



# NIAS Area Studies EUROPE MONITOR

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## Continuing Ukraine War...



Image source: ISW/FT

### Comment

**The world this year 2022: The Ukraine war  
Russia: Drone attacks escalate the Ukraine war  
The UK: Conservative party put to test as worker strikes continue**

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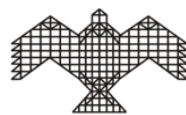
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With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. KAS promotes and preserves free democracy, social market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

**Europe Monitor**

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**EM COMMENT**

**The world this year 2022: The Ukraine war**

*By Padmashree Anandhan*

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**WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES**



Source: Guardian Graphic/ISW, Reuters/Alarabiya, Sputnik / Russia's Defense Ministry, Yekaterina Shtukina/POOL/TASS, Cpl Anil Gurung/UK MoD, Sky News

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 310 to Day 280 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: Implications of the Ukraine war.

*By Padmashree Anandhan, Sai Pranav, and Madhura S Mahesh*

**EM SHORT NOTES**



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EM Short Notes provide a brief overview of the latest developments in Europe in political, economic, security, climate, maritime, and science and technology aspects. The daily developments cover from the UK, western Europe, Nordic, Baltic, Balkans to the far east Russia.

*By Padmashree Anandhan, Sai Pranav, and Madhura S Mahesh*

## COMMENT

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### **The world this year 2022: The Ukraine war**

By Padmashree Anandhan

*Ukraine's prolonged push for military support and sanctions were a success but without peace.*

#### **What happened?**

Following are the six breakpoints of the Ukraine war in 2022.

On 21 February, Russia's declaration on recognising Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) in the Donbas regions as "independent states". Till March, Russia focused on capturing Ukraine's main port cities, with only a few retreats in Chernihiv and Kyiv in western Ukraine.

In June, the US, and Europe supported Ukraine through supply of military aid to Ukraine from mid-range to high-capacity weapon systems. Initially, Ukraine was provided with primary equipment's such as helmets, bullet-proof jackets, soviet era weapons, and short-range ground missiles. Later, the military support switched to providing High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), NATO-calibre weapons, and advanced missile systems. Air defence were kept in waiting until last months of the year.

On 13 September, Ukraine claimed its success in the northern and southern counteroffensive, capturing back 8000 sq. km in north-eastern Kharkiv. From Russia, the Ministry of Defence, Sergei Shoigu claimed that "an operation was carried out to curtail and organize the transfer of the Izyum-Balakley group of troops to the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic."

On 05 October, Russia's President Vladimir Putin signed the unification treaties into law after the Russian Parliament ratified the same approving the annexation of DPR, LPR, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia. The move came after a lag in the partial mobilization order was identified.

On 09 November, Russia announced its withdrawal from Kherson from the left bank

to the right bank of the Dnipro River to concentrate its troops, and equipment in Donbas. According to the UK Ministry of Defence, withdrawal was due to Russia's logistical challenges to replenish its stocks, weaker defence posture in countering Ukraine's attacks and the fear of flooding.

On 05 December, the Russian Defence Ministry reported an alleged Ukrainian drone strike on the Russian airbases in Ryazan and Saratov. The drones were identified as "Soviet-made jet drones," targeting the Dyagilevo airfield in the Ryazan Region and the Engels airfield in the Saratov Region located 300 miles from the Ukrainian border. The attack on Russian territory was another important breaking point in the course of the war.

#### **What is the background?**

First, Ukraine's prolonged push for military support and sanctions were a success but without peace. Throughout 2022 Ukraine positioned itself as a strong demander for more advanced weapons to counter Russia and wider sanctions at all levels. The US, the EU and other Asia-Pacific countries such as Japan and Australia first imposed sanctions on luxury goods which expanded into industrial and later targeted critical services and Russian energy. In terms of the military, the west support increased in the course of five months since February and it began to supply high-capacity weapons such as HIMARS, IRIS-T, and Neptune to advanced drone technologies which helped Ukraine to hold a strong defence and succeed in the counteroffensive in Kharkiv and Kherson. The peace efforts from Ukraine have not actualized with Russia nor has been possible through the intervention of external powers. The proposal for a peace summit through the UN does open the scope for dialogue into 2023.

Second, testing of Russia's chokepoints. The first bottleneck placed by Russia to the West was its demand on pay for Rubles for energy exports, with that being circumvented by the West, it became the base for the creation of a divide over Russian energy among the European countries. Following that, the Vostok exercises held on 02 September and the eastern economic forum were a showcase of its military capabilities and its international reputation in the phase of the war. The forum reflected its stronghold with China, India, and Armenia along with the consequent signing of agreements with Mongolia, and Myanmar. The next key choke point in the war was the signing of two decrees for partial mobilisation and Martial Law to improve its security posture in Ukraine and install a three-level security inside Russia. Since the partial mobilisation failed to materialise, a political counter-move was made by declaring DPR, LPR, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia as annexed areas. As Ukraine's defence sustained, Russia's weakened offensive capacity weakened pushed it to import Shahed drones from Iran. The failure to maintain its front line in Kherson pushed the Russian military further inwards into the right side of the Dnipro river. One of the last economic efforts, after restricting its oil and gas supply was the ban to import oil and petroleum to the West. This move was also seen as a weak step as US and Europe import restrictions on Russian energy exist already.

**“...the West would continue its military support into 2023, which can be expected to continue as the countries recover from the pandemic and adapt better to reduce the dependency on Russia.”**

Third, West continuing its support over energy and economic crunch. In the initial period between February and May, the

sanctions focused only on luxury such as freezing the assets, Russian oligarchs, and banking systems SWIFT expanded to key industries such as iron and steel, metals, key equipment, technologies critical for Russian machinery, transportation to imposing price caps on the imports of crude oil, petroleum, and gas. In terms of military aid, the US, the EU, along with Germany and NATO have been the key suppliers to Ukraine from defence systems, personnel training, land-based missiles, intelligence support, and advanced systems such as F-35, Neptune anti-ship cruise missiles, to Kamikaze drones, switchblade drones, and Bayraktar TB2 drones. In the case of energy, the divide over the ban on Russian gas and oil has widened. Especially Germany's Nord Stream, and Hungary's and Czech Slovakia's Druzhba pipeline were the also impacted due to Russia's cutdown of supply. The key question here would be if the West would continue its military support into 2023, which can be expected to continue as the countries recover from the pandemic and adapt better to reduce the dependency on Russia.

Fourth, year of failed diplomacy. Since January there have been numerous attempts made by the US, and exclusively by Europe with Russia to prevent the Ukraine war or to reduce the aggression. From Geneva's strategic security dialogue, Vienna OSCE meeting, NRC, Europe's independent Normandy format dialogue, Versailles declaration, regional consensus achieved to support Ukraine except Hungary and Belarus, G7 summit, to NATO Madrid summit. All the attempts have been more of a speed taxi without a destination. The only exception was the grain deal which helped in limiting the hike in global prices.

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## COMMENT

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### Russia: Drone attacks escalate the Ukraine war

By Padmashree Anandhan

*Attack into Russian territory questions the Russia's national security level*

#### What happened?

On 05 December, the Russian Defence Ministry reported an alleged Ukrainian drone strike on the Russian airbases in Ryazan and Saratov. The drones were identified as "Soviet-made jet drones," targeting the Dyagilevo airfield in the Ryazan Region and the Engels airfield in the Saratov Region located 300 miles from the Ukrainian border. According to the Ministry, the strike did not affect its aviation as the drones were shot down by the air defences and reported only slight damage to two aircraft, the death of three service members, and the injury of four other members.

In response to the drone strike, Russia carried out missile attacks on "energy objects" using strategic bombers across Ukraine resulting in power outages in Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Sumy, and Odessa regions. Ukraine has made no claims about the drone attacks. However, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal confirmed the functioning of the power grid despite the missile attack target on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

On 06 December, the Russian Governor of Kursk city claimed another drone attack on an airfield in Kursk which set ablaze oil storage near the airfield. Remaining cautious of the recent escalation, the UK Ministry of Defence said, "if Russia assesses the incidents were deliberate attacks, it will probably consider them as some of the most strategically significant failures of force protection since its invasion of Ukraine." On the other hand, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said that the US would not stop Ukraine from building its own long-range strike capabilities, while the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken remained ambivalent: "We have neither encouraged nor enabled the Ukrainians to strike inside of Russia."

#### What are the three issues?

First, the geography of the Ukraine war. On 24 February, the war began with the Russian military breaching Ukraine's territory in the DPR and LPR regions. With the Donbas region coming under Russian control, the war began to spread to key port cities of Mariupol, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, and Mykolaiv extending to Odessa in the southern axis and a simultaneous rapid development in the northeast axis from Kharkiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv, and extending further to Kyiv in March. This advancement began to slow down in April when Ukraine's forces put up a strong defence in the northeast region of Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy. This first turning point in the war weakened the Russian posture in the northeast axis with a heavy concentration of Russian forces only in Kharkiv and the southern axis and seriously challenged Russia's goal to capture Kyiv in western Ukraine. Since then, regular exchange of attacks between Ukrainian and Russian forces continued in the region until the end of August when Ukraine's strong counteroffensive in early September resulted in the successful recapture of 8,000 sq km in Kharkiv and Kherson. The next turning point happened in November when Russia withdrew from Kherson into the eastern bank Dnipro River, providing a strategic opportunity for Ukraine to launch attacks into the Donbas and recapture Zaporizhzhia where Russia maintains a stronghold. The latest drone attacks into Russia's farthest regions have raised serious concerns about the scope of the war.

Second, the strained Russian offensive. The nature of the Russian offensive seems to be fluctuating since September. During April and May, there was a steady movement of the troops away from Chernihiv into Kharkiv and Russia began to face challenges from August onwards in terms of logistics, restocking of the military, and positioning of

the personnel. This forced Russia to concentrate its forces on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River in November. Since the withdrawal, Russia has diversified its offensive targeting energy grids, infrastructures, and the cyber domain; on the ground too, the attacks have been more sporadic or reactive in nature.

Third, military aid from the west. The west has held a very defensive posture when it comes to sending military equipment and arms to Ukraine. During the war, the type of military support has transformed from medium to high-range weapons systems such as the Howitzers, HIMARS, air defence systems, battle tanks, and drone technologies. In addition, the west continues to augment Ukraine's offensive capacity through regular intelligence support, satellite imagery, and military training, all of which have boosted Ukraine's military strength.

**“In the months ahead, Russia can be expected to adopt more off-ground or non-military tactics while it stocks up its military supplies.”**

#### **What next?**

First, a tipping point or a deviation. There has been slow but a steady improvement in Ukraine's military strike capacity and range between April and October. The first turning point for Ukraine was its counteroffensive starting from April onwards until November and its ability to launch precision strikes on Russian military bases and supply routes providing a strategic advantage to its troops in eastern Ukraine. Although the drone attacks into Russian territory remain to be claimed by Ukraine, it can be a tipping point that can change the course of the war. For the escalations and turning points in the war, the west's support has been crucial. The recent drone attacks on its territory may not be a deviation but could serve as a strong warning for Russia.

Second, probable future scenarios for Russia. Russia's last resort to secure its position in the northeast axis of Ukraine through mobilization and martial law did not materialize and has ended up being a failure. The increasing support from the west to Ukraine and Russia's continued challenges in replenishing its weapon and material supply and troops are set to strain Russia's hold in eastern Ukraine. In the months ahead, Russia can be expected to adopt more off-ground or non-military tactics while it stocks up its military supplies.

Third, the future of western military support. The military support from the west to Ukraine has ranged from ground, maritime, and air defences supplies to intelligence support with the principal goal of bridging the asymmetry. It remains to be seen if the west will come together to put troops on the ground.

Regardless, the west can be expected to continue preventing escalations and reigning in the possibility of direct military engagement between both parties while securing energy and cyber infrastructures and waiting for the sanctions to take effect.

## COMMENT

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# The UK: Conservative party put to test as worker strikes continue

By Padmashree Anandhan

*Pay rise, better working conditions and improved public services continue to be the demands of the protestors*

On 13 December, 40,000 workers of the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport (RMT) along with 14 train operating companies, staged a 48-hour walkout. The strikes were held in England, Scotland, and Wales demanding an increase in pay on par with the rising cost of living and better working conditions. The Network Rail which owns 50 per cent of the UK's railway infrastructure, announced the shutdown of railway services during the strike days. Along with the rail workers, teachers, postal workers, border force officers, ambulance staff from the Unison, GMB unions, nurses, university staff, baggage handlers, driving examiners, and bus drivers from different labour unions announced to hold strikes through December and January.

On 13 December, in a firm response to these strikes, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that the government will not be able to shift its position on a pay rise. He said: "While the government will do all we can to minimize disruption, the only way we can stop it completely is by unions going back around the table and calling off these strikes." According to Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt: "Any action that risks embedding high prices into our economy will only prolong the pain for everyone, and stunt any prospect of long-term economic growth."

### What are the three issues?

First, the nature of the strikes. This can be viewed at three levels. At the geographic and industry level, the strikes which began in June 2022 have been held across England, Wales, London, and Scotland by the RMT workers. This has now spilt over to workers from other critical sectors such as health (non-life-threatening division), education,

and airport. At the workers' level, although the striking group was predominantly blue-collar, to begin with, it has now come to include white-collar workers such as civil servants, junior doctors, teachers, university staff, and nurses. In terms of the total working days lost as per the data from the Office for National Statistics, the private sector has been impacted the most with a loss of 369 days, the highest since November 1996. At the demand level, it has increased beyond the initial call for a pay rise to better working conditions, job security, and more investments in infrastructure.

Second, reasons behind the strike. One, the clash between the demand for a pay increase and the government's hold on public spending and its plan to increase taxes is seen as the major trigger behind the strikes. Two, the participation of the white-collar employees from administration, health care, schools, and universities was due to budget cuts resulting in a lack of beds, home health aides, shortage in staff to attend backlogs and prevent delays in healthcare, schools, and universities. Although the current allocated budget and existing reserve in 2022 will keep the educational institution afloat, sustaining the same for the next year remains to be seen.

*"Increasing energy prices, cost of living, and cutting down on public service will reduce the public's support for the conservative party."*

Third, government response. The UK government has not been reluctant, however, prioritizing the economic pressure and addressing the demands for a pay rise has gone slow. Thus far, the government's



response to the strikes in December has not been in the favour of the labour unions from railways, baggage handlers, universities, public and commercial services, and bus drivers. The governments in England and Wales have given an average rise of 4.75 per cent to NHS (National Health Service) staff, up to 9 per cent to the royal mail workers, and 6.85 per cent to the lowest-paid category of teachers. Since the offered pay rise does not match the inflation, it has been rejected by the workers, furthering the chaos inside the country. Further, the government has followed stricter rules such as a strike can be organized only if a majority in the union agree through an organized vote. The restrictions also apply to certain professionals such as nurses (who will not risk the immediate health of patients), ambulance workers, and firefighters, while police officers are not allowed to strike. The government is expected to propose tougher rules in the coming weeks.

#### What next?

First, a troubled public service atmosphere. UK's growing strikes amongst the railway, airport baggage, university, and to some

extent the NHS staff can disrupt key services and lead to public resentment. Increasing energy prices, cost of living, and cutting down on public service will reduce the public's support for the conservative party.

Second, a wait-and-watch game for Sunak's administration. Worker strikes are nothing new in the UK since the 17th-century industrial action is well known amongst the worker groups, but the government's response to such strikes has varied over time. Taking the 1978 "Winter of Discontent" period as an example, Harold Wilson's Labour Party failed to address the pay rise demand of the workers which triggered more strikes and no concrete decision. This eventually led to the Margaret Thatcher administration (Conservative) to introduce rules to control the power of trade unions in the 1980s which resulted in silencing the miner strikes who returned to work without any negotiation. Similarly, Sunak's administration can also be expected to wait and watch the strikes weaken, but it is going to be a long wait.

## War in Ukraine: Daily Updates\*

By Padmashree Anandhan, Madhura S Mahesh, and Sai Pranav



Source: Guardian Graphic/ISW, Reuters/Alarabiya, Sputnik / Russia's Defense Ministry, Yekaterina Shtukina/POOL/TASS, Cpl Anil Gurung/UK MoD, Sky News

### War in Ukraine: Day 310

#### War on the Ground:

On 30 December, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said during his speech at the government meeting that Ukraine had spent more than UAH 1.2 trillion in the security and defence sector since the war began. Out of the UAH 1.2 trillion, more than UAH 250 billion was used to buy weapons and military equipment. He discussed visa-free assistance from the EU in energy, transport, economy, customs and digital. The five visa-free visas will help Ukraine's trade and economy with the EU efficiently. Shmyhal called out to Ukraine's partners to support the restoration of the energy sector. He said that the sector needed USD 1.5 billion. Shmyhal also mentioned that Ukraine needed USD 350 billion by June 2023 and USD 700 billion by the end of 2023 for reconstruction and recovery. The amount was estimated following a verified funds assessment by the World Bank, the European Commission and the Ukrainian government.

On 30 December, Ship NEVA containing Ukrainian wheat reached Somalia as part of the humanitarian aid from Ukraine to Somalia and Ethiopia to relieve them from food insecurity. It was the second wheat shipment to reach Somalia under the Grain from Ukraine initiative. Finland, France and Japan undertook the shipment's logistical cost.

#### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 30 December, Belarus' Anti-Aircraft Missile Forces Department Head Kirill Kazantsev reported that the missile that had entered Belarusian airspace and was intercepted by its military was found to be from a Ukrainian S-300 long-range anti-aircraft system. The initial investigation showed that the missile was either mishandled or suffered technical malfunction or was a deliberate provocation. Following the incident, Russia's President Vladimir Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said that Ukraine's violation of

\* 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: Implications of the Ukraine war. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read them every day.

Belarus' airspace was concerning to Russia. He said: "The highest possible level of mutual dialogue and the trust it entails allows us to exchange the most sensitive information in a swift manner," on the investigation's information.

On 30 December, TASS reported that Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov claimed the US involving directly in the Ukraine war. He alleged that the US soldiers were being deployed in Ukraine to participate in the war. The US also directly involved itself in the war through its soldiers, military advisers and intelligence officers participating in it. Lavrov said: "Military specialists are obviously engaged not only in making visits to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, but, of course, in one way or another they provide direct advisory, and maybe even more than advisory, services." He declared that Russia would disrupt any weapons trade between the West and Ukraine.

On 30 December, in a virtual meeting with China's President Xi Jinping, President Putin discussed strengthening the bilateral relations between China and Russia. He stated that their strategic relations are seen as a stable factor amid global political tensions. He discussed military and defence cooperation, humanitarian and sports exchanges, infrastructural developments energy supply and trade improvement with China to improve their bilateral relations. Putin also invited Xi to visit Russia in 2023.

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

On 30 December, the UK's Defence Ministry provided 1000 VALLON metal detectors and 100 bomb de-arming kits to Ukraine to help demine minefields and clear bombs and mines from civilian and public infrastructures. The package also includes Stromer vehicles, anti-air missiles such as Starstreak and AMRAAM, M109 155 millimetre self-propelled guns, L119 105 millimetre light guns and 100,000 artillery and small arms rounds.

On 30 December, the US government is considering providing Ukraine with Bradley Fighting Vehicles as part of another military

aid package. Being a light tank, the Bradley can strengthen Ukraine's ground weaponry capabilities with its "reconnaissance, reconnaissance, fire and maneuver, and 'hunter-killer' engagements."

### **The Global Fallout: Implications of the War in Ukraine**

On 30 December, China stated that Russia and its strategic partnership will be strengthened with cooperation on energy, trade and other sectors during the virtual meeting between Putin and Xi. Xi said: "China is willing to work with Russia and all progressive forces in the world that oppose hegemonism and power politics, oppose any unilateralism, protectionism, and bullying, and firmly defend the sovereignty, security, development interests and international fairness and justice of the two countries." He also condemned sanctions and foreign interference in the war.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 308**

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

On 28 December, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy presented his annual address to the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian Parliament. In his speech, Zelenskyy outlined how in the past 10

months Ukraine has emerged as one of the global leaders and has been instrumental in promoting the values of strength and freedom from tyranny. First, emphasized the role of Ukraine in uniting the EU to combat the energy crisis due to decreased supply of Russian oil and gas. Second, outlined the plans for 2023 which include restarting EU membership negotiations, developing indigenous missiles, boosting their security and digitizing public services and permits. Third, highlighted increasing Ukraine's presence in green energy, and grain exports to secure ties with countries in Africa and Global South. Fourth, addressed the ongoing efforts to rebuild destroyed territories and stressed the importance of coming together to ensure the return of normality in Ukraine. Lastly, Zelenskyy announced the establishment of a tribunal which would look into the crimes committed by the Russian forces and develop a compensation mechanism for all the victims.

On 28 December, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry released a statement condemning the visit of Russian Presidential Administration official Sergey Kiriyenko to the Zaporizhzhia and Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. The ministry highlighted how the visit of Kiriyenko violates the IAEA's guidelines which called for the withdrawal of Russian troops and officials from the power plant. The Ministry urged the IAEA members to cease nuclear cooperation with Russia and suspend the rights and privileges of Russia in the IAEA.

On 28 December, Ukraine's Infrastructure Ministry announced that in the past two days 11 vessels have left the ports of Greater Odesa to Africa, Asia and Europe under the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The Ministry said that around 422,000 tonnes of agricultural goods have left the ports and added that: "Among them are the ALANDA STAR bulker with 30,800 tonnes of wheat for Egypt and the EUROCHAMPION tanker with 45,000 tonnes of [sunflower] oil for India." The Ministry added that the main obstacle in the working of the grain corridor is the delay in inspections by Russia.

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

On 28 December, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov criticized the ten-point agenda proposal of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy saying that it ignores reality. Peskov said that the "peace plan" proposed by Ukraine ignores reality as it does not acknowledge the four new regions annexed by Russia and added that Russia will not be following it. The peace plan for the Global Peace Summit was proposed by Zelenskyy to discuss his ten-point "peace formula" in February 2023 at the UN. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that for any peace talks to resume between the two countries, Ukraine must recognize the annexation of the four new regions in order to: "Prevent the creation and continuation of any threats to our security from Ukrainian territory."

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

On 28 December, the French Minister of Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu announced the setting up of a EUR 200 million innovative fund to help Ukraine purchase arms from French manufacturers directly. Speaking from Kyiv, Lecornu said that both France and Ukraine are working on a "common agenda" which will outline France's military support to Ukraine. He also promised more military aid to Ukraine from the French army and outlined future plans to supply the MAMBA anti-missile system. The Ministry stated that they will be training the Ukrainian personnel to use the missile system before its delivery so that it could be deployed immediately.

On 28 December, the Lithuanian Interior Ministry said that over EUR 86.78 million of Russian and Belarusian companies' funds have been frozen by the Financial Crime Investigation Service (FNIT). This was a result of the sanctions imposed by the FNIT on nine Russian and six Belarusian companies and one Belarusian individual on 20 December. Some of the sanctioned companies are Inter RAO Lietuva, Lifosa, EuroChem Logistics International, PhosAgro Baltic, Vydmantai Wind Park, and IDS Borjomi Europe.

On 28 December, the UK Defence Ministry released its intelligence update where it

reported on the movement of Russian Forces in Kremina. According to the Ministry, Kremina located in the Luhansk Oblast has seen increasing reinforcements by the Russians at the frontline amid renewed pressure from Ukraine. The Ministry outlined that Kremina is an important town for Russia in the Luhansk Oblast and a strategic frontline town for Donbas.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 307

### War on the Ground:

On 27 December, Ukraine's Armed Forces, Naval force division reported on the presence of 10 Russian warships with containing 16 Kalibr cruise missiles in the Black Sea. So far in the Mediterranean Sea, nine Russian warships, five Kalibr category cruise missiles holding 72 missiles are present. It also observed the movement of 17 vessels in the Sea of Azov and 14 in the Black Sea which have moved in and out of the Bosphorus Strait.

### The Moscow View:

#### Claims by Russia

On 27 December, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree announcing a special measure in fuel and energy sector. In the Decree: "On the application of special economic measures in the fuel and energy sector in connection with the establishment by some foreign states of the maximum price for Russian oil and oil products." The announcement comes in response to the price cap imposed by the US, the EU, G7, and Australia on Russian seaborne crude oil. The ban will come be in effect from 01 February to 01 July 2023. Through this Russia will no longer export its oil and oil products to the countries which adopted the price cap.

On 27 December, RT reported on Ukraine's decision to increase the transit fee of Russian oil that is sent via Druzhba pipeline from 01 January 2023. It predicts the increase of the crude transport to Hungary and Slovakia by EUR 2.10 per tonne, which will be 18.3 per cent increase. Transneft spokesman Igor Demin confirmed on the same, this marks the third time raise in the fee since April. Druzhba which is one of the longest pipelines has the capacity to transit oil to 4000 kilometres from Russia to Eastern European countries has now come under spotlight.

On 27 December, RT reported on the Russian arms manufacturer "Kalashnikov Group" decision to increase its "New line of reconnaissance and combat drones." This is expected to speed and expand its arms production in 2023 into new Chukavin SVCh sniper rifle (tactical drones), modern unmanned aerial vehicles, PPK-20 submachine gun and SVCh rifles which have high precision capacity to take down targets from 1200 metres.

### The West View:

#### Responses from the US and Europe

On 27 December, the Germany government approved arms exports amounting to EUR 8.9 billion, the second highest grant so far. Although Germany faces criticism for giving lethal aid to Ukraine, its reversal of military policy is seen as a turning point. The decision has irked the parliamentary defense committee, Chairwoman who criticised

Germany for short-sighted vision and stressed for a better strategy to deal the Ukraine war.

On 27 December, the Swedish government announced an additional aid of EUR 19 million for Ukraine. The aid will be sent through the UK's international support fund initiative to help Ukraine defence up its army capabilities. According to Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson: "The freedom and independence of the Ukrainian people is a prerequisite for a safe and secure Europe."

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 27 December, electricity manufacturer in Ukraine YASNO in reported that Ukraine was receiving stable level of electricity that was sufficient to distribute through temporary network installed. According to the Director, the temporary network is predicted to help maintain the electricity but is the possibility of the equipment behaviour remains uncertain.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 306**

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

On 26 December, Ukraine's *Zvezda* TV reported the blasts and death of three Russians in Engels military airfield base of Russia. The place of blast is seen as the military base of Tu-95 and Tu-160 "strategic

bombers."

On 26 December, Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Ministry reported on starting the process to remove the permanent membership status of Russia from the UN. In a statement the Ministry said that the UNSC membership to Russia and the 1991 Soviet Union dissolution is "unsettled" from the international law point. It stated that: "...accordance with Article 4 of the UN Charter. It provides that the admission of peace-loving states to membership in the United Nations is effected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council, and only in this way. [...]Therefore, the Russian Federation has never gone through the legal procedure to be admitted to membership and therefore illegally occupies the seat of the USSR in the UN Security Council."

On 26 December, Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) reported on neutralizing more than 4500 cyber attacks launched against Ukraine. The agency's Head, Ilya Vityuk stated that Ukraine's preparedness for hybrid warfare and its success in deterring major cyber attacks in January and February 2022. Vityuk said: "We know by name most of the hackers from the Russian special services working against us. After Ukraine wins, a separate block of hearings of the international military tribunal will await them."

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

On 26 December, Russian Defence Ministry claimed shooting down Ukraine's drone that attacked its Engels airfield. According to the report, the Saratov Region which is 900 kilometres from Kyiv was attacked, where three men were found dead due to the debris resulting from the blast. Despite the death, there were no material or infra damage reported in the area.

On 26 December, *RT* reported on Central Bank of Russia Deputy Chairman Aleksey Zabotkin comments on Russia's Ruble. He warned the existence of "volatility" in the Russian exchange since December and fall of the Ruble value exceeding eight month record against the USD. Zabotkin said: "The disinflationary contribution of the

strengthening of the ruble, which occurred in the second half of spring and summer, has ultimately been exhausted by now.”

On 26 December, *RT* reported on the France’s December survey held by “Le Journal du Dimanche,” to find the proportion of its people support to “talks plus arms,” or “peace talks.” The survey revealed that majority of people voted for arming Ukraine along with a peace solution. Seven out of 10 favoured for peace talks while providing military aid to Ukraine. The voter group included, 73 per cent of women, 75 per cent of people aged between 25 and 34. 73 per cent of public sector workers, and 72 per cent rural residents.

On 26 December, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Novak announced Russia’s intention to “restart” the supply of natural gas to the EU through Yamal-Europe Pipeline. Apart from the Yamal pipeline, Nord Stream was also stopped by Russia upon payment condition by Ruble and sanctions. Although through a transit line in Ukraine and TurkStream pipeline Russia has been sending gas, EU is seen a workable market for Russia.

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

On 26 December, in an interview with the *AP*, Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba announced the government’s demand for a “peace summit” at the UN by February to bring the war to an end. He stressed on avoiding the participation of Russia in the summit, with the *AP* observes it as not plausible way to end war. He said: “Every war ends as a result of the actions taken on the battlefield and at the negotiating table.” In response, the UN stated that it could mediate a meet only upon the consent of all parties. Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded: “..never followed conditions set by others. Only our own and common sense.”

On 26 December, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Belarusian Defence Ministry statement on the preparedness of the S-400 air defense system and the Iskander tactical missile systems sent by Russia. The Iskander missile systems which are capable to carry conventional and nuclear warheads can

target up to 500 kilometres to reach Ukraine and Poland. Whereas the S-400 is a Russian surface-to-air missile (SAM) with capacity to target aircraft, UAV’s, cruise missiles, and terminal ballistic missiles.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 26 December, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a phone call with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy where they discussed on G20, facilitating education for Indian students, and Ukraine war. Modi stressed on ending the hostility situation and reiterated his support for diplomacy and peace efforts to end the war.

On 26 December, *Ukrinform* reported on UAE’s first delivery of 1200 generators for Ukraine. The delivery comes part of the agreement between UAE and Ukraine under humanitarian aid. These will be used in health facility, education institutions, critical infra in the “Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa and Kyiv.” The next set of 1200 is expected to come by January 2023.

On 26 December, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s comments on China’s intention to improve ties with Russia in 2023. He stated: “..deepen strategic mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation.” In terms of the Ukraine war, Yi maintained that China has held “..fundamental principles of objectivity and impartiality,” as its position without siding with either of the party.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 304 & 305**

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

On 24 December, Ukraine Defence Minister warned over need for more weapons and ammunition pointing out the attacks it experienced in Kherson. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy assured the strength of Ukraine forces despite ongoing Russian aggression. He also confirmed the killing of 480 Russian troops.

On 25 December, Ukraine's energy grid operator, Ukrenergo announced its decision to emergency shutdown across Ukraine, especially in Kyiv due to high energy usage. The move comes in response to support the reconstruction work and to restore power grids that were damaged from the Russian shelling.

On 25 December, Zelenskyy reported on the call with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During the call they discussed on "Peace formula" proposed by Ukraine and urged India to stand for peace and promote dialogue to achieve solution.

### **Moscow View:**

#### **Claims by Russia**

On 25 December, Russia's Defence Ministry reported on the death of three upon a drone attack by Ukraine in one of its airbase located inside Russia. The Ministry claimed of shooting the drone down and the debris had killed the three. This will be the second attack in the airbase which is 450 miles into Russia. Although there has been claim by Ukraine on the drone attack, in response Russia forces shelled 40 rockets in Luhansk,

Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia areas.

On 25 December, in an interview with Russia's national TV, Russia's President Vladimir Putin accused the west in attempting to split Russia like the "Divide and Conquer" historical rule. He stressed that despite such efforts, Russia strives to unite its people. Russia's Interfax reported that Russian forces had been operating "around the clock" to excel new aircraft missile system positions.

### **West View:**

#### **Responses from the West and Europe**

On 24 December, the Netherlands government pledged EUR 2.5 billion as military aid to Ukraine for 2023. On 25 December, Russia's military was observed to be progressing in Bakhmut area in Donbass by ISW. It stated that Ukraine military had "pushed back" Russia's Wagner group from the position earlier.

On the same day, the UK Ministry of Defence reported on Russia's troops focus on building defensive positions since October in the front line. The defence include "anti-tank and anti-personnel mines."

On 25 December, Belarus Defence Ministry stated that the missile systems it holds that can carry nuclear warheads and S-400 air defence systems are ready to position when there is a need. This creates fear as Belarus is viewed as close ally to Russia by the EU and the US and a possible threat to Ukraine due to Belarus President closure with Putin.

### **Global Fallouts:**

#### **Implications of the War in Ukraine**

On 24 December, the music artist Pink Floyd band raised USD 600,000 in support of Ukraine through the song "Hey Hey Rise Up." On 25 December, China's Foreign Minister reiterated China's stance in Ukraine war and stated that China would further its ties with Russia in 2023. He said: "...deepen strategic mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation."

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"Russia-Ukraine war at a glance: what we know on day 306 of the invasion," *The Guardian*, 26 December 2022

### **War in Ukraine: Day 303**

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

On 23 December, Ukraine's Culture Minister reported on destruction of theatre in Mariupol along with killing of civilians through airstrikes. The same was confirmed by Amnesty International, an independent organization through investigation. It stated that Russia's attack on the building was "deliberate" and is observed to be a war crime.

On 23 December, Eastern Ukraine's regional military administration Head reported on continued shelling in the Kherson city by Russia. The city which Russia withdrew in November was observed to be shelled 61 times including residential buildings, educational centres, and a kinder garden.

On 23 December, Ukraine's Grain Association Head issued a statement on the status of the grain harvest. He stated that the harvest has reduced by 40 per cent and expects the harvest to be between 65 to 66 million tonnes by end of 2022. In 2021, Ukraine had a record of exporting 106 tonnes and since the war due to fuel shortage and issues in sowing, the harvest was affected.

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

On 23 December, Russia's President Vladimir Putin issued an order to the defence industry Chief to make sure the Russian army is equipped with military hardware and weapons in the least amount of time to counter Ukraine. Putin also asked to address the issues relating to weapon delivery. On the same, Russia's arms manufacturer promised to meet the demands of the military officers by taking maximum efforts.

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

On 23 December, upon Putin mentioned the special military operation in Ukraine as "war" for first time in a public address, the US issued a statement asking Putin to assess the war situation and withdraw troops.

On the same day, Germany's Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck highlighted the finding of German Intelligence supporting Russia to be "alarming." The responsible was arrested under suspicion for sharing states information with Russia.

#### **Global Fallout: Implications of the War in Ukraine**

Israel's Mossad spy agency Head reported on Iran's efforts to amplify its support of "advanced weapons" to Russia. The disclosure comes after the US had previously revealed over a "full-scale defence partnership" between Iran and Russia.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 302**

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

On 22 December, in a briefing, Ukraine's First Deputy Prime Minister and Economy Minister Yuliya Svyridenko said that the Economic Ministry predict a fall of Russia's fossil fuel export profits to be more than 50 per cent due to the EU introducing a price cap and embargo on oil and petroleum products. The Ministry expects Russia's revenue to fall below the USD 40 billion per quarter year level. The Ministry also predicted that the change from centralized energy courses to power generators in business will increase inflation by one to two per cent points in 2023. Svyridenko estimates that the GDP will decrease by 33.2-33.5 per cent by the end of 2022. The Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure will impact its economy negatively. According to Svyridenko, the Ministry predicts a possibility of a state budget amendment.

On 22 December, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with Poland's President Andrzej Duda in the saviour city of Rzeszow while returning from the US. Both leaders discussed the summary of 2022, including the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. Zelenskyy and Duda also discussed Ukraine strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation in the global arena in 2023. Zelenskyy emphasized increasing Ukraine's

defence capabilities and humanitarian assistance. He pointed out that the temporary Ukrainian migrants who fled from the war in Ukraine face humanitarian issues and migration problems.

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

On 21 December, *RT* reported that Russia's President Vladimir Putin addressed a Defence Ministry Board meeting pointing out five key points from the war in Ukraine. First, the West viewed Russia as a threat and try to bring it down. Second, the West's interference with former Soviet republics resulting in the ongoing war and how Russia considers striking down its brotherly country, Ukraine, a tragedy. Third, confrontation with NATO and how the war had taught Russia's mistakes and NATO's tactics. Fourth, the development of Russia's nuclear technology and weapons. The last, modernizing Russia's military and increasing the usage of UAVs and advancement in drone technology. Putin also suggested modernizing communication systems and the usage of artificial intelligence.

On 22 December, in a press conference, Putin remarked that Russia was displaying better economic results than many G20 countries. The press conference followed the Russian State Council meeting. Putin said: "As for the economy, despite the collapse, disarray and catastrophe predicted for us in the economic sphere, nothing of the kind has happened. Moreover, Russia demonstrates much better results than many countries of the G20, and demonstrates it consistently." According to Putin, the sanctions imposed by the West resulted in an energy crisis and called the EU's sanctions economic suicide.

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

On 22 December, the US Senate approved the plan to use Russia's confiscated assets to help Ukraine with its efforts in the war against Russia. The amendment to the US law that restricted the usage of Russian assets will be passed with the USD 1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill to fund the government and aid Ukraine. The amendment also relieves the pressure from US taxpayers, who in turn provide aid to

Ukraine. The fund will also be used for the reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine.

On 20 December, the UK's Defence Minister Ben Wallace stated the updates on the war in Ukraine and the UK's continued military assistance at the Parliament in London. He pointed out Russia's and Putin's continued failure in the ongoing war. He criticized Putin's military policies and his responsibility for committing war crimes against Ukrainians. He mentioned the UK's contribution to aiding Ukraine with military and humanitarian supplies. He said that the UK had spent more than GBP 2.3 billion as military aid to Ukraine. It has allied with the US, Poland, Slovakia and the Baltic States to increase its support to Ukraine. The UK has also helped train Ukrainian troops. According to Wallace, the UK will stand up for freedom, human rights and international laws in 2023 against Russia's aggression.

On 22 December, White House National Security Council spokesperson, John Kirby said that US intelligence officials have discovered weapons trade completion from North Korea to Russia's mercenary group, Wagner. The arms shipment included infantry rockets and missiles. Wagner group's owner, Yevgeny Pirogzhin, denied the accusation stating that it was gossip and speculation. North Korea also denied any involvement with Russia in the weapons trade.

On 22 December, the UK's Defence Ministry intelligence reported in a tweet that Russian reservist soldiers were being trained in Belarus by Belarusian instructors. The training showed the capabilities of the inexperienced Russian reservists as most of the experienced Russian soldiers were either fighting or a casualty of the war. It also showed overstretching of the Russian military system by assigning Belarusian soldiers as instructors as they are considered to be inferior to Russian soldiers.

### **Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine**

On 20 December, Ukraine's Humanitarian Coordinator Denise Brown committed an additional USD 20 million from the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF). The

humanitarian aid will help support Ukrainians and 300 civil society organizations. The humanitarian groups and organizations in Ukraine will provide humanitarian requirements to those in need.

On 22 December, the G7 member states' Foreign Ministers agreed to increase their supply of air defence systems to Ukraine to strengthen its aerial prowess against Russian attacks. Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said: "Every rocket that Ukraine takes out of the sky means a bit less suffering for the people in Ukraine." The decision was taken in the G7 Foreign Ministers' virtual meeting that was chaired by Baerbock.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 301

### War on the Ground:

On 20 December, Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba addressed the Georgia Ukraine Azerbaijan Moldova Organization (GUAM)'s ministerial meeting virtually. Kuleba said that Ukraine will take a decisive and productive role during its GUAM presidency in 2023 despite the ongoing war with Russia. Kuleba pointed out five priorities that will be addressed during Ukraine's GUAM presidency in 2023. First, Guam member states' protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Second, the establishment of new economic opportunities and development in trade between European and Asian markets; third, the development of the free trade zone's full functions; fourth, dialogue with the European Commission on the GUAM Transport Corridor; fifth, customs procedures simplification and an extensive approach to logistics within GUAM Transport Corridor. Kuleba also urged the

GUAM member states to condemn Russia's aggression in Ukraine and place sanctions against it.

On 21 December, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the US to meet President Joseph Biden to discuss extensive cooperation between both countries. The cooperation aimed to strengthen Ukraine's defensive capabilities and restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Zelenskyy also met with the US Congress' House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Zelenskyy requested further military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine from the US Congress. In his address at the joint meeting of the US Congress, Zelenskyy stated: "Your money is not charity. It's an investment in the global security and democracy that we handle in the most responsible way," about the US aid to Ukraine.

### **The Moscow View:**

#### **Claims by Russia**

On 21 December, TASS reported that following several months of investigation, there was no evidence pointing to Russia as the perpetrator behind the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipeline explosions. According to TASS, 23 diplomatic and intelligence officials from nine countries including from the CIA claimed that there was no proof found Russia sabotaging the pipelines. They were interviewed by the Washington Post. According to the investigations, the saboteur remains unclear.

On 21 December, Russia's President Vladimir Putin virtually launched the new Siberian gas field which increases gas export to China. The Kovykta gas field will supply Russian gas to China via the Power of Siberia pipeline. The gas field contains recoverable reserves of 1.8 trillion cubic metres.

### **The West View:**

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

On 21 December, US President Biden issued economic, military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine during his joint press conference with Zelenskyy. Biden stated that he approved a USD 1.85 billion military aid package to Ukraine. The package will include a direct transfer of equipment and artillery, tanks and rocket launchers ammunition supply. The package will also include a Patriot missile battery, which will be provided to Ukraine to strengthen its air defence. Biden also announced that the total amount of humanitarian assistance provided by the US to Ukraine on 21 December was USD 2.2 billion. Biden said that the US Congress had unanimously approved an additional USD 45 billion in funds for Ukraine. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) also pledged USD 374 million in humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian people. The USAID's assistance will provide food and monetary help to Ukrainians.

On 21 December, *Reuters* reported that Belarus announced restricting access to a part of the border zone with Russia and Ukraine temporarily. The Gomel region in the southeastern part of Belarus that borders Russia and Ukraine will have temporary restrictions on entering, staying

and moving within the Loevsky, Braginsky and Khoyniki districts of the region. Belarusian government said that the restriction would not apply to officials, workers and residents of the regions. However, it did not mention the duration of the restriction.

### **The Global Fallouts:**

#### **Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 20 December, *Reuters* reported that the World Bank had approved a USD 610 million urgent financial package to address Ukraine's immediate recovery and relief needs amid the ongoing war with Russia. The package will include an additional USD 500 million loan from World Bank's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The USD 610 million financial package will fund the Public Expenditures for Administrative Capacity Endurance (PEACE) project, which covers government expenditures relating to family and children's benefits, public employees' salaries, and utility payments and Health Enhancement and Life-saving (HEAL) project, which will help in restoring and improving access to healthcare services in Ukraine. The World Bank package is in addition to its USD 18 billion aid, out of which USD 15 billion had already been disbursed.

On 21 December, during his meeting with Russia's former President and Security Council Chairman, Dmitry Medvedev, President Xi Jinping said: "China together with Russia intends to facilitate a fairer and more rational implementation of global governance." Xi wants China and Russia to have a stable bilateral interaction and follow both countries' long-term strategic interests. He also said that China will have a new approach to its bilateral relations with Russia.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 300**

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

On 20 December, the Kyiv Regional Military Administration reported on 80 per cent power outage in Bucha, Vyshgorod, Obukhiv districts which hold close to 30 communities. This has led to increased repair works and restoration of power supply lines.

On 20 December, Ukraine and Space Exploration Technologies Corp of Elon Musk signed a deal to receive 10,000 Starlink antennas to counter air attacks of Russia. According to Ukraine’s Deputy Prime Minister, the device that provide internet services will be installed at “points of invincibility locations,” to ensure the supply of power, heating and internet. The move is seen as a measure against the Russian attacks on targeted infrastructure.

On 20 December, Ukraine Armed Forces Commander reported on aircrafts and interceptors loaded with Kinzhal air-

launched ballistic missiles were observed to be training in Belarus’s air space. In response, Ukraine has been increasing its force in the area close to Belarus.

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

On 20 December, RT reported on Russian President Vladimir Putin’s address to the security services. In the address, he appreciated the efforts of the Russia’s security services in dealing the domestic and external threats. Putin said: “Fighting terrorism remains one of the key priorities for all security services... Crowded places, strategic facilities, as well as transport and energy infrastructure must be under special control.” He stressed on the counter intelligence agencies to put an end to foreign special services and spot spies and traitors.

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

On 20 December, The Guardian reported on Putin’s comments on the security situation in the eastern Ukraine. As per the report, Russia’s annexation order to occupy Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson made 15 per cent of Ukraine. This is observed to have changed with increasing logistic challenges, thereby turning around Russia’s annexation goal.

On 20 December, UK Defence Minister Ben Wallace reported on Russia’s plan to send “advanced military components” to Iran in exchange of the drones. He said: “In return for having supplied more than 300 kamikaze drones...undermining both Middle East and international security.” On the same, Germany has accused Iran for delivering arms to Russia and for helping in prolonging the conflict.

### **The Global Fallout: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 20 December, China announced the start of the naval drills from 21 December for China and Russia to boost the cooperation. The drills will be held in the coast of Zhejiang province till 27 December by the Eastern theatre command.

On 20 December, the IMF granted a four-month programme called as “Program

Monitoring with Board involvement (PMB) for Ukraine. This is aimed to give it judicious policies and accelerate “external financing.” In a statement IMF First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath said: “Large and predictable external financial support will be critical for the success of the authorities’ strategy, and frontloaded disbursements would help address strains in early 2023.”

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## War in Ukraine: Day 299

### War on the Ground:

On 19 December, Ukraine’s National Security and Defence Council Secretary Oleksandr Danylyuk reported on Russia’s plan to sell west-manufactured weapons from the occupied parts of Ukraine to terrorists and radical organizations within the NATO member states. According to Ukraine’s intelligence source, the weapons are predicted to be directed to extremist groups in NATO countries to create chaos and disrupt the western weapons supply to Ukraine. He stated that Russia aims to spread misinformation about the US lack of arms control supply to Ukraine by providing the seized US weapons from Ukraine to extremist organizations.

On 19 December, *Ukrinform* reported that Ukrainian artists from Lviv Artists’ National Union organization held 50 auctions to raise money to aid Ukraine’s Armed Forces in the

ongoing war. According to a Derehus award-winning Ukrainian Artist, Ihor Hryshkevych, the latest auction on 17 December raises UAH 200,000. The auctions help the Armed Forces financially in the war.

On 19 December, *Ukrinform* reported that a Russian suicidal drone attacked Ukraine’s capital Kyiv at night, damaging the city’s critical energy infrastructures. Kyiv implemented emergency power outages due to the drone attack. Engineers started to work on restoring the power and heating supply in Kyiv.

On 19 December, Ukraine’s Zhytomyr region Mayor, Serhiy Sukhomlyn reported in a Facebook post that the region will receive 20 buses from Estonia in January 2023, free of cost. The business meeting between Zhytomyr and Tallinn representatives met to confirm Estonia’s humanitarian aid to Ukraine. The aid looks to ease Zhytomyr residents from energy and electricity issues due to interruptions from Russian attacks.

On 19 December, *Ukrinform* reported that Ukraine’s air defence forces from Air Command South struck down 10 Iranian-made Shahed-136 kamikaze drones that were fired by Russia. The southern direction faced incoming drone attacks sent by Russia. Ukraine’s nuclear energy generator, Energoatom also reported in a Telegram post that Russia’s kamikaze drones were sighted near the Southern Ukrainian nuclear power plants. Energoatom is concerned about the risks involving an attack on nuclear power plants.

On 19 December, Ukraine’s electricity transmission system operator Ukrenergo reported that it received energy infrastructure restoration equipment worth USD 100,000 from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The equipment is being installed in a substation affected by Russian attacks. The humanitarian aid includes devices that allow Ukrenergo to manage technological processes and monitor the substation to detect any issues on time and prevent accidents. The aid will help Ukrainians restore power supply stability throughout the winter in one region.

### **The Moscow View:**

#### **Claims by Russia**

On 19 December, Russia's President Vladimir Putin met with Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko in Minsk. The meeting will take place in a one-on-one discussion on integrated gas sector programs between Belarus and Russia. Putin, Lukashenko and their delegates will discuss various issues such as trade and economic agenda, and military, regional and international problems. Putin's Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said: "The entire spectrum of bilateral ties, trade and economic cooperation, part integration concerns," as the meeting's agenda.

On 19 December, Russia's Foreign Ministry reported on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meet with Belarus' Foreign Minister Sergey Aleinik to discuss the war in Ukraine and ways to resist western sanctions. They also discussed bilateral issues faced within the Union State and other Eurasian organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Russia's chairmanship in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Belarus's chairmanship of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

On 19 December, Russia's Defence Ministry's reported on launch of four US-made AGM-88 HARM aircraft, which shot anti-radar missiles, were intercepted by Russian air defence systems over the Belgorod region. The Ministry added that its air defence system shot down six rockets fired from the US-made HIMARS launchers and the Soviet Uragan systems in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and the Zaporizhzhia region. The Ukrainian attacks have left the Russian region without a power supply as it had damaged Belgorod's energy infrastructure.

### **The West View:**

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

On 19 December, the EU agreed on a temporary mechanism to limit the "excessive gas prices." The mechanism is seen as a market correction strategy to protect the people and economies from high gas prices, and to ensure it does not affect global market, energy supplies and financial

market. According to the agreement the mechanism will be activated, if the month ahead price, the TTF (Title transfer facility) goes above EUR 180 per Megawatt hour (MhW) for three continuous working days and there is an increase of EUR 35 per MhW in the global market for the same time. Once activated the price cut will remain for 20 days and the gas suppliers will be allowed to trade only within the set limit. Thereby giving no room for "Dynamic bidding limit." This has created fear amongst Germany, as it predicts the price limit will push away the gas supplier to sell in other markets. In response, Russian spokesperson Dimitry Peskov has stated the deal as an "attack on the market pricing," and "unacceptable."

On 19 December, the UK's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will travel to Latvia to discuss countering Russia's aggression in the Nordic and Baltic regions with Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) member states. Sunak plans to urge the JEF member states leaders to increase their support to Ukraine in 2023, more than they did in 2022. At the JEF summit, the member state officials will discuss Ukraine's defence needs including air defence systems. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended the summit virtually and requested aid to Ukraine from the JEF member states, especially an increase in the supply of air defence systems. The UK also announced a contract of GBP 250 million worth of artillery ammunition with Ukraine in 2023 to ensure its constant supply.

On 19 December, Latvia organizes a charity marathon, which will provide funds for the refugee children in Latvia to meet their basic needs. The marathon named "Give me five!" started on 16 December, aims to help Ukrainian children refugees in Latvia. The charity raised EUR 230, 838 in three days. The marathon will last till 22 December. NGO Ziedot.lv, which is a partner of the marathon requested Latvians to contribute to the charity.

On 19 December, the UK's Defence Ministry's intelligence report stated that the Russian mercenary group, Wagner, has been leading a group of poorly trained convicts in the Donetsk region. They are monitored via

satellites and UAVs. The experienced Wagner uses the convicts as fodder in the war and sees them as expandable assets. The Wagner group also gives the Russian army in Donetsk additional firepower.

On 19 December, *EURACTIV* reported that President Putin had ordered Russia's Federal Security Services (FSB) to increase its surveillance on Russian society for the safety of the citizens from foreign attacks and traitors. Putin also ordered FSB to increase security at the border to prevent the entry of foreign special services and also to flush out traitors and spies. He said to FSB: "...significantly improve your work in key areas, and use your operational, technical and personnel potential to the fullest." Putin assured the safety of the occupied regions from Ukraine by supplying experienced soldier units with modern weapons and equipment.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 19 December, Syria received 500,000 tonnes of Ukrainian wheat shipment from Russia in 2022. The wheat export is sent to Syria from Sevastopol port in Crimea via the Black Sea. A report on the shipments was released by the Ukrainian Embassy in Beirut. The Embassy tracked the shipments from January to November 2022. The report stated that Russia and Syria had used their ships to transport grain to Syria, including the three US-sanctioned Syrian ships, the *Laodicea*, the *Finikia* and the *Souria*. According to the report, Ukraine accused Russia of stealing its agricultural supply to export to Syria.

On 19 December, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani refuted the US CIA's Director William Burn's claim that military cooperation between Iran and Russia is the cause of damage to Ukrainian energy infrastructures. Kanani said that Iran does not intend its relations with Russia to cause any harm to other countries. He also said: "...acts independently in regulating its foreign relations and does not seek permission from anyone," about Iran's foreign policy and its relations with Russia. Iran also accused the US of creating a propaganda war against it with baseless

political claims and false allegations concerning its relations with Russia.

On 19 December, *TRT world* reported that Russia and China will conduct naval drills from 21 to 27 December amid the ongoing war in Ukraine. The naval exercise aims to strengthen the relations between China and Russia. It will involve military and artillery firing in the East China Sea. The Russian Defence Ministry said: "The main purpose of the exercises is to strengthen naval cooperation between Russia and China, and maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region."

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 297 & 298**

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

On 18 December, Ukraine’s electricity transmission system operator, Ukrenergo, reported in a Facebook post that the nuclear plants had reached their maximum capacity of usage. The fall in temperature and the Russian missile attack damages have increased energy demand and electricity consumption in Ukraine. Ukrenergo said that the weather conditions are making the energy infrastructure restoration process harder.

On 18 December, Russian fuel storage in Alchevsk in the Luhansk region exploded resulting in fire spreading in the city. Explosions occurred in the Russian-occupied Crimea, Belgorod and Kursk.

On 18 December, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed virtually on Ukraine’s Instagram page his peace formula proposal. He urged all countries to unite for global peace and to end the war in Ukraine. Zelenskyy announced the initiative to hold the Global Peace Formula Summit in the winter. He requested FIFA to share his message before the 2022 world cup finals. However, FIFA declined Zelenskyy’s request.

On 18 December, the Adviser to the President’s Office Head, Mykhailo Podolyak reported in a tweet that Ukraine would not participate in any new agreements or compromises, like the Minsk agreement, that favour Russia. According to Podolyak, Russia’s loss, withdrawal and reparation would restore the world’s security, peace and stability.

On 17 December, Ukraine’s Deputy Prime Minister and Reintegration Minister, Iryna Vereshchuk reported in a *Telegram* post that Poland was planning to become Ukraine’s economic hub and also a logistics hub. Poland aims to introduce a new law which provides insurance against risks for investors, investing in Ukraine’s reconstruction. Vereshchuk urged other countries to participate in a similar venture as Poland.

On 17 December, in his address, President Zelenskyy said that the energy was restored for 6 million Ukrainians. He urged Ukraine’s allied countries to lend air defence systems to repel Russian attacks. Zelenskyy added that Ukraine needed air defence systems to counter Russian missile strikes. The air defence systems will restrict Russia from terrorizing Ukrainians through missiles and improve the chance for the restoration of peace in the region.

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

On 18 December, Russia’s Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu visited the military force to inspect the soldiers taking part in the special military operation. He visited the southern military district troops. The Defence Ministry released a clip of Shoigu’s helicopter conducting an aerial inspection. He also met with the commanders of the

military to get the on-ground report.

On 17 December, *RT* reported that Russia started constructing a protective dome above the used radioactive fuel storage at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). The dome shield will protect from the Ukrainian forces' attack from drones and missiles. According to Russia's nuclear energy company Rosatom, attacks on spent nuclear fuel containers could result in releasing radioactive materials into the atmosphere. Rosatom warned that the attacks could lead to a disaster like Chernobyl.

On 17 December, *TASS* reported that at least ten explosions occurred in Russia-controlled Donetsk People's Republic. According to the DPR's mission to the Joint Center for Control and Coordination, Ukraine's Armed Forces had launched ten Grad rockets at Donetsk.

On 17 December, *TASS* reported that Russia declined talks between NATO and itself amid the Ukraine war and the western sanctions. Russia wants NATO to be dismantled from the international platforms. Russia stated that it does not need the security guarantee that was proposed by NATO in 2021 due to them being incompatible parties.

On 17 December, *TASS* reported that Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Grushko called out to the EU to lift its sanctions on Russian agricultural exports. Grushko asked the EU to remove direct and indirect sanctions that impede Russian agricultural exports to strengthen global food security. He added: "This includes transportation services, the possibility for Russian ships to enter foreign ports, insurance issues, transaction restrictions on Russian agricultural companies, legal entities and individuals, as well as the need to lift sanctions on the Russian Agricultural Bank and reconnect it to the SWIFT system," about the direct and indirect restrictions on Russian agricultural exports.

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

On 16 December, The Netherlands government updated the total amount of military aid given to Ukraine. The total

amount of military aid that the Netherlands has provided amounted to EUR 987 million. The Netherlands also announced allocating EUR 25 million to a NATO fund as military assistance to Ukraine. The fund will be used for fuel, clothes and medical supplies instead of weapons.

On 17 December, the UK's Defence Ministry intelligence reported in a tweet that the Russian forces has increased their aerial and naval cruise missile strikes to damage Ukraine's energy infrastructure. The UK intelligence deduced that Iranian made-UAVs had changed their launch sites from Crimea to Russia's Krasnodar region due to Crimea's vulnerability and convenient region for resupplying the drones as it is near the trade point at Astrakhan.

On 17 December, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)'s director William Burns stated that China is concerned about Russia's failure to invade Ukraine. According to Burns, China is worried about Russia using nuclear weapons. He said that China's President Xi Jinping is cautious about supporting Russia in the war and sceptical about Russia winning the war.

### **Global Fallout: Implications of the War in Ukraine**

On 17 December, Azerbaijan's temporary trustee of its Embassy in Ukraine, Sabir Rzayev announced that Azerbaijan would provide 45 transformers and 50 generators worth AZN 1 million 422 thousand as humanitarian aid to Ukraine. The humanitarian assistance intends to relieve Ukraine from its electricity shortage through the winter following the Russian missile attack which damaged Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 296 (16 dec)**

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

On 16 December, Kryvyi Rih, districts of Kharkiv was heavily shelled by Russia using 76 missiles which was observed as largest attacks in December. According to Mayor Ihor Terekhov, the infrastructural damage was "colossal" which damaged the energy system. The attacks continue to be intense in Luhansk area.

On 16 December, Ukraine's state energy company Ukrenergo stated that the energy consumption had decreased by 50 per cent due to Russian shelling of thermal power

plant, hydroelectric plants, and substation networks. It reported that the restoration would take longer, but the process is carried out on prioritizing "critical infrastructure facilities."

### **Moscow view: Claims by Russia**

On 16 December, Russia's President Vladimir Putin claimed on receiving proposal from armed commanders on how Russia can plan its military campaign in Ukraine. This took place during Putin's visit to the operation headquarters. Russia announced the upcoming meet between Putin and Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, where both are expected to discuss on international agenda and security issues.

On 16 December, Putin held a call India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where Putin provided "fundamental assessments" on the war situation upon request. During the call, Modi reiterated on dialogue and diplomacy as only solution to end the conflict.

### **West View: Response from the West and Europe**

On 16 December, the US providing glimpse on the upcoming security aid package to Ukraine. It plans to include air defence systems, but it denied the Russian claims on providing the complex patriot air defence to Ukraine.

On the same day, the European Defence Agency suggested joint purchase of army stocks by the EU after helping Ukraine as it fears the US might not protect the EU all time. According to the Chief Executive: "The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine demonstrates our capability shortfalls." Therefore, the agency plans to jointly buy equipment and ammunition.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 295**

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

On 15 December, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that the Russian Armed Forces had launched more than 16 attacks on Kherson. Ukraine's President Office Deputy Head Kyrylo Tymoshenko said: "The enemy hit the centre of the city again, 100 metres from the Kherson Regional Military Administration which was attacked yesterday." He added that two civilians were killed as a result of the attack. Zelenskyy later said that in a separate strike on Kherson, a Red Cross volunteer was killed when one of the "projectiles" hit the Red Cross aid station.

On 15 December, the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council Chairman Mykola Lukashuk reported that Russian forces have shelled Chervonohryhorivka, Marhanets, and Nikopol districts killing one. Lukashuk added the Russian forces used Grad MLRS and heavy artillery shells to attack residential neighbourhoods in the three districts. The attack killed a 65-year-old man and left five others injured. He added that the attacks damaged power and gas lines, private houses, five-story apartment blocks, a school, a college, shops, a healthcare facility, a filling station and cars.

On 15 December, the Ukrainian Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food released the data on Ukrainian agricultural exports as a part of the grain deal. The Ministry stated that as of 14 December, 554 vessels carrying around 13.9 million tons of agricultural products have left the ports of the Odesa Oblast. Of the 13.9 million tons of agricultural goods, four million tons of wheat and 5.9 million tons of corn were exported. It also said that in the past two weeks, agricultural exports have increased by 1.6 million tonnes out of which shipments of wheat and corn increased by 399 thousand tonnes and 911 thousand tonnes respectively. The Ministry added that in December 25.08 per cent of total shipments of wheat have been exported to Africa alone which amounts to over one million tonnes. It also added that on 14 December four ships left for Asia carrying over 69.5 thousand tonnes of agricultural products.

On 14 December, Ukraine's Ministry of Defence announced that 65 people were returned to Ukraine as a part of the latest exchange of Prisoners of War (POW). According to the Ministry out of the 65 people released, 59 are Ukraine Armed Forces personnel, five are territorial defence fighters and a US citizen named Suedi Murekezi. Murekezi was arrested back in June in Kherson by the Russians for "participating in pro-Ukrainian rallies." It also said that four bodies of military personnel were returned by Russia. Out of the 65 returned, 23 reportedly are injured with some in serious condition. The prisoners returned were mostly captured on the frontlines in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts.

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

On 15 December, DPR's Acting Head Denis Pushilin said that Ukrainian Armed Forces had shelled Donetsk killing one. Calling it the first attack on Donetsk since 2014, Pushilin said that the Ukrainian Armed Forces launched 40 shells and hit residential buildings and civilian infrastructure. He added that the attacks resulted in one dead and 11 injured. Pushilin called these attacks "terror" against the civilians and added that it was being encouraged by the West through the continued supply of arms to Ukraine.

On 15 December, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that in the past five months Russia has exported around 22 million metric tons of grain mostly to Asia and Africa. Speaking at the Strategic Development and National Projects Council meeting, Putin added that by the end of 2022 Russia can supply approximately an additional five million metric tons of grain to the global market. He said that Russia in the global market is one of the top suppliers of grain, fertilizers and vegetable oil. Putin added that by 30 June 2023 Russia would like to increase the total grain exports to 50 million metric tons. He emphasised that: "At the same time, satisfaction of domestic needs and faithful performance of obligations under foreign contracts is the unconditional priority for us."

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

On 14 December, Canada's Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson issued a statement revoking the temporary sanctions waiver on Russia. The waiver allowed the transportation and repair of the turbine in Montreal and the transit of the same to Germany. In a joint statement: "Putin has been forced to show that his intention was never to return Nord Stream 1 to full operation and that the pipeline itself has been rendered inoperable." The decision comes after consultation with Germany and EU member states.

On 15 December, the Pentagon announced the expansion of the training efforts of the US for the Ukrainian military soldiers in Germany. Through this decision, 500 Ukrainians will be trained every month, reducing the requirement for US troops to be deployed in Europe. So far 3,100 Ukrainian troops have been trained by the US on how to handle "...howitzers, armoured vehicles and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System."

On 15 December, Deutsche Welle reported on a refugee poll conducted by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The poll was held amongst the 11,225 refugees in Germany, which revealed that close to 37 per cent of Ukrainians who took refuge in Germany due to the war have wished to settle permanently or to stay in Germany for longer years. Out of which 17 per cent belonging to working age, have been employed, two per cent plan to leave in a year's time and 27 per cent remain undecided.

On 15 December, the UK Ministry of Defence in its latest intelligence update quoted a low possibility for a Russia, Belarus joint military exercise and a combined attack in northern Ukraine. The earlier deployment of Russian troops in Belarus had created fear amongst the Ukrainians for a possible strike.

**The Global Fallouts:****Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 15 December, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk warned about the

worsening stake of civilians due to the targeted attacks of Russians. He said: "Additional strikes could lead to a further serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation and spark more displacement." He reported that close to 10 million families face a shortage in electricity, water and heat and close to 1.5 million children are vulnerable to depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

On 15 December, the UN reported that more than 14 million metric tonnes of grain so far have been exported out due to the Black Sea deal. This has resulted in reducing global food prices for the last seven months.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 294**

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

On 14 December, the Ukraine Military reported on taking down of 13 Iran made Shahed drones in Kyiv. The attack is seen as first major in the week after drones' attacks inside Russia. Although no casualties were recorded, the five buildings were damaged.

On 14 December, the Ministry of Energy of Ukraine issued a statement on Germany's aid to support Ukraine's energy infrastructure. In a statement, EUR 30 million was announced by the Federal Government of Germany to help Ukraine purchase equipment's to restore the damaged energy infrastructure. Germany will join the list along with Denmark, the UK, and the Association of European Energy Regulators (ERRA) to provide funds for energy support.

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

On 14 December, RT reported on the involvement of UK jurists in training 90 Ukrainian judges on conducting trials against Russia for accused war crimes. Attorney General Victoria Prentis said: "A horrifying catalogue of war crimes, with more than 43,000 cases recorded." She assured to help the Ukrainian judges to "navigate" through them. She also added: "These 90 judges will go back after some really intensive training, able better to run those courts."

On 14 December, RT responded to the NATO new budget for 2023. The civil budget which contains EUR 370.8 million, and the military budget containing EUR 1.96 billion indicates an increase by 27.8 and 25.8 per cent. It stated that the reason behind the increase in rate was due to many members stepping

forward to increase their defence spending.

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

On 14 December, the UK Armed Forces Chief Adm Sir Tony Radakin stated that there was a "critical shortage" faced by Russia in conducting its ground operations. He added: "This means that their ability to conduct successful offensive ground operations is rapidly diminishing."

On 14 December, Bulgaria reached its full operational capacity under NATO's support. NATO reported on the battlegroup which was established on 01 March after the Ukraine war began was able to install full capacity in Bulgaria's battle group. This was possible with help from Albania, Greece, Italy, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the United States, who helped in deploying military personal which totalled the troops to 1000. According to NATO, this indicates a "transatlantic bond" and a model for "largest reinforcement" of collective defence.

On 13 December, the European Commission decision to impose an energy price cap on Russian crude oil has been delayed. During the meeting the EU ministers have approved two measures. These will help in protecting the EU from the gas shortage through "joint gas purchases," and speed the process for renewable energy "installations," which will be put into practise after the price cap is set. The suggested price limit was EUR 275 per megawatt hour if the price of gas remained at same level for two continuous weeks.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 13 December, a conference was held in Paris involving 700 French companies to discuss on their role in the reconstruction process of Ukraine. It was attended by 46 delegations from countries across and many international organisation met to pledge EUR one billion in form of subsidies, materials to help Ukraine in winter. According to French President Emmanuel Macron: "Whenever a territory is reconquered, reconstruction needs to start immediately. Ukraine's economy must stay solid, as it will be the backbone of the rebuilding process." During the conference

the French firms and Ukraine signed a deal worth EUR 100 million for “supply of rails, mobile bridges and seeds.”

On 14 December, International Organization for Migration (IOM) published a report on Ukrainians willing to exit Ukraine in winter. It found that only seven per cent of them were in favour to move out despite power cuts, scarce resources, and low savings. According to the IOM Chief of Mission stated that more than five million people who were initially displaced has returned homes now and 40 per cent of the population is still in need of immediate aid.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 293

### War on the Ground:

On 13 December, Ukraine’s Energy Minister German Galushchenko disclosed the reconnection of the ninth 1,000-megawatt power unit of Energoatom’s nuclear power plants to the Ukrainian power grid. The restored power units in Ukraine-controlled regions provide electricity to its people and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). The ZNPP consumes at least 100 megawatts of electricity from Ukraine’s power grid.

On 13 December, Ukraine received a EUR

one billion loan from France’s Development Agency on subsidized conditions. One, the loan’s interest rate will be 1.04 per cent per annum for 15 years from the date of the loan’s agreement. Two, the grace period for deferring loan repayment will be more than five years from the loan’s issuance. The loan will be directed to the state budget to finance immediate needs such as social and humanitarian expenditures.

On 13 December, Ukraine’s Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal met IAEA’s Director General Rafael Grossi to discuss ZNPP’s demilitarization in Paris. Grossi promised that IAEA will send permanent technical missions to Ukraine to foresee all nuclear plants from Zaporizhzhia to Chornobyl. Shmyhal and Grossi expressed the importance of ZNPP’s safety and security from Russian attacks and discussed necessary steps for demilitarization.

On 13 December, Ukraine’s Security Service (SBU) arrested a Russian agent who had links with the Russian mercenary group, Wagner PMC (a private military company). The Russian agent who was a local resident of Odesa, was investigated thoroughly by the SBU for information leaks. Following the investigation of his phone, they found that the Russian agent had been sharing classified information, pictures and digital maps with Russia. The SBU detained him before he revealed information on Ukraine’s coastal defence units, estimated soldiers, weapons and military equipment used for the protection of Odesa’s coast.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 13 December, Lenta.ru reported that Russia’s Presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov comments on Ukraine’s new realities for achieving peace. Peskov said that Ukraine should accept the reality of the four regions- Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republic, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia being a part of Russia, following the results of the referendum. He said: “Without taking these new realities into account, any progress is impossible.” Peskov also mentioned that Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s three steps that he announced to the G7 leader will escalate the war rather than

bring peace. The three steps were, one, providing military aid to Ukraine. Two, providing financial, energy and social stability assistance to Ukraine in 2023 and three, implementation of the 10-step peace formula that was proposed by Zelenskyy. Peskov said that these steps were aimed to continue the war and not stopping them.

On 13 December, Russia's Defence Ministry spokesperson Lieutenant-General Igor Konashenkov announced that Russia would continue its offensive operations in the Donetsk region. He said that Russian forces were able to intercept Ukraine's counterattack three times. Konashenkov reported: "As a result of fire damage, more than 30 Ukrainian servicemen, four armoured combat vehicles and three pickup trucks were destroyed."

On 13 December, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said that the Council of Europe had taken a megaphone diplomacy strategy for its communication. She added that the letter written to Russia was a show of Europe's propaganda campaign rather than displaying its interest in having a meaningful talk with Russia. The contents of the letters were publicized. The letter portrayed Russia escaping international obligations and Europe caring about human rights in Russia.

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

On 13 December, the US sent the first part of its power equipment shipment to Ukraine to restore its energy infrastructure. The energy equipment was worth USD 13 million. Two more humanitarian assistance continuing power equipment would be shipped before 18 December. The aid is to help Ukrainians cope with the cold winters and protect their energy infrastructures. Canada's Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland also announced humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Canada pledged to provide USD 115 million to repair Ukraine's power grids following the damages caused by Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructures. The fund will be provided from the tariff revenues collected from Russian and Belarusian imports. Canada and the US aim to secure Ukraine's energy infrastructure so that its

people can survive through the winter.

On 13 December, the UK government announced a new package of sanctions which includes 16 individuals targeting 12 senior Russian commanders and four Iranian businessmen. The senior commanders were sanctioned for human rights violations and their direct involvement in war. The four Iranian businessmen were sanctioned due to their involvement in supplying the Iranian-made Shahed drones which destroyed civilian infrastructures and the killing of civilians.

On 13 December, the UK's Lieutenant General Robert Magowan confirmed the involvement of the Royal Marines in covert operations in Ukraine. He said that the commandos supported classified operations in Ukraine and the mission posed high levels of political and military risks. The UK government had previously acknowledged the presence of 45 commandos in Kyiv to evacuate its embassy safely in April.

On 13 December, the UK's Defence Ministry intelligence reported on the cancelled end-of-year press conference of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The UK Defence Ministry predicted that the reason behind the cancellation was due to the growing anti-war sentiments among Russians and possible unwanted discussion on the special military operation. This is the first time in ten years that Putin has cancelled the annual event.

On 13 December, Reuters reported that Italy's Defence Minister Guido Crosetto had announced Italy's halting of weapons supply as soon as the peace talks on ending the ongoing war begins. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni promised to extend arms supply to Ukraine till 2023. However, due to friction within her right-wing coalition, Meloni along with Crosetto stated that the military assistance to Ukraine will end as soon as diplomatic talks begin between Ukraine and Russia.

### **The Global Fallout: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 12 December, the White House released the official statements at the G7 leaders'



meeting. The main focus being the Ukraine war, the G7 leaders warned that any use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons by Russia would be dealt with serious consequences. The need for financial assistance for Ukraine and to meet its urgent air defence system was also discussed. The G7 member states support IAEA's effort to create a Safety and Security Zone around the ZNPP. The G7 leaders also discussed maintaining energy and food security in Ukraine.

On 13 December, Iran's Defence Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said that Ukraine has failed to produce conclusive proof of Russia deploying Iranian drones in the ongoing war. The Iranian Minister said that Ukraine was falsely accusing Iran and was spreading rumours based on unproven claims. He reiterated that Iran and Russia did not develop military cooperation for the Iranian drone trade rather they had a history of interactions since long ago.

On 13 December, Israel's four senior officials from intelligence reports said that Iran wanted to limit its missile supply to Russia fearing the UN and the US sanctions and international backlash. However, they said that Iran has not completely deterred its missile trade with Russia. It has shortened the missile ranges to less than 300 kilometres with the immediate missile supply. The missile trade will include a Fateh-110 missile system which would be modified to limit its range to less than 300 kilometres so that it does not breach the UN resolutions placed on Iran.

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### War in Ukraine: Day 292

#### War on the Ground:

On 12 December, NEC Ukrenergo (Ukraine's electricity transmission system operator) reported on capacity deficit and hindrance in the full generation of thermal energy in Ukraine's thermal power plants due to Russian attacks. It added: "Due to the

complexity of the damage, the work takes longer than expected, also being complicated by poor weather conditions (wind gusts and wet snow).”

On 12 December, the Ukrainian Sea Ports Authority (USPA) reported that two operational ports have resumed food exports from the Black Sea ports in Odesa Oblast. USPA Head Oleksiy Vostrikov said that due to the drone attacks on 10 December the port of Odesa is still non-operational but the ports of Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi have resumed operations. Vostrikov added that the ports are being powered with alternative energy sources.

On 11 December, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy held talks with French President Emmanuel Macron, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and US President Joe Biden. Zelenskyy and Macron discussed issues relating to energy, defence, diplomacy, and economy. In the call with Erdoğan, Zelenskyy discussed on the possible expansion of the Black Sea grain export corridor. Whereas with Biden, the focus was on the ground situation in Ukraine with a special focus on the energy infrastructure amid increased Russian missile attacks. Zelenskyy stressed the importance of air defence and requested Biden for US support in protections of civilians and infrastructure.

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

On 12 December, Russia’s Museum of Air Defense Forces Director and Military Yuri Knutov shared his view on the Russian Armed Force’s future deployment to Slavyansk and Kramatorsk. According to Knutov currently, Russian Forces are focusing on the battles in Artemovsk and Maryinka which are key defence areas of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. He added that if Russian forces are able to take control of Artemovsk and Maryinka it will open the doors for the Russians to take over Slavyansk and Kramatorsk. Knutov said: “Battles that are taking place now, although positional, are of strategic importance,” for the Russian Armed Forces.

On 12 December, the LPR Human Rights

Commissioner Viktoriya Serdyukova reported that the LPR People’s Militia personnel were tortured in Ukrainian captivity. Serdyukova said that when the bodies of the personnel received from Ukraine through the exchange were examined, visible signs of torture were observed which was later confirmed by forensic analysis. She added how: “Forensic experts confirmed later that burns, fractures, gunshot wounds, and severed body parts.” Serdyukova also accused the international organisations of covering up “criminal actions of official Kiev” on prisoners who are subjected to physical abuse by Ukrainian forces.

On 12 December, Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin stressed on re-working the Black Sea Grain deal to maintain food security in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Vershinin pointed out the scarcity in supply of grains to these continents and are instead being delivered to “well-developed and well-off countries.” He added that the parallel agreement between Russia and the UN regarding the uninterrupted exports of fertilizers and agricultural products has not advanced nor achieved any concrete results.

On the same day, Vershinin highlighted Russia’s continued dialogue with IAEA to ensure protection of Zaporizhzhia plant from Ukraine attacks. Vershinin added on the discussion on ensuring “...peaceful nuclear facility won’t pose any threat to civilians both in the region and elsewhere.”

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

On 12 December, Ukraine’s Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security released an analysis of online media coverage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the Baltic States and how it is affected by Russian propaganda. The analysis was based on data collected by a Ukrainian startup LetsData and Detector Media NGO in September and October. The analysis found that Lithuanian media covered the conflict the most between the three countries and that Estonia covered it the least. It also found that the trend in Baltic online media reflected the trend followed by European media when it comes to topics covered in

September and October. The analysis showed that Baltic media covers Russian propaganda by reproducing statements made by Russian President Vladimir Putin and other ministries and officials. It also saw that the Baltic media also cites Russian media like TASS, and RIA Novosti.

On 12 December, Estonia's e-Governance Academy (eGA) announced its new military cyber facility in Ukraine to help the Ukrainian military combat Russian cyber-attacks. The new facility was built with the help of the Ukrainian military and Estonia's CybExer Technologies as a part of the EU's support to Ukraine. According to eGA official Hannes Astok, the new facility will not only help in improving Ukrainian military's cybersecurity skills but also build the "cyber resilience of Ukraine." CybExer official Aare Reintam added that this new facility will help equip the Ukrainian military "with the best cyber range."

On 12 December, Poland's Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski objected on giving security guarantees to Russia. Jablonski said that Russia should not expect such guarantees and said that considering it is a "strategic mistake." This comes amid the EU Foreign Ministers' meeting and calls from the former and current heads of EU member nations such as former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron.

On 12 December, EU Foreign Council's High Representative Josep Borrell said that the EU Foreign Ministers could not come to a consensus on the ninth package of sanctions against Russia. Borrell added that the package is expected to be finalised by 18 December. He mentioned the minister's approval for two of the proposed sanctions in the new package. One, extending the list of sanctioned individuals to 200, including Russian politicians in the Duma, the Federation Council and the judiciary. Two, sanctioning the news outlets and organisations for information manipulation.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 12 December, the International Energy Agency (IEA) published a report on how the EU can avoid gas shortages. It stated that

the EU will face a shortage of around 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2023 due to the reduced import of Russian natural gas. The report focuses on how the EU can avoid this shortage by adopting some practical actions. The IEA proposes that Europe can invest more to increase energy efficiency, renewables, installations of heat pumps, boost gas supplies and promote energy saving. The IEA acknowledges that the EU and its members have started and made "impressive progress" in 2022 on these recommendations. The IEA also recommends measures to further simplify the permit process for renewables, change tax laws that penalize electrification and expansion of existing energy efficiency programs.

On 11 December, Saudi Arabian Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said that the impact of the EU sanctions and price cap on Russian seaborne crude oil has not yet been registered. Prince Abdulaziz also said that "...we see a state of uncertainty in implementation." He considers the price cap to be a "tool created for political purposes" and added that it is not clear if these purposes could be achieved. Prince Abdulaziz said that the impact of the sanctions has not yet been realized because of the uncertainties regarding China's COVID-19 policies and the measures taken by Central banks to control inflation.

On 12 December, the UN reported on UN Aid Chief Martin Griffiths four-day schedule to Ukraine. Starting on 12 December, Griffiths along with the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator will visit Mykolaiv and Kherson to assess the damage and repair works of energy facilities hit by Russian missiles.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 290 & 291

### War on the Ground:

On 11 December, General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces release a statement taking responsibility for the attacks into Melitopol using five missiles. In a statement: "Units of rocket troops and artillery at the same time hit seven control points, 10 personnel concentration areas, an artillery concentration area and an enemy ammunition depot."

On 11 December, it marked one month of withdrawal from Kherson of Russia, the on-ground situation remains difficult for the residents as shelling continue. According to Kherson's administration 96 people have been hospitalized and 41 recorded dead. The internal heating restoration has progressed only to 70 to 80 per cent and of 320,000 people, only 70,000 people are remaining after the withdrawal.

On 11 December, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his daily address reported on the restoration of energy facilities in Odessa. The supply of electricity in Odessa was reported to be partially restored but in Kyiv, Lviv, Vinnytsia, Ternopil, Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia, Sumy, and Dnipropetrovsk region still face power shortage. On 10 December, he reported on the aggressive Russian attack in the Bakhmut in the form of missiles, rocket, and airstrikes causing mass destruction.

On 11 December, Ukraine's strategic weapons and military hardware manufacturer, Ukroboronprom State Concern's project manager, Oleh Boldyrev, said that Ukraine was developing its drones to surpass Iranian-made shahid kamikaze UAVs. According to Boldyrev, the UAVs will help the Armed Forces to attack the Russian army's rear.

On 10 December, Ukraine's electrical transmission operator, Ukrenergo, reported in a Facebook post that the Ukraine government would receive a EUR 300 million loan from EBRD through the Netherlands government's grant. The loan along with another government-approved EUR 32.5 million loan would be used for financing the reconstruction of energy

infrastructures across Ukraine that were damaged by Russian attacks.

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

On 11 December, in an interview Russia's Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said that the Minsk agreement's other participants' ignorance was responsible for the special military operation. The failure of implementing the Minsk agreement was termed the precursor to the special military operation. Peskov said: "President [of Russia Vladimir] Putin and other our representatives were constantly stating it. But all this was ignored by other participants of the negotiations process. This all foreran the special military operation."

On 11 December, Lenta ru reported on Russian Kursk region, Governor Roman Starovoi comments on the region's voluntary people's squad for using the private military company (PMC) Wagner group's training site. According to Starovoi, the voluntary people's squad consists of those people who were not selected for the partial mobilization even though they have prior combat experience. The people's squad operations include patrolling the streets, defending critical infrastructures and extinguishing fires.

On 11 December, TASS reported that Russia's President Vladimir Putin met with Turkey's Erdogan in Istanbul to discuss trade, energy and the grain deal. Turkey-Russia bilateral trade saw a growth in trade turnover in 2022. Both leaders discussed joint energy projects and the establishment of a gas hub in Turkey. They also discussed ways to prolong the grain deal to provide food shipments to needy countries.

On 11 December, RT reported that Russia's Former President and current Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev commented on Russia's defence sector is boosting weapons production to hinder the West which is supporting Ukraine. He said that Russia was increasing its defence capabilities due to the West and Ukraine being treated as enemies and Ukraine threatening Russia's security with drone strikes. The production of arms and

ammunition are expected to be increased.

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

On 10 December, US President Joe Biden in a call with Zelenskyy highlighted US's focus to be henceforth on boosting Ukraine's air force to counter Russia's unmanned vehicles and assured to hold Russia accountable for war crimes.

On 10 December, the UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update reported on the increasing support of Iran to Russia in supply of weapons, ballistic missiles. In return Russia has promised to provide technical and military support to Iran to improve their defence relationship. They also predicted for expansion of Russia's SS-26 Iskander ballistic missiles and warned over the increased participation of Iran in the war which likely puts Ukraine's national infrastructure.

On 10 December, the European Council agrees on EUR 18 billion as financial aid to Ukraine for 2023, despite Hungary's objection to the package. The package was adopted through the written procedure and will be submitted to the European Parliament for further approval. The package consists of a structural solution for Ukraine's financial aid in 2023. The EUR 18 billion loan will have a ten-year grace period. The EU plans to provide immediate short-term relief to Ukraine's budget and finance its needs with the package. The package also aims to help Ukraine with the reconstruction of infrastructure and recovery from the war.

On 10 December, Germany's Embassy in Kyiv announced in a Telegram post that its Federal Technical Assistance Agency (THW) provided Ukraine with 470 electric generators worth EUR 19.5 million. According to the Embassy, part of the generators will be sent directly to Ukrenergo and the rest to Odesa, Nikolaev and Kherson regions. Germany's Foreign Affairs funded the humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. On 10 December, the European Commission reported in a tweet that it has sent 40 generators to Ukraine from its rescEU reserves. The 220 kVA generators will provide power to Ukraine through winter

after Russia attacked its critical energy infrastructure.

On 10 December, Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda tweeted that Belarus' offer to help with grain transportation via its territory to Lithuania is an excuse to escape sanctions. He cautioned Belarus' move to be a trap and said that Ukrainian grain travelling through Poland to reach the Baltic states was sufficient.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 10 December, AZERTAC reported that Azerbaijan provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine to help it through the winter. Four trucks with 45 transformers and 50 units of generators worth AZN one million 422 thousand were sent to Ukraine to help restore stable electricity supply in the territories that were damaged.

On 10 December, Australia's government-imposed sanctions on seven Russian individuals for violating human rights. The individuals that are involved in an attempted assassination of Putin's former opposition leader Alexei Navalny are included in the sanctions; Australia financially sanctioned three individuals who are responsible for supplying shahid drones to Russia that destroyed Ukraine's critical energy infrastructure. The Australian government urged Russia to end the meaningless war in Ukraine.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 289**

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

On 09 December, Ukraine's Infrastructure Ministry reported that the third vessel from Ukraine, bulk carrier NEVA left the Odesa

port to Somalia as part of the “Grain from Ukraine” initiative. NEVA shipped 25,000 tonnes of wheat as humanitarian aid to Somalia and is supported by the Japanese, French and Finnish governments.

On 09 December, in a *Telegram* post, Ukraine’s State Emergency Service reported that Slovakia’s Internal Affairs Ministry provided 119 gasoline generators through European Civil Protection Mechanism. The State Emergency Service said: “In this way, international partners help to overcome the consequences of Russian attacks on energy infrastructure.” The generators would help Ukraine during the electrical shortages.

On 09 December, Ukraine’s Ambassador to Estonia Mariana Betsa said that Estonia’s Foreign Affairs Ministry provided 11 buses with generators and energy equipment to Ukraine’s Zhytomyr, Kharkiv, Buch and Poltava. The humanitarian assistance looks to help Ukraine through the winter and electricity blackouts.

On 09 December, Ukraine’s Defence industry reported that the US State Department granted USD 91.5 million to Ukraine for demining. Canada and the EU also promised to allocate USD 11 million and EUR one million respectively. The fund will be used for training specialists, mine detection, required equipment and demining process. As part of the EU’s demining training for Ukraine, Cyprus and Latvia will send specialists to teach the Ukrainian Armed Forces mine clearance process.

On 09 December, *Benalla Ensign* reported that Russia had shelled the front line of Ukraine’s Armed Forces in the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine. According to *Benalla Ensign*, Bakhmut and Avdiivka saw the most intense conflict. The Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) has been defending against Russia’s attacks and could not move forward in an offensive position. The Russian losses were reported to be around 230 soldiers wounded and three ammunition depots destroyed with several military equipments. The report also stated that Russia has abandoned its plans to capture the rest of Ukrainian territories and

has been seen securing the already captured eastern and southern Ukrainian regions.

On 09 December, Ukraine’s Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said that the situation in the energy sector has been contained, however, the electricity shortage remains a huge concern for Ukraine. The damage to energy infrastructures following Russia’s attacks resulted in blackouts to conserve electricity consumption through the winter. The restoration of energy facilities has been on a slower pace due to winter and the constant Russian attacks. The government has been providing the people with alternative forms of heating such as firewood and metal stoves, where centralized heating systems are non-functional. Ukraine has requested the international community to aid with its energy restoration. Many countries have come forward to help Ukraine restore its energy supply including France, Germany, Slovakia and Japan. Shmyhal said that concerns over energy restoration were being addressed by the government.

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

On 09 December, Russia submitted a letter to the UNSC and UNGA, criticizing the West for supplying weapons to Ukraine with which they had attacked civilians in the Donbas region. The letter accuses Ukraine of attacking Donetsk and Luhansk civilians and damaging the civilian infrastructure. Russia blamed the West for supplying weapons responsible for the damage caused in the Donbas region. NATO-grad 155 millimetre artillery and the US-made HIMARS were reported to be used in the attacks. A Donetsk-based NGO, “Fair Protection” drafted the letter and appealed to the UNSC to take immediate action against the shelling of civilians and infrastructures.

On 09 December, Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) ensured the prisoner exchange with the US was successful. The US basketball player Brittney Griner was exchanged for imprisoned Russian businessman Viktor Bout in Abu Dhabi UAE. On Russia’s behalf, FSB engaged in the prisoner swap deal.

On 09 December, Russia’s President

Vladimir Putin addressed at the summit of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) that Russia's GDP fell by 2.9 per cent in 2022. The summit took place in Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. He said that despite the sanctions on Russia, it will see a fall of 0.9 per cent in 2023 to its GDP and the inflation would drop to five per cent or lower in 2023. He urged the EAEU to remove customs and taxes that obstruct free trade between countries. According to him, the EAEU has been performing better when compared to other economic blocs. Putin remarked on various other issues. He discussed the special operations in Ukraine and how it will take a long time to end. He also remarked on the EU's Josep Borell and former German Chancellor Angela Merkel's comments. He also mentioned the possibility of further prisoner exchanges like Viktor Bout and Brittney Griner.

On 09 December, Putin addressed an assembly of Asian Defence ministers summit in Moscow virtually. He said: "For years, the West has been brazenly draining and exploiting [Ukraine's] resources, encouraged genocide and terror in Donbas, de-facto turned this nation into a colony, and is now cynically using the Ukrainian people as cannon fodder, a battering ram against Russia, as it keeps delivering weapons and munitions to Ukraine, sending mercenaries, pushing it down the path of suicide." The defence ministers were from the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

On 09 December, Russia discussed with the US in Istanbul in Turkey, following the prisoner exchange. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov described the diplomatic missions between Russia and the US as "irritants" and the process as tedious. Ryabkov said: "This is not a political signal that we are resuming dialogue with the US on major issues," during the talks in Istanbul after the prisoners' exchange.

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

On 09 December, the US allocated USD 275 million military aid package to Ukraine. The aid package offered anti-drones and air defence equipment. The package aimed to

strengthen Ukraine's air battles. HIMARS launchers, 155-millimetre ammunition, Humvee military vehicles and generators are also expected to be included in the USD 275 million packages. Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) will cover the costs of the package. PDA allows the US to send defence systems from the stock without approval from Congress in times of emergency.

On 09 December, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly announced that Canada will impose sanctions on Russia on the grounds of human rights violations. Canada imposed sanctions on 33 senior officials and six organizations involved in human rights violations against anti-invasion and anti-democratic policies protesters in Russia.

On 08 December, the Netherlands provides parts and equipment required for energy infrastructure restoration. Transformers, switching components, cables and other equipment were shipped. The supplies come as part of the EUR 180 million aid to Ukraine that the Netherlands' government has set aside. The Dutch contribution was worth EUR six million.

On 09 December, the UK's Defence Ministry reported in a tweet that Ukraine saw Iran-made suicidal Shahed-131 and 136 UAVs for the first time in three weeks. The defence intelligence speculates that Russia received a resupply of the UAVs after depleting their stock. The UAVs targeted Zaporizhzhia and Dnipro Oblasts. 17 UAVs including 14 Shahed-136s were shot down.

On 09 December, Bulgaria sent its first military aid to Ukraine, which was approved by the interim government. The government did not disclose the contents of the military aid. Bulgaria's interim Defence Minister Dimitar Stoyanov said that Bulgaria will send weapons only after its defence capabilities are ensured.

On 09 December, Norway's Foreign Affairs Minister Anniken Huitfeldt announced that Norway agreed to provide NOK one billion to Ukraine for repairing its energy infrastructures. The agreement to send NOK was signed by Huitfeldt. Huitfeldt said that



the fund will be sent through the World Bank.

On 09 December, the UK sanctioned the Russian Colonel Ibatullin for being the commander of the 90th Tank Division, which has been on the front lines of Russia's aggression since the start of the war. Russia's Justice Major Valentin Oparin and Rostov region's Public Prosecutions Head Oleg Tkachenko were also sanctioned for gruesomely torturing individuals to extract testimonies. They were sanctioned under human rights violations. A total of 1,200 individuals were sanctioned by the UK in 2022.

On 09 December, the European Council adopted the conclusion on the fight against Russia's war crimes due to its aggression committed in Ukraine. The Council looks to work closely with International Criminal Court (ICC) in the case against Russia for its war crimes. The conclusion that the Council adopted urged its member states to send its support in establishing specialized units that investigated international crimes at the national level. Member states should also financially, logistically, technically and substantially support Ukrainian victims and refugees during the criminal proceedings.

### **Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine**

On 09 December, Iran's Foreign Ministry stated that the West had complicated the war by supplying uncontrolled weapons to Ukraine. The unrestrained weapon supply was pointed out as the reason for the prolongation of the war. The Ministry also said that Iran had not sent or would not send weapons to Russia to use against Ukraine.

On 09 December, *RT* reported that Saudi Arabia and China had made a joint statement warning of further escalation in the Ukraine war at the summit between Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and China's President Xi Jinping. Both leaders called for limiting the negative impacts of the conflict and restoring peace, security and stability.

On 09 December, the French oil company, the world's fifth-largest oil company, TotalEnergies, announced that it would start

to withdraw its businesses from Russia after being pressured by the international community. TotalEnergies had fired two officials from Novatek, the largest Russian private oil company. TotalEnergies still has a 19.4 per cent stake in Novatek and is unable to sell it due to its main shareholder, Gennady Timchenko, having been placed under western sanctions.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 288**

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

On 08 December, in the discussion on "Criminal Prosecution for the Crime of Aggression On 08 December, in the discussion on "Criminal Prosecution for the Crime of Aggression Committed in Ukraine" held in Washington, Ukraine's Head of the President's Office Andriy Yermak said that a special tribunal creation against Russia was necessary to stop its aggression. He urges the US to support forming a special tribunal for Russia's war crimes in Ukraine. He said: "Peace is a universal value. I am sure that all of you appreciate it, and there is no such person and no such people who do not dream of peace when someone destroys it. But peace is impossible without justice. And justice is impossible without judiciary," during his speech in the discussion.

On 08 December, Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets, reported in his *Telegram* that Australia's International Ombudsman Institute's President, Ombudsman Chris Field and the UK's Health Protection parliamentary Ombudsman, Robert Behrens visited Ukraine. According to Lubinets, the

visitation displayed both countries' support for Ukraine. Lubinets pointed out human rights issues and the violations by Russia in Ukraine.

On 08 December, Ukraine's nuclear energy generating company, Energoatom reported in a *Telegram* post that Russia had brought numerous Grad multiple launch rocket systems into Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). The rocket launchers were kept near the sixth power unit and the dry storage of used nuclear fuel. Energoatom urged IAEA and the global nuclear community to create a security zone around ZNPP to hasten complete demilitarization and occupation of the power plant.

On 08 November, Ukraine's National Bank (NBU) Governor Andriy Pyshnyy said that the bank has estimated a one to two per cent points inflationary pressure rise in 2023 due to electricity shortages. The NBU considers two possibilities for energy restoration. It is either the electricity shortages not exceeding 25 per cent or the energy infrastructure being more damaged and slow recovery.

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

On 08 December, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov accused NATO of increasingly involving itself in the conflict. Ryabkov said that can be seen in the diversified nature of NATO's support to Ukraine and in the "intentional policy" of the US and Europe. He also highlighted that the West does not have any restrictions on the nature of arms and ammunition supply to Ukraine adding "The Westerners are pushing ahead with expanding the range of deliveries of ever heavier, longer-range weapons." Ryabkov added that Russia is engaging in bilateral talks mainly with unfriendly countries on this matter and said that all "opportunities to drive the message home and to warn our opponents - are being used to the full extent."

On 08 December, Russia's Foreign Ministry Spokeswomen Maria Zakharova claimed that the US is looking to extend the Ukraine conflict for at least three more years. Zakharova said, "Washington plans to fuel hostilities in Ukraine at least till the end of

2025. That's what their plans are, judging by documents, which they don't hide from anybody." The documents here are the USD 1.2 billion worth contract for Raytheon's National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS). The contract states that the US will be purchasing hardware for Ukraine with a delivery deadline of November 2025.

On 08 December, Sevastopol Governor Mikhail Razvozhayev said that the Russian Navy countered a drone attack in Sevastopol. Razvozhayev said that the Navy "shot down a UAV over the sea." Sevastopol is a strategic federal city located on the southwest coast of Crimea.

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

On 08 December, in a joint press conference with Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Slovakia's Foreign Minister Rastislav Kacer announced that his government had pledged for another package of military aid to Ukraine. The new package will include ammunition, large calibres, warm clothes for soldiers and military equipment. However, he did not specify the contents of the package.

On 08 December, the European Council decided not to accept Russian travel documents issued in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian regions and breakaway territories in Georgia. The travel documents are invalid to obtain a Schengen visa or cross the region. The Council considers Russia's invasion as ignorant of rules-based international order and a threat to regional peace and security. The move comes as a show of solidarity for Ukraine.

On 07 December, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine adopted the declaration that Ukraine should become a NATO member to ensure peace and stability in the region. The declaration was adopted at the twelfth session of the Tripartite Assembly of the three parliaments in Vilnius in Lithuania. Lithuania and Poland promised to support Ukraine during its EU accession and NATO membership process. Increasing sanctions on Russia, creating a special tribunal, supporting Ukraine's reconstruction and

recovery process were discussed during the session. The Tripartite promised to work together to ensure Russia's full de-occupation from Ukraine.

On 08 December, Canada and the Netherlands filed a joint declaration of an intervention in the Ukraine war to the International Court of Justice. Both countries accuse Russia of committing genocide in Ukraine and requested a convention on the prevention and punishment of war crimes committed by Russia. Canada and the Netherlands submitted their interpretation of the genocide convention to the ICJ due to their mutual interest in the result of the convention.

### **Global Fallout: Implications of the War in Ukraine**

On 08 December, Uzbekistan rejected the idea of natural gas union with Russia and Kazakhstan that was proposed by Russia's President Vladimir Putin during his talks with Kazakhstan's President Qasym-Zhomart Tokayev in Moscow on 28 November. The proposal to ship natural gas from and between the three countries to others like China. In an interview, Uzbekistan's Energy Minister said that Uzbekistan's national interest is a priority over the natural gas exchange. He added: "We will never compromise our national interests. Even if we [agree to receive natural gas from Russia], we will proceed via commercial sales contracts. We will not allow any political conditions to be imposed in return." Uzbekistan's rejection displayed growing divide between Russia and former soviet countries.

On 08 December, International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC)'s President, Mirjana Spoljaric announced in a tweet that she is visiting Ukraine and will meet the Mykolayiv and the Kherson regions' people. She said that she will visit winter stricken places in Ukraine in her four-day visit.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 287**

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

On 07 December, Ukraine’s spokesperson Deputy Head Roman Mashovets met the Ambassadors and Defence Attachés of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. In the meeting, Mashovets briefed the representatives regarding the situation at the frontlines, the measures taken to counter Russian attacks and the requirements of Ukraine in terms of weapons and ammunition. The representatives were also briefed about increasing Russian military presence in Belarus including the training facilities for mobilised Russian personnel in Belarus who are then deployed in Ukraine.

On 07 December, the Ukrainian Minister of Culture and Information Oleksandr Tkachenko said that over 1000 cultural sites had been destroyed in Ukraine since the war

began. According to Tkachenko, cultural infrastructure like clubs and libraries have also been destroyed along with cultural heritage sites. He thanked foreign allies for their support in preserving the cultural sites. Tkachenko added that the main challenges for the preservation of Ukraine’s culture are a decrease in production in creative industries and talent.

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

On 07 December, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with the Council for Civil Society and Human Rights to discuss the Russian military operation in Ukraine. In the meeting, Putin reportedly said that the operation in Ukraine will continue until all Russian objectives are achieved. Calling it a lengthy process, he highlighted the gains that Russia achieved which includes the annexation of the four Ukrainian territories. When the question of additional mobilisation was brought up, Putin refuted it saying that more than 300,000 reserve troops were added to the military. He added that out of the 300,000, only 150,000 are on the battlefields and the rest are either stationed in training centres or reserves. He added: “In these conditions, talking about any additional mobilization activities simply does not make sense, and there is no need for the state and the Ministry of Defense today.”

On 07 December, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the West of misleading the developing nations to garner support in the UNGA to pass resolutions targeting Russia. Lavrov said that the West is using the UN “blindly” to assure developing nations that the resolution passed is “only about the moral and ethical evaluation of Russia’s actions.” Lavrov added that the West will use this resolution to seize Russian assets outside the UN. He said that the same pattern is being used to set up an international tribunal against Russia and added that such moves would not be legally binding on Russia or any country.

On 07 December, *RT* reported that US imports from Russia doubled in October despite US sanctions on Russia. It reported that in October, the US imported goods

worth USD 732 million from Russia compared to USD 332.1 million in September. The US had imported fertilizers, iron, steel, and nonferrous metals. Whereas the US exports to Russia, the amount decreased to USD 80.1 million compared to USD 90.4 million in September.

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

On 07 December, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the ninth sanctions package against Russia. The package has proposed six new sanctions, which include the addition of 200 individuals and entities to the sanctions list. The Russian armed forces, members of the Federation Council and the State Duma are some of the new additions to the list. The package also proposes sanctions to be levied on three more Russian banks and a full transaction ban on the Russian Regional Development Bank, new restrictions on exports such as electronics, key chemicals and IT components. The proposal also looks to ban the direct supply of drone engines to Russia which also extends to third-party countries that in turn can supply drones to Russia. Lastly, the package proposes more economic sanctions on the Russian energy and mining sectors and the removal of four Russian propaganda channels from all distribution platforms.

On 07 December, the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Tour fined the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) for its decision to ban Russian and Belarusian players from competing at Wimbledon. The ATP imposed a fine of USD one million and has threatened the LTA with expulsion from the ATP Tour. The LTA in response said they were disappointed with the decision and added that the ATP "...has shown no recognition of the exceptional circumstances created by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, or the international sporting community and UK Government's response to that invasion." The LTA added that they are considering their response to the fine and expulsion.

On 07 December, Saeima's Defence, Internal Affairs and Corruption Prevention Committee announced that all the Ukrainian refugees employed in Latvia are mandated

to attend Latvian language classes from 01 January 2024. The Committee's decision is based on a proposal from the Ministry of Culture. Currently, no such requirements are there for non-Latvian groups. Lawmakers have criticized this decision by saying that the refugee status of Ukrainian implies that they must return back to Ukraine once the war is over. Saeima lawmaker Edmunds Zivtiņš and deputy Jānis Dombrava expressed support for the decision and added that this will make life easier for Ukrainians who are planning to stay back in Latvia.

On 07 December, *Be/TA* reported that the Belarusian military will be moving forces and military equipment as a part of a counterterrorism exercise. This has sparked rumours that Russia is planning a separate attack front from Belarus. Belarus's Security Council added that the movement of forces and military equipment will restrict citizens' movement as some "...public roads and areas will be restricted and the use of imitation weapons for training purposes is planned." The areas of these exercises and their nature are yet to be disclosed.

On 07 December, Turkish energy company Karpowership Trade Group announced plans to supply about 400 megawatts of electricity to Ukraine through Moldova and Romania. The Karpowership Trade Group President Zeynep Harezi said that the company is in talks with the aid organizations and the UN to develop an efficient plan to supply electricity to Ukraine. Harezi said that electricity transmission through Moldova and Romania will take place as ships dock in the ports and electricity is unloaded. He added that with the lift of restrictions on insurance on boats, it will be possible for ships to travel to Ukraine and supply electricity directly.

On 06 December, the US through the Fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) announced an additional USD 800 million in security assistance to Ukraine. The Act included US President Joe Biden's proposal for a USD 500 million increase in the assistance provided to Ukraine. The Act is now tabled in the Senate and once it passes there it will be sent to Biden for his

assent. The NDAA is a program created to map out the defence spending of the US.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 06 December, the UNSC met to discuss the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and diplomatic solutions to bring the war to an end. In the meeting, the ambassadors of Russia and the US engaged in a verbal spat where the two accused each other of showing “no interest in Ukraine talks.” The Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzi said that Russia hears the call for a diplomatic solution to end the conflict and added that Russia is ready to “conduct negotiations” and remove the “root cause” for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Nebenzi then went on to accuse the west of stalling diplomatic solutions as it was supplying weapons to Kyiv saying: “What you’re seeing now is an ongoing war of the West against Russia. ... This is something that leaves us no other option but to continue the aims of our SMO.” In response to these allegations, US Deputy Ambassador to the UN Lisa Carty said that it is Russia that “has no genuine interest in negotiation or meaningful diplomacy,” which is seen from its attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure. The UNSC council is meeting again on 09 December to discuss weapons from Ukraine allegedly falling into the wrong hands.

On 06 December, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) urged Western airlines to resume flights over Russia to reduce the crowding of European air spaces. The IATA Head Willie Walsh said that this will also increase flight efficiency from Europe to Asia. Walsh added that the diversion of flight routes to avoid Russian airspace through Europe is unsustainable. Walsh also said that the resumption of such routes should only happen once the Russia-Ukraine conflict is over.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 286**

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

On 06 December, in an interview with *CNN*, Ukraine’s First Deputy Prime Minister and

Economy Minister Yuliya Svyrydenko pointed out the retainment of export potential by Ukraine despite Russia's aggression. According to a KSE Institute and Agrarian Policy and Food Ministry report, Ukraine's agricultural exports were worth USD 21.1 billion between January and November, which was 13.7 per cent lower compared to the same period in 2021. The direct loss in the agricultural sector was calculated as USD 6.6 billion and the indirect loss was USD 34.25 billion. The July 2022 Grain Corridor Initiative and the new Grain from Ukraine program boosted agricultural exports after Russia halted ships in Odessa port.

On 06 December, Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada Chairman Ruslan Stefanchuk said in a Facebook post that he participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly meeting with Lithuania, Poland parliamentary heads and the US Congress's Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Robert Kelly Menendez. The meeting focused on Russian aggression in Ukraine and its attacks on Ukraine's important energy facilities and civilian infrastructures in the recent missile strike. The need for more anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence was also discussed.

On 06 December, Ukraine's Armed Forces released a statement on the 120th defence brigade that was a joint-staff exercise with other military units near Ukraine's border with Belarus. The military exercise focused on training soldiers in the lower and upper headquarters with interaction skills. The exercise took place in the defence zone near the border.

On 06 December, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and Moldova's Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita signed on defence, energy, logistics, trade and economic cooperation between both countries. European integration and ways to stop Russian aggression were also discussed. Ukraine and Moldova also agreed on air defence and border control cooperation.

On 06 December, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba urged Germany to provide them Leopard 2 tanks, Patriot systems and

Marder infantry fighting vehicles in addition to the Gepard anti-aircraft guns and Iris-T air defence missile system that Ukraine had already received. He thanked Ukraine's Western allies for providing military aid.

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

On 06 December, Russian defence minister Sergey Shoigu accused Ukraine for launching 33 shells on Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and called the act as "nuclear terrorism." Shoigu added: "Our units are taking all [necessary] measures to ensure the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant's safety."

On 06 December, TASS reported on Latvia's National Electronic Mass Media Council cancellation of "broadcasting license" of Dozhd TV due to national security concerns. The cancellation comes into effect from 08 December.

On the EU imposing of energy price cap Russia spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated that the price cap would not affect it as Russia economy is has the necessary capacity. He highlighted that such measures will affect the stability of the global energy market but not on Russia's special military operation.

On 06 December, Russian Governor of the Kursk city claimed on another drone attack on an airfield in Kursk which led to the blaze of an oil storage near the airfield. He added: "As a result of a drone attack, an oil storage tank caught fire in the area of the Kursk airfield. The fire is being localized. All emergency agencies are on site."

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

On 06 December, the EU and Norway signed an agreement to support EU Military Assistance Mission in Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) by contributing NOK 150 million as financial aid. The agreement was first announced on 31 October. However, it comes into effect after Norway signed formally. The voluntary financial contribution will help Ukraine's Armed Forces with its training and additional equipment.

On 06 December, Latvia's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Janis Karklins, condemned Russia at the UNSC meeting. She discussed on energy needs of Ukraine in the winter. She added that Russian missile strikes have damaged the energy infrastructure of Ukraine, resulting in electrical shutdowns and energy shortages in afflicted regions. She supported the idea of the Special International Tribunal to prosecute Russia for its war crimes against Ukraine.

On 06 December, Hungary vetoed EU's financial aid of EUR 18 billion to Ukraine for its 2023 budget at the EU Economics and Finance Ministers meeting. In response EU member states withheld Hungary's EUR 7.5 billion aid that was assigned to it. The EU member states also withheld Hungary's EUR 5.8 billion COVID recovery fund. However, the EU adopted the amendment to the financial regulation to allow financial assistance in the diversified funding strategy.

On 06 December, the UK Defence Ministry in its intelligence update reported that two Tu-95 BEAR heavy bombers were damaged at the Engels airbase in the Saratov region and a fuel tank exploded at the Dyagilyaev airbase in the Ryazan region due to Ukraine's drone attack. Engels airbase is over 600 kilometres from Ukraine-controlled regions. This holds Russia's Long Range Aviation in western Russia and has 30 heavy bombers within it.

On 05 December, Montenegro's Prime Minister Dritan Abazovic and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a joint declaration at Abazovic's office in Podgorica to help Ukraine become a member of the Euro-Atlantic society. Montenegro promised to support Ukraine's defence force by donating 11 per cent of its military budget as defence aid.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 06 December, Poland received its first set of military vehicles from South Korea. Ten Black Panther K2 tanks and 24 Thunder K9 howitzers worth USD 5.8 billion arrived at the Gdynia port on the Baltic Sea coast of

Poland. The deal replenishes and strengthens Poland's defence systems as it had contributed to Ukraine's military aid. South Korea's Armaments Agency Minister Eom Dong-hwan said that South Korea's weapons deal would strengthen its relations with Poland.

On 06 December, International Criminal Court's (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan called out to the international community to help with ICC's budget to conduct an investigation on Russia's war crimes against Ukraine. He said that ICC has been facing a financial shorthand and could not implement the Special Tribunal against Russia, which was proposed by the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Khan warned of the difficulty in organizing a Russian Tribunal by the ICC.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 285**

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

On 05 December, Kyiv Regional Military Administration Head, Oleksii Kuleba, stated in Telegram that energy facilities in Kyiv, Vinnytsia and Odesa were attacked by Russian missiles damaging the electricity power infrastructure in Ukraine. Due to the attack 40 per cent of the Kyiv region is facing electricity shut down. According to Shmyhal Ukraine’s power grid was functional despite the missile attacks. The energy providers issued emergency shutdowns to balance the systems and avoid increasing the damage. He added that the restoration process has begun within the affected region.

On 05 December, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported that Ukraine’s air defence systems destroyed most of the 70 Russian Calibers and Kh-101 missiles that arrived in Ukraine. A few missiles that missed the air defence systems damaged energy facilities in Ukraine, resulting in the death of four people. He thanked his western allies for lending the air defence systems that repelled the attacks and urged them to fight against terrorism together with Ukraine.

On 05 December, *Ukrinform* reported that Ukraine’s National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) Secretary Oleksiy Danilov had said that the Russian missile strikes not

only harms Ukraine but also its neighbouring countries. Danilov’s statement comes after a missile being discovered by Moldova’s border police patrol near the Briceni village, close to Moldova’s border near Ukraine.

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

On 05 December, Russia’s Defence Ministry said that Ukrainian drones had struck Dyagilevo military air base in the Ryazan region and the Engles air base in the Saratov region resulting in the death of three officers and damage to two aircraft. The drones were intercepted by air defences. Six were found to be injured and explosion of a fuel tanker was observed in the Ryazan region. The attack was the first by Ukraine to reach the Russian mainland. The Defence Ministry discovered that the Ukrainians had used Soviet-era Tu-141 Strizh jet drones.

On 05 December, *RT* reported on Russian Defence Ministry’s claims on deterring Ukraine’s arms and troop logistics by its missile strikes. Russia struck Ukraine with missiles using strategic bombers to derail their transportation of troops, weapons, and ammunition to the front lines by train. The Defence Ministry said: “All 17 assigned objectives were hit,” talking about their targets of energy, communication, defence facilities and transportation in Ukraine. The missile strike was in retaliation to Ukraine’s drone attack in Dyagilevo and Engles airfield in mainland Russia.

On 05 December, *RT* reported that Russian military expert Alexey Leonkov confirmed Ukraine’s responsibility for the anti-air missile parts and debris that fell in Moldova’s Briceni village. According to Leonkov, the debris was found to be from S-300 PS/PT anti-air missiles used by Ukraine to intercept Russian high-precision strikes. The anti-air missiles were part of Ukraine’s counter-to-Russian military strike that targeted Ukrainian energy infrastructure. The missile strike was in retaliation to Ukraine’s drone attack in the Saratov and Ryazan regions.

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

On 05 December, the SIPRI released a report on the performance of the top 100 companies in the arms industry in 2021. It found that Russia to be the prime supplier of raw materials faced a challenge of stagnation in the arms production and because of war the sales increased only by four per cent. For the US, 40 firms formed part of the total 100 and it comprised half the global arms sales, leaving out North America which sales fell by 0.8 per cent. In case of Europe, the ship building industry was observed to have increased sales whereas the aircraft industry had low performance. Comparing Asia and Middle East, the arms sales had a fast pace growth in Middle East with 6.5 per cent and was seconded by China with 6.3 percent. The report identified major challenges for reduction in the arms sales, which were supply chain issues, Ukraine war sanctions, and pandemic.

On 05 December, the US government will hold a virtual meeting with oil and gas companies to have a discussion on assisting Ukrainian energy facilities. The damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure by Russian missile strikes resulted in the convention of the executives and the government. The US Deputy Secretary of Energy, David Turk, said: "As you know Ukrainian energy assets are being aggressively targeted to take advantage of the winter's coldest temperatures and harshest weather conditions. Together, we can help to boost Ukrainian resilience," in a letter to oil and gas executives. The Department of Energy said that it would ensure energy companies provide a steady and reliable supply to their customers and support foreign partners.

Canada pledged to provide CAD 15 million in funds for demining equipment to Ukraine. The humanitarian assistance includes the detection and clearance of landmines and other explosives that are from the war. Canada also provided bomb suits to protect Ukrainian bomb squads and advanced remote-control demining systems to demine large areas.

On 06 December, the Czech Republic's Foreign Affairs Minister, Jan Lipavsky, announced the discussion on the Russian

invasion of Ukraine as the main topic in the informal Visegrad Group (V4) Foreign Ministers meeting in Bratislava in Slovakia. Following the V4 Prime Ministers' meeting, the member states agreed on joint support for Ukraine. The Visegrad Group consists of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

On 05 December, the US Ambassador to Ukraine, Bridget Brink, said that the US would provide air defence and energy aid to Ukraine. The US promised to help Ukraine protect and reconstruct its civilian infrastructure. The Russian attack on Ukraine's energy, water and heating system will be countered by the US help to Ukraine, according to Brink.

On 05 December, Lithuania's Defence Ministry said that it would provide Ukraine with 155-millimetre ammunition for its artillery. Lithuania also commented that it would help Ukraine de-occupy Russian-invaded regions.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 05 December, the UN's Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner released a report on civilian casualty updates. The total number of Ukrainian civilian deaths was estimated to be 162 and the number of injured was 526. The total number of civilian casualties recorded from 24 February till 04 December was 17,181, where 6,702 were killed and 10,479 were injured. The recorded civilian casualties resulted from missile strikes, shelling, explosives, and multiple launch rocket systems. According to OHCHR, accurate figures of civilian casualties are yet to be known as the records are delayed in heavy fighting areas such as in the Donetsk, Kharkiv, and Luhansk regions.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 283 & 284**

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

On 03 December, *Ukrinform* reported on Austria's Finance Minister Magnus Brunner announcement to provide support to Ukraine of up to EUR 20 million. The fund

will be directed to Ukraine Recovery Trust Fund (URTF) in restoring public services especially energy sector.

04 December, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine claimed on the completion of Ukrainian military training, called "Operation UNIFER" from the Canadian Armed Forces that took place in the UK. It reported that as part of the training the Ukrainians including "construction workers, bankers, accountants, mechanics, firefighters, engineers, chefs," had learnt the basic skills along with lessons on "Armed conflict, battlefield casualty drills, combat first aid, field craft, marksmanship, explosive threat awareness and recognition, and both urban and trench warfare training."

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

On 03 December, *Meduza* in reference to Financial Times reported on the increase in purchase of old tanker by anonymous buyers which was observed by the UK's Braemar Shipping Services. They have found that the bought tankers which is 12- to 15-year-old were being used to export oil to China, India and Other Asian countries. This is seen as "shadow fleet" as an alternative way around the energy price cap which restricts western shipping companies to help in transit of Russia oil to non-EU countries.

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

On 03 December, *Bloomberg* reported on benefit Russia reaped from the stolen wheat from Ukraine. The report found that during the occupation, Russia had taken close to USD one billion worth wheat harvested in Ukraine as per the NASA food security and agriculture program satellite imagery. It said: "Almost 6 million tons of wheat was collected from areas not under Ukrainian control, according to NASA Harvest. About 88% of the winter crops planted in occupied areas were harvested, while unharvested areas were mainly along the front line."

On 03 December, *ISW* a US based think tank has predicted that despite the pressure from Russia to launch an operation from Belarus into Ukraine the probability of Belarusian arms joining the Russian war seem to be low.

According to the report: "...ISW has previously assessed that Belarus is highly unlikely to enter the war in Ukraine due to domestic factors that constrain Lukashenko's willingness to do so."

On 03 December, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the agreement between the EU, G7 and Australia over price cap on Russia's crude oil. While Russia has responded saying "Will not accept," Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called it a "weak policy." Along with the price cap, the EU has also agreed on a scheme to cut down the flow of Petrodollars to target the Russian revenue. This move is seen as a trigger to global shock on oil price as it will ban all the European shipping services to end its oil ferry operation in exporting the Russian oil. The US suggested an alternative to prevent the price shock by bringing an exception to leave out service providers who buy oil below the price cap to export to non-EU countries.

### **The Global Fallout: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 03 December, *Bloomberg* reported on Microsoft projection on future cyber threat from Russia. According to Microsoft's digital threat analysis center has warned its customers for possible Russian cyber-attacks during the winter. It mentioned "Prestige" as the recent ransomware attack by the Russian military intelligence and highlighted the simultaneous cyber-attack on Ukrainian and foreign based supply chains. It added: "...foreshadow what may become broadening tactics during the winter ahead."

On 03 December, in an interview World Bank Vice President Anna Bjerde estimated that Ukraine would need 500 to 600 billion for post-war reconstruction. She recommended for a "Marshall Plan" to bind public and private money to restore Ukraine. Bjerde also expects the drop in GDP to further increase from 35 per cent to 40 per cent due to infrastructure loss, and absence of tax revenues.

On 04 December, UNHR High Commissioner Volker Türk will start his four-day visit to Kyiv Kharkiv, Izyum, Uzhgorod, and other parts of Ukraine. He is expected to meet

national and local government authorities to during the visit. According to the UN data 6,557 casualties have been recorded and 10,074 injured.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 282**

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

On 01 December, Ukraine's President's Office Head Andriy Yermak reported that 50 Prisoners of War (POW) were returned by Russia. As a part of the exchange, Ukraine returned prisoners held in Olenivka, and soldiers in Mariupol and Azovstal. Yermak added that injured Russian personnel in Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions were also returned. He thanked the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of POW and assured the return of all Ukrainians.

Ukraine's General Staff and Supreme Commander-in-Chief estimated that Ukraine had lost nearly 13,000 soldiers since February. This comes after European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen estimated 100,000 soldiers to have

been killed, which was later deleted by the European Commission saying that it was a mistake.

On 02 December, Sumy Regional Military Administration Head Dmytro Zhyvytskyi said that 76 mortar bombs and shells were launched by Russian forces at the region's border areas. Zhyvytskyi said that the Seredyna-Buda community was hit the hardest with Russians launching a mortar strike and 22 self-propelled artillery strikes. While no casualties were reported the strikes have caused major damage to infrastructure in the areas.

On 02 December, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement regarding the threats received by Ukrainian embassies and consulates. Embassies in Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Croatia, Italy, Austria, the consulates general in Naples and Krakow, and the consulate in Brno all received packages containing animal eyes. The packages reportedly were soaked and smelled of blood. The embassy in the USA was delivered a letter containing a photocopy of an article critical of Ukraine. Additionally, the embassy in Kazakhstan received a bomb threat which was proven false and the entrance of the ambassador's residence in the Vatican was vandalised. Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba said that they believe these incidents were pre-planned as all of these incidents happened simultaneously. Kuleba added that this will not stop Ukraine's diplomatic front. The statement went on to cite the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and has asked foreign governments for increased protection for Ukrainian diplomats abroad.

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

On 02 December, Russian President Vladimir Putin praised Rosatom and their efforts to help Russia advance in the field of nuclear technology on the account of Rosatom's 15th anniversary. Putin outlined how the corporation has been a key factor in Russia's nuclear deterrence capabilities and the development of new weapons systems and military equipment. He also praised Rosatom's efforts to bring together specialised enterprises and scientific schools

to increase nuclear research and development and fortify Russia's nuclear shield and defence capabilities. Putin acknowledged Rosatom's role in Russia achieving nuclear parity in a short time and praised their commitment towards increasing the nuclear capability of Russia in the defence and power sector.

On 02 December, Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov reiterated that President Vladimir Putin is open to dialogues and peace talks but will not accept the demand for the withdrawal of Russian forces. Peskov said that US President Joe Biden's condition for peace talks to start is not possible and added that "Without a doubt, the special military operation continues." He added that Putin is open to talks and that Russia prefers "peaceful diplomatic means" to achieve their interests. Peskov said that the US refusal to recognise the newly annexed territories will be a point of contention for talks to start and common ground to be achieved.

On 02 December, RIA Novosti reported that Russian air defence systems will now be able to effectively detect and destroy missiles launched by Ukraine from High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) because of a software update. According to a Russian military commander in the Zaporizhzhia Region, the air defence forces now have a new software update which will help them "detect, track, and destroy" HIMARS missiles.

On 02 December, Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in a telephone conversation discussed the Ukraine crisis and the Black Sea Grain deal. On the matter of Ukraine, Putin re-explained the motive behind the special military operation and he expressed how the West's continued supply of military and training of Ukrainian soldiers was prolonging the war. Putin added that the increased military and financial supply to Ukraine is making it more difficult to negotiate with Kiev. He highlighted how targeted missile strikes were abandoned by the Russian forces but recent attacks on Russian civilian infrastructure such as the Crimean bridge have forced Russia to retaliate with targeted strikes. On the Black Sea Grain deal, Putin

emphasized the need for an efficient and comprehensive plan for grain exports which would include the removal of barriers against Russia.

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

On 01 December, EU members agreed on a USD 60 price cap per barrel on Russian seaborne oil with a price adjustment policy to keep the price at five per cent below the market price. This comes after EU members previously failed to come to an agreement on the price cap before the EU embargo on Russian crude goes into effect on 05 December. The price cap will now be tabled in the parliaments of EU member countries before it is fully implemented. This new price cap and the price adjustment mechanism are being introduced to ensure a steady supply of Russian crude after 05 December to prevent a global supply shortage.

On 02 December, the G7 nations and Australia approved the EU USD 60 per barrel price cap on Russian seaborne oil. The price cap was initiated by the G7 countries to prevent a shortage of Russian oil supply to mitigate a sudden rise in the energy crisis and increased fuel inflation. In a statement, the G7 members added that they are “prepared to review and adjust the maximum price as appropriate,” and make sure middle and low- income countries are not adversely affected. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that this will restrict the “...primary source of revenue for his illegal war in Ukraine while simultaneously preserving the stability of global energy supplies.”

On 02 December, UK Defence Intelligence reported on increasing logistical threat for Russia upon the withdrawal from the West Bank of the Dnipro River. The withdrawal has turned in favour of Ukraine to target down Russia’s logistic nodes and communication lines, forcing Russians to transfer their supplies and labour intensive leading to “further south and east.”

On 02 December, Hungary’s Prime Minister Victor Orban stressed his stance on objecting the EU plan to give EUR 18 billion to Ukraine

in 2023. He added: “We are not in favor of this because we do not want the European Union to become a community of indebted states instead of a community of cooperating member states.” Instead Orban suggested the EU to allocate funds to Ukraine from its budget through bilateral deal. The block has remained for several months, according to the EU, Hungary’s veto is seen as counter to EU’s block on funds over Hungary’s rule of law violation.

On 02 December, Finland Prime Minister Sanna Marin raised concerns over Europe’s need to strengthen the security. She stressed on building the defence capability and the European defence industry. Marin added that to ensure security for Finland it is a condition to maintain bilateral relations with Russia and be close to NATO and not a member.

On 02 December, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the OSCE delivered the Joint Statement of NATO members along with Finland and Sweden to the OSCE council. The statement outlined how the OSCE area is in a crisis due to Russia’s actions in Ukraine and that NATO condemns Russia’s actions in Ukraine and fully supports Ukraine and its fight for sovereignty. It went on to highlight how these actions violate international law, the UN Charter, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, and OSCE commitments. The statement outlined how Russia is responsible for the destruction of human life especially those of women and Children in Ukraine. It reiterated the support for the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism and ODIHR monitoring to bring into light abuses of international human rights in Ukraine. The statement expressed concerns regarding Belarus and its unwavering support for Russia and Russian military integration in the North. Finally, the statement called on Russia to withdraw from Ukraine completely and cease all military occupations in the OSCE region.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war**

On 02 December, oil futures decreased by 1.5 per cent before the OPEC+ meeting on 04 December and the EU embargo on Russian seaborne crude on 05 December. Brent

crude futures decreased by USD 1.31 to USD 85.57 per barrel and the Texas Intermediate (WTI) fell by USD 1.24 to USD 79.98 per barre. The market reacted with caution on 02 December over the uncertainty regarding the OPEC+ decision which could shock the market on Monday. While OPEC+ is said to retain its target of two million barrels per day, oil prices could dip further if no additional production cuts are made.

On 02 December, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine finished its work and the mission came to an end. The Commission said that it has finished its assessment on a “broader temporal, geographical, and thematic framework” and will be submitting a report in March 2023. The Commission said that the extensive damage to civilian and energy infrastructure has resulted in devastating consequences for education, children’s rights and lives. It talked about how destroyed schools prevent physical access to schools and an online mode while initially feasible has been disrupted due to repeated attacks on civilian infrastructure. Civilian infrastructures are under the protection of international humanitarian law and the commission aims to prepare the report keeping this in mind and would take a victim-centric view for its work.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 281

### War on the Ground:

On 01 December, Ukraine’s Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Defence Ministry reported on the movement of Russian troops from the Rostov and Belgorod regions to Kherson via Crimea. The move was to replenish the Russian military strength in the Kherson region. According to the Ministry, The Russian forces regrouped in the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions following the de-occupation of the Dnieper river’s right bank. It observed that the Russians were not building an offensive group in Belarus following rigorous combat training. However, the ministry is cautious of Russia attacking from Belarus or Kharkiv direction in the future.

On 01 December, Ukraine, Sweden, and Denmark’s Foreign Ministers met in Buchares. They discussed on first, Ukraine’s Dmytro Kuleba, Sweden’s Tobias Billstrom and Denmark’s Jeppe Kofod discussed strengthening their support for Ukraine in the war by increasing and toughening their sanctions against Russia. They were looking

into the next sanction package against Russia. Second, increasing the pace of Ukraine's EU accession.

On 01 December, Ukraine pushed for the EU to introduce new sanctions against Russia that would focus on Russia's missile industry following its attack on Russia's electricity grids. The next set of sanctions would target Russia's missile manufacturing industry to stop Russia from damaging Ukraine's energy facilities further. Kuleba met the EU's High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy at the Organization of Security Co-operation in Europe. Both agreed to extend the EU's support to Ukraine till the war's end.

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

On 01 December, *RT* reported on the Switzerland Economic Ministry report on the value of frozen assets of the Russians. In the announcement it stated that USD 7.94 billion of Russian assets remained frozen as of 25 November which amounted to only a fraction in Switzerland. According to the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO): "The frozen amounts can increase if, for example, new persons are added to the list or if new assets are identified." On the same, *RT* reported that close to USD 300 billion reserves remain frozen in the international, but the European Commission has no record on the assets frozen by the EU member states or the amount of liquid assets held in cash.

On 01 December, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned that conflict between two nuclear states gives a high possibility for a nuclear war. He said: "Any war between nuclear powers is unacceptable. Even if someone decides to start it using conventional means, there will be a huge risk of it escalating into a nuclear one." Lavrov reiterated Russia's nuclear doctrine on the use of WMD's only in response to a nuclear strike from the enemy.

On 01 December, in the OSCE meeting Russian Permanent Representative to the OSCE Alexander Lukashevich said that Russia was urged to start the special military operation to respond to the threats faced by the Russians and Ukrainians in the border.

He also criticized OSCE for not being effective in stopping the violence in Donbass.

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

On 01 December, China's President Xi Jinping during his meeting with the EU Council President Charles Michel on Ukraine war called out for resolving the crisis through "political means" and with an interest of Europe and countries in Eurasia. Whereas Michel was reported to stressed Xi to make use the UNSC vote to end Russia's occupation in Ukraine.

On 01 December, US president Joe Biden expressed his willingness to "speak with Mr. Putin" to initiate a dialogue. Biden suggested the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine as one way to end the war. Germany's Federal Government released a statement on the list of military aid to Ukraine given so far. It includes unmanned surface vessels, border protection vehicles, three BEAVER bridge-laying tanks, and eight unmanned surface vessels, 12 border protection vehicles, spare parts for Mi-24 helicopters, 28 anti-drone sensors and jammers, 28 anti-drone sensors and jammers in partnership with the Netherlands. The total export of military goods as of 28 November sum to EUR 1,933,456,163.

### **The Global Fallout: Implications of the War in Ukraine**

On 01 December, China's President, Xi Jinping, discussed ways to end the war in Ukraine with the European Council President Charles Michel. Both agreed to stop Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, from using nuclear weapons. Xi and Michel want to avoid using nuclear weapons and the escalation of the war. Michel and Xi agreed to work together to urge Putin to respect the UN charter and Ukraine's sovereignty.

On 01 November, the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, announced that humanitarian assistance of USD 5.7 billion was requested for Ukraine in 2023 at the Global Humanitarian Overview report 2023 launch in Geneva. USD 51.5 billion in funds were requested as total aid to people in desperate



need around the world in 2023. The Covid pandemic, climate change and the war in Ukraine were held responsible for the UN requesting USD 51.5 billion in aid to help the needy during emergencies.

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## War in Ukraine: Day 280

### War on the Ground:

On 30 November, Ukraine armed forces claimed killing 500 Russian soldiers, adding to the total of 88,880. Along with this they also reported of destroying three tanks, six armoured "personnel carriers," and three drones. The exchange of missile attacks have been surrounded majorly in Ukraine east, "Kivsharivka in Kharkiv and Sloviansk in Donetsk."

### Moscow view:

#### Claims by Russia

On 30 November, Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu stated that Russia would focus on building nuclear arms infrastructure in 2023 as part of its strategic interest. Former Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev warned against the possibility of Patriot missile systems being supplied to Ukraine by NATO. He called the organization as "criminal entity," and stated that upon such aid to Ukraine, it would become the target of Russia's military.

### West View:

#### Response from the West and Europe

On 30 November, European Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen issued a statement on setting up a court with support of the UN to inspect the war crimes committed by Russia. She said: "It is estimated that more than 20,000 civilians and more than 100,000 Ukrainian military officers have been killed so far." Von der Leyen also reported on Commission's future plan to freeze more Russian assets. Till now EUR 300 billion of Russian Central Bank and EUR 19 billion of Russian Oligarchs has been confiscated.

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## EM Short Notes\*

By Padmashree Anandhan, Sai Pranav, and Madhura S Mahesh



Source: ICGB, Henry Nicholls/Reuters/The New York Times, PeterDargatz/77 images/Pixabay, Klix.ba, Estonian free press, Erkin Keci - Anadolu Agency

### ALBANIA

#### Protests erupt in Tirana over poor governance

On 06 December, former Prime Minister Sali Berisha and his Democratic Party led a protest in Tirana criticizing Prime Minister Edi Rama. The opposition accused Rama of using the EU-Western Balkans Summit to cover up Albania's internal problems. The protest started at Skanderbeg square and ended at Martyrs of Nation Boulevard. The opposition members largely outlined the problems Albania is facing because of Rama and his administration and Berisha asked the EU to not support Rama. Berisha added, "In Albania, the real power is the mafia because the government is connected to it." Berisha ended the protest with assurance to remove Rama (Kristi Geta "[What Happened during 2 hours of Opposition's Protest](#)," *Albanian Daily News*, 06 December 2022; "[Former PM Asks Police to Release Perpetrator Who Punched Him](#)," *Albanian Daily News*, 06 December 2022; "[Berisha Calls on EU Leaders Not to Be Deceived by](#)

[Rama](#)," *Albanian Daily News*, 06 December 2022)

#### Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama calls for EU integration

On 06 December, Albania's President Edi Rama in an interview with *EURACTIV* on the sidelines of the EU-Western Balkan said that while EU enlargement is welcomed the actual integration process was "individual and merit-based." Rama added that the integration process should be authentic and that the countries should follow due process and not "cheat." At the Summit, Rama said that the decision to hold the summit in Tirana shows the EU's commitment to the integration of the region into the EU framework. He seemed hesitant about the support of EU members for the integration of the Western Balkan countries. Rama said that while there was "interest" among the members for the enlargement, except for Germany and France no other country has openly shown support for the integration of new members. (Alice Taylor

\* 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.

"Rama: EU accession not an 'exam you can cheat on', more work needed," EURACTIV, 06 December 2022)

## **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

### **Electricity exports increased over BAM one billion in 10 months**

On 03 December, *Sarajevo Times* reported that electricity exports from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past 10 months amounted to over BAM one million. This is a 56.7 per cent increase from 2021 where it amounted to BAM 952.5 million. Bosnia and Herzegovina imported electricity worth BAM 268 million which is 67.8 per cent more than in 2021. This increase in electricity revenue is largely attributed to high energy prices due to the Russia-Ukraine crisis. ("The Export of Electricity from BiH exceeds One Billion BAM," *Sarajevo Times*, 03 December 2022)

### **Borjana Kristo elected as the new Prime Minister**

On 22 December, Bosnia elected a new Prime Minister, Borjana Kristo. She belongs to the ruling coalition party, Croatian Democratic Union, and was previously the vice president of the Croat majority party. The executive body of the government consists of 10 members in total. The decision to remove the previous Prime Minister and appoint a new one was taken by the state Presidency Council. A member of the Council, Denis Becirovic said: "We had two choices today: to keep the current chairman in a technical mandate, Zoran Tegeltija, who was leading the most inefficient Council of Ministers this century, or we could ... select a new person." (Azem Kurtic, "Bosnian Presidency Appoints Borjana Kristo as New PM," *Balkan Insight*, 22 December 2022)

## **BULGARIA**

### **Roumen Radev rejects new amendments to the Bulgarian Electoral Code**

On 14 December, Bulgaria's President Roumen Radev vetoed the new amendments to Bulgaria's Electoral Code passed by the Parliament. Radev reportedly vetoed many provisions in the amended law and added that the law does not assure equal treatment of voters, the secrecy of the

vote, and the efficient organization of the electoral process outside Bulgaria. Radev particularly criticized the parliament's decision to require voters to cast their votes through printouts from the voting machines. He said that this curbs the freedom of votes to choose how to cast their votes either through a paper ballot or a voting system. ("Bulgarian President Radev vetoes amendments to Electoral Code," *The Sofia Globe*, 14 December 2022)

## **DENMARK**

### **Danish Energy Agency approved UK and Norway gas companies to store CO2**

On 06 December, the Danish Energy Agency (DEA) allowed the UK's INEOS E&P and the Norwegian Wintershall Dea oil and gas companies to store 15,000 tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in a former offshore oil field in the North Sea. The foreign companies were given four months to experiment, develop and show that CO<sub>2</sub> can be stored according to the Greensand Pilot Injection Project. The companies were granted permission to use the Nini West oil field that was formerly owned by Denmark. Denmark's Energy Technology Development and Demonstration Program funded the project with DKK 197 million. Greensand is the first project to receive Denmark's permission to store carbon more cleanly and safely. The CO<sub>2</sub> will be stored in the sandstone reservoir 1,800 meters below sea level. ("Denmark grants 1st permission for carbon storage in the North Sea," *en.trendz.az*, 06 December 2022)

### **Inflation recorded at 8.9 per cent in November**

On 12 December, *the Local dk* reported that Denmark's consumer goods and services price had averaged 8.9 per cent in November. The inflation fell by 1.2 per cent from October to November. The annual cost of living for a Danish Family's increased by more than DKK 40,000 due to inflation. According to the report, an increase in energy prices affects the prices of consumer goods and services. Higher inflation has caused lower purchasing power among Danish consumers. Although inflation has fallen in November, it is still considered higher than the normal average calculated

year-on-year. (["Inflation down in Denmark but forecasts tentative for 2023," thelocal.dk](#), 12 December 2022)

### **Frederiksen's new coalition agreement provides plans to address inflation**

On 14 December, Denmark's Acting Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen presented the agreement of the centrist coalition government titled "Responsibility for Denmark." The new agreement outlines the plans of the coalition for tackling inflation, lack of employees in hospitals, and tax reforms. Some of the plans include the imposition of an extra five per cent in taxes for those who earn more than DKK 568,900 per year and the scrapping of a public holiday in 2024 which will help Denmark divert funds to increase Denmark's military expenditure to meet NATO targets. The new centrist coalition of center-left Social Democrats, the center-right Liberal Party, and the centrist Moderate party is the first such coalition since 1978. The new coalition also has the majority in the parliament with 89 of 179 seats and enjoys the support of four seats from the semi-independent Danish territories in Greenland and the Faeroe Islands. (Jan M. Olsen "[Danish PM says centrist coalition needed at time of crisis](#)," *AP News*, 14 December 2022)

### **The government's loan scheme on energy bills is used by few than expected**

On 20 December, *the Local dk* reported that the previous government's energy bill loan scheme was used by fewer people than initially expected. The loan scheme's purpose was to relieve businesses and households by delaying energy bill payments. Anything excess of 2021's last quarter energy price was given the option to be frozen and can be paid later. The delayed payment only includes the additional cost and not the entire energy bill. The government had allocated DKK 45 billion for the loan scheme out of which only DKK 85 million was used by households and businesses. Private households are the majority to have used the energy loan scheme out of the limited users. Most of the businesses rejected the scheme due to the fear of incurring debt. The businesses complained that the interest

rate was high at 4.4 per cent and the annual fees incurred if the loan is used by businesses. (["Danish homes and businesses reluctant to use government's energy loan scheme," thelocal.dk](#), 20 December 2022)

## **ESTONIA**

### **President Karis assures support to Ukraine**

On 24 December, Estonian President Alar Karis in an interview with an Estonian News Portal spoke of Estonia's stand on the war between Russia and Ukraine. The President spoke of Estonia's continuing support for Ukraine, and the significance of this support. Karis responded to a question about his statement about Putin's war, saying he still supports what he spoke about, the war being Putin's and not Russia's war. He spoke on how Estonia is managing inflation and power cuts, which are being caused due to energy shortage in Europe. (["President Karis: You can be for peace when the war is over," news.err.ee](#), 24 December 2022)

## **FINLAND**

### **President approves the amendments to the Abortion Act**

On 20 December 2022, the Finnish President approved an amendment to the country's existing Abortion Act. The new amendment in line with the Oma tahto 2020 citizens' recommendations got approved after the report submitted by the Social Affairs and Health committee. The amendments are landmark decisions by the Finnish authorities that will help women more in their right to self-determination. The act mandates that for terminating a pregnancy before the end of twelve weeks only the assent of the woman is required. Earlier it was not so, yet for pregnancies, after the twelfth week, such a provision has only been given for special cases when the woman's life is in danger and complications arise. The act also provides counselling and psychological support services. The amendments are to come into force on 01 September 2023, as other associated decrees are left to be amended which will ensure that the act is implemented properly. (["Amendments to the Abortion](#)

Act approved, *valtioneuvosto.fi*, 20 December 2022)

### **New reform to remodel the healthcare services**

On 23 June 2021, Finland's Parliament passed a law transferring healthcare services from the country's 293 municipalities to the 21 regional authorities and independently, the city of Helsinki. These reforms are to begin from 2023 onwards and include a whole array of new strategies. The reforms have been made following a provincial model of implementation. The services have also been renamed to now known as 'wellbeing service county'. The reforms are not just in names or division of responsibilities but have also been done keeping in mind to decrease the costs. They also include a generous package to encourage the use and faster adoption of digital services. The reform does not address the funding, this might lead to tightening of funding and a possible shortage of healthcare workers. ("What structural changes should be expected from Finland's public healthcare reform?", *yle.fi*, 21 December 2022)

### **Olkiluoto nuclear reactor restarted at full capacity to produce electricity**

On 28 December, a nuclear reactor on Finland's west coast restarted its operations. It was shut down due to repairs and this was causing a shortage of electricity supply to the main grid. The Olkiluoto nuclear power plant has been operating since 1979, but it was stopped this year when cracks appeared on the feedwater pumps. The operating company, Teollisuuden Voima, through a spokesperson issued a statement "During the 10-day trial period the reactor will undergo around 10 so-called 'full capacity tests'." The reactor started operating at 400 megawatt-hours and reached its total capacity of 1600 megawatt-hours ("Olkiluoto 3 restarts after shutdown," *yle.fi*, 28 December 2022)

## **FRANCE**

### **Eric Ciotti elected as the new leader of the Les Republicains party**

On 11 December, Eric Ciotti was elected as the new leader of the Les Republicains (LR) party scoring a majority of 53.7 per cent of the votes. His opponent Brumo Retailleau scored 46.3 per cent of the total votes. Eric Ciotti is a right-wing politician who looks to "rehabilitate the value of work, fight against violence and disorder in the streets, stop the migratory invasion and the rise of Islamism." ("French conservative party chooses right-wing Ciotti as leader," *France 24*, 11 December 2022)

### **Risk of energy shortage lower due to reduced consumer demand**

On 20 December, France's grid operator, RTE published a statement saying that the country is no longer in danger of facing an energy shortage. The overall consumption and demand from the consumers have become lower, in line with the government's recommendations. The French government had earlier recommended that households and businesses should aim to reduce their electricity usage by at least 10 per cent. As of now, there is a nine per cent reduction which has led to France coming out of the red zone. Another development that has assisted in this has been the greater output generated by Nuclear and hydropower plants. The power utility company EDF has listed out some risks too that are being faced due to increased production. ("Reduced energy consumption helps lower threat to French power supply," *France24*, 20 December 2022)

### **France to boost wind energy output with EU assistance**

On 22 December, the European Commission's Directorate General for Energy and Climate announced France can go ahead with its plan to increase electricity output from its wind farms. For this, the EU approved France to adopt the plan under its aid framework. With this, France can now increase its total output which has been needed since the breakout of the war in Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis, on top of 16 nuclear reactors in France not functioning. The French decree proposes to increase the output of turbines by one MW till 31 December 2023. The EU had to

compromise on some of its positions for allowing the project to go ahead, it has given leeway on restrictions on noise and environmental concerns. (Paul Messad, [EU Commission greenlights capacity boost for French turbines](#), *EURACTIV*, 22 December 2022)

### **Violent protests in Paris after a deadly shooting at Kurdish centre**

On 25 December, two days of violent protests over the mass shooting that took place at the Kurdish centre in Paris's 10th district finally ended. The casualties included six people, with three having died due to gun wounds and three in hospitalized severe condition. The accused, William M, a 69-year-old white man who worked as a train driver harboured extreme hate towards other communities and in particular towards migrants. He targeted the Kurdish minority due to the involvement of Kurdish forces in the Syrian war and their actions. He has been arrested earlier too over such hate-induced acts. The French prosecutors have placed the man in psychiatric care due to his history of unwarranted violence. The Kurdish community's response has been strong with them demanding the French government take serious action and look into the issue. (Manuel Ausloos and Antony Paone ["Kurdish protest over Paris shooting turns violent"](#), *Reuters*, 25 December 2022; Henri Atier ["Paris shooting: Suspect admits 'pathological' hatred of migrants"](#), *BBC*, 25 December 2022)

### **Peak emission levels leave no space for climate goals**

On 27 December, *LesEchos* reported on the Citepa estimate of France's greenhouse gas emissions levels in 2022. France's gas distribution service GRDF found that the number of nuclear reactors which were shut down due to corrosion or repair issues has led France to use more gas to produce electricity. To meet the constant supply of energy, the government has allowed the fire power plants to operate at "full capacity" resulting in massive climate impact. In the last nine months, there has been no slight variation in the gas emissions and Citepa estimated that only 0.3 per cent of 306.8

million tonnes of CO2 was reduced. It recommends "double the rate of reduction of emissions" for France to achieve the 2050 carbon neutrality target. In terms of sectorial contribution, industrial emissions were down by five per cent whereas the transport sector showed an increase of four per cent. (Muryel Jacque, ["Overconsumption of gas prevents CO2 emissions from being reduced in France"](#), *LesEchos*, 27 December 2022)

## **GREECE**

### **Green Tank provides an estimate of electricity produced from renewable energy**

On 05 December, Green Tank a Greece-based think tank reported that around 47.1 per cent of electricity demand in Greece was fulfilled by renewable energy in the first 10 months of 2022. It added that on 07 October for five hours, Greece's entire demand for electricity was supplied by renewables which is a first for the country.

Hydroelectricity is the major source of renewable energy in Greece with plants producing 20.2 gigawatt-hour for ten months which exceeded the amount of electricity produced by fossil gas and lignite. This sharp increase in renewables contribution is attributed to increased fuel prices and a decrease in overall electricity demand. (Igor Todorović ["Greece produces record 47.1% of electricity from renewables so far in 2022"](#), *Balkan Green Energy News*, 05 December 2022)

### **Police officer accused of shooting a teenager**

On 06 December, a 34-year-old police officer in Thessaloniki was presented before the court on the charge of shooting a 16-year-old Roma. On 05 December, police chased the teenager after he ran without paying money at the petrol station. The officer fired two bullets and the boy reportedly lost control of his vehicle and crashed into the wall. He was taken to a nearby hospital to treat his injuries. After the incident, the police officer was arrested and suspended. In Thessaloniki, thousands protested, and where Police used tear gas and stun grenades to suppress the protestors. Protestors also barricaded the

hospital at which the boy is being treated and even set fire to dumpster cans. Six people were detained by the police. The officer has been given time to defend himself before the formal trial by an investigating magistrate. ([“Protests erupt in Greece over teenager’s shooting in police chase,” Al Jazeera](#), 06 December 2022)

## HUNGARY

### **Government accused of misusing citizens’ data for election campaign**

On 01 December, Human Rights Watch released a report which accused the Hungarian Prime Minister and his party Fidesz of misusing citizens’ data for election purposes. The report outlines how Fidesz used data from Covid-19 vaccination registration, tax benefits applications, and association membership registrations to distribute the party’s campaign messages before April 2022 elections. The report further goes on to highlight how this violates privacy rights and calls such moves a “betrayal of trust and an abuse of power.” ([“Orbán used Hungarians’ COVID data to boost election campaign, report says,” Politico](#), 01 November 2022)

### **Viktor Orban to shift energy profits to state budgets**

On 08 December, Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orban announced that the government would convert the extra profits of energy companies to state budgets. He said that the windfall taxes would be increased to 95 per cent from 40 per cent for energy companies in the Brent-Ural region. Orban accused the EU of placing price caps on Russian oil exports, which resulted in lower crude imports to Hungary via the Druzhba oil pipeline. The oil and gas companies are reluctant to sell due to lower prices and higher taxes. Orban said that the windfall taxes would sustain Hungary’s poor economy. The EU has withheld Covid recovery funds from Hungary due to the rule of law issues. ([“Orban raids oil ‘extra profits’ after scrapping fuel price cap,” Reuters](#), 08 December 2022)

## ITALY

### **Government optimistic on EU’s post-pandemic recovery fund**

On 02 December, Italy’s government announced that it is confident in finishing the 55 targets set for the latter half of 2022 to gain EUR 19 billion from its EU post-pandemic recovery fund. Italy has already received EUR 67 billion out of EUR 200 billion from the EU fund. Some Italian Ministers warned that it would be tough to fulfill all 55 targets of reforms and deadlines. However, the government believes that it can achieve all the targets by 2022 and can submit a request to the EU for its third payment from the post-pandemic recovery fund. Italy’s government has already allocated EUR 12 billion for extra costs incurred by the construction firms working on public projects. ([“Italy says will hit all 2022 targets for EU post-pandemic funds,” Reuters](#), 02 December 2022)

### **Two rescue ships carrying over 500 migrants dock at Italian ports**

On 11 December, the Italian authorities allowed two rescue ships carrying over 500 migrants to dock in the ports of Salerno and Bari. The Geo Barents Ship with 248 migrants docked in Salerno and the Humanity one with 261 migrants docked in Bari. The two ships were reportedly allowed to dock due to bad weather conditions to mitigate risks to those on board. This comes as Italy is looking to introduce new regulations regarding the entry of rescue ships and rescued migrants. ([“509 Migrants Arrive in Italy as Rescue Ships Dock,” VOA](#), 11 December 2022)

## KOSOVO

### **Serbian President announces the removal of the 19-day blockade**

On 29 December, ethnic Serbs of northern Kosovo announced the removal of barricades from three major roads. These had been blocked as a sign of protest against the arrest of a Serbian Police Officer on 10 December. The officer has now been released and placed under house arrest. To calm tensions down in the area, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic held meetings with the Kosovo Serbs and announced the barricades will be removed beginning 29 December. The conflict relates to Serbia

repeatedly trying to block the independence of Kosovo and the western powers backing Kosovo in its quest. The majority of Kosovo's population are ethnic Albanians and the minority are ethnic Serbs, which leads to minor clashes and breakouts of violence. (Fatos Bytyci, "[Serbs in northern Kosovo to start removing barricades from Thursday](#)," *Reuters*, 29 December 2022)

## LITHUANIA

### **Border fence installation with Belarus completed**

On 20 December, Lithuanian border forces revealed in a statement that the defence forces had stopped the regular and constant patrolling of its shared border with Belarus. This development came to be as the border fence between the countries nears completion. The border fence covers most of the entire length and has been built by Lithuania. It also includes surveillance systems that will assist in enhancing border security. The work had begun after the migrant refugee crisis during the summer of 2021. More than 19,200 migrants have been turned away since 03 August 2021, earlier nearly 4,200 migrants had managed to cross over into Lithuania. (Augustas Stankevicius, "[Lithuanian troops stop patrolling Belarusian border](#)," *LRT.lt*, 20 December 2022)

## LATVIA

### **Parliament approves the creation of the Ministry of Climate and Energy**

On 01 December, the legislation proposing the creation of the Ministry of Climate and Energy and the appointment of deputy ministers was passed by the Saeima. The Law on State Administration Structure Law was passed with 52 votes who also supported the creation of the new Ministry. 36 deputies voted against the Law and 45 were against the creation of the new Ministry. The new legislation did not receive the support of the Legal Affairs Committee which is responsible for the approval of the draft law. The Saeima debated if the law could be voted on if it was rejected where former Saeima Speaker Inara Mūrniece said that it can be voted on despite the rejection as the Saeima's prior support for the bill overruled the rejection

by the committee. ("[New ministerial office creation approved by Saeima](#)," *eng.lsm.lv*, 01 December 2022)

### **Foreign trade turnover exceeds 2021 figures**

On 12 December, Latvia's Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) published provincial data that revealed Latvia's foreign trade turnover to be EUR 4.2 billion in October 2022. The export goods in Latvia came up to EUR 1.82 billion in October and the imported goods were worth EUR 2.8 billion. However, compared to October 2021, foreign trade exports have worsened from 45.7 to 43.4 per cent. Latvia's total foreign trade turnover from January to October amounted to EUR 39.19 billion, 33.3 per cent higher than in 2021. The export value increased by 30.7 per cent and the imports value grew by 35.3 per cent. Latvia exports the most to Lithuania, Estonia, Germany, and Sweden and imports from Lithuania, Estonia, Germany and Poland. ("[Latvia's foreign trade gap widened in October](#)," *eng.lsm.lv*, 12 December 2022)

### **Coalition parties to form the new government**

On 14 December, New Unity, United List, and National Alliance signed an agreement to enter into a coalition and form the new government of Latvia. The government is led by Prime Minister Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš who is from the New Unity party with his 14 cabinet ministers. Out of the 14 cabinet ministers, four belong to National Alliance, four belong to National Alliance and six belong to New Unity. The coalition will now face a confidence vote in the Saeima. The Latvian elections were held on 01 October and the three parties decided to enter a coalition after the results were announced which was followed by two and a half months of negotiations between the parties. ("[Latvia's coalition parties sign next government agreement](#)," *eng.lsm.lv*, 14 December 2022)

## MALTA

### **Protesters across Valletta against an amendment to abortion law**

On 04 December, thousands of protesters hit the streets of Valletta voicing their anger



on a proposal for amendment to abortion law. The proposal tabled in the parliament speaks about legalising abortion for women whose health and life are at risk. A doctor will determine the risk factor according to the proposal. The proposal also provides protection for the doctors and nurses who carry out the procedure. The protesters are against this proposal and say that the wording of the proposal is vague. Led by pro-life organisations, over 20,000 protesters gathered in Valletta holding placards saying "Zomm l-abort l'barra minn Malta" (Keep abortion out of Malta), "Ipproteġu lil uliedna" (protect our children) and "Jien m'għandix vuċi" (I don't have a voice). Malta's former President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, archbishop Charles Scicluna and Nationalist Party leader Bernard Grech, joined the protestors. The main concern over the proposal is that it will "bring abortion to Malta" and that women will be eligible for abortion for mental health or trivial reasons. Abortion in Malta is banned and criminalized. Anyone who undergoes abortion or provides abortion services in Malta can be jailed from 18 months to three years in prison. (["Thousands gather in Valletta to protest abortion law reform," Times of Malta, 04 December 2022](#))

#### **NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Pay reduced for MLA under the new bill**  
On 07 December, Northern Ireland's Secretary of State Chris Heaton-Harris received parliamentary approval to reduce the salary of MLAs by 27.5 per cent according to the Executive Formation Act. Since February 2022, Northern Ireland's MLAs were unable to perform their complete duties due to the devolved government. The MLA will receive their full pay when the Assembly is fully restored. The need for pay reduction reflected the cost-of-living crisis in the region. Heaton-Harris requested Northern Ireland's parties to use the time that the act is implemented to restore the assembly. (["Northern Ireland Secretary announces 27.5% reduction to MLA pay," gov.uk, 07 December 2022](#))

#### **Northern Ireland police say the number of road accidents back to pre-COVID levels**

On 24 December, the Northern Ireland police released data on the number of casualties and road accidents during the year 2022. The data revealed an increase in accidents and deaths due to collisions over the past year. The police in a statement said that the increase can be attributed to the smaller number of cases in the past year due to COVID lockdowns. The most common cause of crashes this year was either the driver failing to be attentive or driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol. (["Rise in number of people killed on Northern Ireland roads in 2022," BBC, 24 December 2022](#))

#### **NORWAY**

##### **Government reduces fossil fuel tax to combat rising energy prices**

On 15 December, Norway's government announced the removal of fuel tax from 2023 to control energy prices. NOK 2.2 billion will be reduced by removing the fuel tax. The mineral oil tax reduction will also take place from 01 January 2023. The net reduction of fuel tax will be more than NOK 600 million and the total amount of road tax on fuel will be reduced by NOK 1.88 billion. The government also plans to increase the CO2 tax which will see a growth in state revenue by NOK 1.26 billion. The removal of road and fuel taxes will help households and businesses cope with rising fuel prices. (Robin-Ivan Capar, ["Norway to remove fuel tax to reduce petrol and diesel prices," the Local no, 15 December 2022](#))

#### **POLAND**

##### **Morawiecki urges to fast-track the judicial reforms**

On 14 December, Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki urged lawmakers from all political parties to fast-track the approval process of proposed judicial reforms. These new judicial reforms were introduced to solve the ongoing dispute between the EU and Poland and unblock important EU funds. The latest dispute was the introduction of a disciplinary chamber for judges by Poland. This was condemned by EU courts which demanded its dissolution

and subsequently levied EUR one million fines per day on Poland for failing to do so. Opposition parties have said that they will come to a decision after reading the reforms thoroughly and making their decision based on the final draft. They also said that the process for adopting the reforms should not be rushed. As per the reforms: "Eliminate potential doubts related to the implementation by the Republic of Poland of its obligations," and boost the judiciary's impartiality and independence. If the reforms are passed then the flow of unblocked funds will alleviate the strain on Poland's public finances thereby reducing inflation. (Pawel Florkiewicz and Anna Wlodarczyk-semczuk "Polish PM urges lawmakers to pass new judicial reforms to unlock EU funds," *Reuters*, 15 December 2022)

## ROMANIA

### **Romanian Defense Ministry defuses mine explosion nearing Black Sea shore**

On 10 December, the Romanian Defense Ministry said that the country's navy executed a "controlled" explosion of a naval mine that had "drifted" close to Romania's Black Sea shore. The Ministry added that the navy was notified by a Turkish cargo ship 2.5 nautical miles north of the Romanian Black Sea port of Constanta. This comes as mines began floating in the Black Sea after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February. Romanian, Bulgarian and Turkish military diving teams have continued to defuse mines drifting in their waters. Since the war, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine have destructed nearly 40 mines in the western waters of the Black Sea. ("Romania defuses mine drifting close to its Black Sea shore," *AlArabiya News*, 10 December 2022)

## RUSSIA

### **2500 dead Caspian seals found in Dagestan**

On 04 December, Russian officials reported that 2500 Caspian seals were found dead in Dagestan on the Caspian Sea coast. The first set of carcasses was found on 03 December and was reported by the North Caucasus Territorial Administration of Rosrybolovstvo and the total amount dead

was pegged at 650-700 seals. This number increased drastically as more of the coast was explored and in total 2500 seals were found. The reason for the death of all the seals has not yet been determined but according to the Russian Ministry of Natural Sciences, it was due to natural causes due to emissions of natural gas. The ministry said that the death of thousands of seals will not affect their population in the Caspian Sea as they have a population of around 300,000 seals in the region. ("2,500 Caspian seals found dead along Russian coastline," *The Guardian*, 05 December 2022; "Thousands of dead Red Book seals were found in Dagestan," *Lenta.ru*, 05 December 2022)

### **CIS summit shows positive trade and security cooperation**

On 26 December, Russia's President Vladimir Putin held an informal summit with the leaders from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). He highlighted the growing trade, technological sovereignty, industrial production, and maintenance of security in the Eurasian region. In the meet, Kazakhstan's President Tokaev Kasym-Jomart Kemelevich highlighted the increase in the economic growth by 11 per cent and the Astana summit. He also added cooperation in combatting terrorism, the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway, and supporting the space for the Russian language. The meeting reflected the joint effort in building cooperation amongst the CIS. ("Informal CIS summit," *Kremlin.ru*, 26 December 2022)

## SCOTLAND

### **Scotland Parliament decreases the age for self-identification for trans people**

On 22 December, the Scottish Parliament gave assent to a new law that decreases the age for self-identification for transgender people. Along with this, the bill proposed to remove the requirement of needing a medical certification for being identified as a transgender person. The bill is touted to be one of the progressive laws that have been brought in by the government and have met with a lot of criticism from the opposition. The major changes brought in are the lowering of the age from 18 to 16 years and the introduction of a said

“reflection period” for three months in which the person can introspect their decision. The opposition parties have claimed that the new bill will be used by male preparators to access spaces used by women and that this would lead to an increase in gender violence. The Scottish government stated that the bill is another step towards destigmatizing excluded minorities and would make their transition into society more acceptable. ([Scotland passes transgender self-identification bill](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 23 December 2022)

## SLOVAKIA

### **Slovakian government votes for a no-confidence motion**

On 15 December, in the Slovakian government, 78 of 150 MPs voted in favour of a no-confidence motion proposed by the opposition. Prime Minister Eduard Heger’s coalition government which was formed with three parties lost the majority when the “Freedom and Solidarity Party” withdrew. As the coalition goes into a no-control zone, it also failed to get the 2023 budget passed. Upon the no-confidence motion, President Zuzana Caputova will now have to appoint a new prime minister or suggest new elections, which will require a two-thirds of the Parliament majority. The reason behind the withdrawal of the Freedom and Solidarity party was due to dissatisfaction over the “spending plans” of the Finance Minister and support from the opposition party. (“[No confidence vote topples Slovakia coalition government](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 15 December 2022)

## SPAIN

### **Highest rate recorded in youth employment**

On 20 December, *EURACTIV* reported on the revised rate of Spain’s labour rules. It reported an increase of 142 per cent in youth workers. Europe has faced the highest rate of youth underemployment and unemployment since the global financial crisis. The improvement has been observed due to the labour reform introduced by the Socialist-led government. The youth unemployment rate of Spain improved after the economic recovery in 2021 and fell by 13 per cent after the introduction of labour

regulations. After the negotiation with the labour union and employers, temporary jobs and contracts were removed to the max to reduce the job instability and unemployment rate. This has now led to a beneficial increase in youth employment in Spain. (“[Youth in Spain see jobs gain after years of instability](#),” *EURACTIV*, 20 December 2022)

### **Spain makes it smoother for citizens to change gender**

On 22 December, the Spanish Parliament passed a new law allowing citizens to change their gender on official documents without any medical or psychological evaluation as was the case before. The people only have a self-declaration of their gender, the change will be granted based on this itself. The bill reduces the age for the process, introducing it for 14 and 15-year-olds though parental assent is required till 16 years of age. The other feature of the bill is that it reduces the time taken for the entire process to just three months. The law also bans certain prevalent practices like conversion therapy and proceeds to give recognition to those children born to unmarried and bisexual couples. The law is not without controversy as a lot of voice has been raised against the bill from both the left and the right parties in Spain. ([Spain: Gender identity bill passes parliament](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 23 December 2022)

### **President announces third relief package to curb inflation**

On 27 December, Spain’s President Pedro Sanchez announced an aid package worth 10 billion euros for easing inflation and the rising cost of living. This relief package covers a one-time bonus for 4.2 million households, whose annual incomes fall below 27,000 euros. The tax cuts introduced earlier this year for energy bills have been extended till the first half of 2023. The past relief packages have shown some success in controlling inflation as it has come down to 6.7 per cent, which is also the lowest rate of inflation among all the EU countries. The president also announced measures to extend subsidies on train travel for a year. (“[Spain announces \\$10.6 billion](#)

[package to ease inflation pain,](#)” *Euronews*, 27 December 2022)

## SWEDEN

### **Swedish nursing homes see an uptick in COVID-19 cases**

On 24 December, the number of new weekly COVID-19 cases in Sweden peaked at 3,000. Most of the cases are being registered from elderly care institutions, according to Sweden’s Public Health Agency Department Head Sara Byfors. The government does not plan on introducing any new restrictions as of now but has enforced the implementation of basic hygiene routines from the pandemic years. ([“Nursing homes in Sweden see surge in number of COVID-19 cases,](#) *thelocal.se*, 24 December 2022)

### **Indigenous people oppose Energy projects in Northern Europe**

On 22 December, the Sami community of northern Sweden came together to oppose a proposed plan to establish more wind farms and operate mines in their region. The community’s traditional occupation is herding reindeer. The major complaints found against the proposed plans include non-accessibility to the grazing area and noise pollution. There is both support and resentment of the newly proposed projects as it is hoped to bring a slew of new jobs and many associated with that as well. (Maddy Savage [“Reindeer herders fear Arctic industry boom,](#) *BBC*, 22 December 2022)

### **Survey reveals reduced support amongst the public for Kristersson’s government**

On 28 December, a poll carried out by Demoskop announced the findings from its latest survey report on support for Sweden’s government. The results showed that the majority of the citizens do not have confidence in Sweden’s Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson with six out of ten respondents marking the government’s performance as “very badly” in the survey. The major grievances of the people are to do with the rising energy costs, including that electricity and fuel. The government has only been able to announce schemes and promises but has not implemented any, said the people

who were surveyed. There has been a steady rise in the number of people dissatisfied with the performance of the government over the past months as the survey indicates, the report stated. ([“Six out of ten Swedes already think the new government is ‘doing a poor job,’](#) *thelocal.se*, 28 December 2022)

## SWITZERLAND

### **Government to withdraw temporarily from the UN resettlement refugee programme**

On 19 December, Switzerland announced the temporary suspension of its participation in the UN resettlement programme for refugees. The decision came as it reported on the challenge of incapacity to house the fleeing Ukrainian refugees. According to the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) spokesperson Lukas Rieder: “The resettlement programme will not be called into question, only admissions will be temporarily suspended.” In 2022, UNHCR stated that of 1.5 million refugees, only a fraction has been allotted settlement, whereas Switzerland had committed to supporting 1,820 “vulnerable refugees” during 2022 and 2023 and has now withdrawn. ([“Switzerland suspends admission of refugees under UN programme,](#)” *TRT World*, 19 December 2022)

### **Switzerland dismisses proposal seeking the creation of a third-gender category**

On 21 December, Switzerland’s Federal Council rejected the proposal put forward by the Parliament seeking the creation and inclusion of a third-gender category in the country’s official documents for Swiss citizens. This idea was rejected firmly on the grounds that Swiss society was not yet ready for such changes to be brought into the social structure. This is in sharp contrast to its neighbouring countries where changes have been made keeping in mind people of other gender. The government based its reasoning on a national ethics committee report of 2020 which stated that it was not yet time to change the system. ([“Switzerland rejects idea of a third-gender option in official records,](#)” *Euronews*, 21 December 2022)

### **Local gas work association plans to build gas terminal despite objection**

On 25 December, a plan to build a gas terminal which would be able to store up to 150 gas containers for a year was announced in a joint statement by 15 local gas workers. The site is located at Muttenz, near Basel. If built this would be Switzerland's first Liquefied Natural Gas storage facility and is aimed at reducing the country's dependency on pipelines and a need for a constant supply. Previously environmental organizations had raised their concerns over the project. The proposal comes after the Swiss government agreed to address the energy shortage. ("Plans for first Swiss liquefied gas terminal mooted," *swissinfo.ch*, 25 December 2022)

### **THE NETHERLANDS**

#### **Hague court upholds ban on assisted suicide**

On 14 December, the Hague District Court ruled in favour of upholding the ban on assisted suicide. The case was filed by activists led by the Cooperative Last Will group challenged the Netherlands' ban on assisted suicide claiming that it violates the ECHR. In the Netherlands, the practice of euthanasia is legal where physicians are allowed to end the lives of patients by administering lethal doses of drugs under strict conditions. The practice of assisted suicide where a person who is not a physician supplies an individual with fatal substances to self-administer is banned in the Netherlands. The Court in its ruling said that while the ECHR protects an individual's right to decide when to end their life it "...does not go so far that there is also a right to obtain assisted suicide." Cooperative Last Will's Chairperson Frits Spangenberg expressed his disappointment with the court's judgement and added that they will continue this fight. The Dutch Association for a Voluntary End of Life criticized the ruling and said that the court supports a "...situation in which the government deprives its citizens of the right to die with dignity at their discretion." (Mike Corder "Dutch court rejects challenge to assisted suicide ban," *AP News*, 14 December 2022)

### **THE UK**

#### **Fusion robots to help in UK's fusion energy research**

On 05 December, *GOV.UK* reported on the advancement in UK's space industry. UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and the Satellite Applications Catapult have shown the use of remote handling and robot technology in fusion energy research. The maintenance of in-orbit satellites and energy creation from the fusion is observed as a sustainable way for future energy supply and the smooth functioning of the process of in-orbit servicing is an area to be addressed. According to Catapult Robotics Development Lead Jeremy Hadall, the robots are seen as a boon to improve "close-proximity operations," and open up for commercial collaborations. ("Fusion robots at work in the UK space industry," *gov.uk*, 05 December 2022)

#### **39 Albanian migrant children go missing from Kent**

On 04 December, *BBC* reported that out of the 197 Albanian children taken in by Kent City Council 39 have gone missing. These children were unaccompanied migrants who came to the UK by crossing the English Channel. The numbers according to Ecpat UK's head of policy, advocacy and research Laura Durán are "really high" and Ecpat UK fears that they are at risk of exploitation and trafficking. The average age of the missing children is said to be around 18 years. Kent City Council reported that there has been an increase in the number of unaccompanied Albanian children and that "Whilst all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are vulnerable to exploitation... research and experience evidences that some nationalities are particularly vulnerable and can go missing from local authority care very quickly." ("Channel crossings: Dozens of Albanian child migrants go missing," *BBC*, 04 December 2022)

#### **Rail workers union refuse pay rise offer**

On 04 December, the UK's RMT union refused the four per cent increase in pay offer of the Rail Delivery Group. The Group had put forth an offer of a pay rise of eight per cent over two years to halt further

strikes by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT). The RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch said: "We have rejected this offer as it does not meet any of our criteria for securing a settlement on long-term job security, a decent pay rise and protecting working conditions." The RMT announced that they would be organising strikes in December and January which would hamper travel before and after Christmas. The union has organised many strikes this year over the issue of an increase in payment due to the increased cost-of-living crisis. ("British rail workers union rejects offer aimed at averting strikes," Reuters, 05 December 2022)

### **Anti-tank weapons ordered from Swedish manufacturer to comply with NATO's requirements**

On 07 December, the UK's Defence Secretary Ben Wallace announced that the UK had signed a EUR 229 million deal with Swedish weapon manufacturer Saab for the Next Generation Light Anti-Tank Weapon systems (NLAW). The NLAW will be assembled at a facility in Belfast in Northern Ireland. The UK Armed Forces will receive 500 NLAW units in 2023 and several thousand units between 2024 to 2026. The new supply replenished the UK Armed Forces to meet NATO requirements. The UK's NLAWs were sent to Ukraine to use against the Russian aggression in the ongoing war. ("UK orders thousands more anti-tank weapons to bolster stockpiles," gov.uk, 07 December 2022)

### **Jeremy Hunt introduced Edinburgh Reform to deal with post-Brexit consequences**

On 09 December, Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt announced the "Edinburgh Reform a new set of financial regulations which looks to deal with the consequences of Brexit on financial services. The Reforms looks to make the UK "the world's most innovative and competitive global financial centre." The new reforms are based on "agility, consistently high regulatory standards, and openness." According to Hunt, the reforms will help the UK set up a financial services

regulation to bolster competitive and stable financial services. Hunt added that this was possible due to "Brexit freedoms" or the "UK's position outside the EU." There are more than 30 proposed reforms some of which include, reforming the Ring-Fencing Regime for Banks, lifting caps on bankers' bonuses, introducing a plan for repealing and reforming EU law using powers within the FSM Bill and building a smarter regulatory framework for the UK, and reformation of the Securitization Regulation. (Alasdair Sandford "UK to ease financial rules in post-Brexit shake-up to boost global clout," Euronews, 12 December 2022 and "Financial Services: The Edinburgh Reforms," gov.uk, 09 December 2022)

### **Five fisheries projects receive funding from the Environment Department**

On 12 December, the UK's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Department announced GBP 3.5 million for five fisheries and marine habitat protection research projects across the UK. Plymouth Enterprise Ltd University in partnership with Angling Trust and Professional Boatman's Association collect data on excessive fishing of vulnerable species such as sharks, black bream and rays. The data help marine species protect from being exploited. Bangor University in collaboration with the British Geological Survey, Orkney Fisheries Association and Welsh Fisherman's Association looked into climate change impacts on common whelk. They were assigned GBP 400, 000 for the research. The Fisheries Minister said: "A proper understanding of important marine species is vital if we are to manage our fisheries sustainably and safeguard the fishing and seafood sector for future generations." The research projects are a part of the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) scheme, a GBP 100 million UK Seafood government fund concerning research on the UK fisheries and seafood industries. ("Over £3.5m awarded to sustainable fishing projects as new funding round opens," gov.uk, 12 December 2022)

### **Conservative Party faces backlash sharing misleading information**

On 12 December, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) condemned the Conservative Party for falsely claiming that the UK had secured GBP 800 billion from new free trade deals with 70 countries since 2016 Brexit. The UKSA's Chair, Sir Robert Chote, countered the Conservative Intergovernmental Relations Minister Michael Gove's claims of the UK gaining GBP 800 billion. Chote said that the claim was shared without any proof or sources. He pointed out that many deals with the EU and non-EU states that the Conservative party had mentioned in their claim began before the UK exited from the EU. The Scottish National party's Minister, Drew Hendry, criticized Gove for spreading misleading and incorrect information through social media. Hendry said: "Brexit has, and will continue to be, an unmitigated disaster for households and businesses across these islands, reducing Scottish exports by a staggering £2.2bn in the last year alone." (Peter Walker, "[Watchdog reprimands Tories over £800bn post-Brexit trade deals claim](#)," *The Guardian*, 12 December 2022)

### **Rishi Sunak introduces stricter measures to deal with illegal migration**

On 13 December, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak outlined five measures to combat illegal migration across the English Channel. These new measures include setting up a permanent Small Boats Operational Command, increasing raids on illegal working by law enforcement, ceasing housing asylum seekers in hotels and shifting them to alternate accommodations, increasing efficiency in processing asylum claims, and lastly stricter policies towards migrants arriving from Albania. Sunak said that the UK and the Albanian Government have entered into an agreement to decrease the number of illegal migrants coming to the UK. He has introduced a separate five-point plan under this agreement. The measures are, deploying Border Force officers in Tirana airport, declaring Albanian as a safe country, raising the threshold for one to be considered a modern slave, swift detainment and return of individuals along the ECAT, and setting up a new unit to process illegal Albanian migrants. Sunak added that under the

agreement the Albanian government has agreed to protect actual victims and people at risk of re-trafficking. Lastly, Sunak said that new legislation will be introduced to swiftly return illegal migrants to their home country or shift them to a safe country where their claims can be processed. He also added that the migrants "removed" from the UK will not be able to re-enter, settle or apply for UK citizenship. ("[PM statement on illegal migration: 13 December 2022](#)," *gov.uk*, 13 December 2022)

### **UK rail workers begin walkout strike in demand for better pay**

On 13 December, Rail workers across the UK started the two-day strike led by the RMT union demanding better pay with rising inflation. The workers staged a massive walkout which led to a decrease in the number of trains running throughout the day. This led to disruption in daily commutes as trains only ran from 0730 GMT to 1830 GMT. This comes after the RMT rejected the pay offer by Network Pay which outlined an increase in pay by five per cent for 2022 and four per cent from 2023. This strike is part of a series of protests which will be held by postal workers, bus drivers, highway workers, border force and airport baggage handlers who are all demanding for the next two weeks demanding for an increase in pay amid rising inflation. ("[Thousands of UK's rail workers strike over below-inflation pay](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 13 December 2022)

### **Sunak announced three naval ship construction in Belfast**

On 15 December, UK's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced that the Defence Ministry contracted to build three naval vessels in Belfast for GBP 1.6 billion. The new shipbuilding contract will create job offers in Belfast. The move comes after Sunak's first visit to Northern Ireland as Prime Minister. The deal looks to thaw the icy relationship between Northern Ireland and the UK regarding the Good Friday agreement. Sunak stressed the Northern Ireland's parties to form a solution before the deadline for a new election comes up. (Lisa O' Carroll, "[MoD to revive Belfast](#)

shipbuilding with contract for three naval vessels," *The Guardian*, 15 December 2022)

### **UK's new REDAA aid programme to promote research and nature restoration**

On 14 December, the UK announced its new funding programme to preserve the environment called "Reversing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA)." The funds will be directed to offer research grants and a nature facility to restore natural environments. This will be carried through an "in-country research and people-driven action," approach to strengthen the natural landscapes and bolster resilience amongst communities. The nature facility is to ensure UK's aid towards nature restoration is materialized. According to FCDO Minister for Climate and Environment, Lord Zac Goldsmith: "Through REDAA and the Nature Facility, we are using our ODA as a catalyst to unlock more public and private finance for nature." ("UK launches programmes for ecosystem restoration in Africa and Asia," *gov.uk*, 14 December 2022)

### **Government offers GBP 30 million for low-carbon heating in three cities**

On 20 December, the UK government will fund GBP 30 million to benefit households and businesses in three communities by delivering low-carbon heat and helping them phase out fossil fuel usage. The Green Heat Network Fund (GHNF) worth GBP 288 million was first secured by projects in Hull and Petersborough in March. The GHNF looks to offer centralized heating source to buildings that aims to cut carbon emissions and lower the usage of expensive fossil fuels. The low-carbon heat delivery system will use heat pumps and solar and geothermal energy. The GHNF will boost the usage of low-carbon technologies. Hull and Petersborough will receive GBP 27 million to support the low-carbon heat delivery system and Wigan city in the UK will also receive GBP 2.6 million from the fund. The GHNF will help the UK achieve its carbon reduction commitment. ("First Green Heat Network Fund awards for cutting-edge low carbon energy projects," *gov.uk*, 20 December 2022)

### **Ambulance Workers strike for higher pay and better working conditions**

On 21 December, ambulance workers in England and Wales hit the streets to protest and raise their voices for their demands. Driven by inflation and an overload of duties on the current employees, their demands ranged from the revision of the pay scale to better conditions at work. The major complaint was about overtime and underpaid hours that they were forced to do. They also demanded that the government recruit more employees for the health service function more smoothly. The workers are all part of one of the three workers' unions that called for the strike, and nearly 20,000 workers took part in the walkout nationwide. The government did not respond in kind to the protest saying that it is disappointed due to these developments and would in the future take strong action against any such strike or walkouts. ("U.K. Ambulance Workers Stage Their Largest Walkout in Decades," *The New York Times*, 21 December 2022)

### **The UK aviation authority clears the path for Virgin Orbit launch**

On 21 December, the Civil Aviation Authority of the UK gave the final clearance for Virgin Orbit to conduct space launch operations from its soil. This is after a 15-month period where it was being checked whether the company met all requirements for such operations or not. For such an operation there are a lot of safety regulations which are to be completed and tested, and all the authorities have done a thorough inspection of the procedures undertaken by the company, said a statement issued by the UK Transport Secretary Mark Harper. With this landmark decision, the UK wants to get on par with other space competitors and get going in the space race. It is estimated to bring in a lot of investment too, touted to be 16.5 billion euros and generate a whopping 47,000 and 2,500 apprentices that will open up huge avenues for the people. The first mission is named 'Start Me Up' and will be launched from Spaceport Cornwall, a highly modified Boeing 747 jumbo jet to carry the rocket to be released. ("UK space regulator



issues Virgin Orbit licences ahead of UK launch,” gov.uk, 21 December 2022)

### **UK Judge rules that Home Office rule is unlawful**

On 21 December, a high court judge in the UK ruled against a Brexit rule that mandates EU citizens who reside in the UK need to reapply for the continuation of their stay is unlawful. There are 2.7 million EU citizens who have “pre-settled status” in the UK, and these are the primary people who would be affected by this law. By ruling the law unlawful, the judge has extended support to these people from the judiciary. The rule states that these citizens need to reapply after five years to declare it as “settled status.” The Home Office rule also has a clause stating that if the people fail to follow the above-said procedure they are subject to deportation, which will lead to the loss of working rights and access to services. ([Brexit rule that makes EU citizens reapply to stay in UK is unlawful, court says, The Guardian](#), 21 December 2022)

### **UK Company weighs options on disposal of remaining radioactive waste**

On 24 December, a nuclear power plant in the UK, which had been out of use since 1991, is in the process of getting decommissioned. The company which owns the plant site, Magnox, is faced with the difficulty of how to dispose of the radioactive waste. For this, they have put forward two proposals to the government, either to bury the waste underground or to transport it to another site, where it can be disposed of safely. Anti-nuclear group Cadno has come out strongly in protest against both these ideas, stating these would cause environmental damage. (Gareth Pennant, [“Nuclear power: Radioactive waste to be buried at Gwynedd plant,” BBC](#), 24 December 2022)

### **UK’s defence spending to reach two per cent of GDP meeting NATO commitment**

On 24 December, a government spokesperson said that the UK’s plan to increase its defence spending by USD 1.21 billion is in the pipeline. As announced by the Finance Minister, Jeremy Hunt in his last budget in August, the UK has recognised the

need to maintain and earmark at least two per cent of its GDP for defence purposes, and this will also meet its commitments to NATO’s other partners and to NATO itself. The government official spoke the increased spending will come with a new defence policy document which will chart its security issues and priorities. The next budget is set to happen in the coming spring season. ([“British defence spending to rise by more than 1 billion pounds, the Telegraph reports,” Reuters](#), 24 December 2022)

### **National Health Service uses AI tools to bring down stroke casualties**

On 27 December, the UK’s Department of Health and Social Care released a report on the use of Artificial Intelligence in the healthcare industry. It is assisting patient recovery by an impressive amount of 48 per cent. Before the technology was implemented widely, patient recovery was calculated to be just around 16 per cent. The use of AI in the field has assisted in this massive improvement in recovery rates, said the Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay. The health conditions primarily affected are strokes, which affect 85,000 people in the UK every year. The AI software has been developed and is run by Accelerated Access Collaboration situated at National Health Service England and the NHS AI Lab. One of the largest companies involved in the development of AI software is the UK-based Brainomix which has developed the e-Stroke Technology that can detect the future chances of having a stroke in patients. ([“Artificial intelligence revolutionising NHS stroke care,” gov.uk](#), 27 December 2022)

### **Police report reveals a massive failure of catalytic converter thefts**

On 27 December, the UK police released a report on the increasing number of unsolved cases involving the theft of vehicle catalytic converters. Data from the department points out that only one per cent of the total cases being reported are getting cracked by the police. The rest of the cases are remaining as backlogs in the records. The thieves are mainly interested in the metal content of the catalytic converters, which they remove and get sold

separately. As the inflation and cost of living rise in the UK, the number of such cases is seeing a rise, read the statement issued by the Home Office. The solution to the menace is being touted as recruiting more police officers and better implementation of community policing efforts. There was a significant reduction in theft cases since 2020, with the implementation of the “National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership” but the cases are on the rise again. (Chas Geiger, [“Police are solving only 1% of catalytic converter thefts, data suggests,” BBC, 27 December 2022](#))

## **TURKEY**

### **Inflation rates drop to 84.4 per cent after a 17-month rise**

On 05 December, the Turkish Statistical Institute reported that the inflation rate dropped to 84.4 per cent in November. This is being seen as a sign of economic recovery as Turkey hit a 24-year inflation rate high of 85.51 per cent in October. Consumer month-on-month price inflation increased by 2.88 per cent with food prices increasing by 5.75 per cent and alcoholic drinks prices increasing by 3.19 per cent in November. The Institute projected that in the third quarter of 2022, Turkey’s economy grew by 3.9 per cent with exports stagnating due to a global slowdown. ([“Turkey’s inflation dips below 85% after a 17-month surge,” Gulf Today, 05 December 2022](#))

### **Government introduces revised regulations after talks with the International Group of P&I Clubs**

On 12 December, the Turkish Maritime Authority announced the revised insurance regulations for crude oil tankers passing through the Bosphorus strait. According to *Reuters*, the new regulations allows the insurance companies to not hold liability in “all circumstances.” Turkey on 01 December introduced new insurance regulations which mandated all crude oil tankers to present insurance proof when passing through the Bosphorus strait. The regulations were criticized by western insurance companies or the International Group of P&I Clubs who said that by doing so they would be in violation of sanctions imposed on countries such as Russia. This

resulted in a standoff between the insurance companies that refused to comply and the Turkish government. ([“Turkey reaches deal over new crude tanker insurance regulations,” Reuters, 13 December 2022](#))

## **REGIONAL**

### **EU introduces revised policies to reduce packaging waste**

On 30 November, the European Commission put forth revised rules to decrease packaging waste. The revised rules propose to make packaging reusable and fully recyclable by 2023. It also proposes banning certain types of single-use packaging for beverages, food, fresh fruits and vegetables and also extends this ban to small packaging for hygiene products in hotels. The European Commission executive vice president Frans Timmermans said that “The way goods are packaged can and should be done a lot better,” and added that overpackaging by hotels and restaurants is causing damage to the environment. Some of the newly revised rules include precise labelling of reusable packaging, compulsory return programmes for plastic bottles and aluminium cans and new required rates of recycled material in new plastic packaging. The Commission looks to decrease packaging waste by 15 per cent by 2040 in each EU member country based on population. ([“Reuse and recycle: EU proposes revised rules to limit packaging waste,” Euronews, 30 November 2022](#))

### **Lithuania requests funds from the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility**

On 01 November, the Lithuanian Finance Ministry reported that it has submitted a formal request for funds from the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility to the European Commission. This fund will help Lithuania to go ahead with its recovery and resilience plan titled New Generation Lithuania. The Ministry has requested approximately EUR 565 million for the implementation of the plan. Finance Minister Gintare Skaiste said that this is a significant step and added that they are open to amending the plan to extend a proposal towards the development of renewable energy. Lithuania is said to be

eligible for loans up to EUR three billion and grants worth EUR 2.225 billion from the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

(["Lithuania submits EC request for EUR 565 min RRF payout," Delfi](#), 01 December 2022)

### **Supply of gas begins to Moldova through Greece-Bulgaria connection**

On 01 December, the Greece-Bulgaria natural gas interconnector (ICGB) transmission operator announced that it had started transportation of gas to Moldova. The ICGB-which transports gas to Bulgaria from Azerbaijan through Greece-will now transport 80 per cent of its total capacity to the region but has not specified the amount that will be delivered to Moldova. Moldova and Bulgaria in November had signed an agreement to help Moldova reduce its dependency on Russian gas and help secure energy supply in Southeast Europe via the ICGB. (["Greece-Bulgaria pipeline starts carrying natural gas to Moldova," SeeNews](#), 01 December 2022)

### **Germany seeks uniform EU debt rules reform**

On 02 December, following the EU Finance Ministers conference, Germany's government leaked the information on the EU debt rules reforms. Germany was pessimistic about debt rule reforms. However, the other countries believe that there would be a change by March 2023. The European Commission proposed custom debt rules that suited individual countries. Germany's Finance Minister Christian Linder opposed the proposal and pushed for uniform rules across the EU. The ideas that were presented in the Commission have been rejected by a few countries resulting in undecided debt rule reform. (["Germany sceptical of swift EU debt reform agreement - sources," Reuters](#), 02 December 2022)

### **Sweden extradites convicted PKK member to Turkey**

On 03 December, Swedish authorities extradite PKK member Mahmut Tat to Turkey. Tat is a suspected member of the PKK group and was sentenced to jail for six years and 10 months in jail for the same in Turkey. He then fled to Sweden in 2015

where he applied for asylum but was denied. On 02 December night, Tat was extradited to Turkey where he was presented in front of a court on 03 December. This is a part of Sweden's contribution to support Turkey in its mission to counter the PKK and in return secure Turkey's support for NATO membership. (["Sweden extradites suspected PKK terror group member to Turkey," thelocal.se](#), 03 December 2022; ["Sweden extradites PKK/KCK terror group member to Türkiye," Anadolu Agency](#), 03 December 2022)

### **Bulgaria to impose countermeasures if Netherlands and Austria veto Schengen bid**

On 05 December, Bulgarian Prime Minister Gulub Donev threatened to impose countermeasures if Austria and Netherlands veto Bulgaria's bid to join the Schengen visa zone. Netherlands and Austria have expressed concerns regarding Bulgaria's bid for Schengen membership and Austria has even carried out inspections in Bulgaria to address these concerns. Donev highlighted these inspections and similar inspections conducted by the European Commission as evidence of Bulgaria's eligibility to the Schengen. He added that the views of the Netherlands and Austria are based on "domestic political considerations" not on the Schengen criteria. Donev added that the Dutch refused to participate in the inspections and that their concerns were unconvincing and contrary to the opinions of other members. Calling the Dutch "anti-European", Donev added that "despite the stated intentions of two countries (the Netherlands and Austria) to impose a veto, Bulgaria has not given up Schengen." The voting is said to take place in the meeting of EU Justice and Home Affairs ministers on 08 December. (["Bulgaria threatens 'countermeasures' if Netherlands, Austria block it from Schengen," The Sofia Globe](#), 05 December 2022)

### **European Commission to provide EUR 26.3 million Finnish aid to Suomen Energiavarasto Oy**

On 05 December, the European Commission announced that it will be providing support

worth EUR 26.3 million to Suomen Energiavarasto Oy (SEVO), a Swedish company. The aid will help SEVO construct and instal an underground hydroelectric pump storage facility by 2025. The new facility will increase the role of renewables in electricity generation. The facility will also help in phasing out electricity generated by gas fire units. The facility will have a storage capacity of 75 megawatts and 530 megawatt-hours. ([State aid: Commission approves €26.3 million Finnish measure to support SEVO in construction of hydroelectric pump storage](#), *ec.europa.eu*, 05 December 2022)

### **Commission presents EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans**

On 05 December, the European Commission presented an EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans based on the EU Action Plan on the Central Mediterranean. The plan has 20 operational measures under five pillars which are boosting border management along the routes, fast asylum procedures and support reception capacity, combatting migrant smuggling, increasing readmission cooperation and returns and drawing out a visa policy alignment. The Action plan looks to support measures taken by Western Balkan countries towards migrants. The Western Balkans are the most popular route for migrants to travel to Europe. ([Migration routes: Commission proposes Action Plan for cooperation with Western Balkans to address common challenges](#), *ec.europa.eu*, 05 December 2022)

### **Charles Michel and Slovenia's Prime Minister discuss on EU-Western Balkan equation**

On 05 December, European Council President Charles Michel met with Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob in Tirana. Michel said that the Western Balkans Summit is "symbolic" and that the EU's involvement in the Western Balkans has shown remarkable evolution in recent months and that the relationship has progressed in terms of "commitment and involvement." On the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Michel said that the future of the two states was "on the table" and that

the European Council has considered the decision on and off the ministerial level. He thanked the Golob for his consistent support to Ukraine in the war and said that the European Council would "clarify" how they would support Ukraine and act in the next coming weeks with winter fast approaching. Additionally, he addressed the issue of energy and the economy and said that it is "central" because it questions the capability of the EU and the overall energy capacity of the world. He said that the EU would "do a lot of work" and aid the energy ministers in tackling the issue. Lastly, he spoke about the migration issue in the region and said that the issue is "sensitive" and a "difficult subject" in democracies, and said that a strong wave of migration is seen throughout Europe and the Western Balkans. Additionally, he said that the mitigation of the migration issue is a priority for the EU and added that further meetings would entail strong involvement of the EU in the same. ([Remarks by President Charles Michel after his meeting with Prime Minister of Slovenia Robert Golob](#), *consilium.europa.eu*, 05 December 2022)

### **Cirkovce-Pince transmission line opened connecting Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia**

On 06 December, Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob formally opened the Cirkovce-Pince transmission line and the Cirkovce substation juncture which connects Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia. The opening was attended by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Croatian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Davor Filipović. The Cirkovce-Pince transmission line is a part of the EU's efforts to integrate Europe's energy market. The line is 80.5 kilometres long and will be run by Slovenian transmission system operator ELES. The project cost EUR 160 million of which EUR 48 million was funded by the EU's Connecting Europe Facility. (Igor Todorović, [Slovenia completes power interconnection with Croatia, Hungary](#), *Balkan Green Energy News*, 06 December 2022)

### **EU Regulation on deforestation-free supply chains agreement signed**

On 06 December, the European Commission announced that the European Parliament and Council have reached an agreement regarding the EU Regulation on deforestation-free supply chains. The proposal once adapted will ensure that due diligence is done in the exports and imports of palm oil, cattle, soy, coffee, cocoa, timber, rubber and derived products. These products were identified by the European Council and Parliament as the products whose production contributes to deforestation. Companies trading these products will now have to prove that the products do not contribute to deforestation and are legal. The companies will also have to have information regarding the farms where the products are grown and check if they comply with EU laws. If companies fail to comply with EU regulations they will be fined. The Commission added that they will also be assessing producer countries for the level of deforestation risk and depending on this benchmarks for companies will be decided. ("[Green Deal: EU agrees law to fight global deforestation and forest degradation driven by EU production and consumption](#)," *ec.europa.eu*, 06 December 2022)

### **Serbia and Kosovo receive an updated draft from the EU regarding the normalization of ties**

On 06 December, *EURACTIV* reported that the EU sent Serbia and Kosovo a reworked draft regarding the normalization of ties between the two countries. The draft outlines a timeline that the two countries need to follow to reach a final agreement. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and Kosovan President Vjosa Osmani reiterated their support for the EU-led dialogue with Osmani adding: "Kosovo will be submitting its application for EU membership by the end of this year." This comes as tensions between the two increased when Vučić and Osmani engaged in a verbal spat. (Alexandra Brzozowski "[EU redrafts proposal on Serbia-Kosovo ties as Pristina sets sight on membership](#)," *EURACTIV*, 06 December 2022)

### **Turkey asks Finland to lift the arms embargo in exchange for NATO membership approval**

On 06 December, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that for its approval for NATO membership Finland needs to lift the arms embargo placed on Turkey publicly. The arms embargo was placed on Turkey back in 2019 when Turkey conducted a military operation in Syria against the Kurdish militia. ("[Turkey says Finland must end arms embargo to join NATO](#)," *AP News*, 06 December 2022)

### **Turkey asks Greece to cease militarization of the Aegean Islands**

On 06 December, Turkish Foreign Minister Cavusoglu urged Greece to follow international law and cease the militarization of the Aegean Islands. Cavusoglu said: "Either Greece takes a step back and abides by agreements, or we will do what is necessary." This is in reference to Greece's violation of the demilitarized status of the Islands and the recent military drills conducted by Greece on the Islands. Turkey launched a formal complaint at the UN in July 2021 stating that Greece was violating the Treaties of Lausanne and Paris. Both treaties highlight the demilitarised status of the Aegean Islands. Cavusoglu added that Turkey will be forced to take necessary steps to protect its security if Greece continues its "provocations." (Faruk Zorlu "[Türkiye calls on Greece to abide by international law, stop militarizing Aegean islands](#)," *Anadolu Agency*, 06 December 2022)

### **EUR 25 million approved to support Belarus**

On 07 December, the EU approved EUR 25 million to help Belarus achieve democracy from its oppressive regime. In August 2020, the people's protest against President Aleksandr Lukashenko committing election fraud was suppressed by the government. The EU programme, EU4Belarus aims to improve human rights and "support democratic aspirations" in Belarus. The assistance boosts the protection of civil society activists who fight for democracy and human rights in Belarus. It also helps students and workers by increasing

scholarships, training, and professional exchanges with the EU. The EU has supported Belarus' people with EUR 30 million in 2022 and EUR 100 million since the fraudulent August 2022 election. ([Commission will provide €25 million to support the democratic aspirations in Belarus](#), *ec.europa.eu*, 07 December 2022)

### **EULEX and Kosovan Police were attacked by Kosovo Serbs**

On 11 December, Kosovan Serbs launched a blockade in a protest opposing the arrest of a former Kosovan Serb who was part of the police force. The blockade in northern Kosovo led to the forceful closure of two border crossings between Kosovo and Serbia. The Kosovan Police later reported that the Kosovan Serbs had opened fire against the police units from various locations. The Kosovo Serbs reportedly also attacked the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) with a stun grenade. Both these attacks drew criticism from the EU and NATO with the EU Foreign Policy Chief condemning the incident saying: "This attack, as well as the attacks on Kosovo Police officers, are unacceptable." EU Chief Diplomat Joseph Borrell also condemned the incident saying, "EU will not tolerate attacks on EULEX Kosovo or use of violent, criminal acts in the north," and called for peace to be restored. NATO Spokesperson Oana Lungescu called the attacks unacceptable and tweeted: "Any such attacks are unacceptable and those responsible must be held to account." Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said that he would be requesting the NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo to allow the deployment of Serbian troops and police in Kosovo, but acknowledged that it might not be granted. ([Serbia's Vucic says will ask NATO permission to deploy troops in Kosovo as tensions flare](#), *France 24*, 11 December 2022 and [Beyza Binnur Donmez "Borrell warns against attacks on EU mission in Kosovo"](#), *Anadolu Agency*, 11 December 2022)

### **Tayfun missile tests create fear amongst Greece claims Erdogan**

On 11 December, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed that Turkey

producing their own missiles "frightens the Greeks" and added that "When you say 'Tayfun' (Typhoon), the Greek is scared. He said that if Greece continues to arm the Aegean Islands, Turkey will "not be a bystander." The Tayfun missile is a short-range missile produced by Turkey that can hit targets 561 kilometres away in 456 seconds. Turkey test-fired this missile in October over the Black Sea. (*Diyar Guldogan "Türkiye's ballistic missile test 'scares' Greece: President"*, *Anadolu Agency*, 11 December 2022)

### **Erdogan insists Putin supports Turkey's plans for Syria**

On 11 December, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin in a call discussed Turkey-Russia relations in terms of energy, grain corridor and regional affairs. Turkey's "ambitions" in Syria were in focus when Erdogan asked Putin to support his 30-kilometre security corridor. The corridor that will be built along the Turkey-Syria border is inhabited and controlled by Kurds. Erdogan is said to have asked for this request based on a 2019 agreement between Turkey and Russia which allows the two to set up a zone that would fall under Syrian and Russian Control. This comes as Turkey is ramping up its fight against Kurdish militant groups in Syria. ([Erdogan and Putin discuss grain corridor, gas deal and Syria](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 11 December 2022)

### **Eurostat: Poland hosts the highest number of Ukrainian refugees**

On 12 December, *Eurostat* found the figure of Ukrainians seeking asylum in Latvia since the start of the Ukraine war to be the lowest. Poland topped the list with the most temporary protection status given 54,520 fleeing Ukrainians among the EU member states in October. It was seconded by Germany with 37,595, followed by Italy, Romania, and Bulgaria. The number of Ukrainians receiving temporary protection status came down to 22 of 27 EU member states since September 2022. According to the figures, Poland provided temporary protection status to 1.01 million Ukrainian refugees, while Latvia offered to only

35,500 Ukrainians, from March to October 2022. ("1,700 refugees arrived from Ukraine in October," *eng.lsm.lv*, 12 December 2022)

### **The EU provides EUR 220 million to help Turkish border control**

On 12 December, the European Commission approved a EUR 220 million aid package to boost Turkey's eastern border control. The package aims to help refugees in Turkey with basic needs, socio-economic support for the most vulnerable and border management. The aid comes as part of the EU's June 2021 package which aimed at assisting refugees in Turkey from 2021 to 2023. The EUR 220 million aid package will fund new equipment such as surveillance masts, cameras and lighting systems to improve Turkey's border control with Iran and Iraq. The fund also helps Turkey to train officials in border management technology usage, migration law, fundamental rights, and response to large-scale mixed migration. ("EU adopts new programmes in support to refugees and border management in Türkiye worth over €1.2 billion," *ec.europa.eu*, 12 December 2022)

### **EU to set up new carbon price adjustment instrument to decrease carbon leakage**

On 13 December, the European parliament announced the set up of an EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) which will adjust the carbon price paid for goods under the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) and for imported goods. The companies that import goods into the EU are now required to buy CBAM certificates to cover the "difference between the carbon price paid in the country of production and the price of carbon allowances in the EU ETS. The new law looks to ensure that EU efforts to combat climate change are not hampered by countries with "less ambitious policies" where EU goods are produced. The companies from countries that have the same climate "ambition" as the EU will not be required to purchase CBAM certificates to export goods. ("Deal reached on new carbon leakage instrument to raise global

climate ambition," *europarl.europa.eu*, 13 December 2022)

### **Eva Kaili removed; Socialist MEPs under European Parliament investigation**

On 13 December, European Members of Parliament (MEP) unanimously voted to remove Eva Kaili as Vice President of the European Parliament. The 625 MEPs in a plenary session voted for Kaili's removal. Kaili's lawyer Michalis Dimitrakopoulos said: "She has nothing to do with financing from Qatar, nothing – explicitly and unequivocally." Eva Kaili was removed after she was arrested on the charged and arrested in an alleged corruption scandal linked with Qatar. He added that Kaili had not engaged in any "commercial activity" in her life. In the European Parliament, the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group has asked the remaining MEPs being investigated by the police or are indirectly involved to step down. S&D President Iratxe García Pérez said: "We have decided that the MEPs who are being investigated or those whose assistants are being investigated by law enforcement relinquish any position of responsibility that they exercise in the Parliament and in the S&D group as long proceedings are ongoing." Pérez added that the party will also be conducting a separate inquiry into these matters. (Eleonora Vasques "Kaili removed as EU Parliament VP following corruption scandal," *EURACTIV*; 13 December 2022 and Emily Atkinson "Eva Kaili denies receiving cash from Qatar as EU corruption row grows," *Independent*, 12 December 2022; Jorge Liboreiro "Socialist MEPs step down from key roles as European Parliament corruption scandal widens," *Euronews*, 13 December 2022)

### **Slovakia signs arms deal with Sweden for 152 armored combat vehicles**

On 12 December, Slovakia signed an arms deal with the Swedish division of BAE Systems a British defence company to purchase 152 armoured combat vehicles. Slovakian Defense Minister Jaroslav Nad said that he appreciates the "modernisation" of the country's Armed Forces and that Slovakia's progress toward the modernization of the army has

increased multifold. The company said: “..has signed a USD 1.37 billion agreement for the delivery of 152 CV9035 infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) from BAE Systems.” Additionally, the company said that the vehicles would mainly be the “most” modern sub-systems and would include Israeli-produced Spike-LR anti-tank missiles as well. The deal would entail the Slovakian defence industry being involved in “significant” roles in the production and lifecycles of the IFVs. (Ahmet Gencturk [“Slovakia signs deal to purchase 152 armored combat vehicles,”](#) *Anadolu Agency*, 13 December 2022)

### **Çavuşoğlu denies allegation of targeting civilians in Syria**

On 15 December, Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu criticized Belgium for its comments on Turkey’s counterterrorism efforts in Syria. He denied the accusation saying the civilians or the civilian infrastructure was never targeted and asked Belgium to take measures to address the terrorist activities of the PKK organizations in Europe. The exchange of remarks comes after Turkey’s air operation upon a terrorist attack on 13 November by the PKK group that killed six and injured 81. Although Turkey says it carried out the operation in line with UN charter Article 51, the EU member states and the international have accused Turkey of causing violence in Syria. Along with Belgium, Swedish Foreign Minister, Tobias Billstrom has also criticized Turkey for its “Operation Claw-Sword,” in northern Iraq and northern Syria. He said: “Every country has the right to defend itself against terrorism, and this right includes Türkiye.” (“[Türkiye urges Belgium to take action against PKK terrorist group,](#)” *Daily Sabah*; 15 December 2022; “[Türkiye has right to self-defense against terrorism: Sweden,](#)” *Daily Sabah*, 15 December 2022)

### **Albania and the UK to form a joint task force to combat unlawful migration**

On 15 December, Albania and the UK announced in a joint statement that the two will be launching a Joint Task Force to combat illegal migration and infiltrate criminal networks. This comes after

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak discussed the issue of illegal migration in a telephone call. The joint statement reads: “We are committed to strengthening further the implementation of our shared international commitments, especially in the areas of border control, the fight against organized crime, including human trafficking and exploitation in all its forms, and illegal migration.” The joint task force will be set up under the Ministry of Interior/Home Office of Albania and the UK respectively. (Gjergj Erebara, “[Albania and UK Announce Joint Task Force Against Crime and Illegal Migration,](#)” *Balkan Insight*, 15 December 2022)

### **The EU accepts Bosnia’s candidacy**

On 15 December, the EU leaders granted Bosnia and Herzegovina formal candidacy to join the bloc. Bosnia and Herzegovina will join other EU candidates from the Eastern European region. Kosovo also submitted its formal application to join the EU on the same day. Kosovo will have to resolve its issues with Serbia to go further with its application to become an EU candidate. The decision to grant the candidacy status to Bosnia was due to the fear of instability in the delicate Western Balkan region from the Ukraine war. (“[Kosovo formally applies for EU membership,](#)” *Deutsche Welle*; 15 December 2022; “[EU leaders grant Bosnia EU candidate status,](#)” *Reuters*, 16 December 2022)

### **Stricter rules to be adopted for human trafficking at the EU level**

On 19 December, the European Commission proposed tougher rules to tackle human trafficking. In a statement, it reported that close to 7000 people were victims in the EU, costing EUR 2.7 billion, with the highest per cent shared amongst women and girls in the workplace. The new set of rules focuses on forced marriage, trafficking through the internet and social media, a referral mechanism at the EU level to identify the victims early, and a data collection initiative to record the trafficking. The next step will now be the review of the European Parliament and the Council and the



adoption of the member states to implement the laws. ([“Trafficking in human beings: Commission proposes stronger rules to fight the evolving crime,”](#) *ec.europa.eu*, 19 December 2022)

### **Sweden denies the extradition of Turkish Journalist**

On 19 December, the Swedish Supreme Court blocked the extradition of the Turkish Journalist Bulent Kenes to Turkey. It has cited that there are several obstacles to the extradition as it deems it a risk of persecution and the “political nature.” Kenes who was previously working in the Zaman daily was accused by Turkey of supporting Fethullah Gulen and being involved in the coup attempt of 2016. Sweden’s stand on the extradition may complicate the accession process, as Turkey’s one of the key conditions was to extradite Kenes to agree to membership of Sweden and Finland into NATO. The Swedish Supreme court remains to be staunch as it does not deem some of the accusations as crimes. ([“Swedish court stops extradition of Turkish journalist,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 19 December 2022)

### **Meta accused of breaking EU’s antitrust rules**

On 19 December, the EU alleged Meta, of indulging in unfair practices. Meta-owned Facebook has its marketplace linked to the main social media platform. This leads to market distortion as users are provided with automatic access to Meta’s online classified ads service. The commission’s report also revealed that Meta used data from other advertisers on Instagram and Facebook for its own benefit. Meta’s Head of competition for Europe, the Middle East and Asia, Tim Lamb denied stating that the allegations posed against the company were without any foundation. ([“EU accuses Facebook parent Meta of distorting ads market,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 19 December 2022)

### **Baltic-Nordic annual meeting focuses on regional security**

On 19 December, Finland’s President Sauli Niinisto visited Riga in Latvia to meet Latvia’s President Egils Levits. He discussed regional security, bilateral cooperation, and

Nordic-Baltic with Levits before the Joint Expeditionary Force member states leaders meeting. They agreed to increase their support to Ukraine, by the Baltic-Nordic summit held on 09 September. In a joint press conference with Lithuania’s President Gitanas Nauseda, Estonia’s President Alars Karis, and President Levits discussed regional security, the Ukraine war, linking the electricity grids with Europe and the development of the Rail Baltica project. The importance of supporting Ukraine in its war against Russia was prominent in their discussion. The Baltic leader pledged to continue economic, military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. ([“Baltic and Finnish Presidents meeting in Riga,”](#) *eng.lsm.lv*, 19 December 2022)

### **EU accepts resolution for fast-track adoption of renewable energy projects**

On 19 December, the EU formalized the recommendations and suggestions of the Energy Council report which had been agreed upon on 24 November. This move will help in the quicker deployment of renewable energy projects, which are the need of the hour. The framework that has been planned in the regulation is temporary, it is to be reworked and a new one will be introduced after the review of the current implementation. ([“Council formally adopts regulation to speed up permits for renewable energy projects,”](#) *consilium.europa.eu*, 22 December)

### **Moscow-Minsk go ahead with joint military exercise**

On 19 December, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko met and held talks in Minsk, the capital of Belarus. The leaders issued a joint statement, stating there will be joint military exercises and increased military cooperation between the two countries. The joint force will comprise 9,000 Russian and 70,000 Belarusian military personnel. The purpose of this joint force is to defend Belarus if any adversary attacks or invades the country. The Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin spoke on 24 December of this development “the task of the joint Russian-Belarusian group of troops is, if necessary, to fight back

against a would-be aggressor, should the territory of our ally Belarus be invaded." (["Moscow outlines plans for joint force with key ally,"](#) *Russia Today*, 24 December 2022)

### **Rishi Sunak promises to increase the UK's military presence in Estonia**

On 20 December, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced that the UK would increase its military capabilities in Estonia during his visit to the Baltic state. The UK had promised to send a battalion to Estonia to create a division headquarters at the NATO Madrid summit in June, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Despite the UK withdrawing its troops from Estonia earlier in December, Sunak had pledged more troops to help the Estonian armed forces against threats. He said: "we're keeping other resources at readiness so that they can be deployed here at a moment's notice and we're going to increase the number of exercises we do here in Estonia. You will see that next year when helicopters arrive." Sunak promised that the UK will be committed to Estonia and its security by creating its divisional headquarters in Estonia. (["Sunak in Estonia: UK is delivering on NATO Madrid summit commitments,"](#) *news.err.ee*, 20 December 2022)

### **Former EU Politician Eva Kaili admits guilty**

On 20 December, Eva Kaili who is currently in jail admitted to the accusations against her by Belgian authorities. The authorities were investigating corruption, and cases of money laundering within the European Parliament, as it was felt that the lawmakers were being influenced by foreign powers. Kaili's husband Francesco Giorgi has both been placed behind bars for the time being as it emerged that Giorgi was part of a plan to funnel bribes from Qatar and Morocco to influence parliamentary decisions of the EU. The corruption scandal was headed by a former Italian MEP named Pier Antonio Panzeri. Eva Kaili finally accepted that she directed her father to hide bags full of cash and gifts that she received from Qatar as part of their lobbying efforts. (["Reports: EU corruption scandal politician partly confesses,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 20 December 2022)

### **Amazon announces policy changes after EU pressure**

On 20 December, Amazon announced its decision to concede to demands and change its policies which will now comply with EU laws. The areas where the tussle was going on were the gathering and storage of sellers' activities, visibility of products, and the relating to delivery options, especially in Amazon Prime. On 19 December, the European Commission for anti-competitive practices stated Margrethe Vestager, the competition commissioner that Amazon won't use third-party sellers' data for its benefit, and secondly, Amazon will not restrict other sellers from being visible on its premium platform "Amazon Prime." These are not short-term changes as these are to be in force for seven years from now. (["Amazon settles EU antitrust row,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 20 December 2022)

### **Sweden's refusal of Bulent Kenes' extradition criticized by Turkey**

On 20 December, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that Sweden's refusal to asylum seeker Bulent Kenes extradition was a negative development on Sweden and Finland's NATO membership. He said: "We no longer want to hear good words from Sweden and Finland, we want to see concrete steps." Kenes was a journalist who worked as an editor-in-chief in the English-language Today's Zaman, which was said to have links with terrorist organizations. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan mentioned Kenes belonging to the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) and asked Sweden to return him to Turkey. However, Sweden's Supreme Court rejected Kenes' extradition stating that his alleged crime was not criminalized in Sweden. Sweden's Justice Minister Gunnar Strommer said that the final decision on Kenes' extradition will be made by the Council of Ministers, following Supreme Court's ruling. Cavusoglu criticized Sweden for not following the Tripartite agreement it signed with Turkey and Finland for their NATO membership approval. (["Turkey criticized Sweden for the decision not to extradite the journalist, also mentioned Finland,"](#) *hs.fi*, 20 December 2022; ["Sweden blocking extradition of FETÖ fugitive is 'very](#)

negative': FM," Daily Sabah, 20 December 2022; Faruk Zorlu, "Türkiye expects 'not kind words but concrete steps' from Sweden, Finland to address its concerns," Andalou Agency, 20 December 2022)

### **Cyprus plans to process natural gas from Israel for export**

On 20 December, while the war between Russia and Ukraine rages on, Cyprus sees an opportunity to become an alternate energy provider for Europe. Considering this the country is thinking of importing natural gas from Israel and processing it into liquefied form and then reading it for export. Cyprus' Energy Minister Natasa Pilides stated that the first step would be the construction of a plant for processing large amounts of natural gas, the plans for which are what is on the table at the present. The country is in talks with an energy company, Energean, for the construction of a pipeline. This would be finalized once Israel agrees on how much gas it will export to the Mediterranean country. Other energy giants are also in the fray with major companies like ExxonMobil, Chevron, Qatar Petroleum and Dutch Shell. The minister also spoke about transitioning to green energy and investing in areas such as solar energy. (Menelaos Hadjicostis, "Cyprus: Plant to process Israeli gas for export an option," Independent, 20 December 2022)

### **EU-UK finalize fishing deal for 2023**

On 22 December, the EU Council reached an agreement with the UK for sharing fishing rights in the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. This comes in the wake of other such decisions after the fallout of Brexit. Under international law, fish stocks are considered to be shared resources and these are determined by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the UK. The TCA covers aspects such as the amount of fish, area of fishing and rules regarding deep sea fishing. ("Council approves EU-UK fishing deal for 2023," consilium.europa.eu, 22 December)

### **Surge in energy prices halts Bitcoin mining in Northern Europe**

On 22 December, Bitcoin miners who had moved to northern Europe in search of

cheaper electricity switched off their operations for the first time. The energy crisis and the resulting upward swing of electric costs have spared none, not even the energy-abundant regions of northern Europe. Countries which had earlier been a haven for bitcoin miners and alike, namely Norway and Sweden are now facing high demand for energy as the winter has set in. This has led to a halt in mining, as it requires an enormous amount of electricity. (Europe's Last Bitcoin Mining Refuge Is No Longer Viable, CoinDesk, 22 December 2022)

### **EU announces new policy to stabilize gas prices**

On 22 December, the European Council formally passed a temporary mechanism to contain fluctuating gas prices. The initial discussion and decision were taken on 19 December. When in a situation the gas prices in Europe fail to reflect the international markets this correction mechanism is meant to kick in and lower the prices. It also aims to keep the flow of energy steady thus guaranteeing energy security for the bloc as well as financial security. These new regulations are set to come into effect on 15 February 2023 and will last for a year. ("Council formally adopts temporary mechanism to limit excessive gas prices," consilium.europa.eu, 22 December 2022)

### **EU plans on its 'Fit for 55' program**

On 27 December, *EURACTIV* reported on the policies for aviation, maritime, and road transport sectors, under the EU's 'Fit for 55' climate law package. The EU presidency Council will be headed by Sweden in January 2023. First, in the aviation sector, the EU has allowed for cheaper long-haul flights to continue to operate upon refuelling "sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs)." Second, travel within the EU would have to pay for 100 per cent of their emissions and the ships must use lower-carbon fuels over heavy oil and pay 50 per cent of their emissions. The third, road transport said that petrol and diesel cars are to be banned from 2035 onwards and "shift to electric vehicles, consigning the internal combustion engine to automotive

history.” (Sean Goulding Carroll, [“Finish line nears for ‘Fit for 55’ transport laws,”](#) *EURACTIV*, 27 December 2022)

### **Finland to help Estonia in accommodating Ukrainian refugees**

On 27 December, Estonia’s Interior Ministry announced that Estonia was struggling to provide accommodation and refuge to all the Ukrainian refugees who were coming to the country. Finland has responded to this plea by announcing that it will take in 50-100 refugees per week arriving in Estonia starting in January 2023. Finland has offered free education for children and has stated that every refugee will be treated with the same rights as Finnish citizens. ([“Finland to accept displaced Ukrainians from Estonia,”](#) *yle.fi*, 27 December 2022)

## **CLIMATE**

### **Finland’s carbon sinks under threat**

On 26 December, researchers from the Finland University of Luke found that the gradual loss of Finland’s forest cover cost close to EUR two to seven billion. Currently, the price set for compensation is EUR 80 per tonne of carbon dioxide, but the researchers estimate it to be only EUR 40 per tonne. Finland’s spokesperson to the European Commission said that the bill could be valued at billions, but such a bill will not be passed if there is a lag in Finland’s target in 2025. Although the climate change division has warned Finland for saving the carbon sinks and modifying its climate plan for land use, Finland might not be able to fulfill its climate obligations due to non-compliance. ([“The collapse of Finland’s carbon sinks is a national emergency, an expert tells YLE,”](#) *nord news*, 26 December 2022)

## **ENERGY**

### **Finland to transfer surplus renewable energy to Brussels**

On 14 December, Finnish Minister of Economic Affairs Mika Lintilä and Brussels-Capital Region’s Minister of Energy and Climate Alain Maron signed an agreement under the EU’s Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) for the statistical transfers. Lintilä said “Finland’s long-term investments into increasing the share of renewable energy

have been successful, and we have exceeded our target,” and the surplus of the energy target will be transferred to Belgium. The transfer of 132 gigawatt hours of energy will be dated for the year 2021. The total transfer will be worth EUR 1.65 million which will be purchased and paid in a single instalment by 31 December 2022. The transfer of surplus renewable energy to EU nations is to help them fulfil EU energy goals. ([“Finland and the Brussels region agree on statistical transfers of renewable energy – Finland sells surplus for EUR 1.65 million,”](#) *valtioneuvosto.fi*, 14 December 2022)

### **Belgium to get funding from the EU Cohesion Policy for the economic and green transition**

On 14 December, the European Commission reported that Belgium will receive approximately EUR three billion from the EU Cohesion Policy funding in 2021-2027. This funding will be used by Belgium to help in the development of an innovative, inclusive, and inclusive economy and will also help boost its green and digital transition. The Partnership Agreement between the Commission and Belgium outlines how the funding will be used. Around EUR 1.83 billion in funds from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Just Transition Fund will be used for increasing economic competitiveness, green investments and digitalization. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) will be providing funds worth approximately EUR 1.3 billion to invest in employment, skills and social inclusion. Lastly around EUR 40.3 million from the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) will be used to boost sustainable fisheries, aquaculture and processing sector. ([“EU Cohesion Policy: almost €3 billion for Belgium’s green and digital transition and economic development in 2021-2027,”](#) *ec.europa.eu*, 14 December 2022)

### **DW five takeaways on the EU CBAM proposal**

On 14 December, an opinion in *Deutsche Welle* on the new EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) talks about

how this new proposal will help the EU achieve its climate goals and prevent carbon leakages, and how the impact of the proposal on the Global South and international trade is shrouded. The new EU policy looks to prevent carbon leakages by asking countries producing high-emission goods such as steel, metal, and oil refineries to purchase a CBAM certificate before exporting goods to the EU. The piece makes five arguments to understand how these policies will affect European and international industrial companies and producer states. First, the new policy will ensure the development of sustainable production and discourage shifting of production to countries with lax carbon emission laws to avoid paying EU carbon prices. This will reduce the risk of carbon leakage in the EU. Second, this new policy can either start a trade war or lead to cooperation between countries to promote sustainable production. Countries like India, China, South Korea, Russia, and Ukraine may see these policies as protectionist and install countermeasures which could start a trade war. In the case of countries coming together. Third, it will increase the pressure on countries to adopt climate-friendly policies and sustainable production. Fourth, the new environmental standards can negatively affect economically poor countries. According to Oxfam, goods produced in economically poor countries that depend on trade with the EU will see a decrease in the level of competitiveness in the EU market. This will lead to a loss of jobs due to a potential reduction in exports. Fifth, uncertainties are present in measuring the level of carbon footprint across the world and how the collected carbon tax will be invested. (Tim Schauenberg "CO2 tax at Europe's border: A revolution for the climate?," *Deutsche Welle*, 14 December 2022)

## ENERGY

### **The Netherlands receives the JTF to achieve its climate neutrality goal**

On 02 December, The European Commission provided a Just Transition Fund of EUR 623 million to the Netherlands under the Dutch Territorial Just Transition Plan to help with the green transition. The

Just Transition Fund (JTF) will support the Netherlands to change from a fossil fuel-dependent economy to a climate-neutral one. The fund aims at phasing out fossil fuels from industries and transitioning to green energy such as hydrogen. The JTF will be invested in clean and green energy technologies for the chemical and steel manufacturing industries. Renewable hydrogen will be used to produce electricity for industrial purposes. The Fund also looks to establish efficient energy usage in businesses and households to achieve climate neutrality. An increase in labourers and workers is also invested through the fund. ("EU Cohesion Policy: €623 million for a just transition to climate neutrality in the Netherlands," *ec.europa.eu*, 02 December 2022)

### **REPowerEU plan gets approval to reduce the usage of Russian fossil fuel**

On 14 December, the European Council and the European Parliament agreed upon a REPowerEU plan which will help in diversifying the energy supply and increase the energy security of the EU. The REPowerEU proposal was introduced to help the EU reduce its dependency on Russian fossil fuels and help restructure the EU energy sector. The members will be adopting this proposal under the NextGenerationEU initiative which will help it finance important investments and reforms. The proposal looks to introduce new reforms and investments which will help in achieving the goals of REPowerEU such as decarbonising the EU energy industry, boosting the deployment of renewable energy, and addressing energy poverty. The proposal now has to be ratified by the European Council and the Parliament. ("EU recovery plan: Provisional agreement reached on REPowerEU," *consilium.europa.eu*, 13 December 2022)

### **Italy receives EUR one billion for a clean energy transition**

On 20 December, the EU allocated EUR one billion to Italy under the Just Transition Fund (HTF) following its Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP) coming into fruition. The fund will help Italy diversify its economy and create employment in the

green energy sector. The fund will also help Italy to have a clean energy transition and a circular economy. The inclusion of women in the labour force will also be enhanced by the fund. Construction and development of renewable energy infrastructures and phasing out of fossil fuels are included in the fund. The JTF will ensure that Italy transit towards a climate-neutral economy across every demography of its society. ("EU Cohesion Policy: €1 billion for a just climate transition in Italy," *ec.europa.eu*, 20 December 2022)

#### MARITIME

##### **The UK and the EU agree on GBP 280 million worth fishing opportunities in 2023**

On 20 December reached a deal with the EU for fishing opportunities of 140,000 tonnes worth GBP 280 million in 2023. Both parties agreed to have a catch level for 69 fish stocks including North Sea Nephrops, Anglerfish and Western hake. The agreement also includes the protection of fishing stocks and the marine environment. The EU and the UK will work together to provide sustainable fisheries management in the North Sea. The UK had also signed an agreement with Norway and North East Atlantic coastal States for fishing opportunities. According to the agreement, the EU's fleet will get more than 74 stocks and over 350,000 tonnes worth EUR one billion in the Northeast Atlantic the total value of the fishing opportunities acquired by the UK fishing industry for 2023 is GBP 750 million. ("Increased fishing opportunities worth £750 million agreed for 2023," *gov.uk*, 20 December 2022; "Sustainable fisheries: EU and UK agree on fishing opportunities for 2023," *ec.europa.eu*, 20 December 2022)

##### **Decline of fish stock leads to suspension of fishing agreement between Greenland and Russia**

On 20 December, Greenland's government shelved its fishing arrangements with Russia for 2023 due to depleting stocks of several species. Greenland had the access to fish Russian cod in the Barents Sea and Russia was allowed to fish halibut in Greenland's maritime zone, since the 1992

agreement. The war in Ukraine was not mentioned by Denmark's Fishery Ministry of Greenland. However, Prime Minister Mute Egede said that Greenland will follow EU sanctions against Russia in October. ("Greenland suspends fishing agreement with Russia," *thelocal.dk*, 20 December 2022)

#### SPORTS

##### **France beat Morocco to advance to the 2022 FIFA World Cup finals**

On 14 December, the French football team beat Morocco in the semi-finals of the 2022 FIFA World Cup to advance into the finals. With a score of 2-0, France advanced into the finals where they will take on Argentina on 18 December. The two goals were scored by Theo Hernandez and Randal Kolo Muani. France is the defending champion in 2022 and if they beat Argentina in the finals, they will become the first to consecutively win the World Cup in the last 50 years. (Matt Pearson "World Cup: France down Morocco to keep title defense alive," *Deutsche Welle*, 14 December 2022)

#### INTERNATIONAL

##### **EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade agreement green signalled by Germany**

On 01 December, the German parliament approved the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement which is the free-trade pact between the EU and Canada. The agreement was signed in 2016 but had to be approved by the parliaments of all 27 members to fully come into force. 559 German lawmakers voted for the agreement and 110 against the agreement. The vote was delayed due to a pending court case regarding the agreement at Germany's apex court which rejected all the concerns and gave a clean hit to the Agreement back in March. Out of 27 member countries, only 16 EU members have approved the free trade agreement between Canada and the EU and 11 have yet to approve it. ("German parliament votes to approve EU-Canada trade pact," *AP News*, 01 December 2022)

##### **Macron meets Biden to discuss the clash over the Inflation Reduction and Chips Act**

On 01 December, French President Emmanuel Macron met with US President Joe Biden where the two talked about global security, nuclear deterrence, disarmament, economy, trade, supply chain, energy, climate and much more. The two reportedly talked about the US Inflation Reduction Act 2022 which has been a major point of contention recently between Europe and the US. Macron before meeting Biden on 30 November expressed his concern about the Act and called for a “synchronised” effort to solve the differences. Biden then expressed willingness to work with the French and other European officials to address their concerns and the “glitches” in the Act. Biden added: “it was never intended to exclude folks who are cooperating with us.” The two leaders also agreed to increase diplomatic, developmental, and regional engagement in the Indo-Pacific to counter Chinese influence in the region. Biden and Macron also reaffirmed their support for the protection of human rights and the fight against climate change. When it came to defence, Macron and Biden discussed collective security through NATO and ways the US can help Europe increase its defence capabilities. (“[Joint Statement Following the Meeting Between President Biden and President Macron](#),” *whitehouse.gov*, 01 November 2022 and [Biden Says He Is Willing to Talk to Putin About Ukraine, With Conditions](#),” *The New York Times*, 01 December 2022)

### **President Xi to opens Chinese markets for the EU businesses**

On 01 December, China’s President, Xi Jinping, assured trade relations with the EU following his meeting with the European Council President Charles Michel. He said: “China expects the EU to ... share China's supersize market opportunities,” As the EU are growing wary of the US trade rivalry, Xi proposed for the EU’s companies to have trade relations with China and jointly oppose the use of trade and technology as a tool for politics and as a weapon. He expressed his desire for fair and transparent trade relations between the two countries. The frayed transatlantic relations were caused by US President Joe Biden introducing the Inflation Reduction

Act, which subsidized energy bills for businesses. Xi welcomed the EU’s participation in trade relations with China. (Stuart Lau, “[Seizing on EU tensions with US, Xi tells Europe to keep investing in China](#),” *POLITICO*, 01 December 2022)

### **Japan and the EU plan to create a global hydrogen market**

On 02 December, the EU and Japan signed a memorandum of cooperation in Tokyo to create and develop a global hydrogen market. To improve hydrogen technology, and innovate sustainable and cheap production, Japan and the EU have agreed to cooperate to establish an international hydrogen market that produces, trades, and distributes the use of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen energy. Japan and the EU have pledged to become climate neutral by 2050. According to the EU-Japan Green Alliance of 2021, the green transition and global energy security rely on the usage of hydrogen as fuel. The Alliance also focuses on Japan and the EU cooperating to establish a global green energy market. (“[EU and Japan step up cooperation on hydrogen](#),” *ec.europa.eu*, 02 December 2022)

### **The UK delegation’s visit to Taiwan angers China**

On 02 December, the UK MP delegation visiting Taiwan signed a defence cooperation with it. Foreign Affairs Committee chair Alicia Kearns met with Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen to discuss maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The UK is aiming to establish its foreign policy towards Taiwan following Brexit. Kearns said: “We talked about the joint cyber threats that we all face from different adversaries, we discussed disinformation and of course, we discussed traditional military conflict.” The UK promised to support Taiwan if China attacked and promoted deterrence diplomacy. Taiwan already receives the UK’s help in developing and building submarines domestically. China, however, condemned the UK’s MPs’ visit to Taiwan as it had violated its “One China Policy”. It said that it would retaliate if China’s interests are undermined by the UK. (“[Taiwan: UK](#)

lawmakers talk defense cooperation during visit, *Deutsche Welle*, 02 December 2022)

### **Slovakia and Taiwan sign three MOUs to boost trade**

On 02 December, Slovakian and Taiwanese officials met in Bratislava where the two parties signed three memorandums of understanding (MOUs). The three MOUs were signed to increase bilateral trade, exchanges between start-ups and collaborations in the semiconductor industry. The meeting was the second session of Taiwanese- Slovak Commission on Economic Cooperation. The two sides also discussed furthering relations in renewable energy, biotechnology and science and space programmes in the future. ("Taiwan, Slovakia sign MOUs on bilateral trade," *Taipei Times*, 05 December 2022)

### **Finland to provide EUR 1.5 million towards helping women and girls in Somalia**

On 05 December, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced an additional EUR 1.5 million to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) to help girls and women in Somalia. This fund will go towards helping Somalian women and girls get access to sexual and reproductive health services. The donation will focus on helping displaced women and children across Somalia avail of healthcare services. The fund will be used to address pregnancy complications, arrange safe births, and provide victims of gender-based violence with health services, psychological aid and counselling. ("Finland supports sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls in Somalia," *valtioneuvosto.fi*, 05 December 2022)

### **Norway to provide over NOK 325 million in aid to Somalia**

On 05 December, Norwegian Minister of International Development Anne Beathe Tsvinnereim announced that Norway will be providing an additional NOK 325 million in aid to Somalia. Tsvinnereim on her visit to Somalia pledged NOK 25 million in emergency aid to address the problem of the drought in Somalia. The aid will be provided through the Somalia

Humanitarian Fund. Tsvinnereim also announced an additional long-term aid of NOK 300 million through the World Bank from 2022 to 2024 towards developmental efforts in Somalia which will include climate change adaptation, good governance and long-term food security. On her visit to Somalia Tsvinnereim said: "This visit has allowed us to observe and assess the results of Norway's efforts to improve security and support regime stabilisation." Somalia is one of Norway's partner countries for stabilisation and conflict prevention. ("Norway to provide large boost in aid to Somalia," *regjeringen.no*, 05 December 2022)

### **Germany and India sign a mobility and migration agreement**

On 05 December, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar signed a mobility and migration agreement that will boost bilateral cooperation in faster visa processing and production of environmentally friendly energy. Baerbock who is visiting India met Jaishankar in Delhi where the two discussed the challenges being faced by both countries in issuing visas and climate change. The Mobility and Migration agreement was then signed by the two parties which would ease the challenges faced while issuing visas and clear the "mountain of applications" for German visas. When it came to climate change Baerbock said that Germany looks forward to collaborating with India and that in 2023 Germany will facilitate emission-free energy production projects worth EUR one billion. To help India pursue electrification wholly through renewables, Baerbock said Germany will provide EUR 10 billion by 2030 to increase renewable energy production in India. (Johannes Leithäuser "Mobility partnership between Berlin and New Delhi," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 05 December 2022)

### **The UK and the US signed an agreement to boost the energy supply**

On 07 December, the UK signed an energy partnership with the US to increase LNG supply. The UK would increase the US LNG export to phase-out Russian energy



supplies and reduce their dependency on Russia. The UK-US Energy Security and Affordability Partnership look to decrease energy prices in the UK and ensure a continuous energy supply. The partnership also aims to invest in clean energy, with both countries working together to improve energy efficiency and lower gas demands. The UK plans to import nine to ten billion cubic metres of LNG over 2023 under the partnership. ([“U.S., Britain launch energy partnership to boost supplies,” Reuters](#), 07 December 2022)

### **Chinese customs data reveals a trade boom with Russia in 2022**

On 07 December, according to China’s Customs’ General Administration data, the trade between Russia and China increased by 32 per cent between January and November compared to 2021. The trade turnover reached USD 172.4 billion overall in 2022 and USD 18.2 billion in November alone. The data shows China exporting goods worth USD 67.3 billion to Russia in 2022 and Russia’s exports to China amount to USD 105.072 billion. China primarily imports Russia’s subsidized energy supply after the West placed sanctions on it. Russia and China would achieve their goal of mutual trade of up to USD 200 billion by 2024. ([“Russia-China trade smashes record – customs data,” RT](#), 07 December 2022)

### **US permits the sale of 116 Ex-M1A1SA Abrams main battle tanks to Poland**

On 11 December, the Defence Security Cooperation Agency said that Poland had requested a package of 116 M1A1SA Abrams main battle tanks (MBTs) from the US stocks for nearly USD 3.75 billion. The package is said to have 116 M1A1 MBTs, 12 M88A2 armoured recovery vehicles, 26 M1152A1 HMMWVs and other heavy machine equipment from the country. The order also included 51,751 rounds of training ammunition and allows nearly 500 crews under training and armour tanks to be “fully replenished” more than 50 times. On 06 December, Polish Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said that the US State Department had approved the sale of the 116 M1A1SA Abrams MBTs and indicated that the first M1A1SA Abrams is scheduled

to be delivered to the country in 2023. This delivery will leave Poland to operate a total of 366 M1 Abrams from the US and South Korea, along with the domestically developed equipment that would cover a large and varied tank fleet. ([“US Approves Sale of 116 Ex-US M1A1SA Abrams MBTs for Poland,” Estonian Free Press](#), 11 December 2022)

### **Finland’s Foreign Trade Minister visit the US to strengthen bilateral relations**

On 12 December, Finland’s Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Minister Ville Skinnari visit Texas and Washington DC from 12 to 16 December with a trade mission team consisting of businesses and research organizations. Skinnari will sign a Mutual Cooperation Statement with Texas Governor Greg Abbott during the visit. He said: “The purpose of the visit is to promote trade and investment, increase cooperation in high-tech fields and support the networking of research entities.” The trade mission team will look into digitalization, the green economy, artificial intelligence and high-performance computing during its visit to Texas. In the upcoming visit to Washington DC, Skinnari aims to strengthen the bilateral relations between the US and Finland, supply chain security and cooperation in the technological sector. ([“Finland strengthens trade relations in increasingly important US market,” valtioneuvosto.fi](#), 12 December 2022)

### **The EU supports Niger’s fight against armed terrorism**

On 12 December, the European Council approved the creation of a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military partnership mission with Niger to combat armed terrorist groups. The CSDP will help Niger to contain the threat emanating from the armed terrorist group within itself and protect the people. The Nigerien Armed Forces’ ability will also be bolstered through the partnership. The EU military partnership mission to Niger (EUMPM Niger) will support the creation of the Centre for Training Armed Forces Technicians. The EU will provide training and advice to combat terrorism within Niger and ensure peace and security within

the region. The cost of the EUMPM Niger will be EUR 27.3 million. ("Niger: EU establishes a military partnership mission to support the country in its fight against terrorism," *consilium.europa.eu*, 12 December 2022)

### **James Cleverly's address highlights the course of the UK's foreign policy**

On 12 December, the UK's Foreign Secretary James Cleverly addressed the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office on UK's foreign policy. Cleverly said that the UK has partnered up with the US, France and 50 other countries to fight for human rights and adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the UNGA. The UK wants Brazil, India, Japan and Germany as permanent members of the UNSC, along with permanent African representation. According to Cleverly, the UK will stand with Ukraine and against Russia in the ongoing war. He said that the UK's future influence will depend on its relations with the countries in the Commonwealth, the African Union and the ASEAN. He said: "The UK must work with our international allies and new partners to sustain the best of this achievement, which seeks to protect every country and create the setting for everyone to prosper." ("British foreign policy and diplomacy: Foreign Secretary's speech, 12 December 2022," *gov.uk*, 12 December 2022)

### **EU-ASEAN summit to promote trade ties amid global instabilities**

On 13 December, the leaders of the EU and the ASEAN began their first-ever in-person summit in Brussels to celebrate 45 years of diplomatic relations. EU officials said that this summit presents itself as an "opportunity" for the EU and ASEAN to carry out their strategic partnership and "shared" commitments to resist geopolitical tensions. They said that the EU needs to turn its attention to the persistent security challenges in Myanmar, the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea and promoted the idea of building trade relations between ASEAN member states to ice out China as a dominant influence on the region. The Chairman of the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)

Charles Santiago said that a free-trade agreement between the ASEAN and the EU is "not yet on the negotiating table" and that the trade relations between the two would entail consistent sourcing of raw materials and "containing" China's and Russia's overwhelming influence. Additionally, he said that human rights and democracy issues are "not a priority" as trade and economics are the focal points of the summit. (Priyanka Shankar "EU-ASEAN summit to build trade ties amid global tension," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 December 2022)

### **Amnesty accuses Spain and Morocco of covering up the Melilla border incident**

On 13 December, Amnesty International released a report outlining the events of 24 June at the Melilla border between the Spanish enclave Melilla and Morocco. The report also looks into the response of Spanish and Moroccan authorities during the incident and the alleged "cover-up" by both countries with the lack of official response by both sides. The report goes on to highlight how both Spain and Morocco deny responsibility for the casualties that occurred at the Melilla border. Amnesty International's Secretary General, Agnès Callamard said: "This smacks of a cover-up and racism, and rubs salt into already painful wounds," and added that both governments should ensure justice is awarded to the victims and release the truth behind the incident. ("Morocco/Spain: Stalled and inadequate inquiries "smack of cover-up", six months after 37 deaths at Melilla border," *Amnesty International*, 13 December 2022)

### **Azerbaijani Gas is important for Serbia says Djedovic**

On 13 December, Serbian Minister of Energy Dubravka Djedovic in an interview with *Trend* said that the Azerbaijani gas supply will help Serbia in diversifying its energy supply and routes. Djedovic said that to ensure a smooth supply of gas from Azerbaijan Serbia along with Bulgaria has begun the construction of a gas interconnector which will be completed by 2023 end. This will help Serbia gain access to the Southern gas Corridor which includes

the TAP gas pipeline and the Greece-Bulgaria Interconnector and boost its energy security. (Laman Zeynalova "[Access to Azerbaijani gas - priority for Serbia, says minister \(Interview\)](#)," *Trend*, 13 December 2022)

### **Hungary and China discuss bilateral cooperation and the future of EU-China relations**

On 13 December, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held video talks where the two discussed future bilateral cooperation and the future of EU-China relations. The two foreign ministers discussed the bilateral cooperation of Hungary and China under China's Belt and Road initiative. Szijjártó and Wang signed an agreement for setting up an intergovernmental cooperation committee. Szijjártó said that the EU is looking to "...put the relationship back on the path of partnership instead of failed sanctions." Wang said that China can maintain friendly relations with the EU similar to that with Hungary. He added that "we believe that Hungary will continue to play a constructive role in promoting China-EU relations." (Barbara Bene "[Hungarian-Chinese Cooperation a Success Story, Says Foreign Minister](#)," *Hungary Today*, 14 December 2022 and Cyril Ip "[With one eye on the EU, China's foreign minister highlights Hungary ties](#)," *South China Morning Post*, 14 December 2022)

### **EU-ASEAN summit concludes with key agreements**

On 15 December, the European Commission released President Ursula von der Leyen's statement on the conclusion of the EU-ASEAN Summit. The summit was held to celebrate 45 years of diplomacy and many deals were agreed upon between both blocs. One, President Ursula declared a EUR 10 billion investment under the EU's "Global Gateway Strategy" to speed up the investments towards infrastructure, green transition, and sustainable connectivity in the ASEAN. Two, the EU along with Vietnam, the UK and countries part of the International Partners Group agreed on a "Just Energy Transition Partnership with Vietnam." The partnership is aimed to help

it achieve the net zero goal by 2050 and mobilise USD 15.5 billion from private and public finance to help with Vietnam's green transition. Three, President von der Leyen and the Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong agreed on a digital partnership for 2023, to facilitate "data flows and data innovation, digital trust, standards, digital skills for workers, and the digital transformation of businesses." Lastly, two bilateral agreements were signed by the EU with Malaysia and Thailand. In a joint statement: "We commit to develop the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership that is based on international law, mutual interest and mutually beneficial cooperation on issues of common concern and the principle of equality." ("[Indo-Pacific: EU-ASEAN Summit brings the two regions closer](#)," *ec.europa.eu*, 15 December 2022; "[EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit 2022: Joint Leaders' Statement](#)," *consilium.europa.eu*, 14 December 2022)

### **Three agreements signed in Kunming-Montreal deal for biodiversity protection**

On 19 December, the COP15 ended in Canada with 200 states agreeing to global protection and restoration of 30 per cent of "terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas." According to Finland's Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Maria Ohisalo, the agreement is seen as a "turning point" to bring down the biodiversity loss in countering climate change. Of the many decisions taken, one was the removal of subsidies that affect the environment up to USD 500 billion per year and a global commitment of USD 200 billion per year was agreed to be given till 2030. Two, biodiversity has been the central focus, including "agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture," which are considered the most vulnerable and need to be used sustainably by local communities. Three, another agreement was signed for reducing the pollutants and hazardous chemicals by 2030 to lessen the damage to biodiversity and the ecosystem. The leaders agreed on setting a quantitative target to assess the risk of "nutrient emissions," and the use of pesticides. ("[UN Biodiversity Conference reached agreement on halting biodiversity loss by 2030 - 30 per cent](#)")

protection and restoration goal for world's nations," valtioneuvosto.fi, 19 December 2022)

### **UK High court rules in favour of refugee deportation plan**

On 19 December, the London High Court ruled in favour of the UK's plan of deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda but pointed out that the government did not take into account the individual circumstances of the asylum seekers. To date, no person has been deported but the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke of commencing the program as soon as possible. The legal challenge is ongoing in the courts with staunch opposition to the plan from other political parties and from the UN. The plan comes at a time when the UK has received 40,000 migrants seeking asylum. UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman stated that it is meant for discouraging illegal immigration into the country, and the business of people-smuggling. ("UK court rules Rwanda deportation plan lawful," Deutsche Welle, 19 December 2022)

### **UK revokes duties on Indian stainless-steel products**

On 20 December, UK's Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) revoked imposed duties on stainless-steel products from India. These were believed to be under-priced due to subsidies in the home country and thus were seen to be posing a danger to the UK's steel industry. On 01 April 2021, the Trade Remedies Authority, an independent body to investigate unfair trade practices, started to probe into the usefulness of the countervailing measures. The report they produced said that there has not been any major effect and revoking the measures will not negatively affect the domestic industry. The reasons for this were mainly that the UK's manufactures were aimed at export and the country needed imports which are cheaper for its use. This finally led to the decision to remove the measures. ("UK proposes measures on stainless steel from India be removed," Deutsche Welle, 20 December 2022)

### **IALA approved to become Official International Association**

On 20 December, Finland's President Sauli Niinisto approved the Act for the national implementation of the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) to officially become an international organization. The Convention had already been signed by Finland last year on 08 June 2021, but the approval took place only on 19 December. IALA operates in the safety sector of transport and helps in the smooth functioning of ships with respect to navigation. Finland sees this as an opportunity to be a part of the committee that prepares the guidelines, giving them an influential position. Finland's position is represented through the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, which has been part of the earlier IALA since its founding in 1957. The convention still requires nineteen more countries to adopt and sign as the minimum threshold for the convention to be accepted is thirty countries. ("Finland approves the establishment of International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation," valtioneuvosto.fi, 20 December 2022)

### **Jordan hosts leaders from the Middle East and Europe to discuss the Iraq crisis**

On 20 December, leaders from across Europe and the Middle East came together at a joint meeting in Jordan to discuss the domestic security and the conditions prevailing in Iraq. The country has been through turmoil for the past many years, starting with the 2003 US-led invasion and then the subsequent political instability with the rise and fall of ISIS. This meeting is being seen as the second edition of the Baghdad Conference which was co-organized by France in 2021 and was held in Baghdad. French President, Emmanuel Macron, stated that France's interest in the stability of the region which also reflects in the security of the Mediterranean basin. The other leaders in attendance were from Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan's King and the Crown Prince. The foreign ministers of Saudi, Iran, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait were also present and spoke of how they viewed the situation and provided suggestions. The chief of the Arab League called for peace and sovereignty in Iraq. ("Middle Eastern, European leaders meet in Jordan to discuss

[security in Iraq](#)," *France24*, 20 December 2022)

### **US reveals allocations under its Countering Russian Activities Fund**

On 22 December, the US State Department released a report on the allocations under the "Countering Russian Influence Fund". The fund, originally inceptionalized in 2017 has been active in Central and Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. The US, through the fund, invests money in countries which are vulnerable to Russian influence and lack the economic heft to counter it. The fund allocates money to civil society organizations, and other entities that strengthen democratic institutions read the statement in the report. The CRIF may be only used for assisting countries that are a part of NATO and those who have applied to join NATO. CRIF's bulk of investments has gone to Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and other V4 countries. The total amount spent under CRIF is more than one billion dollars, and out of this more than 621 million dollars has gone to the Balkan regions. (Sasa Dragojlo, "[US Spent 621 Million Dollars Tackling Russian Influence in Balkans, CEE, V4](#)," *Balkan Insight*, 22 December 2022)

### **Report released on Finland's activities for a decade in Afghanistan**

On 22 December, the Finnish Foreign Ministry released a report of Finland's activities in Afghanistan during a decade spanning from 2001 to 2021. The report points out the objectives and shortcomings of Finland's actions, how the country managed military operations in tow with other countries and what has been the effect on international security. The Finnish report also gives an extensive overview of the evacuation from Afghanistan, with many first-hand accounts of on-ground occurrences. ("[Foreign Ministry's report on Finland's activities in Afghanistan submitted to Parliament](#)," *valtioneuvosto.fi*, 22 December 2022)

### **US alleges Russia's Wagner group received arms from North Korea**

On 23 December, the White House National Security spokesperson John Kirby said the

Russian mercenary group Wagner has been buying arms from North Korea. Further details included the nature of the arms sold, such as infantry rockets and missiles for its operations in Ukraine. James Cleverly, the UK Foreign Secretary also confirmed these statements and added that the number of fighters in the Wagner group has swelled recently and is nearly at 20,000 troops by one estimate. The Wagner group has also been on a spending spree, shelling more than a hundred million dollars a month for importing arms and for the war against the Ukraine forces. (George Wright, "[North Korea sold arms to Russia's Wagner group, US says](#)," *BBC*, 23 December 2022)

### **Germany shelves plan to nurture business ties with Iran**

On 23 December, the German Federal Ministry of Economic and Climate Action issued a statement saying it had put a hold on state measures to cultivate business ties with Iran. This comes in the backdrop of the protests that have engulfed Iran over the past 100 days. The German Ministry stated that due to the extreme measures being used by the Iranian regime, ties with the country have become strained. The repression of the protests, the continued crackdown on the protest and the undocumented human and civil rights abuses being carried out by the state is unacceptable, and Germany would not like to be associated with such a country. The pullout will affect German investment in the country and many training and trade programmes along with export credits for Iran. The suspension will take immediate effect with only the export credits halted from January 2023 onwards. (Dominic Dudley, "[Germany Halts Trade Guarantees For Iran As Bilateral Relations Sour](#)," *Forbes*, 23 December 2022; "[Germany suspends measures to promote business with Iran](#)," *Reuters*, 23 December 2022)

### **Japan's Ambassador comments on bilateral ties with Hungary**

On 26 December, Japan's Ambassador to Budapest, Masato Otaka, gave an interview to the Daily News Hungary, in which the spoke of Japan-Hungary relations. He spoke of Hungary being a favourable investment

destination for Japan, and trade increasing over the years between the two countries. He spoke of the shared history, and how 2019 was a milestone year for Japan-Hungary ties, which began in 1869 with the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Japanese Empire. Responding to a question about the energy crisis affecting Japan, he said that Japan has diversified its energy sources, and distributed them between Qatar, US and Australia. Oil imports were mainly from the middle east. He also spoke of the rich cultural heritage of Hungary and how it is becoming a major tourist destination for Japanese people. (Alpár Kató, "[Japan's ambassador to Hungary on mutual relations, Bartók-Kodály-Liszt music, North Korea and more – INTERVIEW](#)," *Daily News Hungary*, 26 December 2022)

### **Exxon Mobil sues the EU to avoid windfall tax**

On 28 December, The New York Times reported on the US oil company Exxon Mobil's suit over the EU's windfall tax. The European Council which passed the windfall tax ruled that it can bypass the Parliament in emergency cases. The tax will come into effect from 31 December and has come under lawsuit as Exxon believes the tax to undermine its investor confidence and discourage investment and fears it would lead to a "competitive crisis." According to the spokesperson Casey Norton, the company accepts the high energy price burden placed on the consumers but does not view the windfall tax as the solution to the energy price hike. (Melissa Eddy "[Exxon Mobil sues to try to block Europe windfall tax](#)," *The New York Times*, 28 December 2022)

### **Albania to allow Chinese citizens visa-free**

On 27 December, Albania became the second country after Serbia, in Europe to allow Chinese citizens visa-free entry into the country. The decision came after talks with Chinese officials to abolish the visa regime for both countries. Chinese citizens would no longer need to obtain a Schengen visa to enter Albania. The European Parliamentary report stated that countries take such actions to become attractive destinations for foreign investments but it leads to negatively impacting the cohesiveness of EU policies. The report stated this could hinder Balkan countries' bid to join the EU. (Fjori Sinoruka, "[Albania Backs Scrapping Visas for Chinese in Snub to EU](#)," *Balkan Insight*, 28 December 2022)

### **Osman Kaval to remain in sentence says Turkey's court**

On 28 December, an appellate court in Turkey upheld the conviction of the human rights activist Osman Kaval, who has been jailed on serious charges. The charges include financing and leading the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, inciting violence to overthrow the government, and creating civil unrest. The West believes the arrest to be politically motivated. Kaval has been in detention since 2017, along with seven others who are serving 18-year sentences. In 2021, ten foreign ambassadors had written a joint letter calling for Kavala's release, to which Turkey responded by threatening to declare them as 'persona non grata'. The court has been criticized by the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe for its decision. ("[Turkish court upholds life sentence for activist Kavala](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 28 December 2022)

## About the authors



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Source: RUSIA CONSULTING

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EU and NATO members: 28 EU only, 28 NATO only  
Members also include Iceland, Canada and United States

**Major implications stemming from EU and NATO expansion to the new candidate states: Image source: The Economist, 22 February 2022**

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**Image source: (Clockwise) AP; AP; Associated Press; AP Photo/Markus Söder, AP; AP Photo/Markus Söder, AP; AP Photo/Markus Söder, AP; AP Photo/Markus Söder, AP; AP Photo/Markus Söder, AP; AP Photo/Markus Söder, AP**

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**Image source: The 2022 election performance of Sweden and Italy, Anand Agency**

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