said that Russia had targeted civilians in the region who were collecting water from a tank. The missile attack killed eight civilians and wounded at least 21 in the Lysychansk region. Gaidai stated that Russia had "aimed at the crowd."

On the same day, Russia attacked a shopping center in Kremenchuk. Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that more than 1,000 civilians were at the shopping center at the time of the attack. Zelenskyy added: "It is impossible to even imagine the number of victims... It's useless to hope for decency and humanity from Russia," Officials have updated the death toll to 11 and the

wounded to 50. Central Poltava region's governor Dmytro Lunin called the missile strikes "an act of terrorism against civilians."

Also, on 27 June, Zelenskyy urged the G7 not to let the conflict drag on to winter. He spoke to the leaders via a video link and asked for more sanctions against Russia. Addressing the G7 countries, Zelenskyy said: "if Ukraine wins, you all win." Zelenskyy also mentioned the indiscriminate missile strikes by Russia.

On 27 June, Mariupol steelworks owner Rinat Akhmetov said he had filed a lawsuit against Russia. Akhmetov sued Russia at the European court of human rights under "grievous violations of his property rights." He also seeks a court order to prevent Russia from blockading, looting, diverting, and destructing grain and steel in his steel plant.

On the same day, Lysychansk's governor Serhai Haidai called for civilians to evacuate the region as the situation was deteriorating. He added: "Save yourself and your loved ones. Take care of the children. Be sure that you will be taken care of in the evacuation cities on the territory of Ukraine." Russia's shelling in Kharkiv also killed four people and wounded 19; however, Russia said it denied targeting civilians.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 27 June, Russia said it would invest USD 14.5 billion to boost its domestic aircraft production. This would help Russia to boost its share of domestically manufactured aircraft amid sanctions from the West. The aviation industry has been in a crisis since the West imposed sanctions, as its profitable routes to Europe and the US were now halted.

On the same day, TASS reported how Russia had failed to pay its USD 100 million in Russian Eurobond coupons that had expired. However, the finance ministry denied any default. It said: "In accordance with issuing documentation for mentioned issues, the event of default is the failure to pay on the part of the debtor, but the payment was made in advance - on 20 May, 2022."

The default was caused by a third party involved. Kremlin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov added: "These allegations of a default are absolutely unjustified, because back in May, the obligatory payment in the currency was fulfilled, and the fact that Euroclear withheld this money, or did not deliver it to the recipients is no longer our problem."

Also, on 27 June, president Vladimir Putin said he had accepted Indonesia's invitation to participate in the G20 meetings. This comes as Indonesia's president Joko Widodo had urged Russia and Ukraine to resolve the conflict.

On 27 June, Russia said it was planning to transfer Iskander-M missile systems to Belarus, capable of carrying nuclear warheads. In a meeting with President Alexander Lukashenko, Putin offered to retrofit the Sukhoi Su-25s in service with the Belarusian army.

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

On 27 June, France's president Emmanuel Macron said it denounced Russia's missile strikes on the shopping center in Kremenchuk. Macron called it an "abomination." France's foreign ministry also said that Russia would have to answer for its missile strikes that killed civilians in the shopping center.

On the same day, Canada's president Justin Trudeau announced more sanctions and measures against Russia. Canada has imposed a ban on exporting technologies to Russia that could help Moscow's defense manufacturing capability. Trudeau also said Canada plans to impose sanctions against Russian state-sponsored disinformation and propaganda agents and entities.

On 27 June, Moldova's president expressed gratitude to the EU for accepting the country as a membership candidate. President Maia Sandu also visited Kyiv and Bucha. She added: "Ukraine and Moldova need help. We want this war to stop, this Russian aggression against Ukraine to be stopped as soon as possible. We want to stay part of the free world."

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 27 June, the G7 said it stands with Ukraine; they also announced increasing sanctions targeting Russia's finances and oil. The announcement came after Zelenskyy addressed the G7 in a video conference and urged the countries to give Ukraine more weapons and air defense systems. The G7 released a joint statement: "We will continue to provide financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support and stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes."

On the same day, the growing relations between Russia and China amid the war in Ukraine has made NATO introduce Beijing as a concern in its strategies. Russia has been deepening its ties with China to circumvent sanctions and tackle the West's growing push to isolate Moscow.

Also, on 27 June, regarding Ukraine, the UN stated that it was concerned about the air strikes and shelling. The UN also expressed the challenges in giving humanitarian aid to the civilians trapped in the Donbas region.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 122 & 123

### The War on the Ground:

On 25 June, Sievierodonetsk's mayor, Oleksandr Stryuk reported that Russia's troops have fully occupied the city. They have taken Syrotyne and the towns of Voronove and Borivske. The governor of Luhansk, Serhiy Gaidai, said that Ukraine's troops in the city have been ordered to retreat to new positions. He also said that 90 per cent of the houses in the city have been shelled and 80 per cent have been critically damaged. Russian forces now control most of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, which make up the Donbas. Reportedly, Russia is moving to Lysychansk, the city facing Sievierodonetsk, on the other side of the

Siversky Donets river, but Ukraine's military command has been successful in repelling the attacks.

On the same day, in his nightly address, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy admitted that the war was becoming emotionally tough to handle. However, he vowed that Ukraine will take back territories under Russia's control, including Sievierodonetsk. He said: "At this stage of the war it's spiritually difficult, emotionally difficult ... we don't have a sense of how long it will last, how many more blows, losses and efforts will be needed before we see victory is on the horizon."

On 25 June, Ukraine's military reported that cruise missiles were fired by Russia from ships in the Black sea, and they hit military positions in Lviv and Zhytomyr. However, a few missiles were shot down by Ukraine. A heavy rocket strike was also reported in a village near Chernihiv called Desna. Ukraine's Chief of General Staff, Valeriy Zaluzhnyi said on the Telegram app that Ukraine has started using US-supplied HIMARS rocket systems. He wrote that the rockets have been used to hit Russia's targets in Ukraine. On 26 June, there were reports of Russia's missiles striking the Cherkasy and Sumy regions. It resulted in the death of one person and hit a bridge that helps connect the western part of the country to the Donbas region in the east. Also on the same day, at least 14 missiles hit Kyiv, destroying an apartment block among other infrastructure.

The state nuclear regulatory inspectorate of Ukraine said that heavy shelling has damaged a nuclear research facility in Kharkiv. However, nuclear fuel storage and radiation levels have not been affected.

On 25 June, Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba spoke about their support for Moldova following their acceptance of the EU membership candidacy. This comes after Russia issued warnings of negative consequences over the membership. On 26 June, the minister said that the G7 countries must react to further missile strikes in Ukraine and should aim to impose further sanctions on Russia. He also mentioned that

they must look toward supplying more arms to Ukraine.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 25 June, Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu visited Ukraine, where he awarded medals to Russian soldiers. This is the first time that he visited Ukraine, since Russia's invasion in February.

On 26 June, Reuters cited Rossiya 1 state television station and reported that president Vladimir Putin will visit Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in the coming week. The president of Tajikistan, Emomali Rakhmon has been a close ally of Russia. In Turkmenistan, he will attend a meeting with leaders from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Turkmenistan. This will mark his first international visit since Russia invaded Ukraine in February. His last international trip was to Beijing where China's president Xi Jinping and Putin signed the "no limits" friendship treaty. He is also scheduled to meet Indonesia's president Joko Widodo in Moscow.

Additionally, Putin will meet Belarus's president Alexander Lukashenko on 30 June and 01 July, in Grodno. He said that Russia will supply Iskander-M systems to Belarus. These are short-range missile systems that have a range of 500 kilometers and can fire ballistic and cruise missiles of both conventional and nuclear kinds. Putin also mentioned that they will assist Belarus in modifying their Su-25 warplanes, equipping them to carry nuclear weapons.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, alleged in an interview that the West is unwilling to talk about their mercenaries in Ukraine. She said this when asked about whether the US or the UK had contacted them about their nationals captured from Ukraine by Russia.

On the same day, TASS reported that Ukraine's forces have hit a drilling platform in the black sea, which is owned by the Crimean oil and gas company, Chernomorneftegaz. This is the second such strike in a week.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 25 June, Poland held the Warsaw Pride march, with the full backing of the city's liberal mayor Rafal Trzaskowski. This year, the march was in collaboration with Kyiv Pride. The director of Kyiv Pride, Lenny Emson, thanked the LGBTQ community in Warsaw for including Ukraine's LGBTQ activists in their parade.

On 25 June, UK's prime minister, Boris Johnson spoke to broadcasters in the capital of Rwanda and said that he was apprehensive of Ukraine being coerced into accepting a peace deal that is not favorable to them. He said: "Too many countries are saying this is a European war that is unnecessary... and so the pressure will grow to encourage - coerce, maybe - the Ukrainians to a bad peace."

On 26 June, at the G7 summit, Johnson spoke about the war in Ukraine and the fallouts of the same. However, he mentioned that while the war efforts may be costly now, the price of letting Russia triumph would be even more so. He also announced that the UK, the US, Japan, and Canada will ban the import of gold from Russia. In 2021, the global gold exports from Russia were worth USD 15.45 billion. This ban, which will be to further tighten sanctions against Moscow, will come into force shortly. An official from the US also corroborated this move and said that they will announce the ban on 28 June.

#### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 26 June, the UN Human Rights division in Ukraine reported that they have received "hundreds of allegations of torture and ill-treatment, including conflict-related sexual violence" since Russia's invasion in February. The UN monitoring mission in Ukraine elaborated on the kind of torture the victims had to face. They said that some people were kept tied and blindfolded for days without food or water. They were even put in closed metal boxes, beaten and subjected to mock executions.

Before leaving for the G7 summit on 27 June, Indonesia's president, Joko Widodo,

addressed the Ukraine war. He urged Russia and Ukraine's leaders to aim for dialogue and for Putin to order a ceasefire. He said that this was of utmost importance to reactivate the global food supply chains.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 121

### The War on the Ground:

On 24 June, Ukraine recorded 200 to 300 war crimes committed by Russian forces daily. Ukraine's prosecutor general Iryna Venediktova added: "Very often we do not have access to territories or people at all. However, this does not mean that we should not start an investigation. We will always do it."

On 23 June, Ukraine stated that it had filed a case to end "the mass and gross human rights violations" against Russia at the European court of human rights. Ukraine's justice ministry said that Russia's invasion was illegal and wanted to contest it under the European convention on human rights.

Also, on 24 June, Ukraine said it planned to withdraw its troops from the city of Sievierodonetsk. This comes weeks after street fighting and indiscriminate bombing by Russia. Sievierodonetsk's governor mentioned that this would give Russia a significant advantage in the east.

On the same day, Ukraine's security agency accused lawmaker Andriy Derkach of being a Russian spy. Derkach was previously accused of similar wrongdoings and pleaded not guilty. However, the State Security Service (SBU) said Derkach had received USD three to four million to fulfill a plan to allow Russia's vehicles into the city. The US treasury also sanctioned him in September 2020 for influencing the US elections.

On 24 June, Ukraine's forces informed the US that they needed "fire parity" to counter Russia's advancement in the eastern region of Luhansk. This comes as Russia's artillery is at an advantage in the Donbas region and has inflicted more damage on Ukraine's forces.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 24 June, Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated that the decision to allow Ukraine and Moldova into the EU would have negative consequences. Russia claimed that this amounted to the EU "enslaving" neighboring countries. Zakharova added: "...the European Union has confirmed that it continues to actively exploit the CIS on a geopolitical level, to use it to 'contain' Russia."

On the same day, at a press conference in Azerbaijan, Russia's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov stated that the EU and NATO were acting similarly to Hitler in World War II. He argued that Hitler, too, had united many numbers under his banner against the Soviet Union, and now the two blocs were doing the same. However, Lavrov added: "The development of its relations with any willing countries does not create threats or risks for us."

Also, on 24 June, Kremlin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov talked about the speculations of Germany potentially nationalizing a section of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. He claimed that these were only hypothetical discussions, and Russia would respond with legal actions if needed.

On 24 June, Russia's defence ministry spokesperson Igor Konashenkov stated that 41 soldiers of Ukraine had voluntarily surrendered in the Lugansk region. Konashenkov also said that 2,000 troops were trapped in Gorskoye and Zolotoye areas due to Russia's encirclement.

On the same day, Peskov talked about the situation in Kaliningrad as Lithuania had blocked its road access to its exclave. Peskov added: "Regretfully, they are not our partners any longer, they are our opponents now."

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

On 24 June, Washington called out to Moscow to reveal the locations of the US military veterans captured by Russia's forces. On 23 June, Peskov mentioned the two military veterans Druke and Huynh and called them soldiers of fortune. He added that the two soldiers had threatened the lives of the military service members of Russia in the Donbas region.

On the same day, the US announced to send additional military assistance of USD 450 million to Ukraine. The shipments would consist of rocket systems to support Ukraine's artillery to defend against Russia. White House spokesman John Kirby said: "This package contains weapons and equipment, including new High Mobility Artillery Rocket systems." This would bring the US military contributions to USD 6.1 billion.

On 24 June, UK's prime minister Boris Johnson said that London was willing to assist Ukraine in de-mining the southern coasts. Johnson also extended the UK's help to move millions of tonnes of grain stuck in the country. He added: "There is a job of work to be done. We are working with the Turks and other European friends and allies to see what we can do."

On the same day, the UK announced a ban on exporting jet fuel and banknotes to Russia. In addition, it had updated the list of banned exported goods and prohibitions on using Sterling or EURO banknotes in Russia.

Also, on 24 June, after the EU granted Ukraine and Moldova as candidates for membership, European council president Charles Michel called it "a historic moment." However, the EU's commission has still put forward seven key reforms for Ukraine to fulfill by the end of this year to be a member of the EU.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 24 June, UNESCO said that 150 cultural sites in Ukraine were destroyed or damaged due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

UNESCO's director-general Audrey Azoulay said: "I reiterate my call for the respect of international humanitarian law, in particular the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict."

Also, on 24 June, the IAEA raised concerns for its staff in Ukraine's power plant as Russia had restricted the agency's access to the Zaporizhzhia plant. As a result, the IAEA said it wanted to send another mission to check on its staff working under the Russian troops to maintain the nuclear plant's integrity.

On the same day, The UN's chief, Antonio Guterres, announced his opposition to Russia being excluded from the UN ocean conference. Guterres argued that Russia was an active contributor to pollution, which is why it should also participate in solving the problems.

On 24 June, Guterres also stated about a "real risk" of multiple famines this year. At a meeting in Berlin, he mentioned that the world would face an unprecedented global hunger crisis due to climate disruption, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the deeply unequal recovery.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 120

### The War on the Ground:

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy observed that the Russian forces had been carrying out attacks in eastern Donbas in a similar way it did in Mariupol. He said: "...they want to destroy the whole Donbas

step by step. Entire. Lysychansk, Slovyansk, Kramatorsk - they aim to turn any city into Mariupol. Completely ruined.”

There were several attacks observed by the Ukraine armed forces in the Mykolaiv where three cruise missiles were launched and the force took down two. Ukraine also announced holding the first trial against a Russian soldier who has been charged with sexual assault on Ukrainian women during wartime. The charged soldier known as Mikhail Romanov is also accused of murdering a civilian on 9 March.

Zaporizhzhia region mayor, Dmytro Orlov reported that civilians and workers at the Enerhodar nuclear plant were being captured by Russian forces. He said: “Whereabouts of some unknown. The rest are in very difficult conditions: they are being tortured with electric shock, bullied physically and morally.”

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

Russia’s defence ministry claimed that the Russian Navy handled the exit of Turkey’s cargo ship “Azov Concord.” TASS reported that it will be the first ship to exit from Mariupol and go towards Novorossiysk. The move comes after the discussion took place between Turkey and Russia on ensuring safe exit and navigation to the Black Sea for Turkey’s ships. After Azov, there are still five ships left in the Mariupol to be deported. Apart from this he also reported on supply humanitarian activities held in Donetsk and Lugansk regions, where 183 tonnes of aid were given to people. He also enlisted those involved in the aid activities which included, “ministries, federal services, and agencies, political parties, and non-governmental organizations.”

On 23 June, Russia’s National Defense Management Center chief, Colonel-General Mikhail Mizintsev reported that without engaging with the Kyiv authorities, Russia had transferred or evacuated close to two million people including 300,000 children till now invasion began. He said: “Despite all the obstacles created by official Kyiv, 23,775 people, including 3,676 children, have been evacuated to the Russian Federation from

dangerous areas of the Donbas republics and Ukraine in the past 24 hours.”

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

On 23 June, the EU leaders announced the recognition of Ukraine and Moldova as candidates for membership in the EU. Upon the announcement, the western Balkan states criticized the slow progress of their membership status in the EU. The Balkan states, Albania, and North Macedonia were previously given candidate status in 2004 and 2005, since then the progress has been slowed. The key reason is due to Bulgaria’s block where it demands to settle down the historical and language disputes to proceed to the accession to the EU. According to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen: “I am deeply convinced that our decision that we have taken today strengthens us all.”

Germany and Denmark have issued an alert stating an “emergency” on the supply chain issues faced in importing gas. The alert was previously issued in March 2022 as “phase 1” alert and it needs to ensure the status does not shoot to “phase 3” where the government will be directly involved in cutting down gas to non-essential companies.

Denmark has announced its plans to send its frigate crew off 135 soldiers to take part in a NATO exercise as part of their deterrence activities in the North Atlantic. The exercise involved other countries such as Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Canada.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 23 June, ICRC head to Ukraine, Pascal Hundt, said that ICRC was ready to coordinate agreements on the civilian evacuation from the Donbas combat zone. He also spoke on how the parties to the conflict must involve duly in the evacuation process and ensure a passage for people to exit the war zones. He said: “Since the beginning of May, ICRC teams have assisted over 900,000 vulnerable people with food, livelihood, and cash assistance as well as hygiene material.”

Nike, the US sportswear company has announced its exit from Russia. It has stopped its online sale and closed down its physical stores in Russia. The statement released said: "Our priority is to ensure we are fully supporting our employees while we responsibly scale down our operations over the coming months."

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## War in Ukraine: Day 119

### The War on the Ground:

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the EU countries granting the candidate status to Ukraine said that it motivates the army and society to fight for its independence and expressed it will be a "positive transition." He said: "It is a great motivator for unification, and therefore a great motivator for Ukraine's victory." Ukraine reported that its defenders fighting in the eastern Donbas are facing extreme conditions where 568 civilians are reported to be cornered in Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk. The forces in the southern operational command claimed on launching air strikes on Zmiinyi Island, which was

observed to have caused major losses for Russian forces.

A video has been released from Russia showing an explosion in one of its oil refineries. It accused Ukraine of using a UAV to strike the oil refinery in Rostov. Ukraine countered by saying it uses only drones and not UAVs at any point in the war.

Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Andriy Yermak, appreciated Italy's support to Ukraine in terms of defence, and politics. He said: "We are grateful for the weapons and the loud voice in support of granting Ukraine the status of a candidate for EU membership. But please understand: this is not a charity, but an investment in your own security, in our common peace, in our common free future."

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 22 June, Russia's first deputy permanent representative to the UN, Dmitry Polyansky reported that Russia will begin collecting evidence on Ukraine's armed forces' use of 155 millimetre "artillery system," which is used by NATO members. He said: "Indeed, [the Ukrainian military] is using 155 mm munitions and if necessary, it won't be a problem to collect evidence proving that shelling attacks on civilian areas involve such weapons. I think that we will do it, Russia will do it."

Russia warned Lithuania over its ban on the transfer of goods close to 50 per cent through the railway to Kaliningrad. One of the spokespersons said: "will certainly respond to such hostile actions." Kaliningrad being an important region for Russia's Baltic force depends majorly on the EU's raw materials and spare parts.

Russia's National Defense Management Center, chief Mikhail Mizintsev reported on receiving 50 "evacuation requests" from people living in Ukraine to be evacuated into Russia. He added that in total there have been 2,758,447 similar requests mainly coming from territories under Ukraine, Kyiv, and Donbas. Apart from this, he claimed on Ukraine staging weapons and defence forces near Odesa, Avdeyevka, and Slavyansk hospital facilities. Upon which all the

patients were sent out of the med facility due to weapon deployment.

The DPR mission to the Joint Center for Control and Coordination, in a report, said that Ukraine had used “42 NATO-standard 155 mm shells” to carry out attacks in the Donetsk region. In total nine attacks were observed to be launched in three rounds.

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

Turkey’s weapon production representative said that Turkey must be cautious in sending the weapons to Ukraine as it is important for Kyiv’s defence. The military delegation of Turkey is expected to travel to Russia to talk about establishing a safe sea corridor in the Black Sea area to facilitate Ukraine’s grain export.

On 22 June, the UK’s defence ministry reported that in the coming days the chances for Russia to assemble more reserves on the front lines, especially in Donbas were increasing.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 22 June, the IEA warned Europe that Russia will soon be stopping its gas supply to Europe. The head of IEA, Fatih Birol expressed the need for a contingency plan for Europe. He expects the reduction to cause problems in Europe’s gas storage, giving leverage to Russia in the coming winter. It is observed that the gas imports have scaled down from 40 per cent to 20 per cent. On the same many EU states from France, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands have confirmed the stoppage of gas supply from Russia. Indonesia’s President Joko Widodo is scheduled to visit Ukraine and Russia in the coming week to discuss on finding peaceful ways to resolve the conflict.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 118**

### **The War on the Ground:**

On 21 June, Luhansk region’s governor, Serhiy Gaidai said that Russia’s forces had captured more settlements near the twin cities of Sievierodonetsk, and Lysychansk. The regional governor of Kharkiv, Oleh Synegubov reported that 15 people were killed in the region because of Russian shelling.

President Zelenskyy in his address to African Union leaders spoke about the growing global food crisis and mentioned the condition of Africa. He said that Africa will be one of the worst-hit countries if immediate corridors for the export of Ukraine’s grains are not restored. Russia has been holding Africa hostage over food shortage and rising prices of fuel, fertilizers, oil, and grains. Zelenskyy also met with the prime minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Xavier Bettel, who was visiting Kyiv. He thanked Bettel for the assistance provided in terms of hosting Ukraine’s refugees and allocating 15 per cent of the national budget for Ukraine.

On 21 June, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) reported that they have detained a senior official in the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers and a department head

at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This was because they were suspected to be a part of a Russian spy network. The SBU said: "These officials passed on various intelligence information to the enemy: from the state of our defence capability to arrangements at the state border and personal data of Ukrainian law enforcement officers."

The Russia-backed separatist region of Donetsk People's Republic is now allowing foreigners to sign up for military service in DPR's interior ministry troops. These contracts are valid for one year, but may therefore be extended. In the Luhansk People's Republic, the Joint Control and Coordination Center said that Ukraine had fired Tochka-U missiles at the settlements of Zimogorye and Stakhanov.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

The Interfax news agency reported that the two men from the US, fighting for Ukraine, had been captured in the Donetsk People's Republic. They also showed video interviews of the pair. However, Kremlin said that they did not know the location of the "mercenaries"

On 21 June, the Chief of Russia's National Defense Management Center, Mikhail Mizintsev said that around 21,000 people have been evacuated from dangerous situations in Ukraine, especially from the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republic.

Dmitry Muratov from Russia won the Nobel Peace Prize along with Maria Ressa of the Philippines, in 2021. The Nobel Prize committee had said that it was for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, seen as a precondition of democracy and peace. Muratov recently auctioned his Nobel Medal for a record USD 103.5 million. The money will be given to UNICEF for humanitarian aid for children from Ukraine who have been displaced.

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

On 21 June, the US attorney general, Merrick Garland reiterated that they are committed to identifying, arresting, and prosecuting

Russia's soldiers with war crimes records. Garland met with Ukraine's prosecutor general Iryna Venediktova and announced a team to look into war crimes accountability. This new team will assist Ukraine with criminal prosecution, fact-finding, forensics of human rights abuse, war crimes, and other atrocities.

A military delegation from Turkey will go to Russia to discuss the export of Ukraine's grains from the Black Sea. Ankara has so far spoken to Moscow and the UN, but final approval of the plan has to come after a four-way meeting between Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and the UN. This meeting is soon scheduled to be held in Istanbul. Top EU diplomats also met in Luxembourg and warned about the impending risk of famine. EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, referred to Russia's blockade of ports and said that it was Russia that should be blamed for this global grain crisis.

On the same day, the self-propelled howitzers sent by Germany arrived in Ukraine. This marks the first delivery of heavy weapons promised by Berlin. The arrival of the Panzerhaubitze 2000 was announced by the Defence Minister, Oleksii Reznikov on social media. The head of Ukraine's president's office posted a list of all the other weapons that have been pledged by Germany; it includes 30 Gepard tanks and three MARS II multiple rocket launchers, and 500 shoulder-fired Stinger missiles.

Lithuania banned the transporting of any goods sanctioned by the EU from Russia to Kaliningrad through rail routes. This is a problem for Russia, as Kaliningrad holds Russia's Baltic Sea Fleet and also the deployment-ready Iskander missiles. This move has naturally irked Russia, who warned that Lithuania will have to face a "serious negative impact." Lithuania has also said that it will not be looking toward NATO for support if Russia threatens any military action against Lithuania.

Estonia summoned the Russian Ambassador over a possible airspace violation. A Russian Mi8 came into Estonia's airspace without permission and failed to respond to signals or transponders. This is the second time in

less than two weeks that a similar event has occurred.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 21 June, the 19th meeting of Kazakhstan-EU Cooperation was conducted where Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdy discussed how they can avoid the spillover of the war in Ukraine in their country. Catherine Colonna, the foreign minister of France represented the European Union. Kazakhstan's Minister mentioned that it was necessary to maintain the momentum of positive relations with the EU. They also spoke about how to prevent the influence of the EU sanctions imposed on Russia, on Kazakhstan's companies.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 117**

#### **The War on the Ground:**

On 20 June, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a reason for the increasing food prices on the African continent. Addressing the Bureau of the Assembly of the African Union, he said: "(I) address you in a state of emergency, when we have a war. In an emergency for the whole world, when Africa is actually taken hostage. Hostage of those who started the war against our state." Zelenskyy further mentioned that Russia will soon intensify its attacks on Ukraine and other European countries. He suggested preparing for the hostile activities as the EU's commission had proposed Ukraine as a candidate for EU membership.

On the same day, Ukraine's deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk urged the people in the Kherson oblast to leave the city. This comes as 165 out of 350 humanitarian corridors had failed due to violations by Russia. She further mentioned how Russia was holding 1.2 million citizens of Ukraine and that more than 1,500 were being held in Russian prisons.

Also, on 20 June, Ukraine's troops stated that Russian forces would reach the Luhansk borders by Sunday. Ukraine's deputy defense minister, Hanna Maliar, mentioned that Moscow had gathered all its troops and was preparing to storm the settlements near the eastern city of Sievierodonetsk.

On 20 June, Ukraine's military claimed that Russia targeted and destroyed a food warehouse in the city of Odesa. Ukraine said Russia was attacking warehouses as they did not successfully target Kyiv's troops.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 20 June, according to Crimea's leader Sergey Aksyonov, Ukraine's forces delivered three strikes on the Chernomorneftegaz drilling rigs in the Black Sea. He stated that the three strikes were on the natural gas rigs, and wounded several people.

On the same day, the governor of the Suzemka settlement in the Bryansk Region said that the shelling by Ukraine's forces had caused a power outage. Governor Alexander Bogomaz also stated that a person was injured, but the enemy's attacking fronts were suppressed.

Also, on 20 June, Russia warned Lithuania as Vilnius banned the transit of goods across its borders to its Kaliningrad enclave. Lithuania cited EU sanctions rules for blocking the movement of goods sanctioned by the bloc. Kremlin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said: "This decision is really unprecedented. It's a violation of everything." Russia also accused the G20 members of politicizing a meeting on global health. Russia claimed that the G20 accused Moscow's invasion as the reason for Ukraine's healthcare system plunging into chaos.

On the same day, the Kremlin announced that the two US mercenaries were not covered by the Geneva convention. Peskov added that they would face responsibility for their actions. On the other hand, Russia's Nobel peace prize-winning journalist Dmitry Muratov sold his peace prize for USD 103.5 million. He pledged the money to aid the children displaced by the war in Ukraine. On 20 June, the chair of the Russian security council, Dmitry Medvedev, said there was no point in having nuclear arms reductions

talks with the US as Washington was no longer on the Kelvin scale. But, he added: "Let them run or crawl back themselves and ask for it."

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

On 20 June, Germany mentioned that it was confident that Sweden and Finland would be able to reach an agreement with NATO for their membership bids. However, the government mentioned that even if the two countries did not get their membership in this summit in Madrid, it would not be a "catastrophe."

On the same day, the EU's diplomat accused Russia of committing a war crime by blocking Ukraine's grain exports. This comes as the EU was planning on ways to free up the grain blockade and export the crop to avoid a global food crisis. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell added: "One cannot imagine that millions of tonnes of wheat remain blocked in Ukraine while in the rest of the world people are suffering hunger...This is a real war crime."

The EU has also been discussing the next wave of sanctions on Russia and additional military support to Ukraine. The subject of sanctions was likely discussed at the EU envoy meeting as it was not mentioned in the conclusions of the EU summit. However, Germany has asked the bloc not to impose new complex sanctions but rather focus on the effectiveness of the existing sanctions. Also, on 20 June, Turkey said it had not accepted next week's NATO summit as the final deadline for resolving its objections to Finland and Sweden joining NATO. Turkey's presidential spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin said: "The existence of terrorist organizations must end in those countries. That is what we expect both from Finland and Sweden."

On 20 June, the UK said it had banned Russia's ambassador to the country Andrey Kelin "until further notice." A note to the parliamentarians stated: "As the formally accredited representative of the Russian government, the ambassador will not be welcomed onto the parliamentary estate until further notice." The UK's former

director of the special forces also mentioned that the UK must prepare for a possible war.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 20 June, a court in Moscow rejected an appeal by Meta Platforms Inc as it was found guilty of being involved in “extremist activity” in March. Russia had restricted access to social media platforms to control the flow of false information after 24 February. The state’s communication regulator Roskomnadzor has also been cracking down on platforms that fail to comply with Moscow’s guidelines.

On the same day, leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) countries stated that they would be focusing on the war in Ukraine and the potential sanctions against Russia in the upcoming summit. The leaders would also be planning on Ukraine’s reconstruction laying out medium and long-term goals. Also, on 20 June, on the occasion of World Refugee Day, actor and director Ben Stiller visited Ukraine and extended his support. He was there on behalf of the UNHRC as a goodwill ambassador.

On the same day, Australia said it delivered the first four armored personnel carriers to Ukraine. Australia had promised Ukraine 14 carriers as a part of their USD 285 million aid package. Former defense minister Peter Dutton had also promised 20 additional Bushmaster-protected infantry vehicles.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 115 & 116**

#### **The War on the Ground:**

On 18 June, Luhansk region’s governor, Serhiy Gaidai said that Russia was sending many reserve troops to Sievierodonetsk from other fronts. He said that it was to gain full control of the city.

On the same day, several other parts of eastern Ukraine saw strikes by Russia’s forces. Kharkiv region’s governor, Oleh Synehubov reported that a large fire had broken out as a result of Russian missiles hitting a gasworks in the Iziium district. He added that some other buildings in the vicinity have also been damaged. The head of the regional administration in Novomoskovsk said that a fuel storage department had been hit by Russian missiles too.

Authorities from the Donetsk People’s

Republic said that five civilians had been killed by Ukraine's strikes in the region. 12 others have been injured, as per the announcement made on Telegram. An official in the separatist Luhansk People's Republic, Rodion Miroshnik reported a huge explosion near Sievierodentsk. He also posted a video of the resultant cloud on his Telegram channel.

In the Zasyadko coal mine in the Donetsk region, 77 miners working had been trapped underground after the territory was shelled following a power outage. However, *Reuters* reported that they have finally been rescued and no one has been reported injured.

On 18 June, the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska gave an interview to *The Guardian*. She spoke about the crises that families in Ukraine are having to go through due to the war. She also elaborated on an initiative that she has launched to get the citizens of Ukraine the psychological support they need. When asked about the initiative, she said: "Ukrainians are not used to seeking help from psychologists. We tend to ignore the depression or anxiety. But now we all need to reconsider these stereotypes. And it will take a big information campaign to prove to people that it is not their fault that they need psychological help now. It is necessary to apply for it and there is a place to apply to."

Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported that he had visited the frontlines in the Mykolaiv region. He gathered intelligence about the on-ground situation and spoke to the soldiers deployed there.

On 19 June, Zelenskyy said that after the European Commission's support for Ukraine's EU membership application, he had expected Russia to intensify its attacks. In his nightly address, he said: "Obviously, this week we should expect from Russia an intensification of its hostile activities... And not only against Ukraine but also against other European countries. We are preparing. We are ready. We warn partners." Amidst the increasing presence of Russian troops in Sievierodonetsk, Serhiy Haidai said that the Russian narrative that they

control the entire city is incorrect. Even though Russia does control the main part, the whole city is not yet under their control.

On 19 June, Ukraine's parliament voted through two laws. These laws will severely restrict Russian books and music. They will ban the commercial import of books printed in Russia and will also forbid the printing of books by Russian citizens. Playing music by post-1991 Russian citizens on media or public transport will also be prohibited. This is the latest in a string of attempts to cut cultural ties between the countries.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 19 June, *TASS* reported on the transfer of surrendered commanders and Ukrainian troops to the detention center in Russia. It includes the deputy commander of the Azov battalion and commander of "36 Marine Brigade," and close to 1000 Ukrainian troops from the Azovstal factory. The Russian defence ministry recently claimed 2439 Ukrainian troops and members of the Azov battalion to have surrendered their arms.

On 18 June, Russian President Vladimir Putin in the meeting with the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina Milorad Dodik highlighted the difficulty in conducting the relations and assured the continuity and developments in their relationship.

On 18 June, Russia's defence ministry spokesperson major general Igor Konashenkov said that Russia has hit 62 Ukraine's military clusters, M777 howitzers, Mi-24 helicopters, troops, vehicles including three-arm garages, and Su-25 plane. According to general Igor: "Tactical and army aircraft struck 62 clusters of Ukrainian troops and military equipment. As a result of the air strikes three ammunition depots in the districts of Tsapovka, Kharkiv Region, and Lysychansk, Lugansk People's Republic, were destroyed." Along with this he also reported on attacks on eight UAVs, Bayraktar unmanned assault aerial vehicle in the Luhansk and Kherson region.

Russia's National Defence Management Centre, the chief reported on the evacuation of 29,000 people from risk-prone areas of

Ukraine and Donbas. According to the chief, out of the total count, 3,502 were children by 18 June, and on the total count since the invasion, 1,936,911 people have been recorded to be moved into Russia.

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

On 19 June, EU's foreign ministers scheduled a meeting for 20 June to discuss the possibility of freeing the grain stuck in Ukraine. Ukraine has had more than 20 million tonnes of wheat stuck in its silos since Russia invaded. Thus, Ukraine has been working with the UN to broker a deal and resume wheat exports from Ukraine and food and fertilizer exports from Russia.

On the same day, the UK announced a change in visa rules for minors coming from Ukraine. Under the new rule, children and teenagers could enter the UK as it was prohibited earlier. The minors would not need to enter with a parent or guardian and could seek refuge directly. During his visit, prime minister Boris Johnson mentioned that the UK could not send its troops as support, but the country would continue aiding it for "the long haul." He added: "... Russia's invasion of Ukraine underlines our core purpose – to protect the UK by being ready to fight and win wars on land."

Also, on 19 June, Italy's foreign minister Luigi Di Maio accused his own party of undermining government efforts in supporting Ukraine. Italy has been supplying arms to Ukraine to help it against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In addition, Italy's energy company Eni announced joining with Qatar Energy to expand its productions as Russia reduced its supplies to Italy.

On 19 June, Germany stated that it plans on adopting measures to ensure a continuous supply of energy for its needs. This comes as Russia has dropped its gas supply, and Berlin had to resort to coal to compensate for the drop in supply. The economy minister suggested using coal power plants to replace gas as a medium of generating electricity.

On the same day, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg warned that the war in Ukraine could continue "for years." Nevertheless, he

added: "We must not weaken in our support of Ukraine, even if the costs are high - not only in terms of military support but also because of rising energy and food prices." He further mentioned how modern weapons would also increase Kyiv's possibility of weakening Russia's control of the Donbas region.

On 18 June, the Pentagon's defense technology security administration paused the US' plans of selling four-armed drones to Ukraine. The White House approved the plan; but, objections were raised due to concerns about equipment falling into enemy hands. Instead, the military might swap the current sensor package and radar for less sophisticated tech, but that would still take months to complete. The Pentagon also said it was keen on sending four more rocket launchers to Kyiv as a part of their aid package. This would help Ukraine tackle Russian forces in long-range artillery attacks.

On the same day, Germany's chancellor Olaf Scholz emphasized the importance of continuing communication with Putin. He added: "It is absolutely necessary to speak to Putin, and I will continue to do so – as the French president will also." He further mentioned that communication must continue to help things return to normalcy.

Also, on 18 June, the UK's prime minister reassured Zelenskyy that London would continue to give Kyiv 'strategic endurance' to help it defend against Russia. He further mentioned that the UK would work towards freeing up the grain that is being held hostage by Putin.

On 18 June, member of Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency Milorad Dodik met with Putin. The two leaders discussed the war in Ukraine and its spillover on bilateral relations. Russia claimed that the complications were also because of Bosnia and Herzegovina's support of sanctions.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 18 June, it was reported that India's coal purchases from Russia, have in the last few

weeks. This might be because traders are offering up to 30 per cent of discounts. It was also reported by *Reuters* after reviewing unpublished government data that from last year, India's oil purchases from Russia have jumped more than 31-fold to USD 2.2 billion in the last 20 days.

Morocco's national human rights body, the National Council of Human Rights requested Russia's authorities to ensure that there is a 'fair trail' for the Moroccan citizen. The citizen was sentenced to death by a court in the Donetsk People's Republic. The president of the council, Amina Bouayach contacted the high commissioner for human rights in the Russian Federation to reiterate the matter.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said that due to the Ukraine war, there has been an outpouring of support for refugees in Europe. The commission is hopeful that this might shift the attitude with which Europe views refugees as a community. the UN refugee agency's assistant high commissioner, Gillian Triggs, said: "Before Ukraine, Europe was definitely not prepared for this... It was preparing to resist any increase in numbers ... I imagine there will be a rethinking what the future will look like. They must plan for a continued movement of people, particularly in relation to climate."

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## War in Ukraine: Day 114

### The War on the Ground:

On 17 January, upon three European leaders' visit to Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the Prespa Forum Dialogue highlighting the exiting challenges in the gas market, food market, and refugee problem. He also gave a short brief on the upcoming EU-Western Balkans High-Level Summit which is expected to provide answers on the future of Europe and the European perspective on how society and economies will develop.

During UK prime minister Boris Johnson's visit, Zelenskyy thanked him for his second visit and for agreeing to provide the military training and supply of weapons to fight Russia.

The eastern Ukrainian region of Luhansk governor, Serhiy Haidai reported on the continuing fights in the Sievierodonetsk city where 568 people have been claimed to be taking shelter amidst the constant fighting.

### The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 17 June, TASS reported on Russia's president Vladimir Putin's address at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum's plenary session. On the mounting sanctions from the West, Putin said that Russia will be producing its own set of products with the disappearance of goods from the West and highlighted that the sanctions will have a counter effect on the global economy. He said: "European politicians have landed a heavy blow on their economies. They did it themselves, with their own hands." On Ukraine joining the EU, Putin addressed that Russia will not have a problem as the EU is

not a military organization. He also criticized the elites of Ukraine for making a choice favoring the West. On the questions of red lines and strikes beyond, Putin avoided responding. Apart from this Putin also spoke on the recognition of the Donbas region within the UN's Charter and will continue to protect the interests of the Donbas residents. On 17 June, in an interview with CNN, Russian Presidential Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Russia will need 40 to 50 per cent of its import deficit to be waged for the short-term period. With the increasing sanctions from the West, Russia can counter by reorganizing imports and redirecting them from the east.

### The West View:

#### Responses from the US and Europe

On 17 June, the European Commission released an opinion stressing Ukraine's candidate status in the EU. According to European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen: "I commend the positive EU Commission conclusion on Ukraine's candidate status. It's the first step on the EU membership path that'll certainly bring our victory closer." Along with the EU, Moldova has also supported the decision of Ukraine to join the EU. Ursula added that this first step will lead to both Ukraine and Moldova a step closer to joining the EU and later will receive access to financial aid and economic reforms. Upon the three European leaders of France, Germany, and Italy meeting Zelenskyy in Ukraine showed their support to Ukraine in joining the EU. Apart from this Norway has announced it's joining with the EU sanctions against Russia. In the statement released, Norway said the immediate implementation of a ban on crude oil import and related products to Russia. It also added that such counter-sanctions on Russia will affect its employees, and Norwegian enterprises.

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko warned the Ukraine officials about launching attacks on Russian cities. He reported that Ukraine's demand for more tech long-range weapons such as Kursk, Rostov, Orel, and Belgorod can expect counter-attacks from Russia as it will use newer weapons. He said: "And they will be used against Kyiv, against those who make these decisions. That's why they are still a little bit apprehensive."

On 17 June, UK defence intelligence reported that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is leading it to fasten towards authoritarianism. Along with this it also stated close to 15000 Russian millionaires have applied to exit the UK.

Italy and France's energy enterprises have confirmed the reduction in gas supplies from Russia. Both the energy firms, Eni and GRTgaz said that the supplies have gone down since 15 May.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

The United Nations' humanitarian agency (OCHA) has raised concerns about the worsening humanitarian impact in the Donbas region. It said: "Nearly four months since the start of the war, the humanitarian situation across Ukraine — particularly in the eastern Donbas — is extremely alarming and continues to deteriorate rapidly." It highlighted the situation in Sievierodonetsk where heavy shelling has taken place and reported that close to 8.8 million people had received aid from the UN.

On 17 June, TASS reported on the comments made by the spokesperson of China's Embassy in the US on how China stands to bar all measures targeted to escalate the conflict. According to the spokesperson, China will support the negotiation and steps toward a peace settlement in the Ukraine conflict. He said: "China is not a party directly related to the issue, but it has been committed to promoting peace talks and playing a constructive role in pursuing a peaceful settlement of the crisis."

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 113**

#### **The War on the Ground:**

On 16 June, the governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Gaidai, said that an air strike hit a sanatorium building in Lysychansk. Reuters reported that four people were killed and seven were injured due to the airstrike. Gaidai said that the rescue operation is still underway. He also spoke to CNN about the situation at the Azot chemical plant. 568 people, including 38 children were still stuck there without any option of evacuation. The local governor of Sumy, Dmytro Zhyvytskyi, also reported casualties due to a rocket strike in a suburb in Sumy. He said that four civilians were killed and six have been injured due to the strike. Zhyvytskyi also said that another rocket had struck the Dobropillia district, along the Russian border and 26 mortar rounds were fired from across the border.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reiterated his request for more heavy weapons to combat the increased offensive by Russia in the east. He said: "Every day of delay or postponed decisions is an opportunity for the Russian military to kill Ukrainians or destroy our cities... There is a direct correlation: the more powerful weapons we receive, the faster we can liberate our people, our land."

The head of the self-proclaimed Luhansk

People's Republic, Leonid Pasechnik said that the Russian and separatist forces had entered the Azot chemical plant in Sievierodonetsk. However, they had been unsuccessful in dislodging Ukraine's fighters from their positions. Interfax reported that the separatists were considering reopening the humanitarian corridor for civilians at the plant.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 16 June, US-based satellite imagery company, "Maxar" said that Russia has been transporting Ukraine's grains to Syria. Initial pictures showed carrier ships with Russia's flags docked at Sevastopol port in Crimea. These ships were then photographed in Syria, with their hatches open and semi-trucks lined up to take the grains away.

Gazprom chief Alexei Miller, spoke about limiting the amount of gas to Germany, and said: "Our product, our rules." Gazprom has halved their previous rate of supply for Germany to 70m cubic metres per day. In a panel discussion at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, Miller said that they will not adhere to rules that are not created by them.

The head of the National Defense Control Center, Colonel General Mikhail Mizintsev alleged that the West is using their strategy for Syria in Ukraine too. He said that the US and its allies had supported and armed ideologically radical terrorists in Syria to challenge the undesired government. Mizintsev said that they are following a similar strategy by introducing neo-nationalist ideology to Ukraine's society.

On 17 June, Russia's aviation authorities extended their suspension of some flights from southern Russia for the 19th time. The Federal Air Transport Agency or Rosaviatsiya banned flights at 11 airports on 24 February.

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

On 16 June, Germany's chancellor Olaf Scholz, France's president Emmanuel Macron and Italy's prime minister Mario Draghi visited Kyiv and met president

Zelenskyy. This was the first time they have been to Ukraine since the war started. This visit comes ahead of the deliberations regarding Ukraine's EU membership. The leaders gave a signal that they would support an EU candidate status for Ukraine. The three European heads of state were joined by Romania's president Klaus Iohannis.

Emmanuel Macron also gave an interview as a part of this visit to Kyiv. When asked about the territorial concession that Ukraine might have to make, he said that it was a decision only Ukraine can take unilaterally. He, however, said that according to his values and international law, he would support Ukraine, whatever decision is taken.

The UK is also looking toward further collaboration with Ukraine regarding rebuilding Ukraine's infrastructure. The UK will host representatives and business leaders from Ukraine on 17 June to discuss how some companies in the UK can assist Ukraine with infrastructure, energy, and transport.

On 16 June, the defence minister of Slovakia Jaroslav Nad tweeted about their recent support of Ukraine. He said that Slovakia has sent four M1-17 and one Mi-2 helicopter along with thousands of Grad multiple-rocket launcher rockets to Ukraine.

On the same day, Lithuania's parliament called for the criminal prosecution of Russia's leadership, for their actions in Ukraine. The motion does not specify which authority should carry out the prosecution. However, it says that "Russian leaders, other high-ranking organizers of the crimes, direct perpetrators of the hostilities and the civilian deportations" should be prosecuted.

### **The Global Fallout: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 16 June, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) released a rapid assessment report. It examines the impact of the Ukraine war on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The report assessed that food security and livelihood are the two most

affected sectors. There are already 56 million people in need of food in the region, but the number is projected to rise by 25 per cent in the next six months. The Deputy Regional Director of IFRC MENA, Rania Ahmed said: "The global economic and security impact of the conflict in Ukraine could be the proverbial last straw that breaks the camel's back, pushing already fragile countries in the MENA region over the tipping point."

On the same day, a Russian spy posing as a Brazilian intern infiltrated the International Criminal Court, which is investigating the war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. The Russian, identified as Sergey Vladimirovich Cherkasov, is an agent of Moscow's GRU military intelligence. He had been posing as 33-year-old Brazilian citizen named Viktor Muller Ferreira. Cherkasov has been sent back to Brazil, where he will face arrest for identity fraud.

On 17 June, after three years of deliberations, Ireland will present the draft Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, in Geneva. The UN, member states, ICRC, and several civil society organizations have been involved in the deliberations. The legal advisor to ICRC, Eirini Giorgou referred to the war in Ukraine to point out the level of destruction that the use of explosives causes in cities, towns, and populated regions, especially to civilians.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 112

### The War on the Ground:

On 15 June, Ukraine's commander in chief, Valeriy Zaluzhny, discussed on how the battles are being fought in the Luhansk region. He further mentioned that Russia had concentrated its main strike forces north of the Luhansk region and was launching a multi-prolonged attack from nine directions. Ukraine's army has been defending the city of Sievierodonetsk while trying to stop the Russian forces from taking Lysychansk.

On the same day, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked US president Joe Biden for announcing the USD one billion arms package for Ukraine. Zelenskyy said he was grateful and that it would help Ukraine defend its Donbas region. Ukraine's presidential aide, Mykhaylo Podolyak, had also appealed to the West for more military

assistance ahead of the NATO meeting in Belgium.

Zelenskyy, addressing the Czech parliament, called on the EU to initiate Ukraine's membership in the bloc. He asked the EU to grant its candidate country status to start the accession process. He added: "...the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the first step that the Russian leadership needs to open the way to other countries, to the conquest of other peoples."

On 15 June, Ukraine's prosecutor general confirmed that 21 more children were killed in Mariupol. This brings the total number of child casualties to 313 just in Mariupol and a total of 892 in all of Ukraine.

On 15 June, Sievierodonetsk's mayor claimed that Ukraine was still controlling the industrial area and its perimeter. The area is in a strategic position as it creates the possibility of connecting with the city of Lysychansk. On the other hand, the 500 civilians trapped in the Azot plant attempted to flee as the shelling by Russian forces intensified. Luhansk region's governor Serhiy Haidai said: "people can no longer stand it in the shelters, their psychological state is on edge."

The Russia-backed separatists of the Luhansk People's Republic claimed that Ukraine had disrupted the plans for a humanitarian corridor. Ukraine has been seeking to create a humanitarian corridor to evacuate the 500 civilians sheltering in the plant. Russia's defence ministry has also accused Ukrainian forces of disrupting the efforts. However, Ukraine stated that there was no official communication on this.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

Russia's UN Ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia said that Russia will grant a safe passage for Ukraine's grains to be shipped from the Black Sea port. However, he said that Russia will not be responsible for establishing safe corridors.

Kremlin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov said that the US and Russia must continue their communication and dialogue, irrespective of

the current situation. Peskov said that the relations will have to be based on "mutual respect and mutual benefit," even though going back to the "spirit of Geneva" might be unlikely. He also said maintaining communication about nuclear weapons and discussing the extension of the START nuclear arms reduction treaty was imperative.

On 15 June, Russia said that the West have "shot itself in the head" with their interference in the conflict in Ukraine. They alleged that the rising food and energy prices and shortages of grains, oil, and fertilisers are results of the West's attempt to isolate Russia. The foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, compared the West with China and said: "Energy supplies are steadily increasing: China knows what it wants and doesn't shoot itself in the foot. While to the west of Moscow, they shoot themselves in the head." Apart from this, Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergey Ryabkov spoke about the West sending weapons and assistance to Ukraine. He said that negotiations for peace processes have been stalled due to the west's interference in the conflict.

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

On 15 June, it was reported that France's president, Emmanuel Macron, Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and Italy's prime minister, Mario Draghi will be visiting Kyiv on 16 June. The visit will be to provide support to Ukraine as they struggle against Russia's forces in Sievierodonetsk. It has taken weeks to coordinate and organize this visit and is significant as the European Commission will make a recommendation about Ukraine's application to the EU shortly.

After a 41-minute phone call with Zelenskyy, US President Joe Biden released a statement pledging an additional USD one billion of weapons to Ukraine. Pentagon clarified that this new package will include 18 howitzers, 36,000 rounds of ammunition, two Harpoon coastal defence systems, artillery rockets, secure radios, thousands of night vision devices along with separate funding for training. Additionally, Biden has also

sanctioned USD 225 million to support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine.

At the sidelines of a meeting between the defence ministers of the NATO allied states, US's defence secretary, Lloyd Austin said that the war in Ukraine was a "pivotal" moment. He also mentioned how the US and their allies cannot afford to be distracted from the war in Ukraine.

Two veterans from the US, who were fighting on Ukraine's side in the war have reportedly been captured by Russia's forces. The National Security Council spokesperson, John Kirby referred to this incident and said that everything will be done to get them back. He also urged US nationals to not travel to Ukraine under the current situation.

Canada's defence minister, Anita Anand announced that they will send 10 replacement barrels for M777 howitzer artillery guns and provide USD 6.9 million to Ukraine as aid.

Poland's agriculture minister, Henryk Kowalczyk addressed the plan to build grain silos along the border of Ukraine and Poland. He agreed that this will make the export of Ukraine's grains easier, but said that it can take three to four months to build the silos.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 15 June, China's president Xi Jinping met with Putin and discussed the war in Ukraine. The two leaders agreed to work towards a possible resolution, and China mentioned that it could play a role in resolving the situation. Xi and Putin also agreed to expand cooperation "due to the west's illegitimate sanctions policy."

Concerning the situation of Sievierodonetsk, the UN mentioned that thousands of civilians were still trapped in the city with a diminishing supply of food, clean water, sanitation, and electricity. The UN chief, Antonio Guterres, highlighted the gender disparity in the peace talks. He added: "right to equal participation at all levels, is essential for building and maintaining

peace." This comes as the war in Ukraine forced millions of women and children to flee the country.

On the same day, a report by the UN stated how the food security crisis would push more people in poorer countries to flee their homes. In addition, according to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), the war in Ukraine has adversely impacted the levels of global displacement.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 111

### The War on the Ground:

On 14 June, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy told Denmark’s journalists that Ukraine had enough ammunition to retaliate against Russia’s forces in Eastern Ukraine. However, he mentioned that Ukraine needed more long-range weapons to precisely target Russia’s federations equipment. Referring to the ‘painful losses’ suffered by Ukraine’s forces in Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, he reiterated his request to the West for heavy weapons. On this issue, Ukraine’s deputy defence minister, Hanna Malyar said that Kyiv has received only 10 per cent of the weapons they had asked for.

The head of the parliament’s financial committee, Danylo Hetmantsev said that since Russia’s invasion, their revenues cover less than half of their expenditures. The government reportedly collected UAH 101 billion, while their expenditure was around UAH 250 billion. Hetmantsev warned: “We have to borrow \$5 billion monthly. If we do not get it, we will have to cut spending.”

On 14 June, Ukraine’s agriculture ministry reported that because of Russia’s invasion, around 2.4 million hectares of winter crops will remain unharvested. The total value of the crops is estimated to be USD 1.43 billion. The ministry also said that the agriculture industry has endured losses worth USD 4.29 billion since the war began.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

According to the RIA news agency, Russia’s defence ministry has reported that Kalibr cruise missiles have struck an artillery weapons depot in Chernihiv. Moreover, Russia’s air defence forces also shot down a MiG-29 fighter jet and a Mi-24 helicopter from Ukraine. The ministry reported that their missiles have destroyed an ammunition warehouse in Lviv, which

stored weapons sent by NATO allied countries.

On 14 June, Russia’s foreign ministry reported that they had banned 29 members of the UK’s media from entering the country. Moscow has said that this was a response to the banning of Moscow’s media outlets by the UK government. Russia claimed it was also because of “spreading of false information about Russia” and the “anti-Russian” steps taken by the UK’s government.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov addressed the issue of the two UK nationals sentenced to death in the Donetsk People’s Republic. He said that the Russia-backed separatist leaders would address the appeal by the UK about the sentences. However, no correspondence has been initiated by the UK to date.

Russia’s army and the Luhansk People’s Republic militia said that they will allow a humanitarian corridor to operate in Svatovo in LPR. This was to facilitate the evacuation of around 500 civilians reportedly taking shelter in the Azot ‘ chemical plant.

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

On 14 June, Germany’s defence minister, Christine Lambrecht said that the training of Ukraine’s troops on the German howitzers was nearly complete. She mentioned that the weapons will soon be ready for use in the conflict. The Panzerhaubitze 2000 is one of the most powerful artillery weapons and can target a distance of 40 kilometers. Germany had pledged in May to provide seven self-propelled howitzers to Ukraine, but have faced criticism because of the delays in supplying them.

On the same day, the US president, Joe Biden, spoke about the global food crisis in Philadelphia. He said that the US will aid the building of temporary silos along Ukraine’s border to help facilitate easier export. He said: “I’m working closely with our European partners to get 20 million tons of grain locked in Ukraine out onto the market to help bring down food prices... It can’t get

out through the Black Sea because it'll get blown out of the water."

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) director Alexis Goosdeel reported on the shifts in smuggling routes for illegal drugs in Europe. He said that due to the war, there has been lesser activity on one of the commonly used heroin trafficking routes out of Afghanistan. Instead, an increase in trafficking has been noted on the borders between Turkey-Greece and Turkey-Bulgaria. Goosdeel said that the war might increase smuggling activity in the Mediterranean region.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

The war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on Russia have increased the need to procure more fossil fuels in many countries. At the sixth Austrian world summit, the UN chief, Antonio Guterres referred to the increase in procurement as a hurdle to climate change. He added that the countries would meet their short-term requirements but would have a long-lasting impact on the environment.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 110**

### **The War on the Ground:**

On 13 June, the governor of Luhansk, Sergiy Gaidai spoke about the fighting in Sievierodonetsk and said that 70-80 per cent was under Russia's control. He mentioned how Ukraine's troops were facing a crisis, but the situation was 'still under control.' However, Russia's forces have destroyed the last bridge that connected Sievierodonetsk with Lysychansk, which will make it impossible for humanitarian supplies to reach Sievierodonetsk, and will also prevent civilians from evacuating the city. Reportedly, Russia is also targeting an industrial zone at the Azot chemical plant in the city, where more than 500 civilians have taken shelter.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appeared for an interview with a public broadcaster in Germany, ZDF, and spoke about the situation in his country. He also asked Germany's Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, to not be concerned about Germany's ties with Moscow, and to step up on its support for Ukraine instead. Speaking about the chancellor, Zelenskyy said: "He and his government must decide: there can't be a trade-off between Ukraine and relations with Russia."

Presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, took to Twitter to request more weapons for Ukraine so that they can turn the momentum in eastern Ukraine. He said that they will need 300 multiple launch rocket systems, 500 more tanks, and 1000 more howitzers of the NATO 155mm standard.

Kyiv region's police chief, Andriy Nyebytov reported on the discovery of a new mass grave of civilians near Bucha. Seven bodies found in the grave were exhumed. Nyebytov said that these were "sadistic crimes of the Russian army." Moreover, according to the head of the national police in Ukraine, Ihor Klymenko 1200 bodies that have been found in mass graves across Ukraine have not been identified so far.

On 13 June, at a news conference, the deputy agriculture minister Taras Vysotskiy said that since the beginning of the war, Ukraine has lost a quarter of its arable land. This is significant because Ukraine is known as the 'breadbasket of the world'. But Vysotskiy said that food security for the population of Ukraine was not yet under threat, as sufficient crops have been sown this year.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 13 June, the leader of the Russia-backed separatist Donetsk region, Denis Pushilin said that there was an increase in shelling and fighting in the region. He also mentioned that Russia's end goal in the region is to protect the people of Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics. As quoted by Russia's state news agency, RIA, Kremlin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov also reiterated the same issue. Pushilin also reported that the population of Mariupol has halved since active fighting began in the city. He mentioned that the citizens of the city do not want the restoration of the Azovstal steel plant, as they see it as the primary cause of pollution in the region.

Russia's defence ministry reported that they had struck near the Udachne railway station in the east of the Donbas region with high-precision air-based missiles. By the attack, they had managed to destroy a large number of weapons and military equipment, including some that were supplied by the US and the European nations.

The deputy economic minister Vladimir Ilychev told TASS in an interview that Russia was not planning to leave the global food market, seeing that they are a major supplier of the same. Ilychev is the head of Russia's delegation at the 12th WTO ministerial conference in Geneva. He said: "we intend to

remain there, to supply our products to partners, our traditional consumers, and we are ready to take all the actions available to us to that end, which we have repeatedly stated... But in order for the system to work, it's necessary for all participants in the process to strive for results."

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

At a security policy talk at his summer residence, Finland's president Sauli Niinisto referred to the war in Ukraine. He said that both Russia and Ukraine were using heavier weapons than before. He alleged that Russia has been using thermobaric missiles, which were weapons of mass destruction. He also said that they were supplying Ukraine with the heavy weapons necessary to combat such heavy weapons.

#### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 13 June, Amnesty International said that the attack through constant shelling on cluster munitions and the use of scattered landmines was tantamount to war crimes. After a 14-day-long investigation, Amnesty has found evidence relentless attacks in Ukraine have resulted in the death of civilians. Ukraine maintains that 606 civilians have been killed in the region because of Russian aggression.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 108 & 109

### The War on the Ground:

On 11 June the Ukraine forces reported on the continued shelling and damage incurred in the power lines of the Donetsk region. It found that many cities including, Kramatorsk, Sloviansk, and Bakhmut were facing power outages and “netblocks.” It reported a cut in the internet connectivity in Donetsk.

On 11 June, TASS Russian news agency reported that Russia has started providing passports to Ukraine people living in Kherson and Melitopol to bring the cities under its control. Till now two dozen of Russian passports have been provided in Kherson and 30 in Melitopol. On this, the Ukraine authority and foreign ministry have called it a “flagrant violation of national sovereignty.” At the same, Ukraine’s military intelligence agency found that it had tracked down the passport forms from cities after Russia’s withdrawal. These documents were not in existence from 1990 and have been brought back from blueprints by Russia during the war as per the Ukraine intelligence.

On 12 June, the regional governor said that the Russian forces had launched four missiles at the military capacity located in Chortkiv, in western Ukraine, which injured 22 people. The governor of Luhansk said that the link between Ukraine and Sievierodonetsk can be cut down which might bring out the limitations of Ukraine’s

capacity. He also remarked on how Ukraine has been facing heavy casualties each day.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 12 June Russia’s defence ministry claimed that it had launched a missile strike on the military capacity of Ukraine destroying both the US and UK’s anti-tank and anti-missile systems. The for long-range weapons were recently doubled by the West. It also confirmed on destroying a “portable anti-aircraft system and artillery shells.”

Russia celebrated 12 June as the day for declaring sovereignty and declaration of democratic reform in 1990. It remarked the day with fireworks, flags, and lights on iconic buildings. Apart from the celebrations, Russia also experienced protests about its invading Ukraine. The protestors held a slogan stating “This is not our day,” outside the Russian army headquarters.

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

On 11 June, the UK defence ministry reported that most of the Russian attacks had been focused in the east where Ukraine forces have out-stocked weapons. It observed that upon Russia’s announcement of building the bridge between Crimea, it began issuing passports to Ukraine people and Ukraine has been constantly asking not to take the passports under the terms of employment or any such needs. The ministry also found that although Russia’s precision missiles count had reduced it could switch to more powerful weapon systems which are more destructive.

On 11 June, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen met president Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The visit focused on Ukraine’s application to the EU and evaluating the areas for cooperation, reconstruction, and progress of Ukraine in Europe.

In a analysis statement issued by the Institute for the Study of War: “Consistent with previous reports that Russian forced mobilization efforts are self-destructive and may result in mounting discontent and declining morale and discipline.”

On 11 June, Lithuania announced the opening of a cultural center for internally displaced Ukrainians. Till now it has welcomed more than 50,000 Ukrainians who have left Ukraine in war. Lithuania's foreign minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis said: "so as long as a regime that intends to wage wars outside Russian territory is in place, the countries surrounding it are in danger."

On 12 June, the Sweden military and the US Marines completed the drill in the Baltic Sea which is an important area for Sweden Island. According to the commander of Sweden's Gotland regiment, colonel Magnus Frykvall: "A lot of us thought that there wouldn't be a need to defend Gotland after Soviet collapse. This has been put in a new point of view since the war in Ukraine in 2014, and it was even more clear to us with the current invasion." The drill was held due to the growing fear of Russian aggression and was part of the annual exercise held between the US and Sweden with 26 warplanes and 2400 marines and sailors. It was called Baltic operations involving Swedish troops and marines.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 11 June, the IAEA director-general, Rafael Mariano Grossi reported on the successful restoration of data between the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant in the south and the International Atomic Energy Agency in Ukraine. The data transfer which was cut down by Russia for the past three months was not back on track.

North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un stated his support for Russia's president Putin and the war in Ukraine. It is seen as a step further compared to other friendly states of Russia. North Korea is also among the states which abstained from voting on the UN resolution against Russia.

On 12 June, the UN commission inspected the Kyiv region to look into the war crimes committed by Russia. It has vowed to implement its first mission in Ukraine by June 16.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 107**

### **Was on the Ground:**

On 10 June, Ukraine's defence ministry spokesperson, Oleksandr Motuzyank said that Russia is searching for weak points in Ukraine's defences near Sievierodonetsk, along the Siverskyi Donets River. This statement comes amidst continuous fighting in Sievierodonetsk. It must be noted that if Russia succeeds in capturing Sievierodonetsk and subsequently Lysychansk on the other side of the Siverskyi Donets river, will have full control over the entire Luhansk province. Motuzyank also mentioned that the situation in Southern Ukraine was calmer than before. However, the spokesperson for Ukraine's forces in the south, Nataliya Gumenyuk said that Russia had about 40 crores of missiles targeted at Ukraine, even though she did not reveal how she obtained this information.

The mayor of Mariupol, Vadym Boichenko issued a warning about the potential spread of deadly and contagious diseases like cholera in the city. Mariupol which saw intense fighting between Ukraine and Russia's forces has unclaimed and uncollected corpses which increases the risk of diseases. Boichenko said that there has already been an outbreak of dysentery and cholera and that the city has been placed under quarantine. He has also requested the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to establish a humanitarian corridor so that residents without centralized water, gas, and electricity supplies can be evacuated. The governor of Mykolaiv, Vitaliy Kim, informed via the Telegram app that Ukraine has conducted its 11th prisoner swap with Russia, since the beginning of the war. In the latest exchange, they swapped five captives from Russia for four Ukrainians.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov addressed the issue of the death sentences of the two Britons and one Moroccan, who had fought against Russia, as a part of Ukraine's army. He said: "At the moment, the trials you mentioned are being held based on the legislation of the Donetsk People's Republic because the crimes in question were committed on the DPR's territory."

Amidst increasing isolation by the West, Russia opened a new cross-border bridge with China. This bridge is to give an impetus to trade between the two countries and connects Blagoveshchensk in Russia to Heihe in China, across the Amur river. It is more than a kilometre long and as per the *RIA* news agency, cost around RUB 19 billion to build.

The leader of the Donetsk People's Republic, Denis Pushilin, said that Ukraine's fighters captured at the Azovstal steel plant will be put to trial by the end of the summer. He also mentioned that necessary documents needed for the trial were being prepared.

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

On 10 June, the president of the European Union's Parliament, Roberta Metsola, said that the parliament fully supports Ukraine's EU bid. She mentioned this at the Copenhagen Democracy Summit. The spokesperson to prime minister Boris Johnson said that Britain is condemning the death sentences levied on the two British nationals who were captured in the Donetsk People's Republic. UK's foreign secretary Liz Truss also spoke about the same issue and said that the act was a serious breach of the Geneva convention and that she will be speaking to Ukraine to secure speedy release.

Germany's health minister visited Lviv in Ukraine. He said that Germany will send medical aid to Ukraine, mainly in the form of prostheses, and the deployment of around 200 doctors. The minister also said that they will be setting up trauma centers specializing in treating burns and connecting some of Ukraine's hospitals to a telemedicine service. Germany's economy minister Der Spiegel announced that they are trying to

revise the rules on arms export. This move is to make it easier for democracies like Ukraine to obtain German weapons while at the same time making it more difficult for autocracies to do so. A spokesperson from Germany's government also addressed the death sentences of the foreign fighters in the Donetsk People's republic and said that they were a "complete disregard for the basic principles of humanitarian international law."

Responding to criticism that he faced for saying that it was important not to humiliate Russia, France's president Emmanuel Macron said that France is unwilling to make concessions to Russia. A presidential official said that they want a Ukrainian victory, and for Ukraine's territory to be restored. France's Chief of the Defense Staff, Thierry Burkhard, initiated a phone call with Chief of the General Staff of Russia's Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov. Reportedly, they spoke about the situation in Ukraine and the Sahel region.

### **The Global Fallout: International implications of the Ukraine war**

The deputy chief of NATO, Mircea Geoana, addressed Sweden and Finland's membership to the alliance at the Copenhagen Democracy Summit. He said that while he hoped that the two states could join NATO despite Turkey's objections, he could not foresee any military threat for them from Russia.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 105

### The War on the Ground:

On 08 June, Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelenskyy mentioned the fighting at Severodonetsk. He added that the fate of the war in Donbas would be decided in the city of Severodonetsk. Luhansk’s governor Serhiy Haidai stated that Moscow’s troops were facing significant losses and that it was impossible for Russia to control the city altogether. However, the governor was concerned about the 15,000 civilians at Severodonetsk and Lysychansk.

As the fighting intensified at Severodonetsk, the governor assured that no one in the city would surrender but rather restrain Russian advancements towards the city. Severodonetsk is a strategic point in the conflict as it is crucial for both sides in the Donbas region. Ukraine estimates that

Russia has about 120 battalions inside the country and nearly 40 of the battalions around the Severodonetsk region.

On the same day, Ukraine’s nuclear state company Energoatom accused the UN’s Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of falsely using Kyiv’s name to visit the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant. Energoatom said they had not extended any request to IAEA to visit the plant, as it would then legitimize Russia’s presence there.

Also, On 08 June, families of the soldiers who died in Mariupol said that they had received 160 bodies of the soldiers who were holed up in the city’s Azovstal steelworks. They claimed it was a part of a swap with Russia, but Moscow did not comment on the same. Zelenskyy had earlier mentioned that prison transfers would follow as more than 2500 defenders were held by Russia.

On 08 June, Ukraine’s prosecutor, general Iryna Venediktova, stated that it had filed more than eight war crimes against Russian soldiers. Ukraine has already filed 16,000 investigations of war crimes against Russia since 24 February. However, Moscow denies the allegations that its troops had committed war crimes during the special operations.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 08 June, Russia’s foreign minister Sergey Lavrov stated that Russia was ready for an UN-mediated meeting with Ukraine in Turkey. This comes as Lavrov visited Istanbul and met with Turkey’s foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. However, Lavrov stated that the UN’s involvement would be more symbolic than having any substantive outcomes.

On the same day, Russia’s foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated that the unilateral sanctions placed by countries were illegal. The airspace closure for Russian airlines is illegitimate as it is against the 1944 Convention on international civil aviation provisions. She added that it had caused an increase in the cost of air tickets burdening passengers. She has raised her concerns with the international civil aviation organization.

Also, On 08 June, Russia's state tech corporation Rostec mentioned that its KUB and Lancet kamikaze drones were being deployed in Ukraine. Rostec said that the drones had proven their combat worthiness in Ukraine and had accurately covered tens of kilometers and hit targets. The Lancet drone has a range of 40 kilometers with a maximum 12 kilograms payload, while the KUB drone can carry a three kg warhead and accelerate to speeds of 130 kilometers per hour.

Lavrov also discussed the prospects of allowing Ukraine to export its grains from the Black Sea port through Turkey. Turkey has been playing a crucial role as a center for trade, logistics, energy, and food exports. This would also help Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey counter the global shortage of grain exports.

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

On 08 June, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) released a report that the UK's economy would suffer the most due to the conflict in Ukraine. The group forecasted the UK's growth to initially grow by 3.6 per cent by then fall to zero per cent by 2023.

Additionally, inflation is expected to stay at 8.8 per cent and reach 7.4 per cent by 2023.

On the same day, the EU said it plans to lift sanctions against Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov and his two sisters. This comes as the businessman has launched a legal challenge at the European court of justice. His sisters, too, filed legal appeals to overturn sanctions that blocked their assets located in Europe.

Also, on 08 June, Germany's chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke to Zelenskyy and discussed the situation in Ukraine and his telephonic conversation with Putin. Zelenskyy and Scholz also discussed the possible ways for Ukraine to export wheat out of the country through sea routes. Ukraine also raised concerns about Russia's treatment of prisoners of war.

On 08 June, US president Joe Biden announced his travel plans to Germany for

the G7 summit and Spain for the NATO summit. According to the White House, Biden will be discussing the war in Ukraine, the food crisis, and energy issues.

On the same day, the arctic countries of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the US said that they would resume work but without Russia. A joint statement released further mentioned: "We intend to implement a limited resumption of our work in the Arctic Council, in projects that do not involve the participation of the Russian Federation."

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 08 June, a report by *BBC* stated that due to the war in Ukraine, there had been a renewed rush for fossil fuels making it the new gold rush. A Climate action tracker (CAT) report stated that the world would be at risk of irreversible warming if it did not work toward ending the use of fossil fuels. Countries have been shifting back to new fossil fuel infrastructure to meet its short-term energy supplies, but those short-term supplies would cause issues for the climate targets set.

On the same day, the World Bank stated that it had cut its annual forecast for global economic growth due to the significant recessions the country is facing. In addition, the World Bank said that eastern Africa and parts of Europe were majorly affected by the war in Ukraine. This could further induce stagflation like in the 1970s, where it would be a combination of high inflation and low growth.

Also, on 08 June, Sudan's farmers expressed their concerns about the failing crops due to the rise in fertilizer costs. The farmers were also cut off from international financing that helped their production costs. Sudan is also undergoing political instability and is now likely to face a humanitarian situation due to the war in Ukraine.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 104

### The War on the Ground:

On 07 June, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky said that there was no chance of Ukraine agreeing to a battlefield stalemate. They would rather aim to gain control of all of the territories that Moscow controls. Zelensky said: "We have already lost too many people to simply cede our territory... We have to achieve a full deoccupation of our entire territory."  
 The regional governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Gaidai, reported that Russians in Sievierodonetsk seem to have redoubled their efforts after Ukraine's counterattack. He said that

situation is evolving every day, till now Ukraine's forces have been successful in holding Russia off.

On 07 June, Kyiv experienced renewed violence after a month of relative peace, Kharkiv too suffered a similar fate. The situation in the city had calmed down to a degree with the retreat of Russia's forces. However, the local mayor, Ihor Terekhov, reported a Russian strike, which resulted in one person dying, and three getting injured. He also said that the people lived in constant fear.

On 07 June, adviser to Ukraine's minister of agrarian policy and food, Markiyano Dmytrasevych said that thousands of mines infest the water near the ports in Ukraine. This comes as a blow to Turkey's plans to coordinate the mass-scale supply of Ukraine's grains to the global market. However, Turkey said that they have been able to make progress in the talks with Russia and Ukraine, about the same.

Ukraine's state nuclear company Energoatom condemned the IAEA's plan to send a mission to the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia power plant. It said that Ukraine had not solicited such a visit and mentioned how such a mission would further legitimize the presence of the occupiers in the plant and not acknowledge the acts of aggression by Russia committed at the plant.

The Donetsk People's Republic, the separatist, pro-Russian faction in Ukraine reported that Ukraine's forces have shelled the Petrovsky district in Donetsk with 15 millimetres of artillery, a weapon typically used by NATO states. The Russian-appointed administration in Kherson also announced that a Russian bank is all set to open a branch in the region. However, the head of the Kherson region's "military-civilian" administration, Kirill Stremousov did not specify which bank it will be.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 June, *TASS* provided an update about the soldiers captured from the Azovstal Steel Plant, in Mariupol. The report said that more than 1000 soldiers were transferred to Russia for investigation. This comes amidst some Russian lawmakers suggesting that they need to be put on trial. While *TASS* did not report anything further on what would happen to the soldiers, there is a chance that this might further sour the

chances of negotiations between Ukraine and Russia.

Russia's defence minister Sergei Shoigu also referred to the rising food security crisis and said that the two ports of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, Berdyansk, and Mariupol were ready to start operations. However, he blamed Ukraine for the delay and said that they needed to determine the ways to the port, for them to be functional again.

The lower house of Russia voted on a bill that will further tighten the law against people. At its first reading, the bill was passed by 346 votes to 17, and introduced a new category of "persons affiliated with a foreign agent." In other news, the parliament also passed two bills that will end the European Court of Human Rights' jurisdiction in the country. As per the bill, 15 March has been set as the cut-off point. As a result, rulings made against Russia after that will not be considered. The military prosecutor of Russia's Western Military District said that Russia will be prosecuting 12 Russian officers for sending about 600 young conscript soldiers to Ukraine. He also mentioned that disciplinary measure has already been taken against them and that some officers have been dismissed from service.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 07 June, UK's prime minister, Boris Johnson addressed his top officials and said that Ukraine should not accept a badly negotiated peace deal under any circumstances. He also said: "the world must avoid any outcome where Putin's unwarranted aggression appears to have paid off."

The farming minister of the UK called to initiate an investigation into the alleged thefts of Ukraine's grains by Russia. Victoria Prentis, the minister, said this while addressing a conference at the International Grains Council in London, and mentioned that these allegations were serious and should be looked into.

Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz during his visit to Vilnius, spoke about Russia's military capabilities. He said that given the sanctions that have been imposed on Russia by the West, it will be difficult for Russia to maintain its military capability at the level at which they are operating now. In a meeting with Lithuania's president Gitanas Nausea, Scholz also promised that

Germany will be ramping up military support to Lithuania, especially due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resultant fallouts.

Germany's former chancellor, Angela Merkel, recently commented that during her tenure, she had tried hard to prevent the situation in Ukraine from escalating. Referring to the 2014 Minsk Agreement, she further said: "It's a great sadness that it didn't work out, but I don't blame myself for not trying." She also mentioned that she had been against the idea of Ukraine joining NATO for this very reason.

### **The Global Fallouts:**

#### **International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 07 June, UNICEF issued another warning about the situation in Somalia. The conflict in Ukraine and the blockades on Ukraine's ports have intensified the global food security crisis. Somalia faces a bleak future with projections of a severe famine. The children's agency said that the country already has 386,000 children with life-threatening malnutrition and only a third of the USD 250 million needed to stave off the famine has been raised so far. Rania Dagash, the deputy regional director of UNICEF said that to solve this crisis, the world needs to look away from the Ukraine crisis and act with immediacy.

The IAEA, UN's nuclear watchdog said that the radiation detectors in the Chornobyl nuclear power plant's exclusion zone were back. As per the data collected by the 39 detectors in the region, the radiation levels in the region are in line with the condition before the conflict.

The World Bank approved an additional USD 1.49 billion in funds for Ukraine. They said that this was to help pay wages for the government employees and the social workers. This additional fund increases World Bank's total pledged support to over USD 4 billion. They also reported that this is being supported by guarantees from Britain, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Latvia, Italy, and the newly formed multi-donor trust fund.

A court in Fiji has ordered the removal of the Russian-owned superyacht that has been docked at Queens Wharf in Lautoka, since 13 April. It had been seized by Fiji, after they granted a US warrant which linked the yacht to Russian oligarch Suleiman Kerimov, who has been sanctioned. The Supreme Court said that the

vessel has been costing the government dearly after it floated into the Fiji waters without any permits.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 103

### The War on the Ground:

On 06 June, the regional governor of Luhansk, Serhiy Gaidai said that the situation in Sievierodonetsk was again tipping in Russia's favour. Amidst intense escalation, Ukraine had managed to launch a counterattack and reclaim some of the territories in the city. Gaidai said, that even though neither parties are willing to withdraw, Ukraine has enough forces to eventually repel the Russian troops.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy commented on the same issue saying that Russia might have a numerical advantage in Sievierodonetsk, but Ukraine too has "every chance" of fighting back. He also mentioned that the situation will become truly problematic for Ukraine if Russia manages to break through in the eastern region of Donbas.

The mayor of Mykolaiv city, Oleksandr Senkevych said that after Kyiv, explosions were heard in the city. He announced this on his official Telegram channel.

The prime minister of Ukraine, Denys Shmyhal informed that the government is working to officially recognize English as a language of business communication. He said that this will hopefully promote business development, help with their chances of EU membership and attract more investments.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 06 June, the *Interfax news agency* reported that the US-backed broadcaster Radio Free Europe, also known as Radio Liberty has been fined RUB 20 million. This is because Radio Liberty refused to delete reports about civilian deaths, which Moscow alleges have fake information. Radio Liberty

also had a website, which after a series of fines has now declared bankruptcy. The hearing of its appeal against bankruptcy is scheduled for 08 June.

President Vladimir Putin signed a decree by which the families of the members of Russia's National Guard who passed away in the Ukraine conflict will be given RUB 5 million as compensation. The National Guard also known as the Rosgvardia answers directly to Putin and was created in 2016 to combat terrorism and organized crime.

The Kremlin expressed discontent about Bulgaria, Montenegro, and North Macedonia closing their airspaces off to Russia, ahead of foreign minister Sergei Lavrov's visit to Serbia. It has been described by Moscow as a "hostile act." The foreign ministry has blamed the West for this action, and Lavrov said that such an incident was "inconceivable" and "scandalous".

Russia's interior ministry has placed investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov on the wanted list under an unspecified article of the criminal code. Soldatov, who is known for covering the Russian security agencies said on Twitter that his bank accounts in Russia had been frozen too.

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

On 06 June, a parliamentarian from Ukraine, Yevhen Yakovenko, was detained at Moldova's border. As per the request of the International Criminal Police Organization, Yakovenko was placed in a detention centre. The Interpol has also said that the lawmaker was put on the list because of an accusation of bribery and corruption by Belarus.

The US ambassador to Moscow, John J. Sullivan said that Russia should not consider closing the US embassy there. He said that given the situation of the world now, the two of the biggest nuclear powers should continue their diplomatic talks. Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov however said that while Russia is interested in bilateral talks with the US, given the current tension, such negotiations were 'unlikely'.

The US secretary of state, Anthony Blinken

spoke about the food-security crisis and said that he has credible information that Russia has been "pilfering" grains from Ukraine's stocks for profit. He possibly referred to an article by the New York Times which had forewarned about Russia doing a similar thing. Blinken said that this alleged theft was part of Russia's scheme to destabilize Ukraine's ability to export its crops.

A spokesperson from UK's prime minister Boris Johnson's office said that Johnson and Zelenskyy have spoken over the phone and provided a readout of the call. The two leaders discussed the rising food security crisis and how to deal with Russia's blockade of Ukraine's grains.

Italy's foreign ministry stated Moscow's accusations against Italian media. They have summoned Russia's ambassador, as a protest against the allegation. The statement rejected the "insinuations" about its involvement in an "anti-Russian campaign."

### **The Global Fallout: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 06 June, Charles Michel, the president of the European Council addressed the UN Security Council and blamed Russia for exacerbating the global food security crisis. He also alluded to Russia's troops committing war crimes, especially perpetrating sexual violence in Ukraine, describing it as a "tactic of torture, terror and repression." In response to these allegations, Russia's UN ambassador staged a protest by walking out of the meeting. He later told Reuters that he could not stay because of the lies that Michel was distributing.

A United Nations Commission cited the conflict in Ukraine to make a projection about poverty in Latin America and Caribbean. The study, published by UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) said that poverty in these regions will rise to 33 per cent, which is a 0.9 per cent increase from 2021. They also issued a warning about the food security crisis, and that a "speedy recovery" looks unlikely.

UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is sending a mission to Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which has been under Russia's control. Ukrainian workers in the plant are working under Russian orders, which IAEA says is a definite health risk.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 102

### The War on the Ground:

On 05 June, after more than a month of relative peace, explosions rocked Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, and hit a rail car facility. Ukraine's army and the railway chief said that the attacks were done through missiles fired from the Caspian Sea.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his nightly address spoke about his visit to Lysychansk, and Soledar cities. These two cities are close to Sievierodonetsk, where the Russian aggression has been concentrated, for the last few days.

On 04 June, Zelenskyy reported that a Russian artillery attack had destroyed part of the Svyatohirsk Lavra monastery complex, which belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. He also shared footage of the same on his official Telegram challenge. However, Russia has denied the reports and its involvement in the same, accusing Ukraine instead.

The governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Gaidai said that Ukraine's forces have been successful in reclaiming 20 percent of the territory that had been lost to Russia in Sievierodonetsk. This is significant because it comes after a heavy counter-attack was launched by Ukraine, following Russia's concentrated attack to capture the city. However, Gaidai also reported that Russia was blowing up bridges across the Seversky Donets river. He observed that this might be an effort to block Ukraine from calling in reinforcements and to prevent a quick retreat to Lysychansk, a city on the other side of the river.

Ukraine's Interior minister, Denys Monastyrskiy said that the intelligence services were communicating with the fighters who surrendered at the Azovstal steelworks. He mentioned that they looking into all avenues to ensure the speedy release, even though Russia wants to try them as war criminals.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 05 June, in an interview broadcast, President Vladimir Putin issued a warning to the US about its plans to send Ukraine longer-range missiles. President Biden recently announced that the US will be sending M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, after receiving assurances that these weapons will not be used against Russia. But Putin said that the US can expect a strong response from Russia if they plan to go through with its promise.

The website for the ministry of construction, housing, and utilities in Russia seemed to be hacked and was reportedly being redirected to a "Glory to Ukraine" sign in Ukrainian. The state news agency, RIA said that, despite the breach, the users' data has been protected.

Major General Roman Kutuzov, a high-ranked official in Russia's army was killed in eastern Ukraine. This was reported by a state media journalist but nothing was mentioned about precisely how, where or when the general was killed.

On 04 June, in a brief interview, Putin spoke about Russia's anti-aircraft forces. He said that they have been successful in shooting down 'dozens' of Ukrainian weapons, and are "cracking them like nuts." But, no clarification was received with regards to what kinds of weapons he might be alluding to.

On 04 June, Russia's defence ministry reported that they have shot down a Ukrainian military transport plane that was carrying weapons and munitions. This incident took place near the Black Sea port of Odesa. Another outpost in the Odesa region, with foreign mercenaries, was also destroyed by a strike. They also updated that

an artillery center in the Sumy region has been struck.

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

On 05 June, in a statement, Austria's chancellor, Karl Nehammer said that the EU should make provisions for membership for Ukraine and Moldova. He suggested a preparatory space be made which will be an intermediate stage between cooperation and full membership. He said that amidst this war, a full quick accession is not possible, but provisions must be made so that a "strong, independent and economically successful" Ukraine can survive.

Despite Putin's warning to the US of a strong response, UK has declared that it will be sending long-range rocket artillery to Ukraine. They will supply handful of tracked M270 multiple launch rocket systems, which can hit targets 50 miles away. Spain is also looking to ramp up its support for Ukraine. According to El Pais, they have pledged anti-aircraft missiles and Leopard battle tanks. They will also be providing training to Ukraine's military on how to use these tanks.

On 04 June, France's president Emmanuel Macron said that he is confident that they can play a significant role in mediating peace talks between Russia and Ukraine once the active fighting stops. In an interview with the regional newspapers, he said: "We must not humiliate Russia so that the day when the fighting stops we can build an exit ramp through diplomatic means." Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba however responded to the same comment and said that anyone saying that they should not humiliate Russia was only humiliating themselves. He said: "Calls to avoid humiliation of Russia can only humiliate France and every other country that would call for it... Because it is Russia that humiliates itself. We all better focus on how to put Russia in its place. This will bring peace and save lives."

After a meeting with the MED5 group in Venice, the Interior minister of Cyprus said that the Mediterranean countries which fall on major migrant routes will be expecting more than 150,000 arrivals from Africa and

the Middle East, this year. According to the UNHCR, last year there were 123,381 migrant arrivals, but this year, the countries are expecting a rise in the numbers. This is primarily because of the food shortages caused by the conflict in Ukraine.

### **The Global Fallouts: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 04 June, Pope Francis said that he is preparing to meet officials from Ukraine, to discuss the logistics of a possible visit to the country. Ukraine's ambassador to the Vatican, Andriy Yurash, however, mentioned that he is yet to receive any communication about the same.

On 03 June, Senegal's president Macky Sall spoke about his conversation with president Putin. He mentioned that Putin seemed to be willing to ease the process of exporting Ukraine's grains to the world. Sall, who currently serves as the chairman of the African Union has been talking to Putin about grain export, amidst a rising food security crisis in Africa. He, however, did not mention if Putin attached any conditions to allow the vessels to leave Ukraine.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 99**

#### **The War on the Ground:**

On 02 June, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his address in Luxembourg's Parliament reported that 20 per cent of Ukraine's territory had come under Russia's control. It marked up to 1000 kilometers covering Severodonetsk, Luhansk, Mariupol, and Zaporizhzhia. Apart from this, he claimed that Russia has faced military losses of more than 30,000, whereas Russia has confirmed only 1300 deaths.

Advisor to president, Mykhailo Podolyak confirmed the receiving of long-range HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) rockets and 108 units of M777 Howitzers from the US. He said that Ukraine will not be using it against Russia.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said that it will be

collaborating with other European countries. It is to bring the Russian naval bloc to an end and to reopen the ports for export grain. Since the Blockade caused by the Russian ships, international markets have suffered a shortage in wheat and basic food items. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that with the increased Russian aggression, the food crisis has shot up which has led Ukraine to force lift the naval bloc.

On 02 June, Ukraine announced the increase in the interest rate for the first time in its monetary policy since the war began. The rate has shot from 10 per cent to 25 per cent and upon the rise governor of the Central Bank called for IMF aid.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 02 June, the Ministry of Defense claimed to have struck Ukraine's ground aircraft Sukhoi SU-25 in Mykolaiv region. Russia said that it used a "precision air-based missile" to launch the attack. It also reported on the killing of 240 Ukraine soldiers.

On EU passing the sixth set of sanctions, Russia has warned the EU stating the stop in oil imports would be "self destructive" move. According to Russia's Foreign Ministry: "highly likely to provoke further price increases, destabilize energy markets, and disrupt supply chains." The European Council chief Charles Michel countered by stating the cut in oil imports and finances will push Russia to settle for a diplomatic solution.

Russia's Defence Ministry spokesperson Igor Konashenkov stated that the number of foreign mercenaries has reduced from 6,600 to 3,500. He reported that they were destroyed by Russia's precision long-range weapons in the combat zone.

**The West View:  
Responses from the US and Europe**  
On 02 June, European and transatlantic countries from Slovakia, Turkey, and Sweden vowed to supply a wide range of weapons, anti-tank missiles, Artillery rockets systems, and Baykar TB2 drones. The US weapons supply is estimated to be USD 700 million including anti-tank missiles, armor

weapons, helicopters,

The UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update stated that Russia had brought Severodonetsk under control. Although the fight continues between Ukraine and Russia, 80 per cent of Severodonetsk and its twin city Lysychansk is observed to be taken over by Russians. The UK has also agreed to provide M270 long-range rocket systems, apart from this it will also train the Ukraine soldiers, and troops in the UK.

### **The Global Fallout: International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 02 June Sri Lanka reported on seizing of Russian plane Aeroflot Airbus A330 that had come from Moscow. It was stopped upon the order from Colombo's Commercial Court. It is still unclear if the seizing was due to sanctions.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 98**

#### **The War on the Ground:**

On 01 June, the governor of the Luhansk region, Serhiy Gaidai said that Russia's forces have occupied about 70 per cent of Sievierodonetsk, which is a strategically important city. He also mentioned that the renewed offensive has resulted in some of the forces retreating to "more advantageous, pre-prepared positions."

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy congratulated Ukraine's national soccer team, for winning

world cup qualifying match against Scotland. He said that this win will bring joy to the country's military, who are fighting every day against Russian aggression. The team next faces Wales on Sunday for a spot in the final draw.

### **The Moscow View:**

#### **Claims by Russia**

On 01 June, Dmitry Peskov, a spokesperson from Kremlin, said that the US was provoking Russia by supplying long-range rockets to Ukraine. This is in response to the US's recent announcement about supplying long-range missiles as a part of the USD 700 million weapons package. Peskov also spoke about holding a meeting between President Putin and president Volodymyr Zelenskiyy, but said that such talks need time to be facilitated and organized. He also mentioned that he did not doubt the decision-making capacity of the people in the Russia-occupied regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Donbas regarding its futures.

On 31 May, Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov met Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, and they discussed the internal cooperation in the OPEC. This is in the context of some members of the OPEC considering the removal of Russia from the group. While Russia's foreign ministry released a statement about how the two countries discussed the "stabilizing effect" of the relations between the two countries, no comments were made by Saudi Arabia. Lavrov also spoke about Moscow facing difficulties in exporting grains because there are sanctions that have been levied on their ships.

Alexander Moiseyev, the commander of Russia's Northern Fleet said that they have completed testing the hypersonic Zircon cruise missile. A new frigate on the fleet will be armed full-time with the missiles by the end of this year.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

US president Joe Biden announced a new USD 700 million military package for Ukraine. This new package will include high mobility artillery rocket systems. Referring to the same, the secretary of state, Anthony Blinken said that they have received assurances from Ukraine that these long-range missiles will not be used against Russia.

Germany's foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock addressed the situation in Eastern Ukraine in a speech at the Parliament. She spoke about how Russia has been flattening settlements from a safe distance in the Donbas region, first with missiles, then artillery, and finally with the help of tanks. The former Chancellor, Angela Merkel also opened up about the war, after her silence for so long drawn criticism. The Chancellor, Olaf Scholz meanwhile announced that Germany will be supplying IRIS-T air defence systems to Ukraine. However, he has not yet specified the exact model.

On 01 June, Denmark conducted their vote on the European Union's defence policy. The results of the vote show that they will consolidate their defence ties with the bloc, as 67 per cent of voters are in favour of removing the opt-out. Denmark is the only country in the 27-member bloc that was not there in the common security and defence policy. But given the current situation with regards to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Denmark's vote to scrap the 30-year opt-out holds major significance.

Historically neutral Switzerland rejected Denmark's proposal to send armoured personnel carriers to Ukraine. Switzerland has been able to do this because these carriers are Swiss-made, and there is a mandate which requires foreign countries to seek permission to re-export them.

### **The Global Fallout:**

#### **International implications of the Ukraine war**

On 01 June, Pope Francis addressed a general audience at St. Peter's Square and urged the authorities involved to lift its blockade on the export of wheat stored in Ukraine. In light of the looming food security crisis, he said that grains cannot be used as a "weapon of war".

On 01 May, Brazil's famous soccer star of yesteryear, Pele made a plea to president Putin to end his "wicked" and "unjustifiable" in Ukraine. In a statement that was published on Instagram, ahead of Ukraine's qualifying game for the World Cup.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 97

### The War on the Ground:

Ukraine reported that Russia has now taken control over half of Sievierodonetsk, in the Luhansk province. They also said that Russia has decreased its manpower and firepower

in other parts of the eastern front to consolidate all the efforts on Sievierodonetsk. Governor Serhiy Gaidai said that the city has almost been flattened, nearly all critical infrastructure destroyed, and about 60 per cent of the residential houses damaged beyond repair. Amidst Russia's troops' slow advance towards the centre of the city, Gaidai maintains Ukraine troops do not face the risk of being surrounded by Russia as they could easily start its retreat to Lysychansk, across the river. He also spoke about how a nitric acid tank in the frontline of Sievierodonetsk has been hit by Russian airstrikes. He urged residents to not leave the bomb shelters as they might get affected by the fumes from the acid tank. He also posted a photo on the Telegram app where a large pink cloud could be seen on top of apartment buildings, but no casualties have been reported so far.

On 31 May, a Ukrainian court gave the verdict about two more Russian soldiers accused of war crimes. They were sentenced to 11 and a half years in jail for shelling a town in eastern Ukraine. Alexander Bobikin and Alexander Ivanov had pleaded guilty, and after the verdict said that their sentences were fair. Prosecutor-general Iryna Venedictova said that Ukraine has identified over 600 Russian soldiers suspected of committing war crimes, and has started prosecuting around 80 of them.

Ukraine's state service for special communication released a statement that said that the southern region of Kherson, is occupied by Russia.

The foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter that Ukraine was collaborating with an UN-led international operation to create a safe route for food exports. However, no further clarifications were offered by the minister.

On 31 May, president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukraine's forces were able to gain some ground near Kherson, and were advancing towards the Kharkiv region. He also spoke about the EU's agreement on embargos on Russian oil and said that once this sixth set of sanctions was in place, they should start preparing for the seventh set.

While he welcomed this sixth round of sanctions, he also expressed his discontent about the “unacceptable” delay on the part of the EU. In his nightly address, he said: “In the end there should be no meaningful economic relations left between the free world and the terrorist state.”

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 31 May, Denis Pushilin, the separatist leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic, reported that the cargo ship that was supposed to leave from the Mariupol port has set sail. On the Telegram app, he mentioned that the ship with 2,500 tons of hot-rolled metal sheets is headed to Rostov in Russia.

Russia’s defence ministry reported that its forces downed a Ukrainian Su-25 fighter jet. This took place in the Mykolaiv region. They also bombed two ammunition depots and a radar station in eastern Ukraine.

As the EU prepares to continue with its proposed sixth set of embargos, Russia has cut off gas supplies to some companies in Denmark and Germany. Gazprom extended its gas cuts to GasTerra, a company that buys gas on behalf of the government in Denmark. It said that it will stop the flow to another Danish energy firm Ørsted and to Shell Energy in Germany, for failing to pay in Roubles.

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

The European Union leaders had a summit meeting on 30 and 31 May and agreed about their proposed embargos on Russia. They said that the sanctions on Russian crude oil will take full effect by the end of 2022. This plan will aim to stop 90% of Russia’s oil imports to the European Union bloc. However, Hungary, the main opposition to the oil embargoes, and two other landlocked countries in Central Europe, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia will be given exemptions for pipeline imports for some time till they figure out an alternative.

France’s president, Emmanuel Macron, also spoke about the latest sanction. He said that additional sanctions from the EU cannot be

ruled out yet, and it will depend on Russia’s actions in the coming days. Macron also expressed hope that, amidst the ongoing food crisis, Russia will facilitate the export of food from Ukraine.

Canada announced imposing a new set of sanctions on Russia. According to the official statement, this will include 22 individuals. Moreover, it will affect senior officials of Russian financial institutions and their families, and major key financial institutions and banks too.

On 31 May, US president Joe Biden said that they are doing their best to send Ukraine a “significant amount of weaponry and ammunition” which includes advanced rocket systems, as soon as possible. This announcement comes a day after he said in the press briefing that the US will not be giving long-range missile systems that can target Russia. A senior official of the Biden administration said that they will look into upgrading Kyiv’s battleground capabilities. He also said that the weapons supplied to Ukraine will help strengthen Ukraine’s bargaining power and repel Russian advances in their territory. However, they will not be used on any target in Russian territory.

Germany’s chancellor, Olaf Scholz spoke to reporters and said that Germany will be supplying more weapons and infantry vehicles to Ukraine. But, these will be delivered to Greece, who in turn will pass it on to Ukraine.

### **The Global Fallout: International implications of the Ukraine war**

A UN spokesperson, Stephane Dujarric said that they had had constructive discussions with the first deputy prime minister of Russia, Andrey Belousov. The meeting was to discuss Ukraine’s stored grains and fertilizers and the process through which it can reach the global markets amidst a rising food security crisis.

The UN and other humanitarian agencies also released a statement explaining the status of the brewing food security crisis. The worst drought has hit the Horn of Africa in over 40 years. Without the urgent import

of Ukraine's stored grains, they warned that millions of people in this region will face severe hunger. As per the statement, currently, 16.7 million people are victims of acute food insecurity in East Africa, but with the ongoing crisis, that number is projected to be at 20 million by September.

On 31 May, Pope Francis convened an international prayer for peace in Ukraine. Sitting in his wheelchair, he conducted the service before the statue of Mary Queen of Peace, at the Rome Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. This event was attended by around 1000 people including Ukraine's ambassador to the Vatican.

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## EM Short Notes\*

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Source: BBC/EPA, Alberto Pezzali/Pool/Reuters, Graphic news, The Guardian, AP Photo/Valentina Petrova, Reuters/Dado Ruvic/illustration

### 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)

### BELGIUM

#### Brussels to formally return remains of assassinated Congo leader in 1961

On 20 June, the Belgium government will officially return the first prime minister of Congo, Patrice Lumumba's remains to his family at a ceremony in Brussels. Daughter of Lumumba, Juliana Lumumba stated that while the tooth is merely a human part, it also represents a terrible moment in the history of Congo, its former colony; a period that Belgium is still struggling to unravel and understand its dark colonial past. Patrice Lumumba's democratic and communist values threatened the Belgian government's interest in Congo during the Cold War. Lumumba was assassinated in January 1961 as a result of this concern. ("Priyanka Shankar, [Patrice Lumumba: Belgium to return remains of assassinated Congo leader](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 19 June 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.

### **Belgium's King visit the Democratic Republic of Congo to revamp relations**

On 08 June, Belgian King Phillippe scheduled a six-day visit to Congo in an attempt to take the relations forward after a brutal memory from history. Congo which was formerly under the colonial rule of Belgium between 1885 and 1908, under the rule million people were killed, forced to collect rubber, they died from disease and colonization. It was part of Belgium's empire until its independence on 30 June 1960. During Phillippe's first visit to Congo in 2013, he returned the traditional mask to the ethnic Suku people as a gesture to heal the past. ("Belgian king meets veteran, returns Suku mask to DR Congo," *Deutsche Welle*, 08 June 2022)

### **BOSNIA**

#### **International envoy Christian Schmidt allocates funds for the October elections**

On 07 June, Bosnia and Herzegovina's high representative stated that he had allocated USD 6.8 million for 02 October elections. Issues arose when the government set a date for the elections but did not allocate the funds needed to carry it out. He added: "It is obvious to me that the planned allocation is neither sufficient nor implementable." Serbian and Croatian politicians obstructed the decision on financing the elections as they were not extended exclusive rights through the election law. ("Bosnia's international envoy imposes decision on financing general election," *Reuters*, 08 June 2022; "Bosnian Envoy Imposes Funding Decision For Elections," *Radio Free Europe*, 07 June 2022)

### **BULGARIA**

#### **Prime minister Kiril Petkov formally resigns after losing a no-confidence vote**

On 27 June, Bulgaria's prime minister Kiril Petkov formally resigned after his coalition government lost the vote of no confidence. The four-party coalition government collapsed after one split from the group due to differences in ideologies. Petkov was charged with firming a new cabinet by the president of Bulgaria. He was accused of mismanaging the state's budget. He has a period of one week to form a new majority

government or else a new election will be conducted in Bulgaria, which would be the fourth in eighteen months. ("Bulgarian Prime Minister Petkov resigns after losing confidence vote," *euronews*, 27 June 2022)

#### **Bulgaria lifts veto on Northern Macedonia**

On 24 June, Bulgarian legislators voted in favour of lifting the EU ban on Northern Macedonia's membership. The Bulgarian government had vetoed Northern Macedonia's from joining the EU in 2020 due to historic dispute. This decision came right after prime minister Kiril Petkov's government was overturned by the vote of no-confidence. The Bulgarian lawmakers said that they would stand by their neighbours in joining the EU by acting in the interest of the Western Balkans. The decision was approved by a majority of 170 votes. Sofia pressed Skopje to recognize that their language has Bulgarian roots. They had to acknowledge Bulgarian minorities residing in Northern Macedonia. ("Bulgaria: Lawmakers agree to lift block on North Macedonia EU talks," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 June 2022)

#### **Kiril Petkov's administration falls after losing a no-confidence vote**

On 22 June, Kiril Petkov's government lost the no-confidence vote in the parliament, making the country politically unstable amid surging inflation and the war in Ukraine. The opposition party overthrew the Petkov administration, which came into power only six months ago. If Petkov is unable to put together a majority for a new cabinet and if two other parties in parliament are unable to form a government, President Rumen Radev is obligated to call early elections within two months and install a caretaker administration. Its aspirations to join the euro in 2024 and millions of euros in EU recovery assistance are now in jeopardy as the country prepares for what might be its fourth general election since April 2021. ("Bulgaria's pro-western government collapses after just six months," *the Guardian*, 22 June 2022)

**CROATIA****Croatia switches to the single currency and joins the eurozone**

On 01 June, European Commission said that Croatia had qualified to take up the euro as its common currency from 2023. Through this, Croatia will become the 20<sup>th</sup> country to bring the euro into daily practice as a single currency. According to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen: "Today, Croatia has made a significant step towards adopting the euro, our common currency... will make Croatia's economy stronger, bringing benefits to its citizens, businesses and society at large." The switching from the previous currency of Croatia, the kuna was not a task as it involves Croatia meeting the legal and economic standards along with a "stable inflation" on par with the set benchmarks. Apart from Croatia, Bulgaria is also on the list to switch to euro and join the eurozone by 2024. ("EU says Croatia ready to join eurozone in 2023," *Deutsche Welle*, 01 June 2022)

**CZECH REPUBLIC****Prague's finance minister sets its 2023 budget deficit target below this year's plan**

On 10 June, the Czech Republic's finance minister Zbynek Stanjura stated that he would reduce the 2023 deficit to keep fiscal plans on track. This comes as the war in Ukraine has affected the economic growth of the Czech Republic. The country has increased its defence spending and allocated more funds for refugees. Stanjura said the country's budget would be below the 2022 plan of USD 12.04 billion. He added: "So far, there hasn't been a reason to change the priorities in the government's programme, except trying to speed up raising defence spending to 2% (of GDP)." (Jan Lopatka and Jason Hovet, "EXCLUSIVE Czech minister plans lower 2023 deficit to keep fiscal plans on track," *Reuters*, 10 June 2022)

**DENMARK****Denmark reverses the 30 years opt-out of EU's security policy**

On 02 June, Denmark voted in favour of a historic referendum to remove the 30-year

opt-out from the EU security policy. In the total population, the citizen approval rate came up to 65.8 per cent which is considered the highest but also seen as the second-lowest attendance. Denmark has always chosen to stay away from further integration with the EU since the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and due to the EU's increased security activities post Crimean annexation in 2014. The shift has come mainly due to the Ukraine war and the Nordic neighbour's military reassessment. Through this vote, Denmark henceforth will become part of the finance and military operations of the EU and will also join the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy which might lead to a new opening of security-related agencies. (Adrienne Murray, "Denmark votes to drop EU defence opt-out in 'historic' referendum," *BBC*, 02 June 2022)

**ESTONIA****Baltic leaders virtually meet the NATO chief to boost security on the eastern front**

On 08 June, Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte, Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins, and Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas announced that they will hold virtual talks with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. The key discussion will focus on boosting the regional security and methods to up the NATO "defence and deterrence" mainly at the eastern front. The Baltic leaders pushed for a switch from NATO battalions to brigades in the upcoming NATO summit in Madrid. ("Baltic PMs to discuss regional security with NATO chief Stoltenberg," *The Baltic Times*, 08 June 2022)

**Estonia's Prime Minister to hold talks to maintain a majority in parliament**

On 03 June, Estonia's prime minister Kaja Kallas removed the former coalition parties from the government. Kallas removed the centre-left Center Party as it supported the far-right opposition EKRE party for blocking the reform on primary education. She said: "Estonia needs a functioning government based on common values now more than ever. The security situation in Europe does not give me, as prime minister,

the possibility of continuing cooperation with the Centre Party.” Therefore with half of the Cabinet members removed, Kallas now plans to hold talks for power-sharing with center-right Christian Democrat Isamaa party and the SDE Social Democrats to ensure a majority in the parliament. It is a risky scenario as the government must be in place before she meets with UK prime minister Boris Johnson. (“[Estonia: Governing coalition collapses](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 03 June 2022)

## FRANCE

### **Macron rejects prime minister Borne’s resignation**

On 21 June, president Emmanuel Macron of France rejected prime minister Elisabeth Borne’s resignation offer. Borne, who was appointed by Macron, was said to stay on task and act with the existing cabinet that they had. Macron’s ensemble coalition had fallen short of a majority by 44 seats in the national assembly election that was held last week. While the left coalition called NUPES has scored around 131 seats making it the second-largest party in the assembly. Macron is at an impasse as both the left and the right refuse to join hands with Macron. This can threaten the agendas that he had planned for his second five years term in the office. He is ready to have talks with other parties to make a deal but is being refused especially by Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the left coalition and the right-wing republican, Christian Jacob. Marine Le Pen may work with him if her proposal for the cost of living crisis is adopted. (“[France elections: Macron rejects prime minister's offer to resign](#),” *BBC News*, 20 June 2022)

### **NUPES to form the largest opposition party; National Assembly surpasses expectations in the parliamentary elections**

On 19 June, the new left-wing coalition New Popular Union (NUPES) is on track to become the country’s largest opposition party in parliament as it is expected to win 141 seats. The bloc is led by far-left veteran Jean-Luc Melenchon and consists of La France Insoumise (LFI), the Socialist Party, the Greens and the French Communist Party. The Rassemblement National party

led by Marine Le Pen is expected to win 90 seats in the parliamentary elections as projected by the pollster Ipsos surpassing previous projections. However, Emmanuel Macron’s Ensemble failed to win an absolute majority, leaving him with no choice but to strike a compromise with the conservative Les Républicains (LR) to remain unrestricted in decision-making. (“[French left's coalition gamble pays off in legislative elections but unity challenges loom](#),” *France24*, 20 June 2022; “[A seismic event': Le Pen's party makes historic breakthrough in French parliament](#)”, *France24*, 20 June 2022)

### **Paris awaits its second round of legislative elections**

On 12 June, according to *France24*, the first round of the legislative elections in France took place, with almost 52.49 registered voters taking an abstention. The abstention rate of the first round had crossed the previous record, which happened in 2017. Jean-Luc Mélenchon is leading the left coalition, as NUPES is giving president Emmanuel Macron’s center-right party a hard time getting a surefire majority in the lower house, which is unusual. Far-right Marine Le Pen’s National Rally party is likely to win a few seats in the assembly elections, unprecedented since 1986 when her predecessor won 35 seats. According to a recent survey, the NUPE would likely win around 150 to 190 seats. The number of seats required to win a majority in the house is 289, and according to pollster Ipsos-Sopra Steria, it would be difficult for the Macron-led party to have an absolute majority. (“[French legislative elections: The second round, by the numbers](#),” *France 24*, 17 June 2022)

### **Outdoor events and festivals prohibited in certain cities**

On 17 June, in the city of Gironde, outdoor public events were restricted as historic heat waves hit the Mediterranean region. Indoor events without air-cooling systems were also banned. State forecaster Meteo France mentioned that the early hot spell was caused by a wave of warm air flowing from North Africa. The increasing temperature is to hit 39 degrees Celcius in

Paris, and the droughts have raised concerns about wildfires. ("[Europe heatwave: Outdoor events banned in parts of France](#)," *BBC*, 17 June 2022)

### **McDonald's operations in Paris to pay a big settlement to end tax probe**

On 16 June, the national financial prosecutor's office announced that the US-based fast-food chain McDonald's in France has to pay a settlement of EUR 1.25 billion to avoid a tax evasion probe. McDonald's food chain operations in France have been accused of intentionally lowering profits by sending license fees to its Luxembourg-based parent company to lower its tax burden. In 2016, prosecutors launched an official preliminary investigation after union leaders accused the corporation of concealing tax fraud. The corporation was accused of scamming the state of EUR 75 million every year. McDonald's stated that the present agreement ends the case and tax probe without accepting the fault. ("[France: McDonald's to pay out over a billion to settle tax fraud case](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 16 June 2022)

### **Three reasons why Macron risks losing the majority in parliamentary elections**

On 13 June, *POLITICO* stated three reasons why the incumbent president Emmanuel Macron should worry about the risk of losing his majority in the National Assembly. First, losing the voters to the right. According to statistics from polling agency Harris Interactive, around nine percent of voters who supported Macron in the first round of the presidential election chose candidates from France's conservative party, Les Républicains. Second, the voters prioritize everyday concerns over foreign policy. Macron and his cabinet have stated that measures against inflation will be a key priority, but his travel to Romania and Moldova just days before the final vote contradicts this. Third, unable to grasp young voters. Young voters prefer 70 years old Mélenchon, who positioned himself five years ago as a young disruptor in a political landscape dominated by traditional parties. (Cornelius Hisch and Giorgio Leali, "[Why Macron should fear](#)

[parliamentary vote, in 3 charts](#)," *POLITICO*, 13 June 2022)

### **Melenchon poses tough competition to Macron in the parliamentary elections**

On 12 June, president Emmanuel Macron faces a tough struggle to win an absolute majority in the parliamentary elections after a close call with Jean-Luc Mélenchon's left-green alliance- New Ecologic and Social Peoples Union (NUPES). The projections placed the NUPES bloc of Melenchon and Macron's Ensemble! Coalition neck-and-neck in the first round, with 25.61 percent and 25.8 percent, respectively. The voter turnout for the election was a historic low of 47.5 percent. (Paul Kirby, "[French election: Left surge threatens Macron majority in France](#)," *BBC*, 13 June 2022)

### **Tough competition between Macron and Melenchon in France's overseas territories**

On 06 June, according to a report by *Reuters*, France's incumbent president Emmanuel Macron has been pushing to attract the votes of French voters overseas. 11 of the 577 seats in the parliament are reserved to represent the overseas voters. Even though it is a small number of seats, Macron and the left party led by Jean-Luc Melenchon will face intense competition to attract voters. This comes as France holds its legislative elections in two rounds on 12 June and 19 June, but voting overseas will take place on 18 and 19 June. An IFOP poll also mentioned how Melenchon's NUPES coalition would also give strong competition to Macron's Ensemble. (Layli Foroudi, "[French overseas legislative vote points to duel between Macron and left](#)," *Reuters*, 06 June 2022)

### **France's diplomatic corps strike to withdraw Macron's reform**

On 02 June, the diplomatic corps of France's foreign ministry joined a strike under the hashtag #diplo2metier. The protest has been staged demanding to withdraw the proposed reform to expand and modernize the diplomatic staff of France. In April, Macron announced the reform which will combine the diplomatic corps considered the elites with the civil servant staff pool,

which will enable the staff to compete for diplomatic posts. The strikers argue that the reform will alter the careers, leading to loss of expertise, and will require training and specialization. ("French diplomats go on strike in rare protest," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 June 2022)

### **IFOP polls forecast Macron's shortcomings in the upcoming elections**

On 01 June, according to an international polling and market research firm IFOP, president Emmanuel Macron might not secure an absolute majority in the national assembly elections. The polls inferred that Macron's centrist camp would be able to secure 275 to 310 seats out of the 577 seats. However, it would need additional support to get the 289 benchmarks for an absolute majority. The poll also mentioned Macron's concerns about a possible minority government which would be a hindrance to passing legislation by his government. The first round of voting is due on 12 June, with the runoffs scheduled for 19 June. ("France's Macron could lose lower house majority, polls show," *Reuters*, 01 June 2022)

## **GERMANY**

### **Germany faced a slight decrease in inflation in June**

On 29 June, the Federal statistical office, or Destatis, stated that there was a minor reduction in the inflation rate of goods and services in June when compared to May in Germany. The average price of goods and services in June was 7.6 per cent higher than last year when compared to 7.9 per cent in May. It was earlier predicted to be eight per cent for June. The inflation rates vary for each product and service such as inflation for energy prices decreased from 38.3 per cent in May to 38 per cent in June. Inflation for services was 2.1 per cent in June when compared with 2.9 per cent in May. However, goods like groceries had its inflation rate go up from 11.1 per cent in May to 12.7 per cent in June. Dekabank chief economist Ulrich Kater says that the inflation will go on till January next year and will ease up if no further crisis pops up. The inflation started at the time of the coronavirus pandemic but escalated when

Russia attacked Ukraine affecting the energy prices. ("Germany: Inflation sinks slightly to 7.6%," *Deutsche Welle*, 29 June 2022)

### **Parliament revokes a law that punishes doctors who advertise abortion services**

On 24 June, the coalition government voted to scrap the Nazi-era law in paragraph 219a of the German criminal code that criminalizes doctors who advertise their abortion services. According to paragraph 219a of the German Criminal Code, a doctor might be fined or imprisoned for up to two years for publicly "offering, announcing, or advertising" abortion services. Abortion remains to be legally banned in Germany. However, if the pregnancy poses a health risk, as in the case of rape, or if the abortion is performed during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy following mandated counselling, women and doctors do not face the punishments. Minister of family affairs, Lisa Paus stated that the result was a triumph that strengthens women's right to self-determination in Germany. (Phillip Olterman, "Germany scraps Nazi-era law that barred doctors' abortion ads," *the Guardian*, 24 June 2022)

### **Berlin commemorates the East Germany uprising of 1953**

On 17 June, several government officials assembled in Berlin and laid wreaths to mark the 69th anniversary of the tragic revolt in former communist East Germany. The solemn memorials paid tribute to those who died 69 years ago when East Germans came to the streets to protest falling living standards and demand Germany's reunification. The Soviet troops and East German police suppressed the uprising violently. Mayor of Berlin Franziska Giffey compared the similarities between the Ukrainian's fight against Russian aggression and the protests for democracy of the East Germans. Giffey stated: "The lesson to be learned for our future from this is that freedom must be fought for again and again." ("East Germany's 1953 uprising: Values 'still at stake' in war in Ukraine," *Deutsche Welle*, 17 June 2022)

### **Olaf Scholz promises a special fund to boost security in eastern Europe**

On 07 June, German chancellor Olaf Scholz made his first visit to Lithuania for a discussion with the Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania leaders. The discussion focused on boosting the security of the eastern front, where Scholz pledged to allocate EUR 100 billion as a special fund to strengthen the armed forces. He assured to make Germany's forces the best at the Europe and NATO levels. After the meeting, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda commented that with increasing levels of security and violation of international norms by Russia, there should be no space for dialogue or cooperation, or concession with Russia. He called it a terrorist state. ("Germany's Scholz vows to strengthen NATO's eastern flank." *Deutsche Welle*, 07 June 2022)

### **Berlin accelerates its shift from Russian fossil fuels to wind energy**

On 08 June, Germany's economy and climate ministry stated that it would be presenting a package to expedite the expansion of wind energy. The law additionally gives the country a framework for the national standard for species protection assessment for the species that would be affected by the wind farms. According to the draft law, the wind farms would also have to contribute to financing species protection. This comes as Germany aims to fulfill its 2030 goals of fulfilling 80 per cent of its electricity needs from renewable sources. ("Germany to introduce bill to accelerate wind energy expansion - document." *Reuters*, 08 June 2022)

### **The government creates a EUR nine-month ticket to tackle rising transport costs**

On 01 June, the government decided to give EUR nine a-month tickets in response to the rising energy prices. Additionally, the government plans to reduce fuel prices by 30 cents for petrol and 14 cents a litre for diesel. Germans would be allowed to travel the country with just EUR nine and would deter people from using their cars. This comes as inflation in Germany hit 7.9 per cent in May. The government has also taken measures such as a one-off EUR 300-rebate

for energy costs, EUR 100 for child benefits bonus per child, and people on welfare will receive EUR 100. ("Germans get €9-a-month travel in response to energy price rises." *BBC*, 01 June 2022)

## **ITALY**

### **Italy faces impending doom due to a crisis**

On 27 June, Mario Draghi's smooth administration of Italy is about to conclude due to various troubles looming over Italy. The achievements of the prime minister in making sure of negative interest rates, the growth of Italy after the pandemic, and a chance to spend almost EUR200 billion in EU recovery funds are about to come to an end due to problems facing Italy. War, inflation, and imminent elections are threatening the economy of Italy. The rising energy prices are the main reason for inflation in the country. The predicted GDP growth of 4.1 per cent is cut short to 2.4 per cent due to the war and the implications it brought to Italy. Italy still depends on Russia for its gas needs and would suffer tremendously if Moscow decides to cut off the supply completely. Italy is trying to look for alternatives such as pursuing gas deals with countries like Qatar, Angola, and Algeria and maximizing the usage of coal plants in case Russia decides to cut off the gas supply. There is an impending fear of possible inflation in Italy due to the increase in interest rates and hike in energy prices. The elections ahead also might put Italy at risk. If a proper and smart government is not elected, then Italy would go into recession. (Paola Tamma, "Italy's economy enters choppy waters." *POLITICO*, 27 June 2022)

### **Di Maio leaves the five-star movement due to a difference of opinion with its president**

On 21 June, Italy's foreign minister, Luigi Di Maio withdrew from the 5-star movement following disagreements with the party's leader Giuseppe Conte. Di Maio said that Conte had been undermining Italy's decision to help Ukraine with weapons and supplies. He also said that he would create a new parliamentary group supporting the government of the Italian prime minister

Mario Draghi. This incident could bring forth instability in Draghi's multiparty coalition. As a result of the split in the party, it could trigger a collapse of Draghi's government. Conte is considering pulling the movement out of the government. Political sources say that Di Maio's new parliamentary group would likely be named 'Together for the Future'. (["Italy: foreign minister leaves 5-Star to form new group backing PM," \*The Guardian\*, 21 June 2022](#))

### **First medically assisted suicide approved**

On 16 June, after a long legal battle, a 44-year-old paralyzed man was put to death by medical assistance. Luca Coscioni Association, a pro-euthanasia advocacy group assisted the man identified as Federico Carboni in presenting his case to courts and health officials. The Supreme Court of Italy paved the way for assisted suicide in particular cases in 2019. The Roman Catholic Church and conservative political parties have been vocal in their opposition to the issue. To be eligible for assisted suicide, the court defined a set of criteria that must be satisfied. For example, it must be apparent that a patient cannot be healed, is reliant on life-sustaining measures, and is suffering from "intolerable" physical and emotional anguish. A patient must also be capable of making their own decisions and comprehending the repercussions of such actions. Carboni got approval from an ethics committee in November 2021. He was the country's first to receive legal approval for euthanasia. (["Italy: Man undergoes first legally approved assisted suicide," \*Deutsche Welle\*, 16 June 2022](#))

### **Trends observed in the Italian parliamentary elections**

On 14 June, *POLITICO* examined the trends of Italy's parliamentary elections held on 12 June. First, the major opposition party- The Brothers of Italy have risen dramatically and overtaken its far-right rival, the League. The Brothers of Italy are leading the league in Padua, Parma, Verona, and Palermo. Second, the right-wing parties who formed coalitions, their candidates won seats in Genova and L'Aquila. However, In cities

where the right did not form coalitions such as Verona and Catanzaro, the elections will run a second round. Third, the incumbent ruling party, the Democrats, have received many votes in major cities such as Verona, Genoa, and Palermo. It is observed that the voters preferred the present government amid the rising energy prices and numerous crises in Europe. Fourth, the Five Star Movement Party has further declined in performance since 2017. The party has been attempting to form a coalition with the Democrats. Fifth, the right-wing parties, particularly the League, took a hit for promoting a referendum on justice reforms. The turnout for the referendum saw just one in five voters. (Hannah Roberts, "[5 things we learned from Italy's local elections](#)," *POLITICO*, 14 June 2022)

### **Right-wing parties trying to be the future of the Italian parliament**

On 12 June, Italy held its local elections which saw right-wing mayoral candidates likely to be victorious in major cities across the country. The elections are said to be a precursor to next year's parliamentary elections which might give the right-wing coalition, comprising the center-right Forza Italia and the far-right League and Brothers of Italy, the opportunity to convert the lead in the polls to actual votes with more than forty per cent of the Italian voters supporting them. 9 million eligible Italians across 26 provincial and regional capital voted in the local elections. Right-wing candidates are set to win in many of the cities like Genoa and Palermo whereas, in cities like Verona and Catanzaro, they performed poorly due to failure to agree on a common candidate. (Hannah Roberts, "[Right-wing candidates set to make gains in local Italian elections: Exit polls](#)," *POLITICO*, 13 June 2022)

### **NORTHERN IRELAND**

#### **Belfast Harbour recover port activities after a pandemic**

On 20 June, Belfast harbour was able to bounce back to the pre-Covid levels from the economic hit it suffered due to the pandemic. Turnover increased by 17 per cent up to GBP 73.3 million compared to the previous year and operating profits went up

by 13 per cent up to GBP 34 million. The port had been hit by lockdown restrictions and related supply chain problems. But it recovered from the pandemic lull and the trade volumes even reached record levels in 2021. Even the ferry passenger journeys such as cruise ships had 70 visits to the harbour in 2021 when compared to just one in 2020. Post-Brexit, the Northern Ireland port has picked up a lot of trading activities with Great Britain. (John Campbell, "[Belfast Harbour records financial performance bounce back](#)," BBC News, 20 June 2022)

## NORWAY

### **Oslo shooting recognized as an act of terrorism by Norwegian authorities**

On 25 June, a Norwegian resident of Iranian origin went on a shooting spree, killing two people and injuring twenty-one others. 10 of them were gravely injured. Norway's PST intelligence services deemed a 42-year-old radicalized Islamist to be responsible for the act of terrorism. Authorities confiscated two weapons from the shooter before arresting him. Concerns have been raised over his mental health. London Pub, a popular LGBTQ+ gathering location, Herr Nilsen jazz club, and a takeaway food outlet were the places that were targeted by the shooter. The pride parade was suspended after the incident took place hours before its start. But the LGBTQ community stood in solidarity and marched on the streets, stating that they would not let the shooter win. Elsewhere similar emotions were seen in Turkey where around 200 people were detained by the police due to defying the law by marching pride parade which was banned since 2014. ("[Oslo shooting: Norway attack being treated as Islamist terrorism, police say](#)," BBC News, 26 June 2022; Jon Henley, "[Norway on highest terror alert after two killed in mass shootings](#)," *the Guardian*, 25 June 2022; "[Turkey: More than 200 arrests in Istanbul as LGBTQ marchers try to defy Pride ban](#)," *Le Monde*, 27 June 2022)

### **Norwegian court sentences Bow and arrow murderer to a mental institution**

On 24 June, a Danish man was sentenced to a mandatory mental institution after he was agreed to be mentally ill during the attack

by a Norwegian court. The man had attacked a Norwegian town with knives, a bow, and arrows, killing five people in October last year. He pleaded guilty to all charges and was deemed to be mentally ill. He was found to be suffering from chronic paranoid schizophrenia at the time of the attack. He was not held criminally responsible for his actions as both the prosecution and defense agreed that he was not mentally right. The Norwegian court gave a judgment for him to be taken to mental health care for treatment. ("[Norway: Bow-and-arrow attacker sentenced to psychiatric care](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 June 2022)

## POLAND

### **Poland is set to become a regional gas hub with its LNG terminal**

On 24 June, Poland's biggest liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal at Swinoujscie will become crucial in supplying energy to Central and East Europe. The Lech Kaczynski terminal will be a major replacement for the Russian gas imports to Poland which were halted by Gazprom in April. LNG is procured from all over the world, primarily from Qatar, the US, and Norway. The terminal has brought forth a lot of scope for tourism in the town and the local businesses benefit from people visiting the terminal. Poland is working on becoming a regional gas hub by delivering surplus gas to neighbouring countries through interconnectors. Poland's active role in the gas terminal will help the EU to phase out Russian oil and gas imports. Poland may become a gas hub for Central, East Europe, and even West Europe in the time of energy crisis. (Jo Harper, "[The small seaport crucial for Europe's energy future](#)," BBC News, 24 June 2022)

## SCOTLAND

### **Nicola Sturgeon to push forward with a second independence referendum for Scotland**

On 28 June, Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon is planning to hold a second independence referendum. The UK government opposed the referendum stating that the present time is not good to discuss independence while other issues

that are much more important are at hand. Sturgeon alleges that the process would be done democratically and is sure of her victory. She wants to proceed with the referendum even without the UK government agreeing to the section 30 order. Many criticize her actions as a way to distract from the failures of her party, the SNP. Meanwhile, issues like the cost of living crisis, and energy price crisis are ignored and that is looming over the heads of the people of Scotland. ("[Nicola Sturgeon to set out plan for second independence referendum](#)," *BBC News*, 28 June 2022)

## SPAIN

### **Prime minister Pedro Sanchez criticized for the death of migrants during the Melilla incident**

On 27 June, Spain's prime minister Pedro Sanchez is being criticized from within his coalition government over the deaths of 23 to 37 migrants who were attempting to cross from Morocco to the Melilla enclave of Spain. He was accused of failing to condemn the brutality and violence of the Moroccan police force toward the migrants. The leftist party of Unidas Podemos(UP) and the opposition Popular Party(PP) have criticized the prime minister's lack of action. Sanchez had blamed the mafia and its involvement in human trafficking that led to the incident. The prime minister and his interior minister are being petitioned to explain by the PP. (Camille Gijs, "[Melilla migrant deaths fuel new Spanish coalition fissure](#)," *POLITICO*, 27 June 2022)

### **The Conservative party takes over Andalusia from the socialists**

On 19 June, the conservative People's party won a majority in the regional election in Andalusia. The party got fifty-eight seats in the election, three more than the required seats for the majority. The socialist party, which is in power nationally, lost its prominence in Andalusia in this election as the right-wing parties are overtaking it. It is predicted the same result in next year's national election. For the national election, the People's party is set to join hands with the far-right Vox party although it won the regional election without any help. Juanma Moreno, the People's Party leader in

Andalusia called on voters to allow him to govern solitarily. (Ashifa Kassam, "[Spain: conservative People's party wins unprecedented majority in Andalucía](#)," *The Guardian*, 19 June 2022)

## SLOVAKIA

### **Supreme court cracks down on corruption issues in Bratislava**

On 02 June, Euronews reported on the surfacing of corruption issues in Slovakia as a man tasked to tackle corruption was himself found guilty. Slovakia's court also upheld a conviction against Dušan Kováčik for accepting bribes. Kováčik was the former head of the elite prosecutor's office and was involved in releasing criminals and leaking classified information. With cases against high-ranking public officials coming to the forefront, analysts have called this a "groundbreaking" decision to "cleaning out the house".(David Hutt, "[Slovakia makes slow progress in tackling corruption](#)," *Euronews*, 02 June 2022)

## SWITZERLAND

### **Toblerone to set up a new production factory in Slovakia**

On 24 June, a famous chocolate company, Toblerone will lose its Switzerland tag as they consider opening a new production line in Slovakia. According to Switzerland law, it cannot call itself a Swiss company as it would not be exclusive to the country after it opens a new factory in Slovakia. The company, which was established by the Tobler family in 1908, has its factory in Bern. Due to increased demand for their triangular chocolate, which was inspired by the Swiss Alps, they have expanded to Slovakia. Mondelez, the owner of Toblerone said that this move would allow the chocolate company to increase its production by many times. The company would no longer describe itself as Swiss but rather originated from Switzerland after it starts the manufacturing process from the new factory in 2023. ("[Toblerone chocolate to lose 'Switzerland' tag](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 June 2022)

## SWEDEN

### **No-confidence vote against justice minister Johansson**

On 07 June, the no-confidence vote against the minister Morgan Johansson is said to not work out as the member of parliament Amineh Kakabaveh announced that she would refrain from voting on the motion. This would lead to a shortage of the required 175 votes to topple the minister and the government. The no-confidence motion was launched by Sweden's center-right opposition parties against the minister for falling short of tackling gang crimes, waves of shootings, and murders. ("[Swedish government likely to survive justice minister confidence vote](#)," *Reuters*, 06 June 2022)

### **COP26: Glasgow summit promised climate goals to show the weaker contribution**

On 05 June, *BBC* reported on how countries were performing on the set goals in the COP26. At the Glasgow climate summit, all the countries agreed to provide their climate plans to cut down carbon emissions. This was done to ensure the global temperature was kept below 1.5 degrees Celsius but in the post-pandemic recovery, the temperature was in the increasing range. Till now only 11 countries have submitted their climate plan out of 196 countries. Since the COP26 meeting, China is observed to have taken a maximum effort to reduce carbon emissions. One of the key steps taken by China is stopping the funding to "coal-fired power projects." Such efforts are predicted to contribute 27 per cent to world emissions. (Esme Stallard, "[COP26: Are nations on track to meet their climate goals?](#)" *BBC*, 05 June 2022)

### **THE NETHERLANDS**

#### **Roman temple complex unearthed in the Netherlands**

On 20 June, archaeologists unearthed a Roman temple complex in the Netherlands. This discovery was a bit unusual as there had been no sites that were uncovered that showed the proof of the northern border of the Roman Empire. The temple complex was found in a clay extraction site in the village of Herwen-Hemeling, located near the border of Germany. The remains of two temples mainly used by soldiers from the Roman era date back more than 2000 years

ago. Several small stone altars were used by the soldiers dedicated to various gods and goddesses and were discovered with inscriptions on them. This archaeological discovery is unique as this was the first intact whole temple complex to be unearthed in the Netherlands. The usage of roof tiles suggests that the complex was used by the military and also tips of spears and lances, as well as a few other military equipments were found nearby. (Rebecca Staudenmaier, "[Dutch researchers uncover Roman temple complex](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 20 June 2022)

#### **Minister's suggestion for labor shortage faces criticism**

On 15 June, the Netherlands social affairs minister Karien van Gennip was criticized for suggesting that unemployed youth in France can take up jobs in her country. Political actors responded that a million are already out of work in the Netherlands. Van Gennip said she was only reacting to a European Commission proposal to bring in migrant workers from outside the EU because there were enough young Europeans ready to fill the positions. In April, unemployment in the Netherlands was 3.2 per cent, whereas it was 7.2 per cent in France. According to research from 2021, 13.5 per cent of 15 to 29-year-olds in metropolitan France were unemployed, illiterate, or unskilled. (Paul Kirby, "[Dutch idea to give jobs to French youths backfires](#)," *BBC*, 15 June 2022)

### **THE UK**

#### **The UK government not keeping up with its net-zero policies promises**

On 29 June, the UK government was found failing to enact policies that were needed to reach the net-zero target of carbon emissions. The Climate Change Committee(CCC) expressed its concerns that the ministers would go back on the legally binding commitment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The government has yet to act on the policies that they have spoken of about net-zero CO2 emissions. According to CCC, the best way to tackle the rising cost of living was to implement net-zero policies. The insulation policy became a failure after the

government did not help people insulate their homes. Heating would contribute a lot to greenhouse gas emissions and insulating homes would have reduced them. CCC said that the UK government should explore more renewable energy and consider temporary measures of using coal-fired power plants for a short period in response to rising energy prices. (Fiona Harvey, "Government policies will not get UK to net zero, warns damning report," *the Guardian*, 29 June 2022)

### **Scotland proposed dates for the new referendum on its independence**

On 28 June, the first minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, decided to hold the next referendum on independence on October 19 2023. She wrote to UK prime minister Boris Johnson to obtain formal approval for the vote to take place. However, even if it is not approved by the UK government, Sturgeon declared she would move through with her proposal. In response, the UK government stated that it would look into Sturgeon's proposal but emphasized that it remained of the opinion that "now is not the time" for another vote. In addition, it has been stated that it is obvious that Westminster controls the constituent. ("Scottish independence: 19 October 2023 proposed as date for referendum," *BBC*, 28 June 2022)

### **Demographic census data for 2021 was released by ONS**

On 28 June, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) released the initial report on the population census of 2021. Between 2011 and 2021, population growth was observed in all nine of England's regions as well as in Wales. The East of England experienced the highest rate of population growth, up 8.3 per cent from 2011. The South West increased by 7.8 per cent, adding 412,000 more people and London grew by 7.7 per cent. In England and Wales, 29,177,200 men and 30,420,100 women were recorded, and Men made up 29 per cent of the total population. However, a half-million fewer persons than expected were counted in the census in the figure for England and Wales increased by 7.8 per cent between 2001 and 2011. The ONS said that further information

from the 2021 census for England and Wales will be released in stages over the next two years. (Callum May and Data Journalism Team, "Census: Population of England and Wales grew 6% in a decade," *BBC*, 28 June 2022)

### **Members of parliament support the bill to scrap parts of the Northern Ireland protocol**

On 27 June, a bill to override parts of the Northern Ireland protocol passed the initial approval from the house of commons. This controversial bill will create a new layer of tension between the UK and the EU. Upon which the EU has taken legal action against the UK for breaching the post-Brexit deal. Former prime minister Theresa May said that this bill will besmirch the reputation of the country. Almost all of the ruling conservatives and members of parliament from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) voted for the bill leading to a majority of 74 votes. British foreign secretary Liz Truss said that the UK had no option but to choose this way because the EU was not flexible with the deal. The passing of the bill will lead to a resumption of power-sharing in Belfast which was paused since May's assembly elections due to the NI protocol issue. The move was argued to be legal as it was committed to preserving Northern Ireland's 1998 Belfast/Good Friday peace agreement. This would look bad for the UK as it is seen as breaking an obligation. ("Move to override Brexit deal gets initial backing from MPs," *BBC News*, 28 June 2022)

### **Probe reveals the number of deaths of asylum seekers more than previously informed**

On 25 June, *the Observer* and Liberty Investigate reported on fatalities of asylum seekers housed by the Home Office of the UK between April 2016 and May 2022. The report revealed that the number was higher than what was previously acknowledged. The Home Office documents reported that at least 17 individuals died by suicide or were thought to have committed suicide. The term "safeguarding element" which indicates people with vulnerabilities or needs like a health condition was used by

the department to label in half the deaths since the beginning of 2020. The investigators claimed "systemic failures" are in how some of these incidents were dealt with. This includes possible safeguarding policy gaps and alleged breaches that followed them. (Jessica Purkiss, Aaron Walawalkar, Mirren Gidda, Eleanor Rose & Mark Townsend, "Revealed: dozens of vulnerable asylum seekers have died in Home Office housing since 2020," *the Guardian*, 25 June)

### **Boris Johnson says to listen and learn after his party faces two by-election losses**

On 25 June, prime minister Boris Johnson of the UK commented on the recent by-election losses faced by his Conservative Party. The party lost its Devon seat of Tiverton and Honiton to the Liberal Democrats and Wakefield to the Labour Party. Many of Johnson's members of parliament request a change in leadership as they blame him for the losses, while the others backed him up. Johnson said that the current rise in the cost of living issue is the reason for the request for a change of leadership as the people blame governments for any inconveniences. He further talked about the defeat in a press conference in Kigali, Rwanda, stating that they have got to listen and learn from its mistakes. He said that he would focus on delivering for the country. Many of his members of parliament support his leadership, however, few oppose him and ask for resetting the leader. According to Johnson, two by-election losses should not affect the government and is not his fault. (Kate Whannel, "Boris Johnson admits by-election results 'not brilliant' but vows to go on," *BBC News*, 25 June 2022)

### **The government provides excess carbon subsidies to airlines, which contradicts polluters-pay principle**

On 24 June, the clean transport campaign group Transport and Environment published a report which found that the UK government offered airlines with roughly a quarter of a billion pounds in free pollution permits in a single year. The UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS), which charges

polluters for each tonne of carbon dioxide generated, gave airlines 4.4 million free credits in 2021, whereas the sector only returned 3.4 million. As a result, the whole cost of the emissions from the aviation sector was covered by UK taxpayers, with some left over. Because of the government's generosity, the aviation sector could pollute without paying a fee, and airlines were left with 900,000 extra credits that they could either keep or sell. T&E discovered that if airlines had sold its extra credits at the peak of the market last year for GBP 79.20 each, they might have gained GBP 72 million. (Damien Gayle, "UK gave airlines 4.4m free pollution permits in 2021, study finds," *the Guardian*, 24 June 2022)

### **Lawyers investigate the failure of states in preventing Yazidi genocide of 2013**

On 21 June, a group of prominent lawyers from the UK announced its collaboration as the Yazidi Justice Committee (YJC) to privately investigate the failure of states to prevent the genocide committed in Northern Iraq. The lawyers have been compiling evidence for the past two and a half years to reveal that some countries failed in its international obligations to stop the genocide against the Yazidis in early 2013. The YJC will likely name three countries in a report in early July. It would be one of the first cases in which nations would have to worry about legal action being taken against them for failing to stop a genocide, and it would shape the future of human rights accountability. Ten nations may be held legally liable for failing to prevent genocide under the UN's Genocide Convention, according to evidence evaluated by the YJC lawyers who are working pro bono. (Patrick Wintour, "UK lawyers gather evidence for action against countries over Yazidi genocide," *The Guardian*, 21 June 2022)

### **Bill of Rights proposed as a response to ECHR's intervention**

On 21 June, courts in the UK decided to ignore the European Court of Human Rights interim measures and proceeded with its new draft law, the Bill of Rights. This decision came as a result of ECHR meddled in the process of deportation of refugees to

Rwanda. The ECHR stopped London's deportation flight to Rwanda. The new Bill of Rights would replace the existing Human Rights Act passed by the previous government. The UK's ministry of justice drafted a law on 22 June stating that the UK's courts are free from ECHR bind when it comes to human rights issues as the UK's supreme court would be the ultimate arbiter of it. The ECHR had intervened because of Rule 39 which applies to situations where there is an imminent threat of irreparable harm. This displeased the UK government and in response to that passed the new Bill of Rights. (Cristina Gallardo, "[UK courts could ignore interim ECHR decisions under new human rights plan](#)," *POLITICO*, 21 June 2022)

### **Eight promised wildlife bills were delayed by the government**

On 20 June, the Boris administration was accused of failing to deliver his promised eight wildlife bills. The government has been accused of breaking promises by failing to implement measures on environmentally friendly farming, peat and pesticide usage, returning beavers and other endangered animals, and conserving rare marine life. There are worries that the prime minister's desire to improve England's biodiversity has been lost as his power has diminished and he has been forced to listen to the right-wing of the Conservative party, which considers green initiatives to be too expensive. (Helena Horton, "[Fears for wildlife as Boris Johnson accused of failing to keep policy pledges](#)," *The Guardian*, 20 June 2022)

### **Fashion retailers face losses for customers returning worn clothes**

On 17 June, UK retailer Asos stated that fashion retail shops' profits were being hit due to customers returning worn clothes. Wardrobing is the phenomenon where the customers buy many clothes but return most of them, retaining only a few. Wardrobing has hit the fashion industry hard during and after the covid pandemic. Online retail companies like Harrods have had an increase in returns, reducing its profits. They have started to block shoppers suspected of wardrobing when returning

products. Zara has initiated charges of GBP 1.95 for online returns. (Fleur Britten, "[Fashion brands' profits hit as customers return worn clothing](#)," *The Guardian*, 17 June 2022)

### **Legislators plan on presenting the post-Brexit Northern Ireland bill**

On 10 June, the UK announced that the legislation would present a unilateral revision of the post-Brexit trade arrangements with Northern Ireland. This would be presented to the parliament on 13 June, risking a possible trade war and backlash from Brussels. In May, European Commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic stated that Brussels would respond to the UK's decisions with all possible measures. The US, too, has been involved in the issue as House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi mentioned a possible halt of the US-UK trade deal if London proceeds with the legislation. ("[Risking EU clash, Britain pushes post-Brexit Northern Ireland bill](#)," *Reuters*, 10 June 2022)

### **Boris Johnson promises new provisions for home-ownership**

On 09 June, prime minister Boris Johnson announced that he will be looking to create a high-growth, low-tax economy, that will allow everyone to buy their own home. This promise was mainly targeted at especially the young population and ones living in social housing, as the UK has reported declining rates of home ownership. Johnson said that he will also launch a review of the mortgage market so that low-deposit mortgages can be accessed. The announcement comes after his narrowly won no-confidence vote, amidst speculations that he might lose the party's support as the Tory leader. However, economists stated their doubts that this promise looked doubtful, as tax revenue is likely to rise to its highest level since the 1940s. (Andy Bruce and William James, "[In another reset, PM Johnson pitches plan for UK economy, housing](#)," *Reuters*, 09 June 2022)

### **Welsh Government calls for action to counter racism**

On 07 June, the Welsh government

announced a new plan to counter racism in Wales. It first aims to surface, tackle institutional and systemic racism inside government by 2024, and later rework on the set goals and actions. The plan was drafted by a group of people who were selected from six various areas of racism experiences, the areas include “racism in everyday life, when experiencing service delivery, in the workplace, in gaining jobs and opportunities, the experience of a lack of visible role models in positions of power and the experience of racism as a refugee or asylum seeker.” According to the social justice minister Jane Hutt, the group is determined to ensure the plan does not stay a plan and becomes an action for minority people. (“Call to action' to be anti-racist by 2030 - Welsh government,” *BBC*, 07 June 2022)

### **EU passes the sixth set of sanctions on meeting Hungary's demands**

On 02 June, the EU countries passed the sixth set of sanctions upon meeting Hungary's demands. Earlier Hungary placed a bloc in approving the complete embargo on Russian oil, challenging the decision-making process of the EU. In the new set of sanctions, the EU imposes a partial ban on oil imports, with an exemption for Hungary to import oil from Russia. It also eased the sanctions on Patriarch Kirill who heads the Russian Orthodox Church and favours Putin. Although most of the EU countries raised concerns about Hungary's demands but eventually agreed as a compromise. The link between the church head and Hungary's Prime Minister is unknown, yet Kirill is well known for pro-war views, religious cleansing operations, and deep conservatism. (“EU bends to Hungary's demand, drops Russian patriarch from 6th sanctions package: sources,” *Deutsche Welle*, 02 June 2022)

### **UK to send the first batch of migrants to Rwanda in June**

On 01 June, the UK Home Office announced the first transfer of migrants to Rwanda which is scheduled to take place on 14 June. The move is predicted to face legal challenges from individuals and campaign groups, despite that the Home Office is

aiming to provide support and has planned to send only single people who have arrived in small boats since 01 January. Till now, 4,850 people have crossed through the English Channel and the UK is yet to confirm the number of people given removal notices. Although people are sent to Rwanda, those who fail the asylum application will face a threat of deportation, but will also be provided an option to apply for visas through other courses if they wish to stay in Rwanda. (“First flight taking Channel migrants to Rwanda set for 14 June,” *BBC*, 01 June 2022)

### **TURKEY**

#### **Ankara prevents alleged attacks on Israel's citizens ahead of Lapid's visit**

On 23 June, the foreign minister of Israel, Yair Lapid, appreciated Turkey for preventing and arresting five individuals from Iran suspected of planning attacks on Israel's citizens in Ankara. Lapid met with the foreign minister of Turkey, Mevlut Cavusoglu, to mend their poor relations amid Ankara's fervent support for Palestine. During investigations of the suspects' lodgings in homes and hotels, police found two firearms and two silencers. Lapid stated: “We're not only talking about the murder of innocent Israeli tourists, but also a clear violation of Turkish sovereignty by Iranian terror. We are confident that Turkey knows how to respond to the Iranians on this matter.” (“Turkey foils alleged Iran plot to kill Israelis in Istanbul,” *Al Jazeera*, 23 June 2022)

#### **Prince Salman visits Ankara to normalize relations**

On 22 June, the prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman visited Ankara to meet Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan to normalize relations and trade deals. As the most recent attempts to reintegrate Saudi Arabia into the international community following threats to isolate the country due to journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder, Prince Mohammed's visit to Ankara also signals a significant shift in Middle Eastern affairs. Erdogan stated: “God willing, we will have the opportunity to assess to what a much higher level we can take Turkey-Saudi

Arabia relations.” (Ruth Michaelson, [“Saudi crown prince visits Turkey as relations thaw after Khashoggi murder,”](#) *the Guardian*, 22 June 2022)

### **Women’s activist group awaits courts verdict on femicide**

On 19 June, Women’s rights organizations are eagerly following two court verdicts in Turkey concerning a femicide case and the legitimacy of the country’s departure from a fundamental accord against gender-based violence. The long-awaited verdict on Pinar Gultekin’s assassination comes the same week that Turkey’s highest administrative court, the Council of State, is expected to issue its final decision on Ankara’s withdrawal from the Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention. Some members of Turkey’s conservative government have described the Istanbul Convention as a “trap” that will lead to the destruction of the traditional family. In May 2021, Erdogan issued a presidential decree withdrawing Turkey from the Istanbul Convention, prompting legal challenges from women’s rights groups. Lawyer of the Women’s Platform for Equality, Gocecek Ayata stated that Turkey may only abrogate the convention by legislative action. (Buru Karakas, [“Turkey’s femicide problem: All eyes on court verdicts,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 19 June 2022)

## **REGIONAL**

### **EU members agree on the 2035 CO2 cars phase-out and multi-billion Euro fund**

On 29 June, the EU member nations came up with deals that might turn into laws to tackle the climate crisis. The environment ministers of the 27 member nations agreed on backing a 2035 phase-out of new fossil fuel run car sales and having a EUR 59 billion fund to protect the low-income citizens from the cost of CO2 emissions. They agreed after 16 hours of negotiation in which Germany suggested that the 2035 CO2 car sales phase-out does not include hybrid and carbon-neutral fuelled cars and see if both comply with the EU goal by 2026. Countries like Italy, Slovakia, and Bulgaria

wanted to delay the phase-out to 2040. The EU’s goal is to reduce net carbon emissions by 55 per cent from 1990 levels and introduce a new carbon market that emits zero CO2 by 2035. They agreed to make the rules easier for the EU to intervene in response to the carbon price spikes. The policy to help low-income citizens with EUR 59 billion will start effectively from 2027 and goes on till 2032. ([“EU countries reach climate crisis deal after late-night talks,”](#) *the Guardian*, 29 June 2022)

### **NATO prepares for a cyber defense project**

On 29 June, the members of NATO agreed to establish a program called “virtual rapid response cyber capability,” for defense against cyber attacks from Russia. The initiative was taken following multiple cyberattacks on Ukraine’s infrastructure and increasing concern that Moscow may target the US and other NATO countries. The US has volunteered to offer “robust national capabilities,” to this program. During the summit NATO reiterated that the North Atlantic Treaty’s Article five might also be triggered by a cyberattack, making it an attack against the alliance as a whole. (Maggie Miller, [“NATO establishes program to coordinate rapid response to cyberattacks,”](#) *POLITICO*, 29 June 2022)

### **European leaders’ express resentment over US supreme court decision on the abortion law**

On 25 June, the head of states of European countries expressed disbelief and disappointment in the US Supreme Court’s decision to revoke the right for women to receive an abortion. The prime minister of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel stated: “Making abortions illegal isn’t pro-life. It’s anti-choice.” The recent US court decision invalidates the famous Roe versus Wade precedent, which safeguarded a woman’s right to have an abortion. The prime minister of Belgium, Alexander De Croo, tweeted, “Prohibiting abortion merely encourages riskier abortions; it never results in fewer abortions He added that Belgium will continue to collaborate with other nations to improve #SRHR worldwide. Greece’s prime

minister, Kyriakos Mitotakis and France's president, Emmanuel Macron also critiqued the decision. (David M. Herszenhorn, ["European leaders decry US restriction of abortion rights," POLITICO](#), 25 June 2022)

### **The EU ought to transfer technology and knowledge to Africa says European Parliament**

On 23 June, the European Parliament published a report on the future of African trade relations with the EU. The report advocates the use of trade policy to equalize relations between countries in Africa and the EU. A significant concern raised in the report is the fact that the majority of commodities imported into the EU from Africa are primary goods like food, drink, and energy. Whereas the majority of goods shipped out of the EU are higher-value manufactured goods like machinery and pharmaceuticals. The report states: "Due to the continued direction of the trade from colonial times, wealth is being transferred continuously from the African periphery to the industrialized and increasingly digitized centers." Therefore, the EU is responsible and reasonable to share its technical knowledge with Africa to encourage manufacturing in the region. (Ella Joyner, ["European Parliament advocates equalizing EU trade relations with Africa," Deutsche Welle](#), 24 June 2022)

### **Western Balkans reiterate its desire to join the EU**

On 23 June, Western Balkan countries and the EU met in Brussels to discuss its membership in the union. North Macedonia and Albania are upset with Bulgaria for hindering the accession process with the EU. The president of North Macedonia, Stevo Pendarovski, deemed it "unacceptable" that Bulgaria had made it a requirement for the accession process that Skopje and Sofia debate matters of "shared history," language, and identity. The EU leaders have stated that they would attempt to give "full and unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans." (["Western Balkans determined on membership after EU talks," Deutsche Welle](#), 23 June 2022)

### **Early heatwaves spark wildfires in part of West Europe**

On 18 June, temperatures in a number of Western European countries surpassed 40 degrees Celsius, setting new records for the time of year. The European Commission's Copernicus Emergency Management Service stated that the risk of forest fires was extremely high in parts of Spain, France, and Italy. On 19 June, in Berlin, firefighters had to evacuate about 20 villages as the forest fires spread rapidly. On the same day a wildfire in central Evia, Greece's second-largest island, raged uncontrollably. As a precaution, authorities ordered the evacuation of the village of Kremastos when the fire came as near as 800 meters to certain residences. (["Europe's June heat wave sparks wildfires warning," Deutsche Welle](#), 18 June 2022; ["Wildfires force Germany, Greece and Spain to evacuate residents," Deutsche Welle](#), 19 June 2022)

### **Turkey is called upon to limit the influx of refugees to Cyprus**

On 18 June, the vice president of the European Commission, Margaritis Schinas urged Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot administration to control the migrant influx in Cyprus during his visit to the island's capital Nicosia. His call comes following the number of asylum seekers landing in Cyprus has risen dramatically, with the majority arriving in the island's separatist northern half. According to the Cypriot administration, 90 per cent of migrants enter the country via Turkey and the separatist Turkish Cypriot north, where a loosely controlled student visa system is in place. The UN buffer zone is then crossed by tens of thousands of refugees seeking shelter in the Greek Cypriot south. Interior Minister Nicos Nouris said Nicosia was working with Brussels to speed up the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers, however, a new migrant-receiving facility would require additional EU funds. (["Cyprus: EU urges Turkish north to help cut migrant arrivals," Deutsche Welle](#), 19 June 2022)

### **Fiscal policies fail to reduce the high inflation rate**

On 15 June, an independent Turkish Inflation Research Group (ENAG) expected the inflation rate to be higher by 160.8 per cent than the previously stated 73.4 per cent in Turkey. TUIK, Turkey's official statistics institution, has filed a case with federal prosecutors, accusing ENAG of spreading figures with the intent of damaging TUIK's reputation. Turkey's economy was already in trouble before Russia invaded Ukraine, but it has been spiraling out of control since February. Efforts by the government to prevent this have been ineffective. The minimum wage was significantly increased, but it did not keep pace with inflation, implying that workers effectively earn less, receiving roughly EUR 278 per month. (Elams Topcu, ["Turkey: Erdogan's fiscal policies fuel skyrocketing inflation," Deutsche Welle](#), 15 June 2022)

### **Turkey to produce high-tech drones with laser capabilities**

On 04 June, Turkey announced the mass production of "miniature munition" to install in unmanned aerial vehicles. The munition will be produced by TUBITAK a Defense Industries Research and Development Institute (SAGE). It carried out various tests to integrate into Bayraktar TB2 aerial vehicle. According to the manager of the company: "Mass production of the institute's first UAV munition Bozok has started, we have developed the penetrating warhead for Bozok. We're going to have some related firing tests." The Bozok will be a compact, lightweight, and semi-active laser seeker in comparison with other Turkey drones. (["Turkey starts mass production of laser-guided munition for its drones," PA Turkey](#), 05 June 2022)

### **NATO summit to discuss the further deployment of troops in Europe**

On 28 June, the meeting of NATO member countries in Madrid is expected to focus mostly on China's expanding global ambitions and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Secretary-General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg highlighted the critical decisions that will be made at the Summit, including a major change in NATO's deterrence and defense, long-term support

for Ukraine, and a strengthening of collaboration with like-minded allies around the globe. Members are anticipated to significantly raise the number of troops stationed in eastern Europe and the Baltic States, in addition to stockpiling weapons and equipment there. The national security adviser for the US, Jake Sullivan, stated that further military deployments of "land, sea, and air" will be announced for the long term. (["NATO summit in Spain focuses on Russia and China," Deutsche Welle](#), 28 June 2022)

### **Germany is willing to back the 2035 CO2 cars phase-out with a condition**

On 28 June, Germany agreed to support the 2035 fossil fuel cars phase-out under a few changes to the EU package. Germany wants to add CO2-neutral fuel cars to be added to the proposed bill. If the bill is adopted by the EU, it would ban the sales of carbon-emitting fuel cars from 2035 onwards. But Germany wants to add a clause so that carbon-neutral cars can be exempted. Countries such as Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania have requested to delay the implementation of the bill. These nations called for a 90 per cent phase-out of CO2 cars by 2035 and 100 per cent by 2040. Poland similarly supports the lighter ban. This bill is part of a set of laws developed to help the EU to tackle its carbon emissions reduction goal. (["Germany signals support for 2035 fossil fuel car phaseout, with conditions," Deutsche Welle](#), 28 June 2022)

### **EU to introduce legally binding wildlife conservation targets to its members**

On 22 June, a proposal to address the catastrophic loss of wildlife was introduced after 30 years in the EU. The bill would legally enforce objectives for all member states to restore wildlife on land, rivers, and the sea. Targets set forward by the European Commission include reversing the decrease of pollinator populations and restoring 20 per cent of land and sea by 2030, with the goal of restoring all ecosystems by 2050. The commission also suggested eliminating the use of chemical pesticides in the vicinity of playgrounds, hospitals, and schools by 2030. The commission's executive vice-president,

Frans Timmermans stated that the measures are in the right direction in addressing the "looming ecocide" threatening the world. There will be about EUR 100 billion available for biodiversity-related projects, including ecosystem restoration. (Phoebe Weston and Patrick Greenfield, "[EU plan to halve use of pesticides in 'milestone' legislation to restore ecosystems,](#)" *the Guardian*, 22 June 2022)

### **ECJ restricts the usage of passenger data of flights**

On 21 June, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) established boundaries for passenger data collection and when it can be used by authorities of the law. This court ruled against the use of artificial intelligence (AI), making it the first court to ban machine learning systems. According to the court, the usage of AI may cause direct or indirect discrimination. The ruling also focused on the highly scrutinized passenger data that is collected from those travelling to the bloc. It restricted the time limit of the passenger data that should be stored for less than six months and the handling of passenger data by the law enforcement of the EU member states. The court said that the authority's control over passenger data may come off as discriminatory to people who are travelling to or from Europe. The storage of passenger data should be done only if the person has fled a crime scene or is foreseen to commit a crime. ("[EU court sets limits for use of passenger flight data,](#)" *Deutsche Welle*, 21 June 2022)

### **Five individuals to sue the governments at human rights court**

On 21 June, five individuals affected by floods, forest fires, and hurricanes caused by climate change filed a case to the European court of human rights (ECHR) against the government's membership in the energy charter treaty (ECT). The claimants are suing 12 ECHR member states, including France, Germany, and the UK who have actively used the ECT. The claimants say that participation in the ECT infringes the European Convention on Human Rights' rights to life and to respect for private and family life. The treaty, which

has about 55 members, including the UK, Japan, and EU states, has been seen as a serious threat to the Paris Agreement because it could allow firms to sue governments for compensation for the early closure of coal, oil, and gas plants worth an estimated EUR 1.3 trillion until 2050. (Jennifer Rankin and Arthur Neslen "[Young people go to European court to stop treaty that aids fossil fuel investors,](#)" *The Guardian*, 21 June 2022)

### **Panel at Global Media Forum discusses Russian propaganda amid the war in Ukraine**

On 21 June, a panel discussion in the 2022 Global Media Forum organized by *Deutsche Welle* at its headquarters in Bonn discussed how the conflict in Ukraine has deepened divisiveness and tensions that put democracy and free speech in jeopardy. The panelist was the exiled journalist from Russia, and Ukraine, the German culture and media commissioner, and the EU transparency and values commissioner. Zygar stated that the Kremlin's crackdown on independent journalists had, within a decade, aided the dissemination of misinformation and divided political debate, making it simple for the state to isolate and suppress critical voices. Further, Jourova called for stricter measures for regulating big tech firms as they now make money by spreading false information. (Monir Ghaedi, "[Fighting a 'battle between democracy and authoritarianism'](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 June 2022)

### **Europe consumes an increased amount of cooking oil for vehicles amid rising prices**

On 22 June, *the Guardian* reported that Europe and the UK are consuming 17,000 tons of cooking oil to run vehicles every day. According to the study, palm and soy oil, largely from South America and Indonesia, is also burnt for fuel at a rate of additional 14 million bottles every day. Despite the fact that the effects on the environment may be much worse than those of fossil fuels, 58 percent of the rapeseed oil and nine percent of the sunflower oil consumed in Europe between 2015 and 2019 were

burned in vehicles and trucks. Another study released by the Green Alliance on 20 June found that an additional 3.5 million people could be fed each year if the land used to produce the UK's bioethanol were instead allocated to food crops. This would reduce the impact of global undernourishment brought on by the conflict in Ukraine by 25-40 per cent. (Arthur Nelson, "[Europe and UK pour 17,000 tons of cooking oil into vehicles a day](#)," *The Guardian*, 22 June 2022)

### **The EU plans to impose legal actions on the UK over the post-Brexit trade deal**

On 15 June, the EU announced legal action against the UK government over its unilateral amendment of the post-Brexit Northern Ireland protocol. The European Commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic reiterated that the UK's action was breaching international law. The EU will now reopen the infringement procedure it started against the UK in 2021 when the Boris administration extended a grace period for trade on the island of Ireland unilaterally. That action was put on hold in September 2021 as both sides attempted to reach an agreement. The EU will take additional action against Johnson's government for allegedly failing to carry out appropriate controls under EU laws and produce trade statistics data as required by the convention. ("[Brexit: EU launches legal action against UK over Northern Ireland breach](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 15 June 2022)

### **The EU to resume its aid toward Palestine**

On 14 June, the European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen announced to continue to aid Palestine by donating millions of Euros. The EU and other institutions have been donating about EUR 600 million a year until 2020. The EU froze its aid for Palestine over allegations that its textbooks promoted violence and anti-Semitism. The hold-up caused a financial crisis in the state and the authorities were unable to pay salaries to teachers and doctors. The medical facilities were also forced to limit the number of admissions. Leyen after visiting Ramallah stated that the funds will be released rapidly and EUR

25 million will be allotted to improve food security. (David Gritten, "[European Union to unfreeze aid for Palestinians](#)," *BBC*, 15 June 2022)

### **First flight of Rwanda plan canceled**

On 14 June, the first flight of the Rwanda plane carrying seven refugees was canceled minutes before take-off citing legal concerns. A judgment from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg stopped the deportation of an Iraqi refugee who could have experienced "a real risk of irreversible harm" if he had continued on the flight. This led to a series of legal cases and appeals raised by other refugees in London courts; by late night all the passengers were removed from the plane. (Joseph Lee & Doug Faulkner, "[Rwanda asylum flight cancelled after legal action](#)," *BBC*, 15 June 2022)

### **Stoltenberg trusts Stockholm to address Turkey's concerns**

On 13 June, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg stated that Sweden is ready to address Turkey's concerns on its bid for NATO membership during his visit to Stockholm. Turkey has previously vetoed applications of Sweden and Finland to join NATO for supporting Kurdish militants in Syria. Stoltenberg further stated that Sweden will ensure to amend its legal basis for arms exports to reflect in its future standing as a NATO member with new commitments to allies. Earlier on 12 June, Stoltenberg had visited Finland as well and mentioned that Turkey's concerns are legitimate concerns on terrorism and weapons exports. ("[NATO: Sweden prepared to address Turkey's security concerns](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 June 2022)

### **Space telescope Gaia delivers new data on its mission**

On 13 June, the European Space Agency's space telescope Gaia released a new batch of data on stars, asteroids and distant bright constellations to map the galaxy. Gaia will scan over a thousand million stars to create the biggest and most detailed three-dimensional map of our Galaxy. In the latest data collection, Gaia indicated spectroscopy information as well in addition to the basic

brightness and color details of the stars. Spectroscopy splits the light from stars into its component colors, revealing the chemical, temperature, mass, age, and velocity of the objects being studied. (Jonathan Amos, [“Gaia continues quest for the ultimate sky map,” BBC](#), 14 June 2022)

### **New legislation on Northern Ireland protocol condemned for breaking international law**

On 12 June, Northern Ireland secretary Brandon Lewis reiterated that the amendments made in post-Brexit trade arrangements will not break international law. The statement came following the head of the Irish nationalist Sinn Fein party, Mary Lou McDonald who claims the revisions would breach international law. The amendment, which is set to take effect from 13 May, will have an impact on the existing Northern Ireland protocol, which was negotiated by the EU and the Boris administration post-Brexit. The agreement permits the Republic of Ireland to keep a de facto open border with the UK's Northern Ireland. One of the measures calls for customs inspections on products arriving from England, Scotland, and Wales to keep them out of the EU's single market. The majority of the inspections are likely to be withdrawn in London. ([“Sinn Fein leader: UK about to break international law,” Deutsche Welle](#), 12 June 2022)

### **ECB's interest rates to see a rise in 11 years**

On 09 June, the European Central Bank reported that they will raise the interest rates by 0.25 per cent in July. This is the first time in 11 years that interest rates for Eurozone are being increased. The president of the ECB, Christine Lagarde, said that inflation will be elevated for some time and that the rise in interest rates will also require some time to be reflected. The latest Eurozone inflation was estimated at 8.1 per cent, but the governing council of the bank is aiming to bring it down to its target of two per cent over the medium term. ([“Eurozone interest rates set to rise for first time in 11 years,” BBC](#), 10 June 2022)

### **Spills of an unidentified substance detected in the Baltic Sea**

On 09 June, it was reported that there has been a spill of an unknown substance in the Baltic Sea, along the coast of Sweden. The spill, which the coastguard says is not of mineral oil, is yet to be identified. The head of the coast guard investigation, Jonatan Tholin indicated that it could be a new type of fuel like biofuel. The spill initially covered an area of 30 sq. miles and was in both Swedish and Finnish waters. However, it was reported that by the later part of the day, the spill was no longer visible. ([“Huge mystery spill detected in Baltic off Swedish coast,” The Guardian](#), 10 June 2022)

### **Moscow and Ankara plan to export Ukraine's wheat to Syria**

On 07 June, Russia's and Turkey's defence ministers discussed possible corridors to export wheat from Ukraine to Syria. Turkey's defence minister Hulusi Akar spoke to Russia's defence minister Sergei Shoigu saying: “all measures that can be taken regarding the safe shipment of grains, sunflower, and all other agricultural products.” Akar added that Turkey was coordinating the efforts between Russia and Ukraine, but no formal agreement has been reached yet. Ukraine's embassy reiterated that if the coordination did not consider Ukraine's interests, it would be rejected by Kyiv. ([“Russian, Turkish defence ministers discuss Syria, grain exports from Ukraine,” Reuters](#), 08 June 2022)

### **EU announced provision for a common phone charger for all electronic devices**

On 07 June the EU provisionally approved the adoption of a common phone charger cable throughout the EU by 2024. It has planned to make a USB type-C charger as a uniform charger for all electronic devices from mobile phones, tablets, headphones, video game consoles, portable speakers, and laptops. The rule will apply to Apple and its devices, previously the company had argued in 2021 when the plan was initiated stating it will challenge innovation. Although it's perceived as a bar to innovation, the EU seems to be sturdy on the decision as it aims to reduce electronic waste. It found that the ban on different

varieties of chargers, will cut down consumer costs by EUR 250 million and 11,000 tonnes of e-waste. (Tom Gerken, "[EU sets date for common phone charge cable](#)," *BBC*, 07 June 2022)

### **EU proposes a new deal to impose equal minimum wages across the member states**

On 07 June, the EU proposed an agreement to equate minimum wages given with the standard of living. Of the 27 member states, six states Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Italy, and Sweden which depend on "collective pay bargaining," and do not follow minimum wages will be affected by the new deal. The EU estimated that one out of 10 workers were earning under the minimum wage, but with each country, the amount varied. At the highest range, Luxembourg has set the highest minimum wage at EUR 13.05 per hour, which is followed by Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium. In the lower range Bulgaria, followed by Hungary and Romania with EUR 2.19 per hour has been set as the minimum wage. (Paul Kirby, "[EU deal links minimum wage to decent standard of living](#)," *BBC*, 07 June 2022)

### **EU leaders announce plans to block Russian oil imports by the end of 2022**

On 01 June, the EU said it would end Russian oil imports by the end of 2022. The reason given for the decision was to punish Russia for invading Ukraine. This comes as a part of the sixth package of sanctions approved by all 27 members. The EU had earlier halted the implementation of its latest round of sanctions due to differences over the ban on Russian oil. European commission president Ursula von der Leyen addressed the differences saying: "Left over is around 10-11% that is covered by the southern Druzhba." ("[Russian oil: EU agrees compromise deal on banning imports](#)," *BBC*, 01 June 2022)

### **Poland's recovery plan gets approval from the EU**

On 01 June, the European Commission announced that it had approved funds to help Poland with its economic recovery. However, the funds were restricted until Poland reformed its judiciary system. Von

der Leyen mentioned that Poland would receive EUR 23.9 billion in grants and EUR 11.5 billion in cheap loans under the deal. The commission stated: "Poland needs to demonstrate that these milestones are fulfilled before any disbursement can be made." (Jan Strupczewski and Gabriela Baczynska "[EU approves Polish recovery plan, but no payouts before judiciary fixed](#)," *Reuters*, 01 June 2022)

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **G7's energy security plans might contradict its climate goals**

On 24 June, *POLITICO* in an article anticipates that ahead of the Group of Seven (G7) summit, a proposal being discussed by the group would suggest utilizing tax money for natural gas projects, which might conflict with the group's climate goals. The group has committed to decreasing its consumption of fossil fuels this decade by signing multiple declarations for a safer climate. However, there will be pressure on the leaders to address both the drive to wean the EU off of its reliance on Russian energy and the soaring cost of energy when they meet in Germany for the summit. If the G7s energy security strategy calls for public funding of international projects, it would conflict with a pledge made by every member of the group at the COP26 climate talks in 2021 to end public support for foreign fossil fuel investments by the end of 2022. (Karl Mathiesen and David M. Herszenhorn, "[G7 mulls call for 'necessary' public gas investments](#)," *POLITICO*, 24 June 2022)

### **Exotic birds migrate to the UK from the Mediterranean region for nestling**

On 18 June, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) spotted a few rare bee-eater birds trying to breed in Nottinghamshire and Norfolk. Albeit a beautiful sight, the arrival of these birds is an effect of climate change. The birds usually nest in southern Europe and North Africa. Head of the investigation at RSPB, Mark Thomas, stated: "Pushed northwards by climate change, these exotic birds will likely become established summer visitors in the future, having been an early and unmissable sign in the past two decades

that the nature and climate emergency has reached our shores." ("Bee-eaters in Norfolk 'worrying sign of climate change'," *BBC*, 17 June 2022)

### **Inundated towns for reservoirs re-emerge as waters recede in Germany and Spain**

On 17 June, BBC reported on two sites in Spain and Germany re-emerging from receding waters caused by climate change. A village on the Spanish-Portuguese border named Aceredo, which was flooded to create a reservoir, reappeared after a drought hit the region in February. Another similar site reported was the Edersee, located in the western German state of Hesse, the country's second-biggest reservoir. However, as droughts have become more severe across Germany as the Edersee's water levels decrease, it reveals what is known as the region's Atlantis. Ruins of a bridge, three settlements, and the gravestones of former residents were found there. The project was established over a century ago to feed water to the Weser River and the Mittelland Canal, allowing ships to navigate during the dry summer months. Now, these sites have turned into tourist attractions. ("Severe droughts reveal sunken relics of the past," *Deutsche Welle*, 17 June 2022)

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **UNEP and EIP launch a new project to conserve the Mediterranean sea**

On 28 June, during the Ocean conference in Lisbon, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) inaugurated the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Mediterranean Pollution Hot Spots Technical Assistance programme to reduce pollution in the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment. The programme will prepare the priority investment projects to reduce pollution in the marine and coastal environments of Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia. The Mediterranean Pollution Hot Spots Investment Programme of USD five million is a subsidiary project of GEF-funded MedProgramme established by the Barcelona Convention. ("UN Environment Programme and European Investment Bank

join forces to reduce pollution," *UNEP*, 28 June 2022)

### **New WTO deal to limit overfishing hailed despite flaws**

On 21 June, conservationists hailed the recent World Trade Organization's (WTO) agreement to end subsidies that cause overfishing after 20 years of failed negotiations. Despite being scaled down from its original objectives, Pew Charitable Trusts, which has long advocated for the elimination of such subsidies, said the new agreement represented a turning point in eliminating a major cause of overfishing. The agreement establishes a worldwide framework that restricts financial support for high seas fishing, overfished populations, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. It lays the groundwork to incorporate other subsidies by including steps to increase openness and accountability for governments over how they subsidize the sector. However, the agreement does not prohibit the use of public funds by governments to subsidize either operating expenses, such as gasoline, or capital expenditures, such as the modernization and replacement of fishing fleets' engines. These increase overfishing, favor bigger vessels, and artificially lower operational costs for the fishing sector. (Karen McVeigh, "First WTO deal on fishing subsidies hailed as historic despite 'big holes'," *The Guardian*, 21 June 2022)

### **The government to fast-track measures to control air pollution in the UK**

On 17 June, the National Audit Office (NAO) in a report stated that the government has made progress but is not on a fast pace to reduce air pollution and has also failed to actively inform the public about the issue. According to the report, air pollution is unevenly distributed across the country with low-income and ethnically diverse communities being disproportionately affected. The report raises concern about the level of nitrogen dioxide released by vehicles in the air. NAO concluded that the present measures are not effective to achieve its 2030 ceiling limits and has to set new long-term limits for particulate

pollutants. ("Government set to miss air pollution goals - report," BBC, 17 June 2022)

## **MARITIME**

### **Maritime ministry funds projects for seafarer's mental health**

On 23 June, the maritime minister Robert Courts announced the allocation of EUR 2.75 million for projects to support seafarers' mental wellbeing and the maritime sector at the Mersey maritime exchange in Liverpool. The funding is intended to help the marine industry develop a workforce that individuals from all backgrounds will want to join because it is highly trained and well supported. The sector has developed mental health awareness training that is provided to all new seafarers as a requirement of its training. This financing intends to promote seafarer rights by enhancing the execution of successful programmes. Courts also launched the Maritime recovery route map on the same day to assist the industry in recovering from the pandemic's impact. ("£2.4 million funding to support seafarers' mental wellbeing," The UK Government, 23 June 2022)

### **Extraordinary warming in the Barents Sea region**

On 15 June, *The Guardian* examined a study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, which revealed exceptional warming in the Barents Sea region, Arctic. The warming is taking place in the North Barents Sea, where rapidly rising temperatures are thought to be causing more extreme weather in North America, Europe, and Asia. The warming in this area, according to scientists, is an "early warning" of what might transpire over the whole of the Arctic. According to the new data, annual average temperatures in the region are rising by up to 2.7 degrees Celsius every decade, with particularly large surges of up to 4 degrees Celsius per decade in the fall months. As a result, the North Barents Sea and its islands are the world's fastest-warming region. (Damian Carrington, "New data reveals extraordinary global heating in the Arctic," The Guardian, 15 June 2022)

### **Rising sea levels threaten England's coastal properties**

On 14 June, *BBC* examined a report published in the journal *Ocean and Coastal Management*, authored by Paul Sayers, an expert on flood and coastal risks. The report states that nearly 200,00 properties on England's coast may have to be abandoned due to the inevitable rise in sea levels by 2050. The study examines areas where the costs of upgrading defenses may be extremely expensive or technically unattainable. It was discovered that by 2050, assuming a cautious two-degree celsius rise in sea level by 2100, up to 160,000 houses may need to be relocated. This is in addition to the 30,000 to 35,000 homes that have previously been recognized as vulnerable. (Jonah Fisher, "Climate change: Rising sea levels threaten 200,000 England properties," BBC, 15 June 2022)

### **A new type of marine pollutant was termed as plastitar**

On 13 June, scientists at the Canary Institute of Marine Sciences in Spain coined the term Plastitar for the new type of ocean pollutant. The formation of plastitar is a result of oil spills in the ocean, which then evaporates and weathers, and washes ashore as tar balls that stick to the rocky shores. The structure solidifies over time, fusing anything from abandoned fishing equipment to plastic pellets and scraps of polyester and nylon to the tar. Plastitar was discovered along the shorelines of numerous Canary Islands, It was widespread, spanning more than half of the region they were investigating. The occurrence of plastitar was related to the archipelago's location along a major oil tanker shipping route, but scientists believe it may exist worldwide. (Ashifa kassam, "Plastitar: mix of tar and microplastics is new form of pollution, say scientists," The Guardian, 13 June 2022)

### **Ukraine lagoons and marine life are under threat due to the Ukraine war**

On 07 June, *The Guardian* reported on the damaging effect caused on the oceans and wetlands due to the Ukraine war. The Tuzly Lagoons national park on the Black Sea is

known for being dug by environmentalists to ensure the flow of water bodies. Channels were dug which will be the path to numerous small fishes, which come to the lagoons for breeding. With the war in place, the digging cannot be done and the beaches are now being filled with mines to keep the Russian forces away. The digging has been in practice for the last 30 years and it was seen as a way to restore marine life, environmentalists warn that this was only one affected area brought into light while many other wetlands have been impacted due to the continuity of war. Ukraine's deputy minister of environmental protection and natural resources said: "Almost 400,000 hectares and 14 Ramsar sites [wetlands designated to be of international importance by Unesco] along the coastline and lower reaches of the Dnipro river are under threat." ("Dead dolphins: how nature became another casualty of the Ukraine war," *The Guardian*, 07 June 2022)

#### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

##### **US private equity investor set to takeover UK defense supplier**

On 23 June, the aerospace manufacturing company Cobham was permitted to acquire a UK defense supplier called Ultra Electronics. Cobham, based in Bournemouth, England, was taken over by a US private equity investor, Advent, in 2019. Therefore the firm will be further controlling a significant supplier of nuclear submarine technologies. Under the terms of accession, Cobham will have to establish two "SecureCos" to host "sensitive capabilities." The government will approve the articles of association for these firms, and it will have a seat on their boards. The government will also have "step-in rights," which will enable it to seize control of the SecureCos for national security reasons. (Jasper Jolly, "Takeover of UK defence supplier Ultra Electronics set to be approved," *The Guardian*, 23 June 2022)

##### **Foundation laid for first modern vaccine plant in Africa by German firm**

On 23 June, the pharmaceutical company BioVTech from Germany laid the foundation stone for its COVID-19 vaccine plant in

Kigali, Rwanda. The ceremony was attended by the president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, and other state leaders, in addition to representatives from the EU and the WHO. The 30,000 square meter factory in Kigali would initially have two modular vaccine production containers and have an estimated annual capacity of roughly 50 million vaccine doses. According to BioNTech, the firm will be able to grow production as needed by basing the factory on modular containers. The first shipment of containers is anticipated to reach Rwanda in the latter half of 2022, with the beginning of vaccine manufacturing following 12 to 18 months. The Rwandan facility will be the first mRNA vaccination production in Africa once it is operational. (Isac Mugabi, "BioNTech breaks ground on first mRNA vaccine plant in Africa," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 June 2022)

##### **A whistleblower of Meta plans to start her watchdog agency on big-techs**

On 16 June, Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen is to raise USD five million to start a nonprofit organization to keep a watch on these big-tech social media platforms and increase its accountability. In 2021, Haugen leaked numerous internal business documents exposing how senior executives and engineers play around with the dissemination of harmful content online. Haugen wants to reveal several potentially dangerous activities that were made public as a result of her revelations to the US government and international media houses. Facebook's parent company, Meta, denies that it prioritizes its financial benefit over the well-being of its billions of users worldwide. Ultimately, Haugen wants to create a "simulated social network," an artificial platform where regulators, researchers, and others may play out prospective situations and learn more about how such platforms work without having to beg, borrow, or steal access from real firms. ("Frances Haugen: From whistleblower to watchdog," Mark Scott, *POLITICO*, 16 June 2022)

##### **Tech firms call for ease of cybersecurity criteria for the US big techs**

On 14 June, Tech lobby firms in Brussels are

urging the EU to reconsider plans to compel big cloud providers such as Microsoft, Amazon, and Google to comply with a new cybersecurity label to prevent the US from spying in Europe. Officials at the European Union's Cybersecurity Agency (ENISA) are nearing completion of a certification programme for cloud providers to demonstrate that they adhere to rigorous cybersecurity requirements. However, the draft rules for obtaining the label might force cloud companies in the US to denounce, data-access regulations, restructure operations, and even exclude foreign investors from decision-making. The primary lobby groups have stated that Europe's attempt to boost sovereignty over the cloud sector is "politically motivated, will create complex legal compliance procedures and will not add to increased levels of cybersecurity." (Laurens Cerulus, "[Big Tech cries foul over EU cloud-security label](#)," *POLITICO*, 14 June 2022)

### **Meta launches new parental control features on Instagram in the UK**

On 14 June, the US firm Meta launched a new feature of parental controls in its video and photo-sharing platform Instagram in the UK. They include the ability to set daily time limitations ranging from 15 minutes to 2 hours, beyond which the app displays a dark screen. Parents may also set up break times for their children and view any accounts they report. A parent dashboard will also be available on all Quest virtual reality headsets worldwide. Parents may now request their children to use the supervision tools, which could previously only be done by the child. Purchase permission, app blocking, and access to the child's friend lists are among the new controls. Another Instagram feature that is being tested is a "nudge" tool that encourages teens to explore different subjects if they are searching for the same thing again and over. ("[Instagram launches new parental controls in UK](#)," *BBC*, 14 June 2022)

### **Paleontologists find Europe's largest dinosaur**

On 09 June, paleontologists said that they have found fossilized bones of what may be

the largest carnivorous dinosaur species to be discovered so far in Europe. These were found on the Isle of Wight in England. This dinosaur lived about 125 million years ago in the Cretaceous period. Based on the bones of the back hip tail and some limp fragments paleontologists have estimated that the dinosaur exceeded 10m in length. They have also said that it belonged to the Spinosaurus species, and is considered to be the longest known dinosaur predator.

("Europe's largest carnivorous dinosaur found in UK's Isle of Wight," *Aljazeera*, 09 June, 2022)

### **New trials on fishing methods to avoid damage to the seabed**

On 07 June, scientists from the southwest of England found lobsters and crabs to be attracted to lights. In a project with the fisherman, they used the lights as bait to catch the fish and new methods such as "modified pots dubbed scallop discos," for fishing. If the experiments succeed, the method could be an alternative to stop the damage to the seabed for scallop hunting. ("[Orkney part of 'scallop discos' fishing trial](#)," *BBC*, 06 June 2022)

### **German scientists discover a faster plastic-eating enzyme**

On 01 June, Scientists from Leipzig discovered a new type of enzyme which disintegrates plastic much faster. In an experiment in the collected compost from a Leipzig cemetery, they found polyester hydrolase, PHL7 which broke down the plastic in less than 24 hours. Till now commonly used enzyme is LCC which is used in PET plastic-eating experiments and when comparing the results of both enzymes, PHL seven turned out to be faster than LCC. PET plastics have been a major problem in climate degradation and the solution to PET plastics has been either forcing the plastic to stop or end the production of PET plastics. With the newfound enzyme, the scientists hope to bring it into practice within four years in large-scale industries. ("[Plastic packaging might be biodegradable after all, say German scientists](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 01 June 2022)

### **Accusations arise against France's top three arms producers of war crimes in Yemen**

On 02 June, the European center for constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), the Mwatana for Human Rights, and Sherpa International accused France's Dassault Aviation, Thales, and MBDA France as complicit actors in Yemen's war crimes. The Rights group accused the producers of supporting the Saudi-led coalition to prolong and worsen the conflict. Mwatana for Human Rights executive director Abdulrasheed al-Faqih said: "The coalition's airstrikes have caused terrible destruction in Yemen. Weapons produced and exported by European countries, and in particular France, have enabled these crimes." (John Irish and Caroline Pailliez, "[Rights groups allege French arms makers complicit in Yemen war crimes](#)," *Reuters*, 02 June 2022)

### **SPORTS**

#### **Russian and Belarussian athletes to participate in the US tennis games**

On 14 June, the United States Tennis Association (USTA) announced it would allow individual athletes from Russia and Belarus to compete in the 2022 US Open (Tennis) tournament. However, the players can only participate under a neutral flag. After Russia invaded Ukraine, which was backed by Belarus, the country was barred from participating in International Tennis Federation (ITF) competitions as well as many other sporting events worldwide. ("[US Open: Russian and Belarusian players allowed to compete in New York](#)," *BBC*, 14 June 2022)

#### **Rafael Nadal wins the French Open**

On 05 June, Spain tennis player Rafael Nadal won the French Open claiming his 14 titles and defeating Norway's Casper Ruud. In the overall ranking, he will move two steps ahead of Rodger Federer and Novak Djokovic. Since 2010 Nadal has won back to back in the Australian Open, and French Open. After the win, Nadal said: "It takes a lot of energy to keep going. I want to say 'merci, merci beaucoup, I don't know what will happen in the future but I will keep fighting to keep going.'" (Jonathan Jurejko, "[French Open: Rafael Nadal beats Casper](#)

[Ruud for 14th Roland Garros title](#)," *BBC Sport*, 05 June 2022)

### **FASHION**

#### **Fashion brands to stop using the Higg MSI tool for environmental impacts**

On June 28, fashion brands such as H&M and Norrøna announced that they would stop the usage of a sustainability measuring tool after critics called it greenwashing. 655 garments were rated by the Higg Material Sustainability Index(MSI) to check the environmental impacts on the website of H&M. This tool was launched by a global non-profit alliance of fashion brands, the Sustainable Apparel Coalition(SAC). SAC consists of 250 members of famous brands across the world. The Norwegian Consumer Authority(NCA) warned the H&M group about the negative effects of Higg MSI. The Higg MSI only assesses a selective part of the lifecycle of a product, which does not represent the sustainability of the product. According to critics, Higg MSI misleads and misinforms customers with faulty data. SAC's CEO Amina Razvi addressed the issue and told the media that they would rectify and improve the tool for accuracy in the information and would do an independent, third-party review of the data and the methodology. (Fleur Britten, "[Germany signals support for 2035 fossil fuel car phaseout, with conditions](#)," *the Guardian*, 28 June 2022)

### **INTERNATIONAL**

#### **Anti-abortion activism may rise in Europe following Roe vs Wade verdict in the US**

On 28 June, *POLITICO* examined the influence of the US supreme court's decision to overturn abortion rights in Europe. The response to this week's Roe vs Wade decision may be a sign of a new political rift in Europe if anti-abortion movements increase in the region. The right-wing in Europe may become more divided on abortion than the left. A report by the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (EPF) in 2021 stated that in total USD 81.3 million was funded for activism against abortion between 2009 and 2018 in the US. The report states that powerful mega-donors

establish charitable foundations that support anti-abortion activist groups in the US. These in turn carry out operations abroad either directly or via affiliated firms. The European Center for Law and Justice and the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International are some of the branches of conservative organizations in the US. ("The plan to overturn abortion rights in Europe," POLITICO, 28 June 2022)

### **General Secretary Antonio Guterres presents opening speech at ocean conference in Lisbon**

On 27 June, the UN General Secretary António Guterres spoke at the opening of the organization's ocean conference that took place in Lisbon. He spoke about how the ocean needs to be saved. He raised concerns over the rising sea level, ocean heating, acidification, and plastic pollution in the largest water bodies. He further went on to say that the oceans are being exploited and that the member nations should concern themselves with the protection of the high seas. The harm done to oceans may have adverse effects on small nations and coastal cities and may even cause flooding. Increased fishing and marine pollution have led to a reduction in the population of marine lifeforms. He also talked about dumping wastewater and plastic in the ocean and how it degrades the marine ecology. He called for global awareness of marine pollution and to raise global health. The draft declaration focuses on ways to achieve SDG 14 and improve the health of the ocean. The final draft of the political declaration is expected to be adopted by the end of the conference. (Karen McVeigh, "UN head declares 'ocean emergency' as global leaders gather in Lisbon," the Guardian, 26 June 2022)

### **23 die while trying to cross to the Melilla enclave of Spain**

On 24 June, hundreds of asylum-seeking Africans tried to cross into the Melilla enclave of Spain. At least 23 have died due to the mass migration which assumed the form of a stampede. NGOs on the ground said that the number might increase upon further investigation. Morocco's forces were seen to have attacked the migrants with

fully equipped riot gear. Spanish forces aided Morocco in the indiscriminate use of violence by throwing stones and tear gas at the migrants. This was the first attempt at crossing the Spanish enclave of Melilla after Spain and Morocco resumed their diplomatic relations following a year-long dispute. 133 people made it across the fence and were processed at the reception centre. Several NGOs have called for an investigation of the incident. ("Dozens die trying to cross into Spanish enclave of Melilla," BBC News, 26 June 2022; Ashifa Kassam, "Calls for investigation over deaths in Moroccan-Spanish border crossing," the Guardian, 26 June 2022)

### **Major European firms and banks backing deforestation by a Brazilian meat company**

On 24 June, various banks, UK supermarkets, and an Italian leather supplier were accused of colluding with the Brazilian meat giant JBS. JBS is said to be responsible for deforestation, land-grabbing, and the use of slave labour in the Amazon region. These companies were said to have funded billions of dollars to JBS in its illegal activities. The banks, UK supermarkets, and the Italian leather supplier company have either denied knowing of the deforestation or said that it would clear its mistakes global Witness, the investigating agency revealed that deforestation has reached record levels in the Amazon due to companies like JBS. The government activities have weakened environmental laws and policies which in turn has led to the exploitation of the forest land and local resources by corporates such as JBS. Many from direct and indirect supply chains of JBS had cleared the forest illegally for cattle ranches. JBS has committed to monitoring its supply chains by 2025 to reduce this deforestation (Sophie Kevany, "Banks and UK supermarkets accused of backing deforestation in Brazil," the Guardian, 24 June 2022)

### **Putin calls BRICS countries to cooperate, amid sanctions on Russia**

On 23 June, the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, in a virtual address to the BRICS summit hosted by China, called on

the member countries to cooperate with him as he rerouted his trade. Putin also blamed the West for causing a global crisis. He claimed that Western countries were "using financial mechanisms" to "shunt their own failures in macroeconomic policy onto the whole world" in response to the sanctions. He further stated that the leadership of BRICS is needed now more than ever to chart a unified, constructive path toward the creation of a truly multipolar system of intergovernmental relations. ("Putin urges BRICS nations to cooperate with Russia," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 June 2022)

### **President of Germany visits Singapore, amid food shortage**

On 15 June, the president of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Singapore to promote free trade and open borders amid the food shortages. Steinmeier stated that globalization has stalled and supply chains are being disrupted worldwide because of the war in Ukraine. He emphasized on the preservation of international law and secure investment conditions to the president of Singapore, Halima Yacob. Malaysia's ban on poultry exports has made the people realize its vulnerability, therefore the country has decided to reduce its food dependencies by investing in vertical farming. Steinmeier will also be visiting a sustainable shrimp farm in Singapore, vertical farming is the only option for them as they do not possess any agricultural lands. (Katharina Kroll, "German president visits Singapore as food shortages bite," *Deutsche Welle*, 15 June 2022)

### **Ottawa and Copenhagen agree to share Hans Island**

On 13 June, Canada and Denmark agreed to split a small deserted island in the Arctic, bringing an end to a nearly 50-year diplomatic dispute between the two countries. The government issued an order-in-council confirming the Hans Island agreement. Hans Island rises 180 meters above the cold seas that separate Canada and Greenland. Both nations are 18 kilometers distant from the island, giving them the legal right to claim the rock under

international law. The island will be divided into two halves, one will be Canadian and the other will be part of Greenland. (Ashly Burke, "Canada and Denmark reach deal to divide uninhabited Arctic island," *CBC News*, 13 June 2022)

### **The Rwanda Plan to take off from 14 June**

On 13 June, *BBC* explained the working and implications of the Rwanda Plan following the announcement of the first deportation flight to be taken off on 14 June. Some asylum seekers would be transferred to the Central African country during the five-year trial. It is said to be focused mostly on young migrants who come by "illegal, risky, or unnecessary means," such as small boats or vehicles. Rwanda has stated that the migrants will be entitled to full protection under Rwandan law as well as equal access to jobs and services. As part of the agreement, the UK would spend GBP 120 million in Rwanda's "economic development and growth." The government also stated that it will cover expenditures equivalent to those spent in the UK. ("How many people cross the Channel and how might the Rwanda plan work?", *BBC*, 13 June 2022)

### **Canberra to pay a settlement for breach of contract with Paris**

On 12 June, Australia agreed to pay France's Naval Group EUR 555 million in compensation for breaking a submarine contract with Paris. In 2021, Canberra cancelled its 2016 agreement with France's Naval Group to build a fleet of conventional submarines, this provoked anger, and diplomatic issues in Paris. Canberra instead chose to build eight nuclear-powered submarines with the US and UK technology following its trilateral security partnership - AUKUS. The prime minister of Australia, Antony Albanese stated that the broken french contract will cost the country EUR 2.28 billion. ("Aukus: Australia to pay €555m settlement to French firm," *BBC*, 12 June 2022)

### **New bridge opened between Russia and China**

On 10 June, Russia and China inaugurated

the new cross-border bridge to promote trade and commerce between the two countries. The bridge connecting the city of Blagoveshchensk in Russia to the city of Heihe in China across the Amur river is over one kilometer long and cost 19 billion roubles. The bridge will shorten the travel distance of goods from China to western Russia by 1,500 kilometers and the vehicles will be tolled 8,700 roubles. ([“Fanfare and fireworks to open Russia-China border bridge,” BBC, 11 June 2022](#))

### **Finland to send arms to Ukraine amid NATO ambitions**

On 10 June, Finland announced that it would provide more defense aid to Ukraine in the middle of its aspirations to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Finland's defense minister Antti Kaikkonen said that Finland would send the equipment that Ukraine and its army need. Finland and Sweden decided to openly support Ukraine after Russia threatened them against its application for membership in NATO and violated its airspace. Finland is ready to contribute to the aid of Ukraine and the security of the alliance thereby showing its commitment to the principles of NATO. This might fasten the process of Finland's membership in NATO. Although the membership hasn't been finalized, the US has shown its full support for Finland's and Sweden's admission into NATO as well as being watchful of any security threats in both countries. If any threat to the security of Finland and Sweden may arise, the US will work with the countries to deal with them. ([“Finland to send more military equipment amid NATO ambitions,” HelsinkiTimes, 12 June 2022](#))

### **UN leaders meet in Germany to discuss bringing the focus back to climate change**

On 06 June, in the climate talks held in Bonn, Germany, the UN urged the countries to focus and “redouble” their work towards the prevention of environmental disasters. According to the UN's Climate Change head, Patricia Espinosa: “I appeal to all of you — especially in these difficult and challenging times — not to lose hope, not to lose focus,

but to use our united efforts against climate change as the ultimate act of unity between nations.” She highlighted how the world is coping amid the Ukraine crisis, food shortage, shooting energy prices, and pandemic recovery and stressed on moving forward toward climate promises. The upcoming COP27 which is scheduled to take place in Egypt will focus on bringing the promised plans to action. As per the conference in Bonn, the key issues will focus on supporting low-income and developing countries to come out from the effects of climate change. ([“UN urges 'quick' negotiations at start of climate talks in Germany,” BBC, 07 June 2022](#))

### **Germany's economic minister to visit Israel and the French Minister hold talks with UAE for energy cooperation**

On 05 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the four-day tour of Germany's economic minister Robert Habeck to Israel. During the minister's trip, the discussion with Israel will focus on three fronts, energy and climate cooperation, “high-tech” collaboration, and the purchase of “Arrow 3 missile shield system.” The key reason to hold talks with Israel is to find alternate energy to Russian imports. Israel can be a potential supplier to Europe as it holds the Leviathan gas field located in the Mediterranean Sea which can produce 12 billion cubic meters per year of gas. Apart from this it also has an underwater pipeline to supply gas to Turkey and southern European countries. At the end of the trip, Habeck is expected to hold a joint conference with the Middle East and North African states. The conference will focus on intensifying cooperation on the energy fronts and solar energy. French foreign minister on the same lines held talks with UAE on receiving oil and diesel. He said: “We have to find an alternative to Russian petrol.” (Jens Thurau, [“German Economy Minister Robert Habeck seeks new partnerships with Israel and Jordan,” Deutsche Welle, 05 June 2022](#); [“Le Maire: France in talks with UAE for Russia oil alternatives,” POLITICO, 05 June 2022](#) )

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