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Europe Monitor # 17 | Vol. 03, No. 02 | February 2023
An initiative of NIAS and KAS-India office

Battle for Soledar

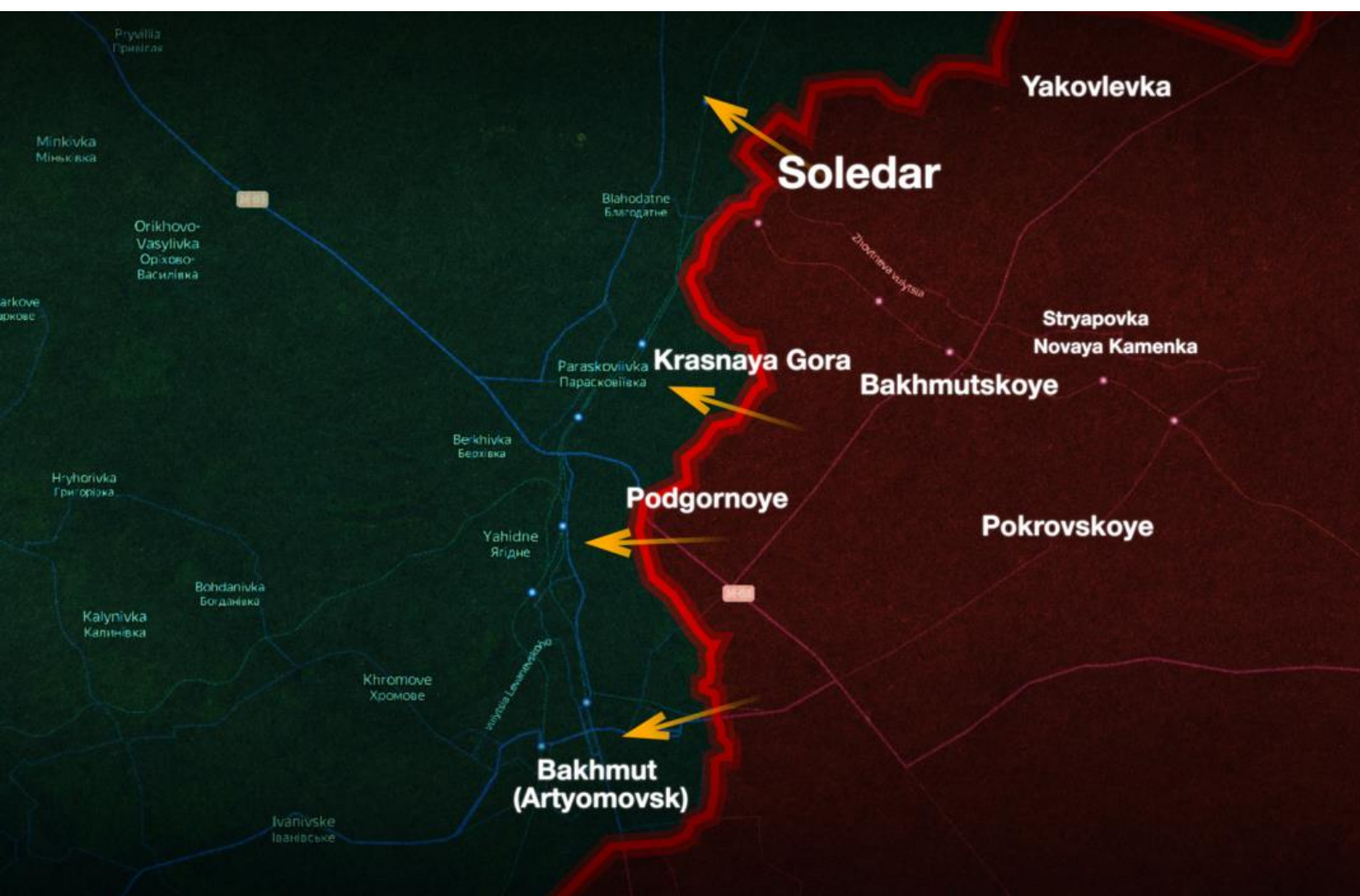


Image source: RT

Comment

Ukraine: A new military push, worsening the situation
Europe: An impending energy crisis and its economic fallouts

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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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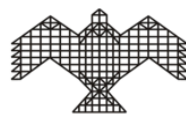
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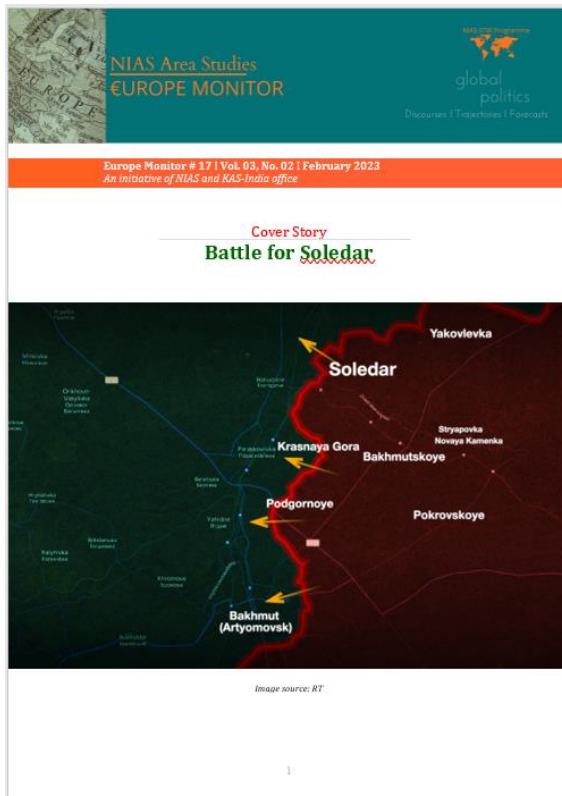
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Europe Monitor

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EM COMMENT

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EM DAILY FOCUS



Source: Deutsche Welle/South Africa, the national news/AFP, The James Town Foundation, Reuters/BBC, REUTERS/Francois Lenoir/File Photo, The Hindu/AFP

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WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES



Source: Kremlin.ru, ISW, AFP PHOTO/FILIPPO MONTEFORTE, IAEA, JAM STA ROSA/AFP/RT, Ukrinform

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 341 to Day 311 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, 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, and Madhura S Mahesh

COMMENT

Ukraine: A new military push, worsening the situation

By Padmashree Anandhan

Increasing military support to Ukraine and the timing of the ceasefire announcement will further complicate the war strategies

On 01 January, the Russian Defence Ministry claimed a strike on Ukraine's unmanned aerial vehicles' (UAV) industrial facility using a "high-precision long-range air-based armament," killing over 350 Ukrainians and destroying air-defence missile systems. Simultaneously, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy claimed to have taken down 45 Shahed drones, killing 400 Russians in a missile attack in Makiivka; however, Russia's Armed Forces reported only 89 casualties.

On 04 January, French President Emmanuel Macron said France would provide "light AMX-10 RC armoured combat vehicles" to Ukraine. He said: "This is the first time that Western-made armoured vehicles are being delivered in support of the Ukrainian army."

On 05 January, the White House and Germany released a joint statement on supplying more weapons: "The United States intends to supply Ukraine with Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, and Germany intends to provide Ukraine with Marder infantry fighting vehicles."

On 05 January, Russia's President Vladimir Putin said: "I am instructing the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation to introduce a ceasefire along the entire line of combat engagement in Ukraine from 12:00 on January 6 until 24:00 on January 7 of this year."

On 08 January, a Russian Defence Ministry spokesperson claimed that a "massive missile attack" in Kramatorsk had killed 600 Ukrainian soldiers. The spokesperson said: "In response to an illicit strike inflicted by Kiev's regime on a temporary Russian military base in the settlement of Makeyevka...the command of the united group of Russian military forces conducted a

retaliation operation."

On 10 January, the Russian mercenary Wagner group claimed to be fighting the war to capture Soledar as part of the Russian offensive in Donetsk. The same was confirmed by the UK Ministry of Defence which stated: "Soledar...likely continues to be Russia's main immediate operational objective."

What are the issues?

First, the intensification. The exchange of shelling between Russia and Ukraine, which was concentrated in Ukraine's southern and north-eastern regions, has expanded further into the eastern Ukraine, centre of Donetsk. The Ukraine military has shifted from attacking the frontline to shelling the Russian occupied Donbass area (Makiivka, Soledar), due to the upgradation of its military capabilities through the West's supply of long-range air defence systems and an equal push to the ground forces through tactical battle tanks. On the other hand, Russia has been challenged with logistical issues, weakened military, dependency on the Wagner Group and Iran's drones. Despite that, it aims to establish a strategic military base to attack Ukraine's infrastructure and bring Donetsk under its control.

"The West's further upgrading to Patriot missiles and infantry vehicles means it is ready to stretch its military expenditure sheet."

Second, the battle for Soledar and the involvement of the Wagner group. The Russian Defence Ministry has not claimed the use of Shahed drones in the Kramatorsk attacks. However, the US and the UK intelligence have observed otherwise. Russia's control in the Donbass seems to be

gradually fragmenting, accompanied by a need to involve the Wagner Group. The new year attacks in Kramatorsk and quick advances of the mercenary group into Soledar prove Russia's determination to strengthen its posture, keep its weapons available at the right place (Soledar salt mine), and encircle Donetsk. However, increasing military support to Ukraine and the timing of the ceasefire announcement will further complicate the war strategies. The use of foreign drones, the involvement of the mercenary group, and the lag in striking back provide a glimpse into the growing vulnerability of the Russian military.

Third, strengthening air-defence systems and advancing ground mobility. The West's support to Ukraine has slowly improved since September, from giving air defence missile systems, drone technologies, and intense training. In November, the US and Germany denied Ukraine's request for patriot missiles and advanced ground mobility vehicles to counter Russia's firepower. This changed in January, with the US, France, and Germany agreeing to provide battle tanks. These infantry fighting vehicles provide ground troops the tactical mobility to launch attacks close to the enemy. The Bradley and Marder have been upgraded with chain guns making them more effective in battleground.

What's ahead?

First, advantage Ukraine. Despite its inability to position its military against Russia's concurrent attacks on its energy grid,

Ukraine's military is steadfast on the frontline, recapturing lost territories. The Ukraine military's main challenge ahead would be to counter Russia's forces and push them further into the east of Donetsk.

Second, Russia's continued carpet bombing. Russia's targeted attacks on the energy infrastructure are expected to continue, along with surprise carpet bombing in particular zones to inflict severe damage. A future ceasefire can be expected through Turkey's mediation, if Russia decides to use it as an opportunity to replenish its military stocks.

Third, new weapon systems to Ukraine. There are several reasons behind the West agreeing to upgrade its military support. The cost factor of the Patriot missiles compared to those used in the HIMARS could be one. Another reason could be the early prediction for Russian aggression coming to an end. The last concern could be the economic impact of heavy military spending. Although the increased military support helped Ukraine's successful counteroffensive, it raised the bar to launch into the Russian-occupied territories. The West's further upgrading to Patriot missiles and infantry vehicles means it is ready to stretch its military expenditure sheet.

Padmashree Anandhan, is a Project Associate at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS.

COMMENT

Europe: An impending energy crisis and its economic fallouts

By Padmashree Anandhan

Rampant action taken by Europe in 2022 to increase internal energy generation does not promise results for 2023

Europe's energy consumption mix has been dominated by natural gas, oil and coal for decades and only in recent years, the debate over the use of non-renewable energies and climate goals has sparked. Since Russia began to cut down its oil and gas supplies as a counter to the sanctions imposed by the West, Europe has been pushed into an energy crisis.

In 2021, the total gas delivered by Russia to the EU was 140 billion cubic metres (bcm), which halved down to 60 bcm in 2022. Although Europe was able to cope the shortage through the emergency mobilised funds of EUR 330 billion, bring control on demand by 10 per cent (50 bcm) and alternate supplies from Africa and Middle-East. In the long term, Europe's energy future without Russian gas and oil seems bleak. Due to the crisis, energy prices turned vulnerable, pressuring gas-intensive sectors to re-direct their operational methods resulting in an add-on liability to the economy.

Forecast for 2023

First, coal, nuclear and hydro power use is likely to supersede renewable sources. In Europe's energy mix, the usage of renewable has become a point of contest. Natural gas, oil, and coal have become the most consumed forms of energy. The Nordic countries, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, seem to rely more on the renewable especially hydropower. To meet the 2023 crisis, the Nordic plan to expand their hydro generation projects, Germany and Belgium retain their nuclear plants, and France and Finland are ahead to construct new plants, transition towards renewable energies and climate goals are about to take a backseat. According to the IEA report, hydro generation is predicted to recover to a five-year average which would benefit in keeping

the electricity supply up by 45 terawatt-hours (TWh). Whereas nuclear generation is predicted to increase by two per cent in 2023.

Second, the household and manufacturing sector shortage will affect the economic recovery. Agreements with Algeria and Azerbaijan did help Europe in a minimal way to be an alternate for the Russian supplies, but still underrepresented the massive gas imports of Europe. At the industrial level, some of the oil and gas-intensive sectors such as manufacturing, fertilizers, chemicals, steel, and ceramics have faced critical challenges in maintaining production and have been forced to cut down profits. Those companies already have alternate sources such as biomethane, coal power and renewable have managed to sustain without huge cost-cuts, but the household sector took the most. The increased demand resulted in hike in prices, narrowing the affordability and reducing consumption. At the household level, subsidies and a slight reduction in demand can benefit only for a shorter time. Europe will need to fasten its internal production, mobilise investments into smart technology and find better alternatives to boost its energy storage. This is to ensure the energy crisis does not become a hitch to economic recovery.

“..the speed of energy reforms being adopted and the time of realization can be immaterial to Europe in 2023.”

Third, the domestic, regional and international energy generation efforts will realize by 2024, however 2023 will remain troublesome. The energy strategy of Europe to reduce the use of non-renewable energies is redirected to plan towards meeting the

energy scarcity and increasing its production. In 2022, Nordic to eastern European countries have proposed new investments to build pipelines, and energy infrastructure to circumvent the shortage by improving the energy supply chain within Europe. Norway, Turkey, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands have become the forefront regional players in facilitating pipeline deals with Greece, Germany and other eastern European countries to replace the Russian energy supply gap. A major role has also been played by private companies such as Equinor and RWE in installations and production. Some of the promising projects being the Greece-Bulgaria pipeline, Bulgaria-Turkey pipeline, Norway's extensive operation in the North Sea, and Germany-Norway hydrogen pipeline. At the regional level, the Renewable Energy Sources Act (RES Act), European Gas Demand Reduction Plan and Offshore Wind Energy Act are expected to materialize in 2023. There are also other efforts such as Fit for 55 package, the REPowerEU plan and a new storage regulation adopted in 2022

which does not seem promising for 2023. The mobilized funds so far come to EUR 330 billion, but to meet the crisis, Europe is estimated to have additional EUR 100 billion, can be possible only in two years through "lower gas import bills." Therefore the speed of energy reforms being adopted and the time of realization can be immaterial to Europe in 2023. At the international level, the US, Africa and Middle-East seem to be promising alternative for Europe, but the rising energy prices in the US, is a high-risk for Europe's economy and the reduced exporting capacities despite the potential in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the DRC limits the energy imports of Europe. Rampant action taken by Europe in 2022 to increase internal energy generation does not promise results for 2023. Comparing the industries and households, the rising energy prices would cost industries and would burden the income of households.

EM Daily Focus



Source: Deutsche Welle/South Africa, the national news/AFP, The JamesTown Foundation, Reuters/BBC, REUTERS/Francois Lenoir/File Photo, The Hindu/AFP

GERMANY

Germany moves ahead with plan to expand coal mining

By Allen Joe Mathew

What happened?

On 16 January, German police announced they had removed all climate activists from Lützerath, a village in Germany's North Rhine Westphalia state. The village is to be demolished for the expansion of an open-cast lignite coal mine run by the energy company RWE. The German police began evicting the activists on 11 January and removed 300 protesters from the village.

On 14 January, clashes broke out between the two groups leaving 20 protesters and 70 policemen injured. Greta Thunberg too extended her support to the activists by joining them on 14 January and leading the protest.

What is the background?

The village Lützerath is located in Germany's western region and is known for its coal mines. Lützerath is on the land owned by RWE, and the company plans on expanding the Garzweiler II mine, to include the village area. The Garzweiler II spread over 35

square kilometres, is a lignite mine which is the most polluting form of coal.

In October 2022, the government run by the Green Party reached an agreement with RWE authorising the demolition of the village, Lützerath. The government's conditions included that RWE leaves out other villages from its expansion plan and prepone the coal phase-out to 2030 from the earlier date of 2038. RWE agreed to these terms which the Greens projected as a huge victory. A Green Party spokesperson Martin Lechtape said: "We were able to save five villages and three farms from being destroyed, spare 500 people a forced resettlement and bring forward the coal phase-out by eight years."

Who are the activists?

The activists are from various groups fighting against climate change. This includes the popular Fridays for Future, and Extinction Rebellion among other local groups such as Lützerath Lebt (Lützerath Lives), and Aller Dörfer bleiben (All Villages Stay). Many activists have been residing in the village for the past two years, trying to prevent its demolition. The activists demand the complete suspension of all operations currently being carried out by RWE and an

assurance that the coal beneath the village will not be excavated. The demands are based on studies published by the international research platform Coal Transitions which stated that Germany has more coal stocks available for use than it requires.

What does the government say?

The government says that the extra coal is needed to secure Germany's energy requirements, due to the energy crisis caused because of the Russia-Ukraine war. RWE says Germany would need these coal deposits by the end of 2023, for the winter months. The government and RWE also spoke out against the activists' claim that this would increase emissions stating EU's caps on emissions will lead to any extra carbon emissions being offset.

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SPAIN

Spain's anti-government protests reflect the deepening polarization

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 21 January, a mass protest was carried out by people in Spain demanding the step down of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. The gathering was led by "right-leaning civil society groups" with the support of the center-right Popular Party and the far-right Vox party. The protestors held sign boards that said: "Sanchez, resign!" and "traitor," reflecting the angst on the government as the general elections are expected to be held in May.

Protestors claimed the government's decision to agree to the demand of Catalan secessionists in appointing a person to mediate talks between the "pro-unity and

pro-independence parties" as a betrayal. In line with the protestors, the current regional parties have rejected the move and called for an independence vote.

Three issues

First, the nature of protests. Protest against the national government has been frequent in the last five years, but the demands have centered around the Catalanian community. The first set of protests called the "Madrid demonstration" was against gender violence when a Catalan court dismissed a guilty without charges. Followed by a series of Catalan protests to revive the independence movement and against the sentence of the nine separatist leaders. At present both issues are being highlighted by far-right and right-party groups to stage protests against the government. While the protest does seem political as the elections near, there is a limited amount of discontent amongst the conservative section of the public against Sanchez for not addressing the gap in the health sector, employment, and economic crisis.

Second, continuing political polarization. Single-party governments have been the norm of Spain since 1982 until the Conservative People's Party (PP) leader Rajoy was replaced by the Socialist party leader Sanchez. Although the change was quick, the continuity of the Socialist party has not been easy. The party has suffered to gain support from the radical-left party Podemos, right of center party Ciudadanos to form a coalition government, which had never occurred since democracy was established in 1977. In the progress of cutting down the differences with the existing parties to form a coalition, a series of four elections gave way for 16 parties into the congress. This took place due to a loss of confidence amongst the public over the party's incapacity to form a government and address the issue of budget reform, reform of the law on sexual consent, and illegal immigration. The far-right party, Vox, and the PP focused on these issues resulting in a vote gain of 15 per cent additionally in the November 2020 elections and triggering the protests. The rise of the far-right and recovery of the PP created pressure for the Socialists and Podemos to unite, but it is not

enough to have a majority to pass any legislation in the parliament. This led Sanchez to get close to Esquerra Republicana (One of the Catalonia's secessionist parties) for support in the parliament. Therefore, the two-split in Spain's political system is expected to worsen.

Third, the challenge over Catalonia. The ousting of the conservative party leader was due to the crisis in Catalonia and the issue of the spread of the separatist movement has been the base for the split in Spain's political scenario. In 2017, when Catalonia held an illegal referendum for independence sparked fear as they saw it as a threat to Spanish nationalism. When the Supreme court sentenced nine leaders of the separatist organization of Catalonia for using their resources to "declare an independent republic," led to mass protests amongst the community. While Sanchez maintains a stance to have a dialogue to settle the issue between the regional leader of Catalonia, the threat to Spanish nationalism has taken the center of the far-right party's agenda. Its focus to address illegal migration and separatism has helped gain support from the public but to gain a majority in the parliament it would need the support of the Conservatives. This has furthered with the national government stepping to replace the conservative majority judiciary to reform the sedition law, becoming the key reason behind the protests and a political deadlock for the 2023 elections.

What next?

The political chaos furthers the polarization. On one hand, while Sanchez presents the idea of dialogue to settle the Catalanian issue, it seems to aggravate the influence of the Right party which has been aiming to devour through the difference to gain power. In such a scenario, the far right would still require the support of the conservative party to form a coalition, which seems to be fluid as both play for power. While Sanchez has to an extent excelled in sustaining the coalition government, faces a more complex situation without a majority to pass legislation on reforming the sedition and judiciary laws. Whether the winner of the 2023 elections is center left or center right, the polarization can be expected to further

with the worsening fragmentation within the parties.

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REGIONAL

Erdoğan calls for extradition of individuals to ratify Sweden's NATO bid

By Madhura S Mahesh

On 15 January, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that Sweden should extradite or deport all the terrorists for Turkey to approve their NATO membership bid. Erdoğan added: "First of all, they need to extradite nearly 130 terrorists in order for their bids to pass our parliament, (but) unfortunately they have yet to do this." This comes as PPK members staged a protest in Stockholm by hanging a puppet of Erdoğan outside the city hall.

On the same day, Sweden Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said that the negotiations with Turkey were in a "very good position." Kristersson added: "The situation in terms of the negotiations, or rather the follow-up of the memorandum, is going well." He previously condemned the protests saying that it was "sabotage" against Sweden's bid for NATO membership.

Sweden drew further criticism from Turkey after Swedish prosecutors on 16 January dismissed accusations against PKK members for slandering Erdoğan. The prosecutors said that their actions on 12 January is not a criminal offence. The prosecutors added that no spokesperson of Erdoğan's AK Party Omer Celik criticised the decision and said: "If you protect a terrorist group who threatens our country, attacks our citizens and the military, then we cannot talk about an alliance here."

Who are the 130 terrorists?

Erdoğan's demand for the extradition of 130 terrorists is concerning the Trilateral Memorandum signed by Turkey, Finland and Sweden in June 2022. The Memorandum outlined Sweden and Finland's support for Turkey's fight against YPG/PYD, FETO and the PKK which are designated terrorist organisations. The memorandum also outlines Finland and Sweden's commitment to addressing unresolved deportation or extradition requests by Turkey. Erdoğan previously had said that Sweden has agreed to extradite 73 terrorists, 33 of the 73 were identified by the Turkish daily Hurriyet as people linked to the PKK.

Erdoğan on 15 January also referred to a joint conference held in November with Kristersson where Erdoğan demanded the extradition of Bulent Kenes, the former editor-in-chief of Today's Zaman and suspected member of the FETO. He said: "Interestingly, their court rejected the deportation of Bulent Kenes to us."

Turkey has previously applied for the extradition of suspected members of the OKK and other terrorist organizations but has been rejected many times. Out of the 33 individuals previously identified, 19 individuals' extradition requirements were rejected by Stockholm's Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has said that it will not be reopening the cases that have been processed.

Extradition in Sweden is decided by independent courts and political leaders do not have a say in the final verdict. Additionally, individuals are not extradited on the grounds of political crimes or if they are at risk of persecution. While Sweden does extradite foreign nationals but only if it

is according to the European Convention on Extradition. Additionally, it does not extradite Swedish citizens and the declared offences must be considered a crime in Sweden.

Road Ahead

On 14 January, Turkey's Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin said that Turkey running short of time to ratify Sweden and Finland's NATO membership. Kalin said: "We have a time issue if they want to join NATO before the NATO summit in June." He attributed this to the upcoming Turkish parliamentary and presidential elections which are said to be held in May 2023.

Sweden on its part has been introducing new laws which will change the definitions of terrorism making it easy to implement the agreements of the Trilateral Memorandum. While Turkey has praised these measures it is of the view that Sweden needs to send a "clear message" to terrorist groups saying that it is no more a safe haven.

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January 2023

Pope Benedict XVI dies at 95: Conservative Christianity, Scandal and Resignation

By Madhura S Mahesh

On 31 December, Former Pope Benedict XVI died in the Vatican of old age. Known as Pope Emeritus, the 95-year-old Former Pope assumed office for eight years and was famous for his decision to resign from the

papacy in 2013. His funeral led by Pope Francis will take place on 05 January. Currently, his body lies in the state of St Peter's Basilica for the public to pay respect to. Pope Francis highlighted the work of Benedict XVI and said: "With deep feeling, we recall his person, so noble, so gentle, and we feel in the heart so much gratitude."

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni conveyed sympathies to Pope Francis and said: "He spoke and will continue to speak, to the hearts and minds of people with the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual depth of his Magisterium."

US President Joe Biden offered his condolences: "I had the privilege of spending time with Pope Benedict at the Vatican in 2011 and will always remember his generosity and welcome as well as our meaningful conversation."

Who was Benedict XVI?

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI previously known as Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger was born on 16 April 1927 in Marktl, Bavaria near the German-Austrian border, where in 1941 he was forced to enlist in the Hitler Youth during World War II. Born into a Catholic family, Ratzinger was formally ordained into the Roman Catholic Church in 1951.

In 1962 he was appointed an advisor to the Second Vatican Church and was also a theologian at the universities of Bonn, Munster and Freising. In 1977, Ratzinger was appointed as the Archbishop of Munich and was appointed as the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in 1982 by Pope John-Paul IV.

After the death of Pope John-Paul II in 2005, he was appointed as the Pope and held this position till 11 February 2013 when he resigned from the papacy citing old age.

Three issues

First, the return of conservative Christian values. After he assumed the papacy in 2005 at the age of 78, he assumed the name, Benedict XVI. He was a staunch conservative catholic priest who projected rigid views on theological and social issues. His three encyclicals criticise atheism, call for a

rethink of the functioning of the international economy, and address the dwindling faith in Christianity. During his time as Pope, he worked towards bringing conservative values back into the fold of Catholicism which was started by his predecessor Pope John Paul II. He introduced policies and ideas that often clashed with the reforms of the 1962-1965 Second Vatican Council which was instrumental in the modernization of the Church. One of his policies was re-introducing the Latin Mass without the restrictions placed on by previous popes.

Second, staunch action against child abuse cases. During his papacy, many child abuse cases were reported which led to his apologizing multiple times. In his tenure in the CDF, he looked into the various child abuse cases and worked towards removing the accused priests swiftly. This spilt over in his role as Pope where he effectively dealt with accused priests and defrocked them if found guilty. As reported by AP one of the main cases handled by him was that of the Reverend Marcial Maciel who was accused of raping young seminarians and had extensive documented proof of his victims and abuses. After he was appointed as Pope, he sentenced Maciel to a lifetime of penance and prayer.

Third, first pope to resign since 1415. On 11 February 2013, Benedict XVI became the first Pope to resign from the papacy 600 years after Gregory XII. This was unique as previous popes have all died in their papacy. Benedict said that his old age is impeding his duties as Pope which involves visiting catholic churches around the world. In his speech, he said that he will continue to preach the teachings of Jesus and live a quiet life. The latter proved to be false as he then became the face of traditionalists who were unhappy with the liberal policies of Pope Francis, Benedict's successor.

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ECONOMY

Croatia adopts Euro and joins the Schengen area

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 30 December, European Commission in its press release announced the approval of Croatia to join the Schengen area and the eurozone. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said: “I warmly welcome Croatia in the euro and in the Schengen free travel area...Schengen enlargement makes us stronger, and Croatia can now fully contribute.” On 01 January 2023, Croatia adopted the euro as its currency and became the eighth country to join the Schengen area. According to Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic: “...we witness the achievement of strategic goals of a state — this is such a day.”

Will the currency conversion affect the economy?

Croatia joining the Eurozone would mean the replacement of kuna (National currency) with euro at a set conversion rate of EUR one for HRK 7.53450 (Croatian kuna). This alarming conversion has raised concerns among consumers about being exploited through high prices by businesses providing goods and services. The EU has introduced a dual price display plan where both currencies will be in use for the next two weeks to allow a complete removal of kuna from the currency market. The prices of kuna and euro will be displayed till 31 December 2023, to ensure the protection of customers from unfair prices.

Additionally, a “Business Code of Ethics” will be followed to ensure the maintenance of stable prices for goods and services. The

financial agency and post officer will facilitate the exchange or circulation of kuna banknotes with euro banknotes till 31 December 2023. The monitoring mechanism and the appointment of “consumer protection associations” are observed to keep a check on businesses from trading at unfair prices but in the case of a “business to business” transaction, it is exempt. Although the mechanism does seem positive, the timing of Croatia joining the Eurozone does not seem convincing. Since the Ukraine war and energy crisis that has hit Europe, the value of the euro is on the rising trend, if a financial crisis is declared later in 2023, as a follower of the single currency, will directly impact Croatia’s economy. Imagining a repetition of similar instances such as the 2008 financial crisis, being a euro or a non-euro country does not account for the impact observed to be the same.

Will the impact be positive or negative on Croatia's businesses being part of the Schengen area?

Tourism

The tourism industry comprises one-fifth of Croatia’s GDP and joining the Schengen area will be a boost for tourism. This would be possible as the crossing “between Croatia and Slovenia in the north” which sees many polish travelers in summer will now be free of checks. Without land, sea, and air control, travel is expected to boom with the removal of checks from 26 European countries, thereby promoting more movement.

Businesses: Health and construction sector

For the businesses, financial statements will remain in the HRK till 2022 and from 01 January 2023, they will be prepared in EUR and for employees, salaries will remain in HRK, which will be converted to EUR as per the conversion rules.

According to professor of Business and Economics, Albert Guvernau, Eurozone supports stability and helps in increasing capital mobility but does not provide worker mobility at the same level. In terms of economic growth, the euro countries experienced a “solid level of growth,” but it was not the same in the reduction of the unemployment rate. In Guvernau’s view, this was due to: “Evidence of the rigidity of

prices and the divergence of production structures.”

Although joining the eurozone and Schengen area can help accumulate capital to impact businesses positively, the state of labour force remains a question. Croatia which has been facing a massive “general labour shortage” since accession to the EU, especially in health in construction sectors, joining the Schengen area can add more to the outflow. Since Croatia’s migration policy is observed to be restrictive and less integrated, the new situation might further push the government to adopt a friendly policy for migrant workers to convert capital into growth.

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INTERNATIONAL

China in the Baltic region: Four takeaways

By Padmashree Anandhan

On December 2022, the Jamestown Foundation released a report on “Between Brussels and Beijing: The Transatlantic Response to the Chinese Presence in the Baltic Sea Region.” It focuses on the increasing sphere of influence of China in the Baltic, possible security challenges ahead due to China’s presence for the Baltic States, provides the transatlantic view’s the role of China and recommends what posture the US, the EU and the Baltic must hold. Following are the four takeaways of the report.

Four takeaways

First, China’s increased Baltic presence in the infrastructure, supply chain, technology, media, and language. China’s has played its economy statecraft in terms of investing in critical infrastructure, acquiring specific technologies through Lithuania’s natural resources, and supply chains such as owning shares in Estonia’s air, rail and seaports. The BRI initiative is another dual-hit factor which brings China closer to the Baltic as it offers shortest route of trade to the Baltic and is made possible connecting maritime route, Eurasian bridge and a direct access to Belarus and Russia through Lithuania. Apart from economy and trade, China also uses its human resources in form of language centres and keeps check on the student’s family in China to ensure information collection. The media house Xinhua has increased its branches to 170 outside China which is influential in impacting societal groups, public campaigns, and national languages.

Second, a Baltic wary of security risk but blinded by economic cooperation. Compared to Estonia, and Latvia, Lithuania is seen to be sound for Taiwan which has slight disturbance in its relations with China. In terms of sharing economic intelligence, cooperation in infrastructure, transportation and commercial opportunities in trade and technology has helped boom the Baltic-China relations. Competing with China in the economic landscape is a no-go area for a small region like Baltic. Whereas, in perceiving China as a security challenge, Baltic’s posture has NATO, EU and the US along to support, but the Russian war in Crimean and Ukraine has by default made Baltic to see Russia as a prime threat over China. Economic dependency over China, and Russia-China politico military relations has been under debate in Baltic, but China as a primary threat to security seems to be in the second.

Third, possible security challenge due to digital, cyber, media, data exchange and maritime link. Estonia, Latvia Lithuania’s highest fear on closeness with China is over its 5G, digital communication, the lack in infrastructure to track China’s cyber hacking, exchange of “sensitive economic data” and

its involvement in the maritime link in Latvia and Lithuania. The deployment of China's Navy in the Baltic Sea is not seen as probable security threat but the Baltic states focus lie in the non-traditional, politics, and economic security.

Fourth, missed focus of Transatlantic. The US's strategy in the Baltic has not been towards looking at China as the threat but, Russia. China has viewed only as a political and a economic challenge, but its lacks in estimating the extent of Chinese involvement in Baltic's infrastructure. The engagement has grown to a magnitude to affect the key arial and maritime infrastructure which might in-turn pose a

security challenge for the transatlantic. The Jamestown foundation in its report recommends the US to involve in closer analysis of China's "ownership" in the infrastructure and upcoming investments in the Baltic to secure it from China and prioritise the EU unity to ensure a stable security in the wider transatlantic.

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War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan, and Madhura S Mahesh



Source: Kremlin.ru, ISW, AFP PHOTO/FILIPPO MONTEFORTE, IAEA, JAM STA ROSA/AFP/RT, Ukrinform

War in Ukraine: Day 341

War on the Ground:

On 30 January, Ukraine spokesperson Andriy Yermak reported on Poland's decision to send F-16 fighter jets. Ukraine also aims to get F-16 or F-15 from the US, Germany's Tornados, and Swedish Gripens. On the same day, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen met Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy where both discussed on Denmark's support to rebuild infrastructure facilities in Mykolaiv. Apart from that they also discussed on sending 19 Caesar howitzers and talks on joining a tank coalition, anti-aircraft, and anti-ship defence.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 30 January, TASS reported on Russia's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov criticism on West for escalating the war through supply of weapons to Ukraine. He said: "The West has been encouraging these demands, [while confirming] its readiness to provide these weapons...leading to a major escalation, with

NATO countries getting increasingly involved in this conflict directly." The response comes after the US, and Germany agreed to send Abrams battle tanks, and Leopard tanks to Ukraine.

On 30 January, the Russian Defence Ministry reported on blocking attempt of US's "military biological programme" in Ukraine. According to the spokesperson, Russia had received information on Ukrainian projects that focused on studying African swine fever, Congo hemorrhagic fever agents and Hantaviruses in Ukraine. Upon finding the materials will now be sent to Russia's investigation committee to take action.

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 30 January, UK Defence Intelligence in its daily update estimated that Russia can be expected to conduct another round of partial mobilization. The observation comes as it finds out lack in number of personnel to carry out the offensive in Ukraine, at the

* 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.

same time keeping the public discontent low.

On 30 January, Ukrinform reported on the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council consideration to stand with Ukraine and support the agricultural sector. Since the war, hike in energy prices and increased purchase prices have become problems for EU agricultural sector. Therefore, methods such as development of bio-economy, imposing EU legislation to cutdown emissions in Agriculture are being seen as possibilities by the EU.

On 30 January, BMFTV reported on the Defence Minister of France and Australia announcement on supplying thousands of 155mm shells to Ukraine to counter Russia. The delivery is expected to occur by first quarter of 2023. The move also revamps the Franco-Australian cooperation under the 2+2 format, which was paused.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 30 January, Ukrinform reported on Iran and Russia connecting of "interbank communication and transfer systems." This is aimed to improve the trade and financial exchange amidst the western sanctions. According to Deputy Governor of Iran's Central Bank: "...about 700 Russian banks and 106 non-Russian banks from 13 different countries will be connected to this system." The relations between Iran and Russia have been getting closer since the Ukraine war as economic issue arise.

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War in Ukraine: Day 339 & 340 War on the Ground:

On 28 January, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged partner countries to supply Ukraine with long-range missiles. Zelenskyy outlined that Ukraine needs Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) and other similar weapons to counter the increased Russian attacks. He added that the long-range missiles would also prevent Russia from attacking Ukrainian cities and destroying key infrastructure.

On 29 January, Ukrainian Naval Forces stated that 15 combat-ready Russian warships were stationed in the Black Sea. The Naval Forces added that three missile carriers are carrying 20 Kalibr-type cruise missiles. Additionally, it added that there are combat-ready Russian warships in the Sea of Azov controlling maritime communications and nine Russian warships, some carrying five Kalibr-type missile carriers with 72 missiles. It accused Russia of violating the International Convention of the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS 1974) in the Sea of Azov by switching off the automatic identification systems (AIS) on civilian vessels.

On 28 January, the Ukrainian Ambassador to France Vadym Omelchenko said that Ukraine will receive 321 heavy tanks from partner countries. Omelchenko added that the tank's delivery times will vary due to pending maintenance works, and logistics issues. He urged partner countries to supply the tanks as soon as possible to counter Russian aggression at the frontlines.

On 28 January, Ukraine's Defence Ministry said that UAH 20 billion will be set aside to procure Unmanned Ariel Vehicles (UAVs) in 2023. The Ministry said that 16 contracts with Ukrainian UAV manufacturers have been concluded. It added the ease of the procedural admittance of UAVs into the Ukrainian Armed Forces has fast-tracked the

process for the Ukrainian UAV manufacturers to get their codification and technical conditions approved.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 28 January, Russia's Foreign Deputy Minister Oleg Syromolotov stated that Russia had become a target of coordinated attacks in cyberspace by the West. Syromolotov outlined that the attacks involved intelligence agencies, hacker activists and transnational IT companies in the West. He added that the nature of attacks has been increasingly complex. Syromolotov said that Russian officials are ready for "massive cyberattacks" and added: "A set of appropriate administrative and technical measures is being taken at the state level. Protection systems are constantly being improved." He also outlined how the US and the West are training a Ukrainian IT Army to increase its offensive capabilities. He said: "They make no attempt to conceal the fact that their cyber command is conducting operations against our country."

On 28 January, the Russian Defence Ministry said that 14 people were killed and 24 injured in a Ukrainian missile strike on a hospital in Novoaydar, LPR. The Ministry said that the hospital was hit by a rocket allegedly launched using the US-HIMARS rocket launcher. It added: "A deliberate missile strike on a known civilian healthcare facility is an absolutely grave war crime of the Kyiv regime." Russia's UN Permanent Representative Deputy Head Dmitry Polyansky called the attack a "heinous crime" and accused the US of being complicit in the attack as the military equipment and intelligence were provided to Ukraine by the US. This was echoed by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticised the US and other NATO countries for their lack of response to the Ukrainian attack. The Ministry further added that the lack of response "confirms their direct involvement in the conflict and involvement in the crimes committed."

On 29 January, the Russian Human Rights Commissioner Tatyana Moskalkova called on the UN Human Rights High Commissioner and the International Committee of the Red Cross to address the violation of Article 18 of

the Geneva Convention of 1949 by Ukraine. She quoted the Article which says: "Civil hospitals organized for providing assistance to the wounded, the ill, the disabled and birthing mothers cannot be attacked under any circumstances."

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 28 January, *Politico* reported that the Pentagon is facing pressure from a few military officials to supply Ukraine with F-16 fighter jets. This comes as Ukraine is looking to acquire fighter jets for a counter-offensive against Russia. The article highlights that there has been no formal request by Ukraine for the supply of fighter jets to the US or any Western ally. It outlines that the F-16s could increase Ukraine's air defence capabilities and efficiently counter potential Russian air strikes. It added that there is a call by Ukraine to train pilots to fly the F-16s before any decision is made. *Politico* highlights that US officials are hesitant to provide fighter jets as they look to prevent any escalation with Russia.

On 28 January, the UK Defence Intelligence claimed that over 300 Russians were killed in the attack on Makiivka on 01 January. It outlined that the Russian Defence Ministry had acknowledged the casualties citing 89 being killed. It added that the huge difference between the two estimates shows the prevalent disinformation in Russian announcements. It attributed this misinformation to inaccurate reports by junior personnel and "deliberate" lying by senior leaders.

On 29 January, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that Germany will not be supplying Ukraine with fighter jets. Scholz in an interview with *Tagesspiegel*, a German newspaper said that Germany is currently focused on supplying Ukraine with Leopard-2 battle tanks. He added that any potential "bidding war for weapons" should be prevented. He also any potential escalation of war between NATO and Russia will not be allowed.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 27 January, UNHRC Chief Filippo Grandi accused Russia of violating the fundamentals of child protection in Ukraine. Grandi said: "Giving them (Russian) nationality or having them adopted goes against the fundamental principles of child protection in situations of war." He added that the UNHRC due to limited access has not been able to determine the total number of children that have been given Russian passports.

On 28 January, DPRK Foreign Ministry Department of US Affairs Director General Kwon Jong Gun said that DPRK has not provided Russia with any arms. Kwon said that such claims by the US are "groundless rumours." It has also criticised the US decision to supply battle tanks to Ukraine. It also said that NATO's eastward expansion is a cause for the current situation in Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 341

War on the Ground:

On 26 January, air raid sirens were heard across Ukraine in the early hours warning civilians of a Russian air strike on civilian infrastructure. The missiles hit infrastructures in Kyiv, Odesa, Lviv, Vinitsiya and Dnipro regions. Odesa Regional Defence Command Maksym Marchenko stated that the air raid sirens were triggered by the bomber-launched cruise missiles and added that some were launched from Russian warships in the Black Sea. Ukraine's Armed Forces Commander Valery Zaluzhny outlied that air defenders had downed 47 of the 55 missiles launched by Russia. Ukraine's Interior Ministry highlighted that all the alerts were issues before the launches took place

On the same day, *Kyiv Post* reported that the Russian missile strikes had killed 11 people and damaged power grids in four cities. In Kyiv a 55-year-old man was killed due to a downed cruise missile, additionally, three workers in Zaporizhia were killed due to the air strikes. the attacks damaged power stations in Odesa, Zaporizhia, and Dnipro where repair is currently underway. The report added that the power grids were switched off in many of the regions which were potential targets which prevented a power surge.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 26 January, the Russian delegation to the Vienna talks on military security and arms control Head Konstantin Gavrillov said that the supply of tanks by the West shifts the confrontation to a new level. Gavrillov outlined that negotiations were ongoing while dealing with the issue of military equipment such as small arms and portable defence systems. He added: "Documents were developed but now they all have been practically set aside, the West is simply not complying with them and indeed is moving to a new level." Russia's Ambassador to Germany Sergey Nechaev criticised Germany's decision calling it "highly dangerous" and added that it "takes the conflict to a new level of confrontation."

On 26 January, Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has not been a potential "interlocutor" for a long time. This comes as Zelenskyy ruled out any future peace talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and added that Putin was now a "nobody" due to the "special military operation." Peskov highlighted Zelenskyy's election promises about the Donbas and the Minsk agreement and said: "This is why, let's put it this way, he himself has long ceased to be a potential interlocutor for President Putin."

On 26 January, Russia's UNESCO Deputy Permanent Representative Tatyana Dovgalenko criticised the UNESCO decision to declare Odessa city centre as a World Heritage site. Dovgalenko said: "As for the reason behind this decision, it clearly was entirely politically motivated." She added that the officials behind the decision are not concerned with the preservation of Odessa. She also said that this was done to accuse Russia of damaging Ukraine's historical sites.

On 26 January, the Russian General Prosecutor's Office sanctioned Meduza, an independent news outlet. The Office listed the outlet in Russia's "undesirable" organisations list which forces the organisations to disband and puts its staff and financiers at risk of jail time. The Office

said that this was done as Meduza's actions "constitute a threat to the foundation of the constitutional order and security of the Russian Federation." Meduza was an independent news outlet founded in Riga, Latvia in 2014 by former employees of *Lenta.ru*. Meduza CEO Galina Timchenko said that the decision "was not completely unexpected," and added "Since the start of the war [in Ukraine] we knew it was just a matter of time. So, we were prepared and it has not frightened us."

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 26 January, the EU launched the Multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform for Ukraine which looks to aid Ukraine's reconstruction, repair and recovery. The platform aims to coordinate between international donors and financial organisations to ensure aid is supplied in a transparent, coherent and accountable manner. Ukraine, EU, G7 countries and financial institutions including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the IMF, World Bank and the European Investment Bank attended the first meeting.

On 26 January, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) levied additional sanctions on eight individuals, 16 entities and four aircraft to reduce Russia's ability to wage war against Ukraine. The US Treasury also designated the Wagner group as a "significant transnational criminal organisation."

On 26 January, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said that the 14 Leopard 2 battle tanks will be arriving in Ukraine by March end or early April. Pistorius added that Ukrainian troops will be trained on the Marder infantry fighting vehicles in the coming days and training for the Leopard will begin later. The UK also announced that its supply of Challenger 2 tanks will be delivered to Ukraine by the end of March.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 26 January, Canadian Defence Minister Anita Anand announced that Canada will be supplying Ukraine with four Leopard battle tanks. Anand said: "This donation, combined

with the contributions of allies and partners, will significantly help the armed forces of Ukraine.”

On 25 January, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board proposed that individual athletes from Russia and Belarus be allowed to participate in international sports tournaments. The Board outlined a set of conditions for the athletes to follow which includes that the athletes should participate as “neutral athletes,” only athletes who have not actively supported the Ukraine war and those who comply with the World Anti-Doping Code will be allowed to participate. On 26 January, the Olympic Council of Asia announced that Russian and Belarusian athletes will be allowed to participate in the Asian Games and other competitions in Asia.

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War in Ukraine: Day 336

War on the Ground:

On 25 January, the Ukraine military spokesperson announced the decision on withdrawal of defence force from Soledar to protect the lives of the “service personnel.” Russia’s claims of capturing Soledar was initially denied by Ukraine’s troops has now withdrawn.

On 25 January, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported on the meeting with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. Establishing access to Ukrainians deported into Russia, protection of refugee rights, and “criminal deportation” were the key topics discussed during the meeting. Zelenskyy reported on close to two million Ukrainians have been forcefully deported.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 25 January, the Russian Defence Ministry released a statement on the Zircon missile (hypersonic) test. In the statement, the Ministry reported that the test was carried out at 900 kilometers distance in the Atlantic Ocean.

On 25 January, RT reported on the French sports gear Decathlon suspension of the supply of goods to Russia upon EU’s sanctions. This has led the company to search for buyers to sell Russian assets. This includes 20 buildings, warehouse spaces, and land plots worth 15 billion Rubles. Selling such assets would require approval from the subcommittee of Russia’s Ministry of Finance, which recently passed a rule to bar the withdrawal of such funds.

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 25 January, Germany’s Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced the decision to provide 14 Leopard 2A6 main battle tanks to Ukraine. This also grants other European countries to

send similar tanks to Ukraine and training of the Ukrainian troops. He said: "I need to explicitly say; it was right and it keeps on being right not to have been pushed forward but to have waited for international cooperation to take place." In response, Zelenskyy thanked for the support, while Russia's Dmitry Peskov condemned the move: "Bring nothing good to the future relationship." The decision was greeted by Latvia's President Egils Levits: "And if we have an aggressive neighbour, it is natural that we are increasing our defense capabilities." Along with Latvia, NATO, the UK, and France welcomed Germany's move. Spain and Norway have expressed consent to provide Leopard 2A4 and Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine.

On 25 January, US President Joe Biden announced similar to Germany to provide 31 M1 Abrams battle tanks to Ukraine.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 25 January, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) confirmed taking steps to include athletes from Russia and Belarus to take part in the 2024 Paris Games. In a statement: "No athlete should be prevented from competing just because of their passport." The IOC President on the same lines said that due to war, sports cannot be politicized.

On 25 January, UNESCO relooked into the proceedings to categorize the historic center of Odesa as "endangered" World Heritage Site. Such classification will help the city to receive assistance to protect the site and maintain the area. This is due to the increased attacks of Russia on the cultural center of the Black Sea.

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War in Ukraine: Day 335

War on the Ground:

On 24 January, Ukraine's Ambassador to Turkey Vasyl Bodnar said that the planning for the construction project of the Bayraktar TB2 manufacturing plant in Ukraine was completed. Bodnar said that the legal framework for the construction was also formed and production in the plant is expected to start in two years.

On 24 January, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal announced the creation of the financial 'Ramstein format.' This format was launched by the G7 to look at three key areas, short-term and long-term assistance for Ukraine, development of the private sector and international financing and coordination of reforms. According to Shmyhal, this was launched to coordinate all financial support projects introduced by the G7 countries and the EU. He also said that the first meeting under this format will be held later this week and will be attended by the EU and G7 countries. They will also be joined by international financial organisations such as the IMF, EBRD, OECD, and EIB.

On 24 January, Energoatom stated that eight Ukrainian nuclear power plants (NPP) are working at peak nominal capacity. Energoatom added that the NPPs contribute to 55 per cent of the total electricity consumption of Ukrainian with the largest amount being produced by South Ukrainian NPP. It also said that Zaporizhia NPP is still connected to the Ukrainian power grid and added that its six power units are shut down.

On the same day, Ukrenergo stated that electricity generation in Ukraine has increased but has still not reached maximum power generation capacity. Due to the significant capacity deficit, Ukrenergo has established per-day consumption caps for all regional power distribution companies. Apart from this emergency shutdowns are implemented to prevent the consumption from exceeding the caps.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 24 January, the Russian Foreign Ministry criticised Latvia's decision to reduce diplomatic relations with Russia calling the move "Russophobic." The Ministry said that Latvia's decision to recall its ambassador from Russia and demand the Russian Ambassador depart from Latvia is hostile. It added that the reasons given by Latvia for this move are "Baltic solidarity" are far-fetched and indefensible. It also said that Russia will "react harshly to any such hostile actions."

On 24 January, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the supply of German Leopard tanks to Ukraine will affect future Russia-German relations. Peskov said that if Germany were to supply the tanks it will "undoubtedly, leave an unavoidable mark for the future of these relations." He added that the relations between the two countries are already minimal and there is not any substantial dialogue between Russia and Germany and other NATO and EU countries.

On the same day, Peskov refuted CNN's claims of a second wave of mobilization calling it "unreliable." He said that CNN's claims of Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly considering mobilizing around 200,000 people are rumours. Partial mobilization in Russia ended on 28 October after Putin said that its objectives were achieved.

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 24 January, the UK Ministry of Defence stated that Russian General Mikhail Teplinsky was allegedly dismissed as one of Russia's main operational commanders in Ukraine. The Ministry added: "It remains unclear whether Teplinsky still retains his additional remit as head of the VDV, Russia's airborne forces." The Ministry lists two potential reasons for his dismissal, one is over the tasks of the VDV and the second is that it is a reflection of the divisions in the Russian operation. The Ministry also said that the divisions in the Russian operation within the senior officers are a result of the appointment of General Valery Gerasimov

and his attempts to establish his authority on the operation.

On 24 January, Switzerland's Security Policy Commission of the National Council (SiK-N) introduced a motion to allow the re-export of war materials to Ukraine. The motion outlined the changes to be introduced to Article 18 of the War Materials Act (KMG) to allow the re-export of Swiss war material. The motion was passed with 14 votes in favour and 11 against and became a parliamentary initiative which will be in place till 31 December 2025. Under the initiative, any re-export to Ukraine should be connected to fighting the Russia-Ukraine war.

On 24 January, *Der Spiegel* magazine reported that Germany has decided to supply Ukraine with Leopard 2 tanks. The magazine outlined that Germany will be supplying at least one company of Leopard 2A6 tanks. The magazine cited "government sources" but did not identify them and the government has not made any statements. Earlier in the day, German Defence Ministry Boris Pistorius said: "I am expecting a decision to be reached shortly." This comes as Poland had submitted a formal request to Germany to allow for the transfer of the Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine. German government Spokesperson acknowledged this request and said: "We will treat the proceedings with the urgency they deserve."

On 24 January, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö visited Ukraine where he met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. During his visit, Niinistö also visited Borodianka and Bucha where he was presented with the ongoing situation on the ground and laid a wreath at the Wall of Remembrance. In a meeting with Zelenskyy, Niinistö reiterated Finland's support to Ukraine "as long as necessary and looked into further political and material support to Ukraine and its efforts to establish a just peace. He later expressed the need to counter Russian misinformation and promised future civilian support comprising generators and humanitarian aid.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 24 January, G7 members, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and other key partners pledged their collaborative support towards the Ukrainian energy sector. The group called on Russia to cease all attacks on the Ukrainian people and its energy and heating infrastructure. They also pledged to supply equipment and humanitarian support for winter, supply essential infrastructure and help Ukraine achieve its goals of modernisation and decarbonisation of its energy infrastructure.

On 23 January, *Reuters* said that traders of crude oil loadings in Russia said that the country's Primorsk and Ust-Luga ports would witness a rise of nearly 50 per cent in January from December. It added that the sellers are "trying" to meet the rising demand for oil from Asia and also benefit from the rising energy prices. According to *Reuters*, about 70 per cent of the cargo of Urals oil is going to India in January, with India emerging as the top buyer of Russian oil for several months. This comes as India's oil imports rose to a five-month record while also buying oil from Russia and China emerging as the second largest buyer of Urals, raising oil purchases in the physical markets in the country. Further, *Reuters* said that the oil supplies from Russia and Kazakhstan through Primorsk and Ust-Luga would reach a staggering 7.1 million tonnes in January, recording the highest level of supply since 2019.

On 24 January, Colombian President Gustavo Petro said that they had denied the US's request to transfer Russian-made military equipment to Ukraine. Petro said that Colombia's cache of Russian-made military equipment is in poor condition as it has not been serviced recently. He added that Colombia was on the side of peace and will not be taking any sides in the conflict. Petro said: "That is why not a single piece of Russian equipment on our territory, regardless of its technical condition, will be used in this conflict."

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War in Ukraine: Day 332 & 333

War on the Ground:

On 21 January, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned Russia for blocking Ukrainian ports at the Black Sea and urged Russia to remove all blockades

delaying food exports from Ukraine. Speaking at the Berlin Agriculture Ministers Conference Zelenskyy said that Russia has blocked over 100 ships carrying food grains by delaying the investigation. He added that this week's long blockade can lead to increased food prices in Europe, the threat of social instability in Asia and reduced access to food in Africa. Zeleskyy advocated for increased cooperation to stop future blockades to food-supply chains.

On 22 January, Verkhovna Rada Committee on Finance, Tax and Customs Policy Chairman Danylo Hetmantsev said that Ukrainian exports of food grains decrease each month by two-three tonnes. Hetmantsev said that the Ukrainian ports have been working at half capacity since October which is leading to the decrease in exports. He amounts this decrease also the delay in the inspection of around 120 Ukrainian ships in the Bosphorus by Russia. He outlined that the delay of anywhere between two to five weeks is proving to be a loss for cargo owners.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 22 January, Russia's Rosenergoatom nuclear power plant operator's Chief Executive Advisor Renat Karchaa criticised Ukraine and the West for delaying the establishment of a safety zone around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Karchaa said that while a consensus has been reached to establish such a zone it is not a solution. He said: "Implementation mechanisms, rather than declarations, are needed to establish such a zone. And it's quite a way to go from having a shared understanding to reaching an agreement." He added that Ukraine's "inability" to independently set up agreements and the West's move to prolong the conflict is hampering the process. Karchaa asserted: "Any agreements are absolutely worthless unless they imply shared responsibility of the parties."

On 21 January, the Russian Foreign Ministry released a report criticising the UN Secretariats statement on the Black Sea initiative and that it falls on Russia to provide the "real data and estimates." The

Ministry highlighted that while it cannot confirm the data on 100 Ukrainian ships, it said that 64 Ukrainian ships are currently in the ports and inspection zones. It further highlights that it is Ukraine's responsibility to outline the list for inspection and passage and that the Russian inspections have nothing to do with this. On the issue of the Togliatti – Odesa ammonia line, the ministry said that the Russians are ready to ship ammonia but there is opposition from Ukraine. It also criticised the UN's lack of action on fast-tracking key fertilizer exports under a humanitarian mission.

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 20 January, Western allies at the eighth meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group decided to delay the supply of Leopard 2 and US Abrams tanks to Ukraine. The meeting was held at the US Ramstein Air Base in Germany where the 15 allies were divided on the issue of supply tanks to Ukraine. Regarding the supply of Leopard 2 tanks, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said that Germany will "balance all the pros and contras before we decide things like that." This also hampers countries like Poland and Finland which require Germany's approval to supply their stock of Leopard 2 tanks. The lack of a concrete decision was offset by the defence ministers pledging other tank models, arms and ammunition, and air defence systems.

On 21 January, the UK Ministry of Defence reported that three sectors have witnessed intense fighting in recent days. The first one is Soledar in the Bakhmut sector of the Donetsk Oblast. Second is in the Zaporizhzhia Oblast where there is a significant deployment of both Russian and Ukrainian forces who have stayed away from a large-scale attack but have exchanged fire. The third is near Kremina where Ukraine has achieved small victories and has defended against Russian counter-attacks. The Ministry added that in all three frontlines persists a situation of deadlock but at the same time projects a possibility of Russian gains near Bakhmut.

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War in Ukraine: Day 330

War on the Ground:

On 19 January, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged EU members and candidate states to come together to implement the Peace Formula. Speaking at the press conference with European Council President Charles Michel, Zelenskyy called upon European Partners to support "relevant international efforts and decisions, in particular the resolution of the UN General Assembly that is being prepared."

On 19 January, Kyiv Regional Military Administration Head Oleksiy Kuleba said that 16 people were still hospitalized after the helicopter crash on 18 January. Out of the 16, six are children and Kuleba added that none of them was seriously injured. The helicopter crash in Brovary, Kyiv injured more than 25 people and killed 14 people.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 19 January, Russia's Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov claimed that Ukraine and Zelenskyy would have preferred if Russia and President Vladimir Putin did not exist. Peskov said: "It is clear that both Russia and Putin are a big problem for today's Ukraine and for Zelensky." These statements were made due to Zelenskyy's statements at Davos 2023. Peskov stressed

Ukraine agreed to Russia's demands to bring an end to the conflict sooner.

On 19 January, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine blatantly biased. Lavrov said: "it was aimed at supporting the version of events that the Ukrainian authorities painstakingly presented to the public, and in many cases, the mission withheld information about the real situation." According to Lavrov, the Mission was sent to Ukraine to see through the implementation of the Minsk agreement's provisions. He added that Russia is looking into the information which implied that the SMM officials withheld information and aided Ukraine's administration to carry out military operations against civilians.

The West View:

Responses from the West and Europe

On 19 January, Estonia, the UK, Poland, Latvia, Denmark, and Lithuania Defence Ministers and the Czech Republic, the Netherlands representatives released a joint statement reaffirming their resolve to support Ukraine's fight against Russia. In the statement, the defence ministers and representatives pledged to continue their military and civilian support and expansion will now include battle tanks. The aid will come from the country's supply. The pledge termed the "Tallinn Pledge" outlines donations by each country. Poland and the UK outlined plans to supply Ukraine with Leopard 2 and Challenger 2 tanks respectively. The other donations include howitzers, ammunition, aircraft, and training in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

On 19 January, the UK Ministry of Defence said that Russia was allegedly looking to deploy a few T-14 Armata main battle tanks in Ukraine. The Ministry made this assumption based on Russian media reports which claimed that the tanks were being prepared to be sent to Ukraine and imagery showing T-14s in southern Russia. The Ministry said that any such deployment will be mainly for propaganda purposes as it will have a high-risk factor for Russia in its operations. The ministry added: "Production is probably only in the low tens, while

commanders are unlikely to trust the vehicle in combat.”

On 19 January, Ministers of European Parliament (MEP) urged Russian leadership to hold themselves accountable for the “crime” of aggression against Ukraine. The MEPs said the “atrocities” committed by Russia in Ukraine show the “brutality” of the war and undermined the importance of a comprehensive international action to bring justice to those responsible. They pushed the EU to make a special international tribunal to persecute Russia and its allies. The MEP’s added that a tribunal would “fill a vacuum” in international criminal justice and also lead the jurisdiction to investigate “not only Vladimir Putin” but the rest of Russia’s allies as well. Further, they reiterated that the EU plays an imperative role in building a special tribunal and that it must focus on “building” arrangements for the court in cooperation with Ukraine.

On 19 January, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said that Poland is “willing” to give Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine without seeking Germany’s approval if it fails to agree to Poland’s re-export at the Western defence ministers at the Ramstein air base. Morawiecki remarked that consent regarding the tanks was of “secondary importance” and that military aid to Ukraine was of primary importance to Poland. Morawiecki added: “We will either obtain this consent quickly, or we will do it ourselves.”

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 19 January, International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi briefed President Volodymyr Zelenskyy about the extending and “intensifying” activities of the IAEA. The discussion entailed detailed briefs about nuclear safety and the security protection zone around the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), which is Europe’s largest nuclear power plant. Grossi reiterated that the zone is “essential” for putting a stop to a “severe” nuclear accident and that the IAEA would “press ahead” with efforts to make the zone a “reality.” This comes as the IAEA has planned to implement its activities across Ukraine and has ensured

the country of consistent support to prevent a “nuclear accident” during the war and resist any “dangers” from happening.

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War in Ukraine: Day 329

War on the Ground:

On 17 January, the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories released a data found by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy which recorded the aid received by Ukraine. The data revealed that since the start of war, Ukraine has received EUR 113 billion in form of military, financial, and humanitarian support from the international. While EU leads in financial aid with the support of EUR 52 billion, the US remains the lead in security aid with EUR 48 billion.

On 18 January, Ukraine’s General Staff of the Armed Forces reported on the ground efforts by Russian troops to be focused towards Bakhmut, but the offensive towards Avidiivka were observed to be ineffective.

The attacks from Russia in Luhansk and Donetsk area seemed to be countered well by Ukraine forces and Belarus was reported to be supporting Russia through joint exercises. Russian shelling was also reported towards Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.

On 18 January, Ukrinform reported on the continued use of forces as “cannon fodder” by Russians and the loss incurred by Russia in the battles for Bakhmut and Soledar. In the report, Bakhmut and Soledar remains the hotspots, where Russia’s Wagner group has lost close to 40,000 in the battle.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 18 January, in the 80th anniversary of the blockade of Leningrad, Russia’s President Vladimir Putin stated why Russia invaded Ukraine. He expressed how it was unbearable for Russia to withstand Ukraine’s act of eliminating people who were linked to Russian culture and language which invoked Russia to launch the military operation. Putin added: “We endured for a long time, tried to reach an agreement for a long time. But, as it turns out now, we were simply led by the nose, deceived.”

On 18 January, in the same forum, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that Russia would halt its operation when there is no threat from the military infrastructure in Ukraine. He stressed on Ukraine to “not discriminate against and harass Russian speakers.” He also condemned the West for not implementing the international treaties and for lying on signed commitments. Lavrov also highlighted West as “colonialist mentality in a new dimension.”

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 17 January, the EU announced to speed its chemical and nuclear preparedness measures through a stockpile in Finland. It allocated EUR 242 million to Finland to create a reserve against chemical, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats to protect the member states. According to European Commissioner for Crisis Management: “..will provide the EU with a significant safety net enabling a quick and coordinated response at EU level.” The

reserve is expected to be ready from 2024, which will include medical countermeasures, response equipment and medical devices.

On 18 January, NATO’s Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General issued statements on the trajectory of the Ukraine war. According to Jens Stoltenberg: “This is a pivotal moment in the war and the need for a significant increase in support for Ukraine.” He stated that for striking a peace solution, more arms would be needed at present. According to Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana: “We have no indication that (Russian President Vladimir) Putin’s goals have changed...Russia has mobilized more than 200,000 additional troops.”

On 18 January, aligning with Canada’s Defence Minister Anita Anand announcement, Canada sent 3000 tonnes of military support to Ukraine. This includes 200 armoured personnel carriers totalling to the CAD five billion overall aid to Ukraine.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 18 January, Israel’s Defence Forces (IDF) confirmed on the transfer of US’s stockpile located in Israel. The transfer is not viewed as threat to the Israel’s readiness, but till now Israel had maintained a neutral stance in the Ukraine war. The transfer of weapons to Ukraine means US using of its existing reserves would be to support the back end production of weapons and munitions. According IDF, the transfer does not imply change in its defence policy but was agreed upon US’s request.

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War in Ukraine: Day 328

War on the Ground:

On 17 January, Ukraine President's Office Deputy Head Andriy Smyrnov called for a special tribunal to investigate the role of Russian military and political leaders in the Ukraine war. Smyrnov during a World Economic Forum Meeting (WEF) on 'The Black Book of Russian War Crimes: Facts of Genocide' said that the tribunal will ensure that suitable arrest warrants and indictments can be issued against the leadership. He urged allied countries to set up the tribunal to investigate "Russia's crime of aggression against Ukraine."

On 17 January, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said that nine thermal power plants (TPP) were destroyed due to Russia's latest attack. Shmyhal said that in the nine TPPs, one unit was destroyed in eastern Ukraine and the rest were destroyed in western Ukraine. He added that the attack also damaged three key substations and one overhead line.

On 17 January, Ukraine's First Lady Olena Zelenska presented Ukraine's Peace Formula at the Congress Centre of the World Economic Forum (WEF). Zelenska said that the presentation was about the role of the Formula in the humanitarian and human dimensions. The Peace Formula was

presented by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the G20 and contains ten points to achieve peace in the Ukraine conflict. She advocated for the swift implementation of the Peace Formula.

On 17 January, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that the rescue operation in Dnipro was completed. Zelenskyy said that the final count of casualties totalled 45 dead out of which six were children and 79 were injured. Dnipro was attacked by Russia on 14 January with a Kh-22 missile which hit a nine-story residential building.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 17 January, the Russian Foreign Ministry levied fresh sanctions on EU officials as a response to the ninth-EU sanctions package. The Ministry outlined that it had extended the number of EU officials banned from entering Russia. Additionally, sanctions now include EU law enforcement agencies that are training Ukrainian troops and European state and commercial weapons and military hardware manufacturers which are being supplied to Ukraine. The Ministry said that the list also includes EU nationals who have repeatedly engaged in anti-Russian views in public. The ministry added: "Any unfriendly actions by Western countries will receive a timely and adequate response."

On 17 January, Russia's ombudswoman Tatiana Moskalkova said that she has not discussed the Prisoner exchange matter with Ukrainian ombudsman Dmitry Luninets in Turkey. Moskalkova said that she was surprised to see media reports regarding a prisoner exchange between the two countries with 800 Ukrainians will be swapped for 200 Russians. She added: "I always stress that these matters are in the purview of the Russian defence ministry." Moskalkova called the terms unfair and said that issue of repatriation should be on the lines of the 1949 Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

On 17 January, Russian Security Council Deputy Head Dmitry Medvedev criticised the participants of the WEF for discussing the issue of tank supplies to Ukraine. Medvedev singled out Polish President Andrzej Duda

for his remarks calling for a coalition of Western countries to supply armoured tanks to Ukraine. Medvedev said: "They probably hope that 'a tank coalition' will bring Ukraine's division closer, which is what the Poles dream about." He added that they should instead draft a collective document announcing Ukraine's surrender specifying the makeup of Ukraine after the war.

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 17 January, the Romanian Defence Ministry announced that NATO's Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) planes had landed in Romania. Two of the three planes landed at the Otopeni air base and the third one will be arriving on 18 January. The AWACS came from the fleet of 14 based in Germany to monitor Russian military activity at the Romania-Russia border.

On 17 January, Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin at the WEF said that Finland will support Ukraine "as long as needed." Marin said that the EU should have taken a harsher stance against Russia after 2014 and expects that the West has learned a lesson on how to deal with Russia. Marin also said that the war would not have taken place if Ukraine was a member of NATO. She added: "We want to become a member of NATO because we don't ever again want war in Finland. We have been at war with Russia before."

On 17 January, Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte said that the Netherlands is considering sending a Patriot missile system to Ukraine. Rutte in a meeting with US President Joe Biden said: "We have the intention to join what you are doing with Germany on the Patriot project, so the air defence system." He said that he had spoken to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz regarding the same and added that the recent attacks on Dnipro had increased "our resolve to stay with Ukraine."

On 17 January, Poland President Andrzej Duda and Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda urged Germany to supply more tanks to Ukraine. Duda welcomed Germany's decision to supply Leopard 2 tanks to

Ukraine and called it a "very needed decision." Nausėda called the decision a "very strategic factor in this war," but called on Germany to clear all the delays for the supply of the tanks as soon as possible. Nausėda said: "We don't have the luxury for such delays, and decision-making must be decisive, fast." Duda reiterated Poland's intention to supply Ukraine with 14 Leopard 2 tanks saying: "Poland has declared the transfer of a company of Leopard tanks to Ukraine as part of an international coalition. Consultations with allies are underway."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 17 January, Ukraine's Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories said that the global aid to Ukraine since 24 February has exceeded EUR 113 billion. The ministry cited findings by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy saying that 40 countries have donated to Ukraine through military, humanitarian and financial aid. The 40 donor countries include Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand, China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The Ministry said that the US alone has provided aid worth EUR 52 billion to Ukraine out of which EUR 23 billion in security assistance. It added that the EU has provided the most in terms of financial aid and along with European institutions has pledged to give Ukraine EUR 35 billion to address its budgetary needs. It also said that EUR 13 billion was given to Ukraine through international aid.

On 17 January, Tennis Australia (TA) banned fans from holding Russian and Belarusian flags at the Australian Open. While fans were allowed to carry the flags to show support to Russian and Belarusian players, TA banned the flag after it was visible courtside in the match of Russia's Kamilla Rakhimova against Ukraine's Kateryna Baindl on 16 January. The TA said: "The ban is effective immediately. We will continue to work with the players and our fans to ensure the best possible environment to enjoy the tennis."

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War in Ukraine: Day 337

War on the Ground:

On 16 January, European Commission’s Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis tweeted on the macro-financial assistance to Ukraine. He confirmed the signing of MoU with Ukraine, which will finance EUR 18 billion as financial aid. Of which three billion has been given to help Ukraine stabilize its payments for 2023.

On 16 January, Ukraine’s Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal released a statement in Telegram on the meeting with the US Secretary of the State Wendy Sherman. The discussion focused on Dnipro attack that resulted in death of many Ukrainians and critical challenges posed by Russia, humanitarian support, financial aid, and restoring energy blocs.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 16 January, *Kremlin* reported on the call between Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russia’s President Vladimir Putin. During the call the leaders discussed on boosting cooperation in energy, natural gas, and building of a “regional gas hub.” Putin highlighted Ukraine’s policy as destructive, and stated that hostility will continue with the West supplying more arms and equipment. They also discussed on “unblocking” the shipment of Russian food and fertilizer.

On 16 January, *RT* reported on Russian Governor Mikhail Razvozhayev comments on Ukraine’s drone attacks in Sevastopol. Razvozhayev reported on two continuous sets of attacks launched by Ukraine using UAV’s, which was observed to be limited as it failed to reach the targets and Russia claimed to have taken down all 10 drones. Till now five attacks have targeted Sevastopol near Belbek airport and above the Black Sea.

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 16 January, *Deutsche Welle* reported the visit of US military’s chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley to southern Germany. On 15 January, the US military began training the Ukrainian soldiers to handle “new combined arms.” According to Milley, the training is aimed to last between five to eight weeks to target close to 500 troops “combat-ready,” to launch offensives and counter Russian attacks. He added: “This support is really important for Ukraine to be able to defend itself.” Apart from this, US Army Air Defense Artillery school in Oklahoma, commander Colonel Curtis King confirmed the training of the Ukrainians on tasks relating to “operator

and maintainer” of the Patriot Air Defence system.

On 16 January, in an address at the Hague, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock called for “special international tribunal,” to address the crimes, gather financial support, and to “underpin the impartiality and legitimacy of this court.”

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 16 January, IAEA authorities reached South Ukraine for monitoring the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. The IAEA team is expected to stay till safety and the hostility situation ends. According to IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi: “Taking into account all the risks and the current situation, we came to the conclusion that we need to strengthen the agency's presence at Ukrainian nuclear power plants.” In the mission, two “safety experts” will stay to monitor the plant, give technical support, record “off-site” events and report the findings.

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War in Ukraine: Day 325 & 326

War on the Ground:

On 14 January, Kherson’s Regional Military Administration Head reported on Russian attacks in Kherson. As per the report, Russia had struck 66 times on the residential

buildings and people using “artillery, MLRS, mortars, and tanks.”

On 14 January, Ukraine’s military intelligence reported on the potential capacity of Russian forces. It stated that Russia’s efforts to “reorganise” its military-industrial complex and economy are seen as evidence of shifting to martial law. They also show the need for strengthening its operations, which seem to be underplayed by the troops present in the occupied areas.

On 15 January, Ukraine’s YASNO has claimed for a massive energy deficit due to the Russian attacks on one of the thermal power plants. According to the Director: “Distribution system operators must adhere to these restrictions in order not to deteriorate the condition of the system. Therefore, emergency shutdowns can be used.”

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 14 January, RT reported on Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin comments on “local ceasefires.” Observing the prolonging war situation on ground and slim chances for a peace deal, Kalin stressed on “local ceasefires and small localized de-escalations.” He added: “What Russia wants is to be respected as a major player and to [avoid] having NATO in their backyard. Russia is interested in a new international architecture, security guarantees.”

On 15 January, Russia’s President Vladimir Putin commented on the state of Russian economy. According to Putin, the economy was stabilizing better comparing the economic indicators. Of which unemployment was observed to be low and inflation “lower than expected.” He added that inflation is expected to slow down from 11.9 per cent to five per cent. Apart from the economy, Putin also gave an assessment on the Russia’s military operation in Ukraine. He said: “The dynamics are positive. Everything is developing within the framework of the Defense Ministry’s and the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s plan.” The same was confirmed by the Russian Ministry Defence

on continued fighting in Soledar and a successive offensive.

The West View:

Responses from the West and Europe

On 14 January, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in the phone call with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy assured the government's decision to support Ukraine with "Challenger 2" tanks. In a statement: "...UK Government would be working intensively with international partners to deliver rapidly the kind of support which will allow Ukraine to press their advantage, win this war and secure a lasting peace."

On 14 January, Germany's Federal Government released the new list of military support to Ukraine. It includes, "four mine clearing tanks, four mobile and protected mine clearing systems, 10 border protection vehicles." Apart from this, 40 Marder infantry vehicles, patriot air defence system, 120 heating systems and industrial stocks were also listed.

On 15 January, UK Ministry of Defence in its daily intelligence update observed Russia's move to increase the age limit of "military conscription" from 27 to 30 to reduce the public discontent. Although Russia's move is expected to increase the troop capacity by 30 per cent, the change in the age limit avoids calling for another mobilization order as per the ministry.

On 15 January, Belarus's Security Council First Deputy State Secretary Pavel Muraveyko, announced the air force drills to be held between Belarus and Russia. According to Muraveyko the exercise is expected to be defensive involving "...aerial reconnaissance, deflecting air strikes, air cover of important objects and communications," for two weeks till 01 February.

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War in Ukraine: Day 315

War on the Ground:

On 04 January, Ukrainian Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food Mykola Solskyi announced that the World Bank is providing USD 50 million in aid to boost the energy efficiency of grain elevators. Mykola Solskyi said: "\$50 million - this amount will be spent on a program under which all grain elevators can obtain new power generators for a total sum of up to UAH 5 million, or switch to LPG [boilers]." He added that the cost of a boiler or a power generator will be partly reimbursed.

On 04 January, ABC News published an interview with Ukraine's military intelligence head Kyrylo Budanov where he claimed that more strikes deeper into Russian territory are likely to take place. In the interview, Budanov did not outline if Ukraine will conduct these strikes and also said that any such confirmation will be done after the war ended. He also spoke about the situation on the ground, dwindling stocks of Russian weaponry, Russia's nuclear arsenal, and US military aid to Ukraine.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 04 January, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Maria Zakharova dismissed Italy's

role as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine. Zakharova said that Italy cannot act as a mediator as has taken an anti-Russian stance since the “special operation” began. She added: “It is known that Italy, along with an extensive range of weapons and military equipment, supplies anti-personnel mines to Kiev.” Zakharova claimed that countries are willing to participate in the negotiation talks only for mercenary reasons.

On 04 January, Russian Armed Forces Main Military-Political Department First Deputy Head Lieutenant General Sergei Sevryukov claimed that the attack on Makeyevka happened due to the increased usage of mobile phones on the base. Sevryukov said that the increased usage allowed Ukrainians to pinpoint the location of the soldiers and launched the strike. He also said that the total number of casualties due to the attack has risen to 89.

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 04 January, Poland Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said that Poland will be buying the second batch of US Abrams tanks. Blaszczak signed a USD 1.4 billion deal which outlines the purchase of 116 M1A1 Abrams battle tanks along with the necessary equipment and logistics. Blaszczak said: “We are strengthening Poland’s armed forces, we are strengthening the iron fist of the Polish army in order to increase the power to deter the aggressor.”

On 04 January, Latvia’s National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) Chairman Ivars Āboliņš said that Russian-language media is still prominent despite the ban of 121 Russian channels being banned. Āboliņš said: “In Latvia, there are 252 retransmitted media, of which 127 are also available in Russian, and 42 in Latvian.” He said that to encourage Latvian media, the NEPLP has developed a national strategy which will prioritise the promotion and development of Latvian language media in the country’s informative space.

On 04 January, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that France will deliver AMX-10RC light combat tanks to Ukraine. While no further details have been released,

Elysee Palace has said that the delivery reaffirms France’s “unwavering support” to Ukraine until the war ends. The AMX-10RC is a light combat tank on wheels which was commissioned for the French Army in 1981 and deployed in Afghanistan, Sahel and the first Gulf War.

On 04 January, *ISW* reported that the Russian Ministry of Defence’s claim that the use of mobile phones by servicemen caused the attack shows the inability of the Russian Military to address its systemic failures. The *ISW* said that while cell phone usage might have aided the Ukrainians, it is not the sole reason for the strike. It holds the Russian command responsible for the deployment of over 100 servicemen to non-tactical positions near an ammunition depot within firing range of the frontline.

On 04 January, *ISW* reported that the dependency of Russian forces on poorly trained mobilised personnel for positions of leadership instead of experienced office cadres is one of the main reasons for the poor performance of the units. This comes as DPR Head Denis Pushilin said that in the recent Makiivka, few of the personnel killed were mobilized, servicemen. Russian dependency also adds to the heavy casualties within the units which contributes to decreasing morale, and poor operational security. The *ISW* adds that officers with minimal training do not have the ability to make critical tactical and operational decisions which adds to the degeneration of Russian combat power.

On 04 January, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock called the recent attacks of Russia on Ukraine an “attack on humanity” during a joint press conference in Lisbon. Talking about Russia’s attack on Ukraine on 31 December on energy infrastructure, Baerbock said that the European community should stand with Ukraine, international law and the Charter of the UN till the end. She also called for common unity and effective decision-making in the EU to help Ukraine swiftly and not let individual countries delay this process.

The Global Fallout: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 04 January, *AP News* reported that the increasing usage of advanced drone technology in the Ukraine conflict will usher in a new age of warfare. The article outlines how the prolongation of the war will lead to both sides using advanced drone technologies equipped with AI. Also called “killer drones”, these types of combat drones are being developed by countries to deal with targets effectively and reduce human error. In the Ukraine conflict, while both sides have not used such drones, Ukraine’s Digital Transformation minister Mykhailo Fedorov said that their development is “a logical and inevitable next step.” Countries such as Israel, the US, Turkey, Poland, China, and Russia currently have semi-autonomous drones which require some human interference but all are looking into the development of fully autonomous drones for combat purposes.

On 03 January, UN Secretary-General Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq said that the UN has not received any communication from Ukraine regarding Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s peace summit proposal. Haq said that the UN is not organizing any such summit and said that any further developments will be announced. Haq also said that the recent attacks on Russian soldiers in Makeyevka highlight the importance of bringing the conflict to an end.

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War in Ukraine: Day 314

War on the Ground:

On 03 January, Ukrinform reported on discovery of a torture chamber in the regional police department of Kherson. In the investigation it identified evidence of residents, law enforcement officers and patriots being tortured in seven chambers.

On 03 January, Ukraine’s Strategic Communications of the Office predicted the upcoming winter to be challenging for Ukraine and Russia. Despite the harsh climate conditions, it views two advantages for Ukraine as it will be able to defend better from its own ground and flowing support from international. The challenges it sees ahead is the low temperatures which will make it difficult in deployment of forces, thereby increasing the demand for more health care services, thereby affecting the overall offensive.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 03 January, RT reported on increase in the import of gold by Switzerland from Russia. According to the report, Swiss exports of pharmaceutical goods surmounted by 19 per cent, and imports from Russia increase by 54 per cent since 2022. Although the metal manufacturers and dealers have denied partnering in import of Russian gold, Swiss Customs data recorded 6.4 tonnes of gold worth USD 370 million from Russia in November.

On 03 January, Russia's Defence Ministry claimed on destroying the HIMARS rocket launchers in Druzhkovka railway station and Kramatorsk. It also claimed on using its air force for precision strikes that destroyed 130 mercenaries in Kramatorsk and Maslyakovka. On the strike in Makiivka, Russia which previously claimed 63 to be dead, has updated it to 89 and blamed Ukraine for tracing the location of soldiers through their phones. According to Lieutenant General Sergei Sevryukov: "But it is already obvious that the main reason... was the turning on and massive use by personnel of mobile phones within reach of enemy weapons contrary to the ban."

The West View:

Responses from the West and Europe

On 03 January, Deutsche Welle, reported the announcement of the upcoming summit in Kyiv. The EU-Ukraine summit is expected to take place in Ukraine instead of Brussels to discuss the financial and military support on 03 February.

On 03 January, Turkey's President spokesperson announced President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's plan for separate calls with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russia President Vladimir Putin.

The Global Fallout:

Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 03 January, RT reported on Angola request to Russian businesses to invest for "diplomatic support." Angolan Ambassador to Moscow Augusto da Silva Cunha said "We want to motivate Russian businessmen to take advantage of Angola's openness to foreign investment." Till now the relations between Angola and Russia have been close in diamond, banking, agriculture, transport sectors.

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War in Ukraine: Day 313

War on the Ground:

On 02 January, Ukrenergo reported that the supply of electricity in Ukraine has been further disrupted by Russia's attacks on energy infrastructure in Kyiv and Central Ukraine. It stated that it will assist in the restoration of power through emergency power outages. Since the demand for energy had decreased due to warm weather in Ukraine has resulted in an easing of the burden on energy infrastructure and restoration efforts.

On 02 January, Ukraine's Minister of Energy Herman Galushchenko said that an energy blackout in Ukraine is only possible theoretically. Galushchenko outlined how Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been functioning under Russian attacks for three months but has yet to completely fail. He said that this is mostly due to the existing measures for the physical protection of the facilities and the technical measure in place to balance the system. Galushchenko added that Ukraine is conducting planned electricity supply restrictions to repair the damage caused to power generation and transmission systems to limit the chances of an energy blackout.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 02 January, the Russian Ministry of Defence said that 63 Russian troops were killed by a Ukrainian missile attack on Makeyevka in DPR. According to the ministry, the Ukrainian forces launched six missiles through the HIMARS multiple rocket launchers which hit a temporary housing area occupied by Russian forces in the Donbass region. The ministry added that out of the six missiles two were downed by the Russian forces.

On 02 January, Russia's long-range air command head Lieutenant General Sergey

Kobylash outlined the role of long-range aviation in Ukraine in 2023. Kobylash said that it will continue to play a role in the military operation in Ukraine by carrying out combat missions in the region. He said that the command will be trained in “the use of airborne means of destruction” as a part of its operational and combat training for 2023. He also added that as a part of the command’s role in the military operation in 2023 the pilots will be honing their skills in working with information support for high-precision weapons and automated control systems.

The West View:

Responses from the West and Europe

On 02 January, Hungarian National Policy State Secretary János Árpád Potápi criticised Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s decision to sign a new law which restricts the rights of national minorities living in Ukraine. Potápi focusing on the Hungarian population in Ukraine said: “While Hungary is carrying out the largest humanitarian aid operation in its history to help refugees from Ukraine, the rights of national minorities in Ukraine are being further restricted.” He highlighted the recommendations of the European Commission given to Ukraine and said that they were not being implemented effectively. He added that while Hungary supports Ukraine’s integration into the EU, Ukraine needs to ensure that the new laws adopted by Ukraine should follow international standards and European values.

On 02 January, the UK’s Foreign Office announced that they will be stopping the imports of Russian liquified natural gas (LNG). the Foreign Office said that this will directly affect the gas revenues of Russia which is being used to finance the war in Ukraine. The US is now the main supplier of LNG to the UK and other European countries. Russian LNG has not come under EU sanctions and is currently being used to keep the energy prices in Europe in check.

The Global Fallouts:

Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 02 January, IMF head Kristalina Georgieva said that in 2023 a third of the world will be in recession. Georgieva lists

the war in Ukraine, rising inflation, high-interest prices and rising cases of Covid in China as some of the main catalysts for economies to enter a recession. She added that the US, EU and China will see their economies slowing down.

On 02 January, India’s External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar reaffirmed India’s stance on the Ukraine conflict and called for a dialogue between Ukraine and Russia. Speaking at a press conference in Vienna, Jiashankar stressed that this era is not an era for war and added that all differences should be addressed through diplomacy and dialogue. He added that India along with the Global South is concerned regarding the availability of food, fertilizers and fuel which have been restricted due to the conflict.

On 02 December, Taiwan delivered the first batch of two high-power generators (300–800 kilo Volt-amps) to Kyiv as a part of the memorandum signed between Taiwan and Kyiv. The generators were received by Kyiv’s Mayor who said: “The first two generators have already been handed over to “Kyivteploenergo”, they will be used in the city’s boiler houses.” The memorandum of understanding was signed between Taiwan and Kyiv to help the latter purchase diesel power generators to provide alternative heating sources for the residents. Through the deal, Kyiv is said to purchase 20 generators to help offset the damage done to the city’s energy infrastructure.

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War in Ukraine: Day 311 & 312

War on the Ground:

On 01 January, Ukraine’s Defence Ministry’s Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR)’s representative, Vadym Skibitskyi, reported that the sanctions mounted on Russia by Ukraine and the West had taken a toll on Russia’s military might. According to Skibitskyi Russia’s arms stock has been decreasing. The deficit can be seen from the number of Iskander ballistic missiles, Kh-101, and Kh-555 air-based cruise missiles that the Russian army has been deploying due to the shortage of anti-aircraft missiles, and artillery shells. This has made Russia depend upon Iran and Belarus to replenish its missile stock.

On 01 January, Kyiv, came under attack from Russian drones and missiles. 45 Shahed-131/136 kamikaze drones were destroyed by Kyiv’s air defence systems and Ukraine’s Air Force. In the attack on new year eve, 45 suicidal drones were shot down by Ukraine’s air defence. The primary target of these drones was found to be destroying Ukraine’s energy infrastructure. Debris from the X-55 missile was also found in one of the districts of the Kyiv region. Russia was also accused for attacking near Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine using Kamikaze drones.

On 31 December, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his new year address spoke on Ukraine’s resilience to fight back against Russia to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Listing our the key events of the year during the course of the war said: "Putin 'hides behind you and burns your country."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 31 December, Russian President Vladimir Putin in his new year’s address to Russia called 2022 “A year of difficult, necessary decisions, the most important steps towards gaining the full sovereignty of Russia and the powerful consolidation of our society.” Putin said that the events of 2022 are milestones for a common Russian future and Russia’s total independence. He added that 2022 was filled with anxiety, unrest and experiences which brought great, key changes to Russia and the world. He criticized the West saying that while they lied about wanting peace all along they had planned to use Ukraine to weaken Russia. On the sanction imposing on Russia, Putin said that despite the intention being to destruct "industry, finances, transport," did not materialize as the Russian society strengthened its economy to ensure sovereignty.

On 01 January, DPR’s acting Head Denis Pushilin reported on the shelling in Donetsk, Yasinovataya, Makeyevka, and Gorlovka by the Ukrainian forces that killed a civilian and injured five others. Pushlin noted: “Since 2014 it has been their cynical practice to terrorise civilians on the days of important holidays.” The shelling resulted in the destruction of an indoor bazaar, the Donbas arena stadium, the Republican Art Museum, and the Donetsk Technical School of Industrial Automation. Other civilian infrastructures like schools, private households and shops were also hit by Ukrainian artillery.

On 01 January, Gazprom announced to continue its gas supply to Europe through Ukraine via the Sudzha gas pumping station. A spokesperson for Gazprom outlined that 43.4 million cubic meters of gas were transported every day to western and central European countries. The total volume of gas to be transported was decided by Ukraine and the spokesperson added that the request for supplying gas through the Sokhranovka gas pumping station was rejected by Ukraine.

The West View: Responses from the West and Europe

On 02 January, Germany will lead NATO’s

"Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF)" from 2023. The VJTF was formed as a response to Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014. Germany will contribute 8,000 soldiers out of 11,500 to the VJTF. Its purpose is to be ready to engage in short-term deployments and reach the target within 48 to 72 hours. It is seen as deterrence and defence of Europe. Germany will head the VJTF in 2023 due to the annual change of leadership.

On 31 December, the UK's Defence Intelligence reported that Russia had a pattern of attacking Ukraine's energy infrastructure every seven to ten days with missile strikes. However, Defence Intelligence speculates that Russia would break the pattern and attack Ukraine to demoralize the people amid new year celebrations.

On 31 December, Advisor to Kraus-Maffei Wegmann (KMW) Nicholas Drummond stated that Germany has started the production of 18 Remotely Controlled Howitzers RCH 155 that are part of the military package that Germany had promised Ukraine. Germany would provide 18 RCH 155 howitzers worth EUR 216 million to Ukraine.

On 31 December, the EU's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy High Representative, Josep Borrell said in a tweet that the bloc would continue its solidarity with Ukraine in 2023. He reprimanded Russia for attacking Ukraine in 2022's end. He said: "We are resolved to continue standing by Ukraine, also in 2023."

On 31 December, the ISW reported on Putin's annual New Year's Eve speech. The report stated that Putin was adamant about justifying the war and its expenses. He said: "...we are defending our people on our own historical territories in the new Russian Federation Subjects (the illegally annexed territories of Ukraine)." He added: "...was a year of difficult, necessary decisions, of important steps toward achieving the full sovereignty of Russia and the powerful consolidation of our society," Putin displayed himself as an able wartime leader, heading the ongoing war within his control. According to ISW's, Putin did not mention

the Russian army's setbacks and failures in his speech.

The Global Fallout: Implications of the War in Ukraine

On 31 December, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva met Ukraine's Vice Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko and Russian Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matvienko. Lula and Matvienko discussed Russia-Brazil bilateral relations and emphasized the need for peace and common ground to bring the Russia-Ukraine conflict to an end. Lula and Svyrydenko discussed the situation on the ground and the latter also presented Zelenskyy's "...formula of peace for the world." The two also talked about Brazil's participation in the rebuilding of Ukraine and future economic cooperation. Lula called for an end to the conflict and said: "In Brazil, we have a tradition of defending the integrity of nations and we are going to talk to whoever is possible for peace."

On 30 December, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said that the backup power line Ferosplavna 1 to the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) was disconnected on 29 December. Grossi said that the 330 kilovolt (kV) backup power line was disconnected due to shelling in the region which damaged the already fragile electricity supply from the grid. The backup was allegedly lost around 2135 hours of Ukraine time due to shelling near the Dnipro river. Grossi called for an immediate cessation of all military action to restore the Ferosplavna 1 power line.

On 31 December, ICRC President Mirjana Spolarich Egger in an interview with Neue Zürcher Zeitung said that she will be visiting Moscow in 2023. Egger said that her visit to Moscow is a part of the ICRC initiative to remain neutral and ensure security guarantees to volunteers on the ground and for prisoner visits. She said added that all the details for her visit have not been finalized yet. In the interview, she spoke about the work ICRC doing in Ukraine and the importance of staying neutral and abiding by humanitarian law.

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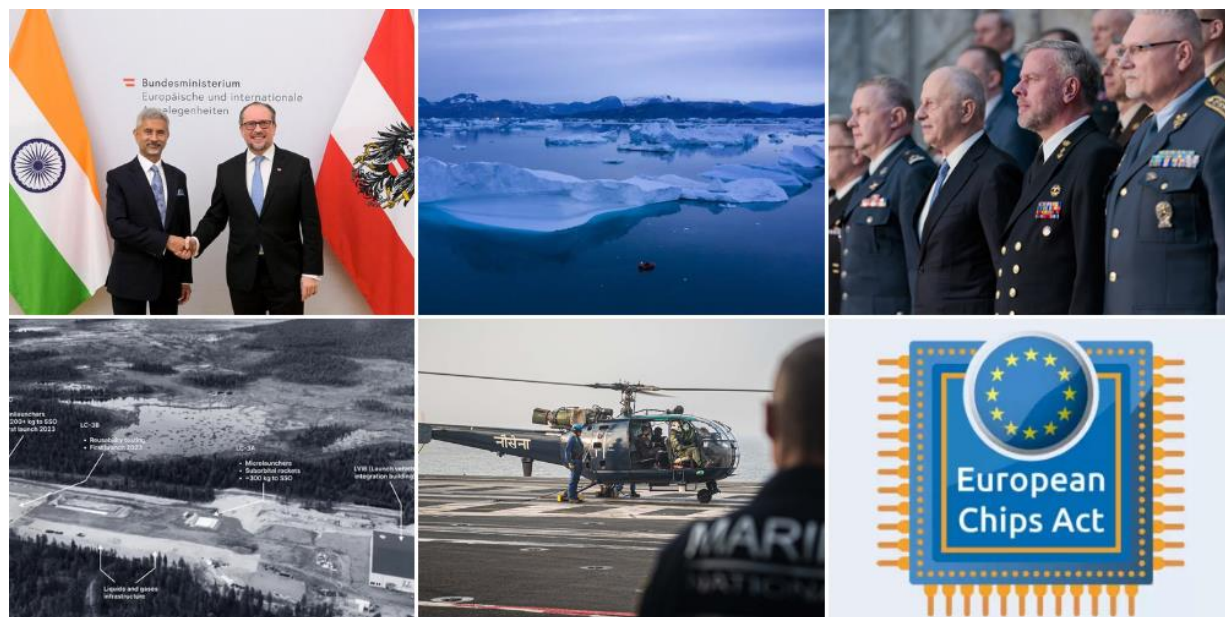
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EM Short Notes*

By Padmashree Anandhan, and Madhura S Mahesh



Source: FP PHOTO/MICHAEL GRUBER BMEIA/The Hindu, AP Photo/Felipe Dana, File, nato.int, gizchina.it, FFEAU.ALINDIEN/Twitter, SSC

AUSTRIA

Parliament releases regulation for taxes, CO2, allowance, and pension benefit for 2023

On 01 January, Austria's parliament declared its new rules for 2023. The tax increase, known as the "cold progression" has been abolished, and this will lead to a person earning EUR 31 more per month. The CO2 tax has been enforced more strongly now with the revised tax, the law now states EUR 32.50 tax per ton of CO2 consumed. This law will affect motorists in particular. The family allowance amount has been increased from EUR 120 to EUR 165.10. The school start allowance scheme which provides EUR 100 per child is to be reintroduced from August 2023. New rules for waste segregation have been introduced, more plastic waste is now allowed in the yellow bins, whereas the collection of light packaging is to be standardized. The pension benefits for those who earn less than EUR 5,670 a month have been increased to 5.8 per cent,

and starting March 2023 a EUR 500 direct cash transfer scheme will commence.

("Salaries, cash bonuses and regulations – What awaits Austrians in 2023?" *Austrian Press*, 01 January 2023)

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Kristo forms state-level coalition government months after elections

On 25 January, Bosnia and Herzegovina formed a state-level government led by Chairwoman Borjana Kristo. Her Council of Ministers received the support of 23 out of 42 members of the House of Representatives. The nine Council of Ministers led by Kristo represents the state-level coalition in the House of Representatives which includes the Bosnian Serb party, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, SNSD, the HDZ, and six parties from the Osmorka group. Kristo belongs to the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) designated as President. The Council earlier received criticism from other parties for its lack of gender equality as only two

* 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.

women are a part of the Council. (Azem Kurtic "[Bosnia Finally Forms State-Level Government](#)," *Balkan Insight*, 25 January 2023)

CYPRUS

Ex-transport minister drops out from the presidential bid

On 02 January, the Ex-Transport Minister, Marios Eliades announced that he had withdrawn his nomination for the President's post. Eliades had announced his candidacy 14 months earlier and was on the campaign trail trying to build coalitions with other parties. After pulling out of the race, Eliades said: "Parties as well as presidential candidates, who share concerns with me, have remained attached to their initial plans, not caring if they are dead ends and most likely doomed to electoral failure." Previously associated with the Edek party during the late 1970s and early 1980s, he became the Transport Minister of Cyprus. He did not reveal if he would be supporting any candidate or not, stating that the country needs an honest and progressive to lead the people. He did state that he would never abstain from casting his vote as that was a duty of each citizen. (Andria Kades, "[Eliades withdraws from presidential race](#)," *Cyprus Mail*, 02 January 2022)

CZECH REPUBLIC

Petr Pavel wins the first round of presidential elections

On 14 January, General Petr Pavel won in the first round of the Czech presidential elections with 35.39 per cent of the total votes. Pavel defeated Andrej Babis who got 35 per cent of the votes. Pavel, a former NATO military committee chairman said: "It's such a close result that I can already see the hard work for us ahead of the second round." Babis said that he was "delighted" with the results and congratulated Pavel but then went on to criticize him saying: "I don't understand why he's running." The two will now move on to the second round of elections as none of the candidates received a majority of votes. (Sarah Palmer and AP "[Czech Presidential elections: Petr Pavel scores](#)

[narrow win over Andrej Babis in first round](#)," *Euronews*, 14 January 2023)

ESTONIA

Ministry of Defence continues to increase expenditure in acquiring weapons

On 17 January, *Defence news* reported on Estonia's Ministry of Defence announced its decision to buy 12 K9 Thunder howitzers as part of its artillery fleet expansion plan. Under the EUR 36 million deal, the Estonian Defence Forces will operate 36 similar weapons. The continued expansion of Estonia's investments reflects the growing need for "indirect fire weapons." According to the Defence Minister: "...we have made quick decisions to equip both infantry brigades with additional K9 Thunder mobile howitzers and bring Estonia's indirect fire capability to a completely new level." Apart from Estonia, Poland is also among those to purchase K9 Thunder from South Korea's Hanwha Defence. Similar to the deal with South Korea, Estonia is also part of a similar contract with the US to buy six M142 HIMARS. (Jaroslaw Adamowski, "[Estonia buys 12 more howitzers amid 'lessons from Ukraine'](#)," *Defence news*, 17 January 2023)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed to form contiguous zone up to 24 nautical miles

On 17 January, *ERR* reported on Estonia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Reinsalu statement on establishing a "contiguous zone" in the maritime area. Reinsalu stated that through setting up the zone Estonia will be able to implement its legislation "up to 24 nautical miles" from the territorial baseline. This will help the security and guard the environment present in the zone. Apart from this the zone also has economic benefit to monitor customs, tax, immigration, and to impose sanctions on Russia on violation. According to UNCLOS, a contiguous zone for any can be only up to 12 nautical miles from outer limit. Estonia's Foreign Affairs Ministry said that Finland which does not have one, but Estonia can extend in the west to 24 without affecting its state borders. ("[Estonian foreign](#)

[ministry wants to extend controlled maritime area](#),” *ERR*, 17 January 2023)

FINLAND

Environment Institute reports infrastructural damage due to inland flooding

On 17 January, the Finnish Environment Institute (Syke) reported on increasing water levels in the western and southern part of Finland. According to Syke the reported floods are viewed as exception with zero possibility for a “serious flood damage” via roads, and underwater fields. The 2022 report by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found increased impact on the infrastructure due to “inland flooding.” Similarly Finland’s climate panel warned on more floods in the upcoming years in 2021. ([“Winter floods hit Finland,” Yle.fi](#), 17 January 2023)

Higher Female participation in military service and training says Finnish Defence Force

On 30 December 2022, the Finnish Defence Forces released data on women who underwent military training in 2022. The data revealed that in 2022, the highest number of women took up voluntary military service, and in total, more than 12,000 women had undergone training. 2022 was the first year that the number of women the Finnish Defence Forces are training/g in a single year went above 1,000. Finnish society’s view on women in the military largely seems to be changing as suggested by the results of a recent survey by the *Uutisuomalainen*, a Finnish newspaper group. Out of the people surveyed 35 per cent have stated that they support mandatory conscription for women. In the Finnish Parliament, one-third of all the MPs support this idea too. The majority still is against the idea of female conscription, both among the public and the parliament. This debate has been continuing in the country for many months and gained relevance after the Russian invasion. ([“Record number of women volunteer for military service in 2022,” yle.fi](#), 20 December 2022)

Forecasts predict slow economy growth in 2023

On 02 January, the Ministry of Finance announced that Finland is staring at a period of slow growth, and consumer price rise in 2023. The statement came with the release of the latest economic forecast for 2023, in which the GDP is expected to contract by 0.2 per cent. This is not a new warning as experts from various fields have been warning of a looming recession in early 2023. On 16 December 2022, Bank of Finland, the Head of forecasting at the Meri Obstbaum said: “National economy will contract by half a per cent year-on-year in 2023.” This has been attributed to the energy crisis facing Europe, causing the rise in the cost of living. The statement from the Ministry of Finance indicates that Finland’s economy will only recover in 2024, as inflation will recede and consumption will rise. The price rise due to the pandemic will reduce as supply chain bottlenecks get removed and raw material prices stabilize. A Financial Advisor at the Ministry of Finance, Jenni Paakkonen said: “Public debt as a proportion of gross domestic product will decrease this year by almost a percentage point to 71.7 per cent. The decrease is attributable to the injection of tax revenue provided by robust economic growth and solid employment situation.” ([“Finnish economy to slide into recession in 2023, say Ministry of Finance, Bank of Finland,” Helsinki Times](#), 02 January 2023)

FRANCE

Real Estate Market faces downturn at the start of 2023

On 03 January, a French real estate agency Century 21, released its report for 2022 on France’s real estate market. The report found that there has been a slowdown in the housing market. The President of Century 21, Charles Marinakis said: “We are seeing a market reversal as a result of a significant slowdown in the housing market which had gained popularity in the wake of the Covid-related lockdowns.” The housing market peaked in the summer of 2022 and from then on prices have fallen drastically. In Paris, the prices fell by 2.4 per cent in 2022 when compared with 2021, the report

stated. Another report on the distribution of housing loans, by the Banque of France, released on 28 December 2022 also pointed to the same trend. It stated: "There has been a relative slowdown in the second half of the year, which somewhat standardized the supply of home loans, following the exceptional growth in recent years caused by very low interest rates." (Veronique Choron, "[The changing landscape of France's real estate market](#)," *Le Monde*, 03 January 2023)

Five challenges ahead for Macron in 2023

On 01 January, *Les Echos* reported on the challenges ahead for French President Emmanuel Macron in 2023. First, the issue over the pension reform, which has been a drain on the state's finances and needs immediate reform according to the government. Raising the retirement age to 65, in line with the Touraine law. The vote support from the Les Republicains will be the decider. Second, reduction in unemployment insurance to 25 per cent and 40 per cent in the case of a fall in the unemployment rate below six per cent (The current being 7.3 per cent). This tops the list of priorities as unions pressurize the government to implement reforms. Third, controlling the purchasing power. France had put two measures in place, a cap on fuel price electricity prices. The government had introduced a fuel allowance of EUR 100 and an energy check of EUR 100 or 200 for households, which are likely to be withdrawn. Fourth, Laws related to immigration have been proposed and the bill "to control immigration, improve immigration" is being circulated among various state councils for review. Fifth, increased investment in renewable energies. France, to tackle the energy crisis has worked its Renewable Energy Act and proposes the construction of multiple onshore and offshore wind farms. The Act also introduces plans for the installation of solar panels in outdoor car parking spaces. (Alain Ruello, Gregoire Poussielle, and Jacques Paugam, "[Macron's hot issues for 2023](#)," *Les Echos*, 01 January 2023)

Surveillance measures announced to check passengers from China

On 30 December, France's Health and Transport Ministries announced restrictions on travellers from China. The Ministry has released strict COVID-19 surveillance measures, making it compulsory that people have a negative COVID-19 certificate that is not more than 48 hours before departure. The other measures include the mandatory wearing of masks, and maintaining social distancing. This decision comes after a surge of COVID cases after the removal of lockdowns in China on 07 December 2022. The new rules are to come into force from 05 January 2023 onwards. From 01 January, travellers from China were required to undergo an RT-PCR test upon arrival to the country. This makes France the third country in the EU to introduce screening for passengers from China as a precautionary anti-COVID measure after the EU had failed to agree on a joint plan of action on 29 December 2022. (Louise Guillot, "[France becomes third EU country to screen China arrivals for COVID](#)," *Politico*, 31 December 2022)

GERMANY

Defence Minister meets Austin to discuss on supply of tanks to Ukraine

On 19 January, newly appointed German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius met US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on the same day that he took charge in the office. His meeting comes at a time when a debate rages on whether to supply Ukraine with more heavy military equipment or not. Germany is reluctant to provide its domestic Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine. Russia has threatened severe action if the West provides more aid to Ukraine. Pistorius has not as of yet issued any statement of what the future course of action is. ("[New German 'defense minister meets US counterpart](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 19 January 2023)

Kiel Canal resumes operations after two weeks

On 04 January, The Kiel Canal was reopened after it had been closed due to an oil spill on 21 December. It is a man-made canal connecting the North and Baltic Seas which

was closed due to an oil pipeline leak near Brunsbüttel port in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. According to a Kiel-based think tank, closing the canal for two weeks had cost Germany EUR 1.6 million per day as it was the key artificial shipping lane. Germany's Environment Minister, Tobias Goldschmidt lauded the cleaning efforts and said: "The cleaning work in Brunsbüttel is progressing well. Thanks to a great team effort, the spread of oil in the Elbe and the North Sea and thus an environmental disaster could be prevented." (Roshini Majumdar, "[Germany: Key shipping lane reopens after shutdown](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 04 January 2022)

Climate Activists go to extreme lengths to push for climate goals

On 02 January, *The New York Times* published an article illustrating how climate activists belonging to a group known as "Last Generation" are using extreme tactics to get the governments and public attention. They have been in the news for various other incidents, like desecrating a Christmas tree in Germany, heckling Parliamentarians, disrupting concerts, and throwing paint on famous paintings in museums. The group Last Generation was founded in 2021, when a group of activists went on a hunger strike in front of the German Parliament, since then they have grown in numbers and are non-well-established. The latest method they are using is blocking traffic, by walking onto highways wearing yellow vests. The German public as well as the government have both taken note of their issues, as well as their disruptive tactics. The debate now rages, about how much is too much while protesting. This is leading to internal discussions among the activists as well if these actions are bringing the common people towards or away from the environmental cause. These actions also make the activists an easy target for right-wing conservative politicians, in particular the opposition parties in the German Parliament. Describing the protests, a researcher studying protests at the WZB Social Science Centre, Daniel Saldivia Gonzatii says, "They mix claims really easy to implement, majority-winning policy

claims — things that are quite accessible for a majority of the population — with a system criticism." (Christopher F. Schuetze, "[Climate Activists Find a Way to Get Germany's Attention: Stop Traffic](#)," *The New York Times*, 02 January 2023)

GREECE

Mitsotakis announces for spring general elections

On 15 January, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said that the government would hold parliamentary elections in the spring, specifically from "April onwards." Greece would go into elections under a proportional representation system which would also entail a second round of voting. This comes as Turkey's presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for 18 June, with the government against amping up its rhetoric against Greece in the last few months and warning the country with a missile unless they "stay calm." Mitsotakis said that the elections would be held at a point when they would be "practically" exhausting their four-year term which is said to end in July. (Nektaria Stamouli "[Greece to hold elections in spring. Mitsotakis says](#)," *Politico*, 14 January 2023)

HUNGARY

Veszprem-Balaton prepares to celebrate itself as the European Cultural Capital of 2023

On 31 December, *Deutsche Welle* Hungary's win as Europe's cultural capital. The EU in 2018 announced that the city of Veszprem-Balaton in Hungary has won the bid to be one of the three European Capitals of Culture for the year 2023. The EU calls for bids from countries, and selects three cities each year, these are then promoted for tourism and benefit from other related activities. Veszprem-Balaton's turn begins on 21 January, for which preparation has got underway. Veszprem has a distinct musical culture too, which has been acknowledged by the UN, awarding the city "UNESCO City of Music" in 2019. The chief adviser for program development at Veszprem-Balaton 2023 said. "When bidding for the title of European Capital of

Culture, Veszprem had two fierce rivals in Hungary: Győr and Debrecen. "On the one hand, we had a very firm intent. On the other, it was really a case of David versus Goliath. We were the smallest city, but we were the most enthusiastic." Themes of regeneration and sustainability have found a strong place in the art of the city and will be on showcase in the various programs during the course of the year. Nearly, 3,000 events have been planned for the year for which the government has allocated USD 186 million worth of funds. (Agnes Szabo, "[Veszprem-Balaton 2023: Hungary's new creative region](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 31 December 2022)

ITALY

Gas station workers hold strikes upon failure to reach consensus with the government

On 25 January, gas station workers belonging to FAIB, FEGICA, and FIGISC gas unions staged a walkout after failing to reach a consensus with the government. The workers of the FEGICA and FIGISC unions staged a 48-hour strike whereas FAIB workers staged a 24-hour strike. This comes as the Italian government withdrew discounts on gas prices and put forth a transparency policy to prevent "speculation in prices." The unions objected to this as the latter clause could lead to a clash between gas stations and customers. (Baris Seckin "[Italy's gas station workers go on strike](#)," *Anadolu Agency*, 25 January 2023)

Italy's most influential gangster in 1980's arrested

On 16 January, *FT* reported on the arrest of Sicilian mafia boss, Matteo Messina Denaro aged 60 by the Italian police after 30 years of search. Denaro known as "powerful bosses" of Cosa Nostra a criminal organisation that was active during late 1980's to early 1990's through "deadly bombings" in Rome, Florence and Milan. The last three decades Denaro has been escaping the arrest despite the arrest of his associates. Being one of influential gangster was convicted with life sentences, homicides, car bombings murders, emerged as one of the gangster force in international drugs trade in Italy. (Amy Kazmin, "[Italy's](#)

[most-wanted mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro arrested in Sicily](#)," *FT*, 16 January 2023)

Ruling Party leader says coalition partners should unite under a single party

On 04 January, Forza Italia's leader, Silvio Berlusconi announced his desire to see the unification of the three main ruling parties of Italy. The three allies are the President's, Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia, Matteo Salvini's League and Berlusconi's Forza Italia. These three parties combined are in a coalition that forms the Italian government. Berlusconi's suggestion comes at a time when the European elections are scheduled to be held in 2024. Meloni's party being the strongest in Italy, she is not keen on uniting the three parties into one, but looking ahead at the elections in Brussels this can be an opportunity for a wider right-wing consolidation. Brussel's politics is vastly different from that of Rome. Either way, Meloni has declared her intention of retaining power as the head of the right-wing parties, it remains to be seen what decision she would take. (Olivier Tosseri, "[Giorgia Meloni tentée par la fusion des droites italiennes pour peser plus à Bruxelles](#)," *Les Echos*, 04 January 2023)

NORWAY

Electric car sales record highest growth in 2022

On 02 January, the Norwegian Road Federation released the data of vehicle sales and registrations in 2022. The data shows electric cars recorded the highest growth in sales, with four out of every fifth car registered being an electric vehicle. Compared to 2021, electric car sales have gone up by 14.3 per cent to an all time high of 79.3 per cent in 2022. The US electric automaker, Tesla sold the highest number of vehicles out of all the electric cars sold in the country. Tesla has become the market leader for the second year in a row after 2021. In the EU, Norway has lead the path in switching over to electric cars. Norway's policies incentivized buying and owning electric vehicles but this has changed in 2023. The tax exceptions on electric cars have been removed starting 01 January

2023. The government stated that tax exemptions had costed the government USD four billion in 2022, and will not be feasible in the long run. ([“Norway: Electric car sales soar, setting new record,” Deutsche Welle](#), 02 January 2023)

The Guardian report on increased earnings from oil and gas

On 01 January, a report in *The Guardian* analyzed how Norway has become richer over the course of the Russia-Ukraine war due to high oil and gas prices. This increase in energy prices worldwide has led to Norway earning a profit of over EUR 113 billion in 2022. Norway has replaced Russia as the major provider of oil and gas to Europe. The report says that the increase in Norway’s earnings have not directly benefited Norwegians, for the citizens are facing increased cost-of-living expenses. In June 2022, an economics professor at Oslo University, Kalle Moene stated that Norway should put the excess profit into an international solidarity fund that would help the countries who have been affected due to the war and the disruptions of global supply chains. The government decided that it would not allocate any money for aid, instead, it reduced the aid budget from one per cent of gross national income to 0.75 per cent. This was announced by the Prime Minister, Jonas Gahr Store. There is minimal support emerging within the government for sharing the profits for aid. This is due to the pressure on the government from its coalition partners, the Green party, the Christian Democratic party and the Socialist party. (Philip Oltermann, [“Battle for the nation’s soul’: Norway faces debate about gas and oil wealth,” The Guardian](#), 01 January 2023)

POLAND

Mateusz announces to increase defence budget

On 30 January, Poland’s Prime Minister Mateusz Morawieck announced that Poland will be increasing its defence budget from 2.4 per cent to four per cent of its GDP. As a part of this increased spending, Poland will be purchasing 116 Abrams tanks worth USD 1.4 billion from the US. It will also be purchasing 180 K2 “Black Panther” from

South Korea and plans to acquire over 800 units of the tank whose production begins in Poland in 2026. Poland will also be purchasing around 48 FA-50 light combat fighter jets and 600 K9 howitzers from South Korea. It also will be increasing its armed personnel from 50,000 to 250,000 in the coming years. ([“Poland to ramp up defense budget to 4% of GDP,” Deutsche Welle](#), 30 January 2023)

PORTUGAL

Constitutional Court rejects law decriminalizing euthanasia

On 30 January, the Portuguese Constitutional Court rejected a law decriminalizing euthanasia outlining the vague wording. The court said that the text of the law fails to define “suffering of great intensity” which could lead to “medically assisted death.” This is the second such law to be rejected by the Court which rejected a similar law in March 2021. Portugal’s parliament has been trying to decriminalize euthanasia for three years but has faced consistent opposition from Portugal’s President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. ([“Portugal’s Constitutional Court rejects decriminalisation of euthanasia,” The Brussels Times](#), 31 January 2023)

Teacher’s union protest demanding increase in pay

On 15 January, the Union of All Education Professionals (STOP), a Portuguese teacher’s union, staged a protest in Lisbon demanding better pay and working conditions. Thousands of people took part in the protests and many more joined the movement by going on strike. The union plans to keep the pressure high on the government and is gearing up for a nationwide demonstration on 11 February. One of the demands of the protesters has been the removal of Education Minister Joao Costa. Costa says the protests are: “atypical, disproportionate and radical in the middle of a negotiation process.” ([“Portugal: Thousands of teachers strike demanding better pay,” Deutsche Welle](#), 15 January 2023)

RUSSIA**Effects of the war felt on new year celebrations**

On 30 December 2022, *The Moscow Times* reported on the New Year celebrations and the public mood in the country. This is Russia's first new year after the war in Ukraine began. Since then, it is estimated that around 1,00,000 Russian soldiers have lost their lives. The men fighting in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine do not see any hope of returning back to families and celebrating together, nor do they see when would the war end. In Russia itself, war messaging has become normalized and a part of everyday life, as the pro-war symbols "Z" and "V" have been put up in public places. Criticism of the war is not tolerated and leads to immediate detention, nearly 19,500 were detained under these charges in 2022. Many young Russians have left the country, fearing forced conscription or due to being anti-war. Russia's neighbouring countries of Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have seen the arrival of tens of thousands of Russians in 2022. (Anastasia Tenisheva, "[Where Are We Heading?: Wartime New Year Prompts Russian Soul-Searching](#)," *The Moscow Times*, 30 December 2022)

SLOVAKIA**Parliament amends the constitution to allow early elections**

On 25 January, Slovakian Parliament introduced amendments to the constitution to hold early elections. The amendment was passed by 92 lawmakers. The new amendment allows Slovakia to hold snap elections if the motion is passed with a three-fifths majority in the National Council. This allows the Council to decide on a possible election date after Prime Minister Eduard Heger's government lost the no-confidence vote in December 2022. ("[Slovakia parliament changes constitution to enable snap vote](#)," *Independent.co.uk*, 25 January 2023)

SPAIN**Health workers stage protest against government's negligence**

On 15 January, thousands of health workers took to the streets to protest against Madrid's regional government accusing it of dismantling the city's public health care system. The protestors marched with signs saying "S.O.S. Public Healthcare" and "Stop Privatization." The protestors highlighted the shortage of healthcare staff and criticized the Madrid authorities for favouring private healthcare providers. Madrid spends the least on primary health care in Spain despite its high per capita income. ("[Spanish health workers march against Madrid regional govt](#)," *Independent.co.uk*, 15 January)

SWEDEN**District court sentenced two men of espionage found to be Russian agents**

On 19 January, Stockholm's District Court sentenced two men to prison for being Russian agents. The men, who are brothers, have been acting on behalf of Russia's military intelligence service, the GRU, for more than a decade. The older brother was an intelligence officer with the Swedish intelligence agency Sapo, who passed on confidential information. The court convicted him of espionage and handed him a life sentence without provision for pardon. The younger brother has been convicted of managing contacts and planning communications with Russian counterparts and has been given a sentence of 10 years in prison. The brothers' names are Peyman Kia and Payam Kia, they became naturalised Swedish citizens after arriving from Iran, in 1992. ("[Sweden: Two brothers convicted of spying for Russia](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 19 January 2023)

SWITZERLAND**Population to reach nine million in 2023**

On 01 January, a report in the Swiss newspaper *SonntagsZeitung*, published the findings on the population figure for Switzerland for the year 2023. The report says that Switzerland's population will exceed 9 million by the end of 2023. The growth is more than that of other EU countries like France, Germany and the UK. The major reason behind this is the free movement of people within the EU, which

attracts immigrants to Switzerland's high quality of life and economy. The nine million population figure includes both permanent and non-permanent residents. The newspaper spoke about the harmful effects on the environment due to population growth. It will make it harder for Switzerland to achieve its emission reduction targets, as infrastructure development and traffic will see an exponential increase. (Rico Bandel, ["Welcome to the 9 million Switzerland," Tagesanzeiger.ch](#), 31 December 2022)

THE UK

Hundreds Albanian children missing from asylum centres

On 25 January, the UK Home Office Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Simon Murray stated that out of 200 missing migrant children 88 per cent of them are Albanian. This comes as UK Interior Minister Robert Jenrick informed the parliament that since 2021 4,600 child asylum seekers had arrived in the UK out of which 440 had gone missing and only half had returned. Murray added: "The Home Office have no power to detain unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in these hotels, and we do know that some of them go missing," and that many are traced and found later. This drew criticism from NGOs who questioned the lack of action by the government and authorities over this issue. Stand For All, a human rights advocacy organization, Director Daniel Sohege said: "The [UK] government has done nothing but attack Albanians, ignoring how Albanian young people are one of the most at-risk groups of child trafficking." The Child Rights Centre in Albania (CRCA) criticized the government saying that it is obligated under international law to protect unaccompanied children and added: "One has to wonder if this lack of care and responsibility comes from the fact that they are foreign children." (Fjori Sinoruka ["Concerns Grow About Albanian Children Missing in UK," Balkan Insight](#), 25 January 2023; Alice Taylor ["UK government lost 176 Albanian child asylum seekers, didn't notify Tirana," EURACTIV](#), 25 January 2023)

Post-Brexit UK Bankers leave to the EU for better pay

On 19 January, the European Banking Authority published the data on the movement of banking employees post-Brexit. The data revealed that UK Bankers are leaving the country for Spain, Italy and France. The data showed that 1,957 bankers in total had relocated to other countries. These bankers were being paid more than EUR one million. The major reasons for migration are better to pay, and residency in the EU. (Rupert Neate, ["Brexit exodus helps drive record number in EU banks paid €1m-plus," The Guardian](#), 19 January 2023)

UK's think tank's find 330,000 worker loss in labour force due to Brexit

On 17 January, the UK in a Changing Europe and Center for European Reform released data which outlined that Brexit cost UK economy 330,000 workers. The data revealed that the net loss of workers was around one per cent of the UK's labour force. The two think tanks highlighted that as of September 2022, the number of EU-origin workers in the UK had decreased by 460,000 when compared to figures if the UK was part of the EU. They also observed an increase of approximately 130,000 non-EU workers which offset the potential consequences caused by the decrease in workers. This has led to a decreased labour supply for certain sectors of the UK economy such as wholesale and retail, manufacturing, transportation and storage, administration, accommodation and food. (Benjamin Fox ["Brexit cost 330,000 drop in UK labour force, new research finds," EURACTIV](#), 18 January 2023)

New set of protests by nurses for hike in pay

On 18 January, nurses in the UK staged a walkout demanding a rise in pay adding to the surge of strikes by public workers. Nurses from hospitals and clinics staged a 12-hour strike which led to a delay and postponement of appointments and procedures. While emergency care and cancer treatment were not affected, the strikes added pressure to the overwhelmed public health system. Royal College of Nursing union head Pat Cullen has called on

health officials to the negotiating table to prevent further strikes in February. The 12-hour strikes are said to continue on 19 January. Public workers in the UK have been staging multiple strikes demanding an increase in pay amid rising inflation and the cost-of-living crisis. (Jill Lawless "[UK nurses stage new walkout as strike wave intensifies](#)," *AP News*, 18 January 2023)

Government blocks Scotland's gender reform bill

On 16 January, the UK blocked the legislation on legal process to change gender passed by the Scottish parliament resulting in a clash between Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Nicola Sturgeon. She said: "This is a full-frontal attack on our democratically elected Scottish parliament and its ability to make its own decisions on devolved matters." The move was observed to be cutting across UK's Equalities Act of 2010, one of the reasons behind the block. Previously the Scottish Parliament approved to lower the age limit for "gender recognition" to 16 without medical analysis, this was countered by the UK government as it was viewed as bringing two set of rules within. (George Parker and Lukanyo Mnyanda, "[Sunak in constitutional clash with Sturgeon over gender reform bill](#)," *FT*, 17 January 2023)

Rishi Sunak lists 2023 priority plan

On 04 January, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak gave a speech listing his top priorities for 2023. The major points were on Economy, Healthcare and Immigration. On the Economy, Sunak said that the government plans to halve the rate of inflation. Secondly, the government will aim at creating better-paid jobs across the country. Third, improvement in public services, by focusing on reducing the national debt burden. Fourth, on healthcare, he spoke of reducing NHS waiting lists by March 2023. Fifth and final, on immigration, he said tougher laws will be enacted that detain and remove illegal migrants crossing over in small boats. ("[Prime Minister outlines his five key priorities for 2023](#)," *gov.uk*, 04 January 2023)

BBC report on analysis of post-Brexit UK

On 02 January, *BBC* gave an analysis of how the UK's economy has fared post-Brexit. The report says that the UK is behind on every measurable metric. Some of these could be attributed to the pandemic-induced challenges, but when compared with Europe, the UK remains an outsider with markedly low-quality governance. The many promises of Brexit have been busted by the reality check that is now happening. The only companies that have profited from this situation are those that operate in the areas where previous companies have moved out of the UK. Since the UK's import duty and protectionist policies came into force, many companies are not willing to export their products to the UK, and this artificially created situation is not sustainable for a long time. There is a shortage of labour in every industry, and inflation has hit the country hard with prices of consumer goods shooting up. All this has negatively affected the production capacity of companies. Four per cent is the reduction in UK's economic output according to the Office for Budget Responsibility. The other major issue is that of relations with Northern Ireland. Brexit promised to resolve the trade problems that existed, but the condition remains the same and more uncertain. The UK has been in the process of trying to create new laws, moving away from legacy EU laws. Due to Brexit being driven by political interests, it is near impossible to have sensible policies come to the forefront. The writer says this will take some years. (Douglas Fraser, "[Brexit: The scorecard two years on](#)," *BBC*, 02 January 2023)

70 companies on four-day workweek trial

On 06 June 2022, a pilot program implementing a four-day workweek began in the UK. 70 companies took part in the program which included 3,000 employees ended on 06 December 2022. In the mid 1800's, six day work week was the norm, which changed in 1930's after prolonged campaigning to a five-day workweek. The current proposal for four-day work week is aimed at increasing the productivity at 80 per cent. Along with the UK, Spain and Italy

are on the front to implement the four-day work scheme. Employees who underwent the program reported that their productivity increased and their overall work-life balance was better. Companies who have found it feasible to stick with the four-day workweek have decided to extend the plan into the future. According to one manager, the company is able to produce 101 per cent of the work, in 80 per cent of the time. ("Four-day working week: How we got here - and where next," *BBC*, 03 January 2023; Emma Simpson, "Four-day working week: How we got here - and where next," *BBC*, 03 January 2023)

Rail workers continue to strikes increase in wages after new year

On 03 January, UK rail workers launched a fresh set of strikes shutting down over half of the UK's railway lines despite the schedule to end after new year. The Rail, Maritime and Transport union have launched the strike to demand better wages with rising inflation. The strikes will take place from 03 January to 07 January. The UK Transport Secretary Mark Harper called on all union leaders to return to the negotiating table and added that the government has proposed a "fair pay offer." This was refuted by union leader Mick Lynch who said that there were no new proposals from the government. ("UK trains disrupted again as workers stage fresh strikes," *Le Monde*, 03 December 2023)

Department of Commerce reports on UK's failure to meet Brexit foreign trade deals goals

On 31 December, the UK's Department of Commerce confirmed that the UK had not been able to meet the goal of moving away from pre-Brexit trade deals. The plan was to make 80 per cent of the trade deals as new post-Brexit negotiated deals. By the end of 2022, the government has only managed to have less than two-thirds of all the foreign trade volume being covered under post-Brexit agreements. One of the defining policies that Brexit promised was the ability of the UK to negotiate and introduce its own trade deals. The data provided by the Ministry of Commerce says that only 63 per cent of all foreign trade has been covered by

post-Brexit contracts. The UK apart from wanting to trade more profitably with the EU also plans to build trade relations with the US which has a larger market. It is giving more importance to having a trade deal with the US. An economist at the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, Andrew Lee says, "Trade deals are complicated in practice, and the rest of the world doesn't see trade with the UK as important as Brexit advocates think. Not everyone is patiently waiting in line to sign a deal with Global Britain." ("Britain misses its own targets for trade deals," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 31 December 2022)

Measures to produce nuclear fuel domestically to move away from Russian energy

On 02 January, the UK Minister of State for Energy and Climate, Graham Stuart announced that the UK has allocated EUR 75 million to fund the domestic development of nuclear fuel production. This is aimed at countering the reliance and building an alternative to Russian fuel and civil nuclear goods. The move is in line with the UK's G7 promise of introducing a Nuclear Fuel Fund to encourage nuclear operators to use UK-produced fuel over others. The fund also helps in diversifying uranium production, which is the primary element required for nuclear projects. The UK government plans to acquire 24GW of energy from nuclear sources starting in 2050. Stuart spoke of the new development, "This investment package will strengthen the UK's energy security, by ensuring access to a safe and secure supply of UK-produced fuel to power the UK nuclear fleet of today and tomorrow - squeezing out Russian influence, while creating more UK jobs and export opportunities." The fund functions by taking bids from private companies, and has awarded EUR 13 million to companies in Preston. ("Ministers bolster UK nuclear fuel capacity to squeeze out Russian influence," *Gov.uk*, 2 January 2023)

Migrants who entered the UK in 2022 totals 45,756

On 01 January, the UK government released the data on the number of total migrations who tried to cross over into the UK during

the year 2022. The report said that 45,756 migrants came in 2022, the highest recorded to date. There is a difference of 17,000 migrants from 2019. The report also had details regarding the number of people who tried to cross over in small boats and vessels across the English Channel on a single day. On 22 August, 1,295 people made the perilous journey over the English Channel, making it the highest recorded migrant crossing in a single day. There have been lots of accidents and deaths, due to the boats capsizing. This has become a substantial political issue at home, in the UK, conservatives trying their best to handle the situation. The government had plans to commence flights to Rwanda, with deported people onboard. UK Interior Minister, Suella Braverman said that the government would go ahead with the deportation policy. The France's government paid USD 74.5 million as funds for patrolling the French coast and deter migrants from crossing. (["UK: Record number of migrants cross the Channel in 2022," Deutsche Welle, 02 January 2022](#))

TURKEY

Opposition plans to reduce Presidential powers if elected in the 2023 elections

On 30 January, the Turkish six-party opposition coalition to decrease Presidential power if elected in the 2023 elections. The six-party National Alliance presented a joint 240-page, 2,300-point programme outlining Turkey's future post the 2023 election. While the opposition has not named a Presidential candidate, it vows to remove policies introduced by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan such as the implementation of a presidential system in 2017 which abolished the office of prime minister and increased the powers of the President. The 2,300-point programme includes plans to limit the presidential term to seven years, strengthen the parliament, combat rising inflation and economic instability, strengthen ties with the US and focus on Turkey's accession to the EU. The National Alliance or the Table of Six consists of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Good Party, Felicity Party, Democrat Party, Democracy and Progress Party, and Future

Party. (["Turkey opposition vows to cut presidential powers if it wins vote," Al Jazeera, 30 January 2023](#))

Defence industry plans to produce alternatives of US-made HIMARS

On 16 January, Hungary's, Industry and Technology Minister Mustafa Varank commented on Turkey's defence industry capacity to produce alternative products to US's HIMARS rocket launchers. According to Varank: "We produce alternative products to HIMARS in Türkiye, and if there is a need for them, we are ready to provide the necessary support for these products." He added that Turkey's defence industry cooperation has been improving with Hungary in supply of armoured vehicles and drone technologies. (["Türkiye can supply Hungary with HIMARS alternatives: Minister," Daily Sabah, 17 January 2023](#))

Government aims to increase the capacity of short-range ballistic missiles

On 14 January, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that Turkey aims to increase the target range of the Tayfun short-range ballistic missiles to 1,000 kilometres. The Tayfun missile was successfully tested in October and currently has a range of 565 kilometres. Erdoğan said: "National matters are above politics and should remain so. If we have achieved gains in the Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Black Seas, we must protect this together, without exception." Previously Erdoğan claimed that these missile tests are "scaring" the Greeks who have been arming islands near the Turkish coast. (["Türkiye vows to boost domestic ballistic missile's range to 1,000 km," Daily Sabah, 15 January 2023](#))

REGIONAL

Finland reiterates its request to join NATO with Sweden

On 30 January, Finland's Foreign Affairs Minister Pekka Haavisto reiterates Finland's NATO membership bid alongside Sweden. Haavisto said: "Sweden is our closest ally in defence and foreign policy." He added that he expects Finland and Sweden will be members of NATO before the NATO summit in July. This comes as Turkish President

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said: “We may respond differently to Finland if necessary,” and added that Finland should not go down the same route as Sweden. ([“Haavisto: Finland has patience to wait for Nato membership — with Sweden,”](#) yle, 30 January 2023; [“Türkiye may favor Finland’s NATO bid,”](#) *Hürriyet Daily News*, 30 January 2023)

Italy urges caution over the relaxation of EU state aid rules

On 30 January, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni advised the EU to be cautious over the relaxation of EU rules on state aid for business. Meloni said: “the aim should be supporting businesses without risking to weaken the single market.” This comes as the EU looks to amend its state aid rules to prevent a decrease in investments due to the US Inflation Reduction Act. She also advocated for the setting up of an EU sovereign investment fund to help European companies. ([“Italy’s Meloni says caution needed on relaxing EU rules on state aid,”](#) *Reuters*, 30 January 2023)

Finland approves first commercial military material exports to Turkey

On 25 January, Finland’s Defence Ministry stated that it had approved the first commercial military material exports licence since 2019 to Turkey. The Defence Ministry’s Special adviser Riikka Pitkanen outlined that the licence issued was for steel used in armour making. The issue of licences was one of the demands of Turkey for it to ratify Finland’s NATO bid. ([“Finland OKs 1st military exports to Türkiye since 2019 amid NATO row,”](#) *Daily Sabah*, 25 January 2023)

EU to increase humanitarian aid funding to EUR 1.7 billion in 2023

On 18 January, the European Commission stated that the EU’s humanitarian aid for 2023 will be EUR 1.7 billion. The aid will be distributed in Southeast Europe and the European Neighbourhood, the Sahel, Central African Republic and the Lake Chad basin, East and Southern Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, Asia and Latin America. The aid will also be distributed for climate-related crises, innovative projects, and

policy initiatives and reserved for unanticipated humanitarian crises. Around EUR 1.3 billion will be distributed to the various regions to address the consequences of armed conflict, food crisis, climate disaster, regional conflicts, refugee assistance and consequences of the Russian war. ([“Humanitarian Aid: EU increases funding to €1.7 billion for 2023,”](#) *ec.europa.eu*, 18 January 2023)

The final version of the EU’s Chips Act focuses on regulation and promotes international cooperation

On 18 January, *Euractiv* outlined the new changes made to the Chips Act by the European Parliament’s Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). The changes include defining the conditions to qualify as a first-of-a-kind facility and introducing concrete triggers for implementing emergency measures which will be developed by the EU in collaboration with national authorities and market representatives. The ITRE also added the list of critical sectors in the annex of the Act for efficient regulation, increased funding, safeguarding supply chains through international cooperation, and increased protection of IP rights. (Luca Bertuzzi [“EU Parliament’s leading committee readies final position on Chips Act,”](#) *EURACTIV*, 18 January 2023)

Lithuania renounces cross-border cooperation agreement with Belarus

On 18 January, Lithuania’s Interior Ministry renounced the agreement signed with Belarus outlining the principles of cross-border cooperation. The Ministry added that the implementation of the agreement is not possible due to the current geopolitical scenario. The Interior Ministry’s Deputy Arnoldas Abramavičius said: “The Belarusian government has taken a confrontational stance, both by organising the flow of irregular migrants and by being directly involved in and supporting Russian aggression.” The agreement was signed between Lithuania and Belarus on 01 June 2006 outlining areas of cross-border cooperation. The areas highlighted were infrastructure, sports, tourism, education, movement of vehicles and passengers,

energy efficiency and more. ([“Lithuania renounces cooperation agreement with Belarus,” LRT.lt](#), 18 January 2023)

Ursula introduces the ‘Green Deal Industrial Plan’ at the WEF Davos 2023

On 17 January, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen introduced the EU’s Green Deal Industrial Plan’ at the Davos 2023. According to Von der Leyen, the plan aims at making “Europe the home of cleantech and industrial innovation on the road to net zero.” The plan has four pillars, first is the regulatory environment ensuring efficient speed and access to reach net zero. The second pillar looks at increasing investments and financing of clean-technology production to keep the European market attractive and competitive. Third, the development of skills ensures a smooth transition and the fourth pillar is to support fair and open trade of clean technology for the benefit of all. Von der Leyen added that the EU would take up various policies and initiatives under the four pillars and existing initiatives to ensure an efficient implementation of the plan. ([“Special Address by President von der Leyen at the World Economic Forum,” ec.europa.eu](#), 17 January 2023)

NATO General assures security support to Bosnia

On 16 January, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met member of the tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Denis Bećirović to discuss the stability and the significance of the alliance in the Western Balkans region. During the meet Stoltenberg stressed on concentrating on reforms to protect the “multi-ethnic institutions.” He also added on the NATO’s support in helping develop a “defence capacity building package” to boost the security capabilities. On 17 January, the representatives of NATO’s Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme and scientific group of Bosnia and Herzegovina exchanged areas for cooperation in the field of “cyber defence, counter-terrorism and the detection of explosive hazards.” According to a NATO spokesperson: “Our cooperation aligns with our evolving

partnership and with an ever-changing security landscape, and is increasingly focusing on the application of technologies to tackle new and emerging challenges.”

([“NATO Secretary General meets with Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Nato.int](#), 16 January 2023; [“NATO and Bosnia and Herzegovina strengthen science and technology cooperation,” Nato.int](#), 17 January 2023)

Slovenia to construct its first nuclear waste disposal site

On 16 January, Slovenia’s Agency for Radioactive Waste (ARAO) announced its plan to construct a “low and intermediate” level radioactive waste disposal site near Krsko nuclear plant. The site is scheduled to remain in trial mode till 2026 and the first stage of the construction will provide access to roads, launch “environmental service” and build landfill facilities. In the third phase, “manufacturing and delivery of a lift and lifting equipment,” is expected to take place. According to the agency, the site will be a dumping site for radioactive waste along with capacity to hold 990 concrete containers. (Radomir Ralev, [“Slovenia to start building nuclear waste disposal site in 2023 – report,” Seenews](#), 16 January 2023)

Western banks at rifle as they try to exit Russia

On 16 January, *FT* reported on the Western banks attempt to step out of Russia being barred by law passed by Russia’s President Vladimir Putin. The law introduced by Putin does not allow companies listed under the “unfriendly countries” to complete deals without his approval. This includes close to 45 companies which have been made to stay, while few have left at huge cost. The reason behind the strain on the Western banks operating in Russia is due to the influence of some “powerful Russians” in the entity. One of the examples was HSBC, which agreed to sell its subsidiary to Russia’s Expobank to exit but now has been withheld as Expobank has to get approved from Putin. In the other case, SocGen, French bank with a huge exposure to Russia was able to exit through selling to one of richest Russian’s Potanin, but was forced to take EUR 3.3 billion, with EUR 1.5 billion

loss. ([“Western banks struggle to exit Russia after Putin intervention,” FT](#), 16 January 2023)

Czech Republic gets first Commissioner for Roma Affairs Commission

On 04 January, the Czech government appointed Romni Lucie Fukova to the post of government Commissioner for Roma community affairs. The post had been created in December 2022, for addressing issues faced by the Roma community. They comprise 2.5 percent of the population in the Czech Republic. The Commissioner’s aim is to uplift the historically underrepresented and disadvantaged minority present in the country. Fukuoka after her appointment said her major goals were to create educational and professional training opportunities targeting the most vulnerable among Roma. The majority of the Roma consider this a step in the right direction. The Czech Republic now becomes the second country after Slovakia to have a commission for the Roma community. (Lubos Palata, [“Czech Republic appoints its first Roma commissioner,” Deutsche Welle](#), 04 January 2023)

European Single Market celebrates 30 years since founding

On 01 January, the EU celebrated 30 years since the establishment of the European Single Market. The Single Market came into being on 01 January 1993 with the plan for greater integration of the European countries, and ease of business. It also succeeded in the free movement of people, services, goods and capital across the member countries. In 30 years it has been able to drive growth and cultivate healthy competitiveness among the members. The Single Market rules have helped member countries to work together efficiently towards multiple common goals. The press release from the EU Commission lists the coordinated response against COVID-19, the handling of the Ukraine war, the rules for environment, labour, personal data and human rights protection, and the policies for transitioning to a Green Economy as the major achievements. ([“European Single Market is turning 30,” ec.europa.eu](#), 02

January 2023)

NATO debates enforcement of defence spending by member countries

On 03 January, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in an interview with the German Press Agency, *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* spoke out on the fissures among NATO member countries. There is an ongoing debate on tightening the norms to make two per cent of GDP the minimum for defence expenditure by member countries. There are disagreements on how to reach this goal, whether to enforce it or let countries gradually increase their spending reaching the two per cent of GDP target by 2024. The war in Ukraine has pushed this issue to the forefront. Stoltenberg is to lead the negotiations among NATO members as Chairman of the North Atlantic Council. He says, “NATO is there to ensure that a conflict like the one in Ukraine does not escalate beyond Ukraine. For that we need credible deterrence and defense and that is why we need to invest more in our security. As the world becomes more dangerous, we need to invest more to prevent war.” The next summit is scheduled to happen in Vilnius, Lithuania from 11 July to 12 July 2023. The countries supporting stricter regulations are UK, Poland, Lithuania and other Eastern Alliance countries. Germany, Canada and Belgium are viewed as the main opponents to the proposition. ([“NATO threatens new dispute over defense spending,” faz.net](#), 03 January 2023)

30th Anniversary of Czechoslovakia dissolution

On 31 December 2022, the Czech Republic and Slovakia marked the 30th anniversary of the breakup of erstwhile Czechoslovakia. The country had got divided without a referendum and just based on an agreement between two Prime Ministers. There was a peaceful division afterwards, without any conflict or life being lost. The people of both countries still reminisce about the days when both counties used to be one. Many citizens inhabit the border areas and freely move to and fro across the border. Alliances and friendships are common among people. The only conflict to have happened is over the division of the fishing rights in the

various rivers flowing through both countries, the situation never escalated to require any involvement from the police. The main difference being Slovakia adopted the Euro whereas the Czech Republic is still using its old currency. The citizens of both countries speak of the day the federal state got divided with nostalgia, recalling New Year's Eve of 1992 when they sang the whole Czechoslovakia anthem. (Rob Cameron, "[Czechoslovakia: Czechs and Slovaks mark 30 years since Velvet Divorce](#)," *BBC*, 02 December 2023)

NATO study on Baltic China relations released

On 20 December 2022, a NATO-funded study on relations with China conducted jointly by political scientists from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania released a report. The study found that over the past 30 years, the Baltic-Chinese relationship has had both highs and lows. The methodology of the study included surveys among the citizens to know their opinion on China, and analyzing the bilateral ties and economic cooperation between the Baltic countries and China. China does not have many economic interests in the region, therefore most of the Baltic countries do not see China as a threat or competitor. Lithuania was the one exception, as the country has been blocked economically by China due to its opening an embassy in Taiwan. Estonia and Latvia have a less critical view of China, with the major issues of concern being Taiwan, Tibet and China's relationship with Russia. The report concludes by stating that the majority of people have a neutral view towards China, with more than 40 per cent of people in the three countries selecting neutral. ("[Baltic-China relations at one of the lowest points, study finds](#)," *LRT.lt*, 30 December 2022)

Sweden takes over the EU Presidency from the Czech Republic

On 01 January, Sweden undertook the European Council from its predecessor, the Czech Republic. Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristernsson will lead the EU's Swedish Presidency for six months, from January to June. The four main priorities that the Swedish Presidency will look at are,

security and unity, competitiveness, green transition and energy transition, and democratic values and the rule of law. Sweden will take over the EU's Presidency amid the ongoing Ukraine war, energy crisis, inflation, economic crisis that has been prevailing over Europe. Kristersson stated: "Sweden is taking over the Presidency at a time when the European Union is facing unprecedented challenges. A greener, more secure and freer Europe is the foundation of our priorities." Sweden will be having its third term of the EU's Presidency and will be followed by Spain in the next half of 2023. ("[The Swedish Presidency is under way](#)," *consilium.europa.eu*, 01 January 2023)

CLIMATE

Activists protest against the participation of major oil firms over climate debate

On 15 January, over 100 climate activists took to the streets of Davos protesting against major oil firms ahead of the World Economic Forum (WEF). The activists have accused major oil firms attending the summit of taking over the climate debate. The protestors are of the view that oil companies' involvement in the WEF will lead to them pushing their interests. The WEF commencing on 16 January is said to discuss global threats which include climate change. Chevron, Saudi Aramco and BP are some of the oil companies attending the WEF. (Maha El Dahan "[Davos 2023: Climate activists protest over big oil hijacking debate](#)," *Reuters*, 15 January 2023)

ECONOMY

Relief as France sees inflation ease during December

On 04 January, the French National Statistics body, INSEE released its preliminary data on inflation during December 2023. The inflation rate fell to 6.7 per cent from 7.1 per cent in November 2023. The French Minister of the Economy, Finance and Recovery Bruno Le Maire issued a statement saying, 2023 will bring a fall in inflation and prices are set to stabilize. The major reason for the slowdown in inflation can be attributed to

the fall in energy prices, which peaked at 18.4 per cent in November 2023 and have come down to 15.1 per cent in December 2023. The Food price inflation meanwhile has remained stable at 12.1 per cent. (William Horobin, "[French Inflation Unexpectedly Slows, Easing Pressure on ECB](#)," *Bloomberg*, 04 January 2023)

FASHION

Paris Fashion Week draws criticism and praise

On 25 January, *Deutsche Welle* reported that at the Paris Fashion Week, Schiaparelli's show drew criticism and praise over its dress which featured life-like animal heads. While Schiaparelli had issued a statement saying that they were made from "foam, wool and silk faux fur and hand painted to look as life-like as possible," many criticised it saying that it promoted trophy hunting. It also received praise from PETA President Ingrid Newkirk calling it innovative and adding: "may be a statement against trophy hunting, in which lion families are torn apart to satisfy human egotism." At Dior's show, the designers paid tribute to Josephine Baker, an African-American woman with dresses reflecting the style from the 1920s to the 1950s. The show also included 13 blow-up portraits of famous African-American women in the industry. Apart from the dresses, Louis-Gabriel Nouchi's show made a political statement with a model walking the runway with a sign that read "Stop the executions in Iran." (Brenda Haas "[Paris Fashion Week: What everybody is talking about](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 January 2023)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Greenland records the highest temperature in a millennium

On 18 January, a study published in the journal *Nature* found that temperatures in Greenland have become the warmest recorded in a millennium. The study was conducted over many years and noted the temperatures of ice cores from 1995. Greenland's ice cores are some of the remotest and purest areas in which scientists study temperature change. Previously, the temperature change event

had not been noticed as it had been masked due to an event known as "Greenland blocking." The ice sheets contain information on the earth's temperature history in the form of ice formation during different periods. Scientists are alarmed over the rise in temperatures as this will lead to a rise in seawater levels with the ice melting away. (Seth Borenstein, "[New ice core analysis shows sharp Greenland warming spike](#)," *Associated Press*, 19 January 2023)

Data reveals Europeans used less energy to heat homes during Winter 2022

On 18 January, the smart thermostat maker Tado published its findings on household heating for the winter of 2022. The findings revealed that European countries in general reduced their energy usage for heating homes. The Netherlands reduced the temperatures most, nearly meeting the target set by the company of one-degree Celsius. In Germany, the government had decided to reduce temperatures in public offices to 19 degrees which helped in conserving energy. The European public too reacted in kind by reducing their personal usage. This is due to both the higher prices and the lack of natural gas. Europe imports most of its energy and gas fulfils 32 per cent of the energy requirements. European governments too had requested their citizens to use less energy due to the ongoing crisis. (Thomas Escritt, "[Europeans dial down the heating, heed calls to save energy](#)," *Reuters*, 18 January 2023)

Taiwan to share semiconductor technology with Lithuania

On 18 January, Lithuania's Teltonika IoT Group and Taiwan's Industrial Technology Research Institute signed an agreement on semiconductor chip technology sharing. The EUR 14 million deal will help Teltonika gain access to use the licences of the chip manufacturing technology and devices developed by the institute. Out of the EUR 14 million, EUR 10 million will be given by the Taiwanese Foreign Ministry and the rest will be supplemented by Teltonika. The projects under the deal are said to be completed by 2027. Teltonika IoT Group Founder and President Arvydas Paukštis

said: "I believe that the implementation of the planned works will help Lithuania to be among the most advanced countries in the world." (Giedrius Gaidamavičius "[Lithuania and Taiwan sign deal on semiconductor technology sharing](#)," *LRT.lt*, 18 January 2023)

META to pay EUR 390 million for breaching EU's data protection laws

On 04 January, Irish Data Protection Commission slapped a fine of EUR 390 million on META, the parent entity owning Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram along with a host of other internet companies. The Commission, in its report, stated that the method used by META in taking consent for collecting data from people for posing targeted ads on Facebook and Instagram violated EU laws. The case includes Facebook and Instagram. META has been ordered to change the process of acquiring data and been given three months to do so. The Commission stated in its judgment that companies do not have the right to force their users to consent. META released a statement saying it feels disappointed by the judgement, and this will affect its personalized targeted advertising. The case was brought to the Commission in 2018 by a prominent privacy rights activist, Max Schrems. (Chris Vallance, "[Meta fined €390m over use of data for targeted ads](#)," *BBC*, 04 January 2023)

Thrush Nightingale named as Latvia's Bird of the Year

On 02 January, the Latvian Ornithological Society picked the Thrush Nightingale as its bird of the year. This is in homage to Ukraine and to bring attention towards the conservation efforts for the Nightingale. The President of the Society, Andris Dekants while announcing the winner said: "Hearing the nightingale's song in nature in the spring, this year we invite you not only to enjoy the attractive voice of this bird, but also to think about how each of us can support Ukraine and Ukrainians and their efforts for independence." The Nightingale can usually be spotted during the months of May and June, as they migrate from Africa at the end of April. The population of the Nightingale has fallen by a quarter of what

it was in 2005, the society in its announcement stated. Dekantis in conclusion said: "This is one of the rare times when the Bird of the Year role is a songbird that is not characterized by expressive plumage, but by a bright song. Therefore, we invite residents to not only notice, but also hear the voices of birds in nature and try to recognize them." ("[Nightingale is Latvia's bird of the year](#)," *Latvia Public Broadcasting*, 02 January 2023)

SPACE

Sweden and European Commission inaugurate Europe's first orbital launch facility

On 17 January, *Space News* reported persisting ambiguity over Europe's orbital launch. On 13 January, Sweden's Prime Minister and European Commission's President inaugurated the Esrange Space Center, Europe's first orbital launch facility. According to SSC chair of the board Anna Kinberg Batra: "This will be instrumental for reaching the E.U. and U.N. sustainability goals as well as strategies within security and defense." Till now Europe has accessed space through France's space agency CNES, but through this initiative it will provide Europe an independent access featuring "...launch vehicle integration facility and three pads." The first launch from the facility is expected to occur by end of 2023. (Jeff Foust, "[Sweden opens orbital launch site looking for users](#)," *Space News*, 17 January 2023)

INTERNATIONAL

Protest erupts in Jakarta over Quran burning in Sweden and the Netherlands

On 30 January, hundreds of protestors took to the streets to protest against the Quran burning incident in Sweden and the Netherlands. The protestors marched to the Swedish embassy in Jakarta carrying white flags. They also burnt the flags of Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands as a sign of protest. The Swedish Embassy in Jakarta said: "the Islamophobic act committed by a far-right extremist in Sweden is strongly rejected by the Swedish government." It added: This act does not in any way reflect

the opinions of the Swedish government,” This comes after Danish far-right activist Ramsus Paludan burnt the Quran in front of the Turkish Embassy in Sweden and a mosque in Denmark. (Andi Jatmiko [“Indonesian Muslims protest Quran burning in Sweden,” AP News](#), 30 January 2023)

Germany to provide EUR 200 million to Brazil towards the protection of the Amazon rainforest

On 30 January, Germany’s Development Minister Svenja Schulze said that Germany will be providing EUR 200 million towards the protection of the Amazon rainforest. Schulze said that the aid will be provided to Brazil in the form of donations and credits. The aid will also include socio-environmental projects in the Brazilian Amazon forest regions. It will also include low-interest loans to farmers towards the reforestation of agricultural land. Schulze said that the measures will be initiated in 100 days. Out of the EUR 200 million, EUR 35 million will be donated to the Amazon fund. ([“Germany pledges funds to help Brazil defend Amazon rainforest,” Reuters](#), 31 January 2023)

Czech President-elect holds phone call with Taiwan President

On 30 January, Czech Republic President-elect Petr Pavel held a telephone meeting with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen. Pavel said: “I assured her that Taiwan and the Czech Republic share the values of freedom, democracy, and human rights. We agreed on strengthening our partnership.” Pavel becomes the first elected European head of state to hold a direct political meeting with Taiwanese officials. The Chinese diplomats in the Czech Republic reportedly tried to stop the meeting from happening. Pavel’s move to have direct dialogue with Taiwan marks a shift in foreign policy from President Miloš Zeman who has advocated a pro-China stance. (Stuart Lu [“New Czech president risks China’s rage with call to Taiwanese leader,” Politico](#), 30 January 2023)

EU proposes 70 projects to combat China’s BRI

On 23 January, the EU announced the Global

Gateway project which acts as a counter to China’s Belt and Road initiative. The new initiative includes 70 projects of which the first one is to lay an optical fibre cable under the Black Sea which connects North African and Mediterranean countries. It also includes a dam and hydroelectric plant in Cameroon. The EU aims to mobilize over EUR 300 billion from public and private funders by 2027 to fund EU projects abroad. Some of the other projects include an energy transition in Indonesia, a hydrogen project in Kazakhstan, a transport link in Central Asia and a digital connectivity project in the Philippines. (Barbara Moens [“EU lines up 70 projects to rival China’s Belt and Road infrastructure spending,” Politico](#), 23 January 2023)

French troops to leave Burkina Faso within a month

On 25 January, the French Foreign Ministry announced that French forces would be leaving Burkina Faso within a month. This comes as Burkina Faso submitted a formal denunciation to the French government which outlined a request for the withdrawal of French troops from the country. The ministry referred to a 2018 agreement between the two countries and said: “the termination takes effect a month after reception of written notification. We will respect the terms of the agreement by honoring this request.” The 400 troops deployed in Burkina Faso are said to withdraw by the end of February. ([“France to ‘respect’ Burkina Faso’s request and pull troops,” Deutsche Welle](#), 25 January 2023)

Head of the European Central Bank lays out 2023 goals: tackle inflation and finance EU’s green transition

On 19 January, the Head of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde spoke at Davos 2023 on Europe’s Growth in the coming year. She identified inflation as the major challenge the bloc will face. This is also going to be the main aim of the bank, to reign in rampant inflation and bring it down to target levels. In the bank’s view, the current inflation is unsustainable in the long run and needs to be brought back to 2 per cent. She announced the bank will raise interest rates by 250 base points to achieve

this. Lagarde spoke of plans for Europe's transition to Green Energy. She outlined plans for financing the project, obtaining half a trillion dollars over 8 years and creating a single capital market. ([“Lagarde at Davos 2023: Reducing inflation is 'primemission' of the European Central Bank,”](#) *World Economic Forum*, 19 January 2023)

Urmas Reinsalu reiterates Estonia's support for the EU monitoring mission

On 18 January, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu met with Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan where the two discussed increased cooperation between Armenia and Estonia. Reinsalu reiterated Estonia's support for a permanent EU monitoring mission at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border to establish peace in the region. The two also discussed the effective implementation of the EU's Eastern Partnership platform. Khachaturyan is on an official visit to Estonia where he met Estonian President Alar Karis on 16 January. ([“FM: Estonia supports decision to deploy permanent EU monitoring mission along Armenia-Azerbaijan border,”](#) *NEWS.am*, 18 January 2023)

India and France conduct joint naval exercise in Arabian Sea

On 16 January, India's Ministry of Defence released a statement on initiating the bilateral naval exercise between India and France. The exercise known as Varuna started in the Western Seaboard, where stealth destroyer INS Chennai, “Guided missile frigate INS Teg, maritime patrol aircraft P-8I and Dornier, integral helicopters and MiG29K fighter aircraft,” took part and France navy was represented by “Charles De Gaulle, frigates FS Forbin and Provence, support vessel FS Marne and maritime patrol aircraft Atlantique.” This exercise aims to excel war-fighting, interoperability skills in the maritime domain to ensure peace and stability. ([“France And India Kick Off VARUNA 2023 Naval Exercise,”](#) *Navalnews*, 17 January 2023)

Turkey's Operation Claw-Lock takes out close to 500 PKK terrorists

On 15 January, Turkish National Defence Ministry stated that 506 PKK terrorists have taken down since Operation Claw-Lock commenced in April. Operation Claw-Lock was launched by Turkey targeting PKK bases in the Northern Iraq regions of Metina, Zap and Avasin-Basyan. The ministry also conducted a media tour of these regions where reporters were informed that 575 PKK hideouts were destroyed. The reporters saw PKK hideouts being targeted from the Iraq-Turkey border. ([“Over 500 terrorists neutralised in Türkiye's Operation Claw-Lock so far,”](#) *TRT World*, 15 January 2023)

Ties with Turkey can not be normalised says the Syrian Foreign Minister

On 14 January, Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad said that ties with Turkey can be normalized once the Turkish military withdraws from Syria. Turkey has placed its troops in Northern Syria providing assistance to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to the political and armed opposition. This comes as talks between the defence ministers of Turkey and Syria met in Russia in December 2022. The two reportedly discussed Syria's demand for the withdrawal of troops from the region and a withdrawal of support to three key opposition factions. ([“Syrian FM: No Normal Ties with Türkiye without End to Occupation,”](#) *Asharq al-Awsat*, 14 January 2023)

British-Iranian Alireza Akbari executed on the charges of corruption and espionage

On 14 January, Mizan reported that former Iranian Defence Minister Alireza Akbari was executed on the charges of corruption and espionage. Akbari's execution drew criticisms from the UK due to his dual British-Iranian citizenship. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called the execution a “callous and cowardly act, carried out by a barbaric regime.” The UK also sanctioned Iran's Prosecutor General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri. The sanctions include freezing his assets and a UK travel ban. Additionally, the UK has also recalled its ambassador to

Iran Simon Shercliff with UK Foreign Secretary saying: “This will not stand unchallenged and we will be summoning the Iranian Charge d’Affaires to make clear our disgust at Iran’s actions. Our thoughts are with Mr Akbari’s family.” (Aoife Walsh & Caroline Hawley “[Alireza Akbari: Widespread outrage after British-Iranian executed](#),” *BBC*, 14 January 2023; “[Iran: Foreign Secretary Statement on Execution of Alireza Akbari](#),” gov.uk, 14 January 2023; and “[UK sanctions Iranian Prosecutor General following execution of Alireza Akbari](#),” gov.uk, 14 January 2023)

NATO Military Chiefs of Defence to discuss on Ukraine, Kosovo, and Iraq

On 02 January, NATO Military Committee’s Public Affairs and Strategic Communications wing and NATO International Military Staff announced the meeting of NATO Military Chiefs of Defence from 18 January to 19 January. The meeting will be led by Military Committee Chair, Admiral Rob Bauer. The Allied Chiefs of Defence along with Finland and Sweden will attend the meeting. The NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg is expected to discuss on the political objectives and security challenges to NATO. Some of the issues that will be discussed include the ground situation in Kosovo and a review of KFOR’s and NATO’s military support to Ukraine. The Committee will also discuss NATO’s non-combatative and capacity-building Mission in Iraq. (“[NATO Military Chiefs of Defence Meeting - 18-19 January 2023](#),” nato.int, 02 January 2023)

Austria-India hold bilateral talks, agreement to combat illegal migration signed

On 01 January, India’s External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar met with Austria’s Foreign Minister, Alexander Schallenberg and the two spoke of bilateral and international issues concerning the two countries. They signed a joint “Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement” (MMPA) on 01 January. India views this agreement as a

stepping stone to finalizing the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement. Previously, India has signed joint MMPA’s with other European Countries like France, the UK, Germany and Finland. The agreement helps to combat illegal migration to Austria, as India is one of the leading countries from which illegal migrants arrive in the country. In 2022, Austria received 15,000 illegal migrants of India origin. A spokesperson to the Austrian Foreign Ministry, Claudia Turtscher said: “The agreement is now a useful tool to combat illegal migration together, as it enables the swift return of illegal migrants.” The agreement also includes provisions for students and working professionals. The Austrian Foreign Minister spoke about India’s G-20 Presidency, the opportunity that provides and commented on India’s position on the Ukraine War, saying these are the two major issues that form the agenda. (Kallol Bhattacharjee, “[“Exploding number” of illegal immigrants from India came to Austria last year, says Austrian Foreign Minister](#),” *The Hindu*, 02 January 2023; Suhasini Haider, “[India and Austria to sign migration and mobility agreement, shore up ties](#),” *The Hindu*, 01 January 2023)

EU calls to improve efforts to promote peace in Eastern DRC

On 31 December, the UN Group of Experts came out with its report on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Eastern part of the country has been embroiled in violence, which the African nations are trying to solve through the Luanda and Nairobi processes. The EU after the release of the report, responded announcing full support for the processes. It called on all the parties and political leaders to intensify their efforts to achieve peace in the region. The EU noted that the humanitarian crisis put 27 million people at risk. (“[Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the publication of the recent UN Group of Experts report](#),” consilium.europa.eu, 31 December 2022)

About the authors



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Return of Macron, and the rise of Le Pen

Image source: IMF/YouGov/Statista.com/French presidential elections, 02 May 2022

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100 days of the Ukraine war

Image source: Reuters/PolityCity

Major negotiations determining Russian withdrawal from Ukraine after 100 days (02 June 2022)
April and 31 May: Image source: Reuters for the Study of War / Critical Threats, 31 May 2022

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War in Ukraine: What next?

Image source: Reuters/PolityCity

Estimated Russian Troop Numbers
By Area, Feb. 09-2022
1,000 7,500
* Includes Russian-controlled areas

European Union and NATO membership 2022
EU and NATO members EU only NATO only
* Includes EU non-recognized, Canada and United States

Image source: The Economist, 02 February 2022

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Image source: Reuters/PolityCity

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Image source: (Clockwise) AP Photo; heatwaves in the UK, AP Photo/Matt Dunham, 11 July, wildfire in southwestern France, AP Photo; ice melted in the August heat, The Guardian, 22 July, The Perito Moreno in Antarctica, AP Photo/Arnd Bronkman

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Image source: The 2022 election performance of Sweden and Italy, Anonimous Agency

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