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Cover Story

The War in Ukraine



Image source: *The Harvard Gazette, CEEEP, File/Agence France-Presse, Institute for new economic thinking*

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- Russia's imperial ambitions: Suppressing Ukraine's Culture
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About NIAS Global Politics

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

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

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

About Europe Monitor

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

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

Editor

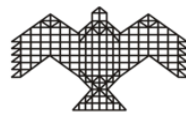
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National Institute of
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About NIAS

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

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



About KAS India Office

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

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

Europe Monitor

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EM COMMENT

Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine

By Lakshmi Parimala H

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By Trisha Roy

WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES



Source: Kremlin.ru, AP, AP/Alex Brandon/RT, REUTERS/Alexander Ermochenko/File Photo, gov.si, Concord Press Service/Reuters

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 370 to Day 401 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, Rishika Yadav, Nityashree RB and Sreeja JS

EM SHORT NOTES



Source: Ansa.it, AP Photo/picture alliance, Sébastien Nogier (EPA-EFE), Chris J. Ratcliffe/Bloomberg, Angel Garcia/picture alliance

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 Femy Francis

COMMENT

The War in Ukraine: Four Issues to watch in 2023

By Padmashree Anandhan

Ukraine must get ready to brace for the damages, and the West should prepare for the long haul.

What happened?

What happened?

Russia's Ukraine invasion was aimed to prevent Kyiv from getting close to NATO and the EU.. The prolonged war has only reversed the Russian goals and has put forward a security threat combined with an exhausting military expenditure for Russia. The protracted war has posed challenges for Russia in the movement of equipment, leadership, and shortage of personnel. To meet these challenges, Russia resorted to partial mobilization, and martial law, captured Soledar, and received drone support from Iran.

The war has made Ukraine dependent on the West's support in military, economic, and humanitarian domains, pushing it to become a constant demand for resources to counter Russia. Although the military and economic support has been slow-paced, the capacity of the Ukrainian forces to defend Russia, their adaptability to training exercises, and to operate west-made weapon systems began to fetch results. Since a successful counter-offensive in September 2022, except for the battle of Soledar, there has been no step back. From the advanced weapons support from the West, Ukraine has managed to push the frontlines to Donetsk and Luhansk from Kharkiv and Kherson.

“Retaking Luhansk, Mariupol, and Berdyansk in the far east will remain under the agenda and would be a long battle game for Ukraine.”

The EU, NATO and the US initially did not expect Russia to continue the war. Due to high intensity of the war there was a gradual switch in the weapon support by

the West. Shifting from the defence equipments, Soviet era weapon systems to high-capacity advanced military support to Ukraine from June 2022. When it did, they started supporting, starting with intelligence support, military aid, and later air defence vehicles and drone technologies. Simultaneously the range of goods and services under the sanctions broadened, and despite that Russia's economy has been more stable than predicted. More than the military support, an unforeseen development is NATO's help to Ukraine through its allies and its renewed focus on the Baltic and Nordic. This has made Russia rethink its war strategy and work on its foreign policy circumventing the US and Europe. Apart from the major actors in the Ukraine conflict, Germany, Turkey, Poland, Belarus, the UN, and IAEA have also played individual roles in mediating, refugee support, standing with Russia, and nuclear threat assessment. Such help has been crucial for targeted tasks and upholding humanitarian protection, but they fail to add to the resolution or deconstruction of the war.

Major Issues for 2023

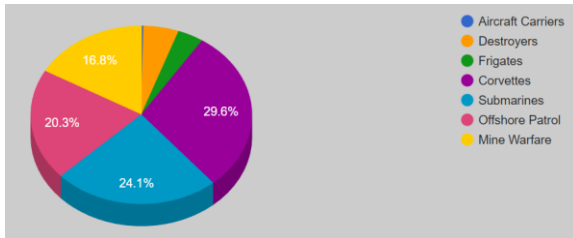
The following four issues could be identified for the year.

1. A prolonged battle on the frontlines

The red line held by Russia begins from the borders of Luhansk, dividing through Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and the right bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson.

Ukraine will have to continue its counter-offensive similar to Kharkiv, Kherson, Kramatorsk, Mykolayiv, and Odesa under two conditions. First, if the West delivers the promised battle tanks and scales up to fighter jets and advanced drones and Russia persists to face the limitations at the ground

level. In such a scenario, winning the city of Donetsk and pushing back Russia further inward from the Dnipro River can be expected in the next months. Retaking Luhansk, Mariupol, and Berdyansk in the far east will remain under the agenda and would be a long battle game for Ukraine. Second, Ukraine may consider negotiation over Luhansk, Mariupol, and Berdyansk to bring the war to a halt and prevent Russia from proceeding further. If not, Ukraine must get ready to brace for the damages, and the West should prepare for the long haul, where the primary focus should be off-the-ground strategies than on the ground to stand for the values it holds in the international order.



Source: WMDMMW

2. Increased support from the US, NATO, and Europe

Military support has fastened since September 2022; this can move faster in 2023. Increasing threat of Russia's continuity in the war, the effect on international trade due to sanctions, and increasing energy prices will factor in their decision. Germany and the US will continue to be the lead actors in giving advanced military support. More third-party transfer authorizations, the NATO allies and the EU member states such as Poland, the UK, Canada, Belgium, Bulgaria, Slavic, and the Nordic can be expected to provide all-inclusive support from ambulances, military logistics, protection equipment, and weapon support. The major challenge will be over delivering Abraham tanks, Leopard 2, or Patriot air defence system.

3. Gaps in the Russian military command and personnel expertise challenges

Russia was observed to be going on full-scale war reaching the western cities of Ukraine in the initial stage of the war, later slowed due

to a shortage of soldiers. The failure of partial mobilization and the lag in training among the recruits have created new challenges for the Russian forces to carry out the command. To fill the shortage, the Wagner Group has been involved in recruiting prisoners from Russia to fight in the war. Apart from the on-ground challenges, in terms of intelligence, Putin switched the task of intelligence gathering from a unit in Ukraine to its military intelligence after repeated failures. Therefore, the government has not been able to execute its operation aligning with the plans as drafted in its military doctrine.

4. Energy challenges to Europe

The energy strategy of Europe to reduce the use of non-renewable energies had been in place even before the war. To meet the energy demands, new investments in energy infrastructure and measures to increase internal production were made to facilitate regional energy supply chains. 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 for 2023 would be the Greece-Bulgaria pipeline, the Bulgaria-Turkey pipeline, Norway's extensive operation in the North Sea, and the 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. For immediate needs, the action taken by Europe at present to increase its energy storage may fulfill its 2023 consumption but would fall short large in its transition into renewable energies.

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COMMENT

Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine

By Lakshmi Parimala H

In the battle between Russia and Ukraine, drones are integrated into every phase of fighting, with extensive fleets, air defenses and jamming systems.

What happened?

Russia has always used unconventional strategies to compensate their military and technological weakness relative to the West. The predominant use of hybrid warfare by Russia was seen in the 2014 annexation of Crimea, where it has used several unconventional methods such as mercenaries (popularly known as 'little green men'), cyber-attacks, propaganda, disinformation and economic pressure. Within three weeks, and with only minor skirmishes, the morale of the Ukrainian army was crushed and its 190 military bases were surrendered. Preceding and following the beginning of the 'special military operation' of Russia in Ukraine on 24 February, 2022, Russia has adopted similar tactics, like cyberattacks on ViaSat, an American satellite company, on which the Ukrainian military relied for communication, information warfare, in the name of stamping out Nazis and of alleged genocide of Russian speakers in Ukraine, and spreading propaganda on social media platforms such as V Kontakte, Telegram and Yandex.

However, these tactics seem to have not worked out in the favor of Russia, in contrast to what happened eight years ago. On the contrary, Ukraine, supported by the West, has been putting up a strong resistance against the Russian forces, countering Russia's hybrid warfare.

Three issues to watch in 2023

1. Russia may not succeed in the hybrid warfare in 2023

Unlike during the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia's success in 2023 in pursuing a hybrid warfare seems remote. One of the main reasons behind this is the lack of surprise element and the familiarization and adaptation of Ukraine's security against Russia's techniques. With the US debunking

Russia's intentions of invasion in early 2022, before the invasion, it has alerted the Ukraine's forces.

A key factor which furthered Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 was cyber warfare. By attacking Ukraine's cyberspace - both civil and military, Russia interrupted the functioning of the military, extracted sensitive information, and at the same time crippled the morale of civilians. However, eight years later, these techniques of Russia seem to be failing in achieving the same. According to ..., the reason behind as the above is: 'Kyiv's ability to harness the experience of years of Russian cyber attacks, combined with strong support from Western governments and — crucially — technology companies has allowed Ukraine to deploy cyber defenses at a scale and depth never seen before'. The process of familiarization of Russia's techniques to Ukraine has begun from 2014, again, from the Russian annexation of Crimea. As mentioned above, besides the adaptation of Ukraine's cyber security to Russian techniques, the Western governments, together with private companies such as Starlink, of Elon Musk, and Microsoft have also extended their support to Ukraine.

2. Russia's failure in information and psychological warfare

One of the main motives of a hybrid warfare is to conquer hearts and minds through information and psychological warfare. For Russia, there is a backlash, strengthening the zeal of Ukrainians to keep fighting. The motive behind this is: firstly, to defend and justify the respective country's actions, and secondly, to influence the public psychologically by degrading their morale. Russia has spread its narrative of stamping out Nazism, genocide of Russian speakers in Ukraine, counterterrorism, 'people's war' and dirty bomb attacks. It has blocked a few

websites with anti-Russian information and has also banned Instagram.

Ukraine has been able to effectively turn everything from leaked, unsecure Russian communications to video of anti-armor ambushes (Sabbagh, 2022). Besides failing to justify its action through its narrative, Russia has not been successful even in demoralizing Ukrainians. However, multiple statements from Ukrainian officials and citizens show that on the contrary Russian acts of hybrid warfare such as forcible spread of disinformation and propaganda, attack on civilians and their infrastructure, such as energy grids, have instead made their resolve to fight even stronger, by inciting anger. In the words of the head of Ukrenergo, a power company in Ukraine, "Russia did not achieve its ultimate goal....Instead of making us scared and unhappy, it made us angry, more resolved to win. They did not lower the morale of the nation; they mobilized the nation."

3. The focus on kinetic war

Recent events show a return to a more kinetic war, at a larger scale, though non-kinetic and unconventional means continue to play in the background. With the winter coming to an end, both the countries are ramping up their arms supplies, with the help of their respective allies. With the failure of hybrid warfare in the initial stages of the war, to capture Ukraine with surprise, the war has now reached an impasse, where both the sides are trying to balance out each other, with Russia having occupied only 18 per cent of Ukraine's territory, as the war is nearing its one year anniversary. Therefore, the dependence on non-kinetic means used previously by Russia, such as cyber, information and mercenaries, are playing a limited role.

On the other hand, the West, supporting Ukraine, has taken up a few new means of hybrid warfare, such as economic warfare (through sanctions) and diplomatic warfare (using soft power such as sports and culture). Besides the failure of the unconventional means, the intensifying acquisition of arms from allies, by Russia and Ukraine, also emphasizes the impending

escalation of kinetic warfare. On Ukraine's side, 'America is sending 50 M2A2 Bradley vehicles, part of a new package of military aid worth more than \$3bn—the largest yet—including armored personnel carriers, mine-resistant vehicles, Humvees, self-propelled and towed artillery, and a large quantity of missiles and other ammunition. Germany has promised 40 Marder vehicles (and perhaps eventually its entire fleet). France is supplying an undisclosed but probably similar number of amx-10rcs' (the Economist). Though sources on Russia's procurement of weapons from other countries are unclear, the US has said it believes China may be about to provide lethal aid to help Russia in the war in Ukraine, and previous procurements from Iran and reportedly, North Korea.

Conclusion

Therefore, from the above arguments, though it is evident that hybrid warfare of Russia has not been as successful as it was in 2014, in leading the war solely by itself, it however, is playing a complimentary role, by taking forward the strategy on land through other means. For example, drone warfare has seen a heightened use in this war. Similarly, attacks on energy grids, though not successful in affecting the morale of Ukrainians, are leaving Ukraine in a stark electricity deficit and blackouts, and damaging the infrastructure, thus creating economical burden on Ukraine. On the other hand, the West is using sanctions, which, again, though turned out to be ineffective in curtailing Russian invasion further, is however, putting economic pressure on Russia. The use of mercenaries, called Wagner, by Russia has proved to be successful to an extent, as seen in capturing Soledar, a settlement in Bakhmut region. Thus, hybrid warfare is playing a complimentary role, enhancing the effectiveness of kinetic warfare by creating diversions or removing hindrances.

Lakshmi Parimala is a postgraduate scholar in the Department of International Studies at Stella Maris College, Chennai.

COMMENT

Russia's imperial ambitions: Suppressing Ukraine's Culture

By Akshaya S

Ukraine's culture, music, dance, folklore and national clothes are distinct and unique from that of Russia.

What happened?

Russia has a long history of suppressing and undermining the Ukrainian language and culture, and its recent materialisation into a textual medium at the hands of Putin is crucial towards understanding the motives behind the war. Putin's essay titled *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians* (2021), not only revealed imperial ambitions but also outlined the historical basis for the oneness of Russians and Ukrainians. In the essay, Putin firmly asserts that a separate Ukrainian identity is nothing but an artificial invention which is being increasingly used by the West to weaken Russia. He questions the legitimacy of Ukraine's present-day borders. To Putin, Ukraine is an integral part of Russian culture and 'Kievan Rus' which drifted afar over time towards the West and he insists on wresting it back into Russia's orbit.

Such a primordial position about culture ignores reality and creates a sort of 'historical fiction.' Ukraine's culture, music, dance, folklore and national clothes are distinct and unique from that of Russia.

To assert Russian preponderance symbolically, Russian flags were installed along the highways leading to Mariupol and even the large sign which announces the city's name was repainted with the colours red, white and blue of the Russian flag. As of August 2022, more than 450 cultural sites have been damaged and reduced to rubble since the invasion, and among them include places of cultural importance like religious sites, museums, historic buildings, cultural facilities, monuments, statues and libraries (US Embassy Tbilisi, 2022). Russian forces have also looted museums in Mariupol and Melitopol, having stolen more than 2,000 works of art and valuable gold objects respectively (US Embassy Tbilisi, 2022).

Major issues for 2023

The following five issues could be identified for 2023.

1. Increasing assertions by Ukraine over identity and culture

According to an opinion poll published by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), an unprecedented 85 per cent of Ukrainians identified themselves as citizens of Ukraine and did not associate themselves with other identifiers such as place of residence, ethnic group, religion, language, etc (Palikot, 2022). A clear majority of respondents refused to identify themselves with Russia and the Russian culture, albeit the older generations seemed to retain more connections as a result of having lived during the Soviet era. Sentiments of disentanglement from the Russian culture are not restricted to the Ukrainian people alone since many ethnic Russians in the areas now controlled by Moscow have begun to speak in the Ukrainian language as a sign of personal protest and disgust towards the devastating and unnecessary war. The Ukrainian society is also being reshaped from a religious perspective as the possibility for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to sever and break its ties altogether with the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church has become increasingly feasible. Comments by Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, have angered the populace of Ukraine since he depicted the war as 'an apocalyptic battle against evil forces determined to break the God-given unity of Holy Russia' (Dettmer, 2022). As a result, a schism between the two religious institutions has manifested resulting in more than 150 parishes defecting from the larger Moscow Patriarchate to a smaller Kyiv-based Orthodox Church. There have been reports of groups of Ukrainian people ripping apart hundreds of Russian books,

including the works of Tolstoy, Mayakovski and Dostoevsky, and other Russian literature (The Economist, 2023). Thus, in the face of an existential enemy who threatens to decimate the entire state, feelings of national identity and unity have witnessed a historic rise in Ukraine. Such events cement the argument that Ukraine's identity will definitely outlive the war and forge a renewed sense of Ukrainian nationalism.

2. Increasing sense of nationalism leading to positive consequences in the Ukraine War.

As witnessed at the very initial stages of the invasion, the Ukrainian forces refused to back down or be intimidated by the Russian armed soldiers even though they were outgunned, underequipped and outnumbered. Such high levels of patriotism and national unity could play a significant role in enhancing motivation and morale among the Ukrainian combatants to defend their country against hostile forces. Coupled with financial aid, defense systems, armoured tanks and weapons from Ukraine's Western allies, the country will indubitably possess an edge over the unmotivated Russian forces on the protracted battlefield.

3. Russia will be unable annex Ukraine

Moscow's gross miscalculation regarding the prevalence of pro-Russian sentiments and the level of support a Russian invasion would receive from the citizens of Ukraine has cost them enormously and continues to tarnish their reputation in the international system. Putin failed to accept and view Ukraine for what it represents—a progressive country which espouses democratic values, principles of freedom from invasion and integrity of nation-state borders— political values very different from its own.

“A clear majority of respondents refused to identify themselves with Russia and the Russian culture, albeit the older generations seemed to retain more connections as a result of having lived during the Soviet era.”

4. New legislations by Ukraine

Akin to the flurry of laws which were passed after the forceful annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, the Ukrainian government could actively pass laws which strongly consolidate Ukrainian identity as a distinct and independent entity and resist aggression after the end of the war (Levchenko, 2022). Such laws are vital towards facilitating a process of healing, peacebuilding and strengthening destroyed human relationships. Towards this end, the government can develop a state policy of national unity which guarantees the involvement of Ukrainian citizens of varying ethnic backgrounds and identities (Levchenko, 2022). This can fasten the process of community peacebuilding and efforts towards rebuilding the country which has been at the brunt of large-scale destruction due to Russia's incessant assault.

5. Securing and preserving Ukraine's heritage

Numerous efforts by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and teams of Ukrainian preservation experts have been underway since the onset of the war to trace monuments with 3-D scanners and store a virtual record, should there be any need to recreate them in the future (Farago, 2022). An example of such an initiative is Backup Ukraine, a joint effort which was launched by UNESCO and Blue Shield Denmark. Despite the presence of international conventions like the 1954 Hague Convention and the 1972 UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage—both emphasising the need to safeguard and preserve cultural heritage and traditions for future generations—this war makes it very clear that Putin is willing to ignore them deliberately in order to erase any remnant of a separate Ukrainian identity.. Thus, such recreation and preservation efforts will be of extreme importance for the Ukrainians whose culture is increasingly under siege by Russian forces.

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COMMENT

Macron's visit to Africa: Three Takeaways

By Trisha Roy

The visit launched a strategy of reduced military presence in the African countries.

What happened?

On 04 March, French President Emmanuel Macron completed a four-day tour of Central Africa starting from 01 March 2023 wherein he visited Gabon, Congo, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The tour comes against the backdrop of France's failing reputation in the continent and a renewed scramble for Africa. The visit has been termed an attempt to 'reset' or 'redefine' the erstwhile colonial power's engagement with the region. However, this reset will require a non-armed approach, with a touch of humility.

During France's presence in the region, security conditions deteriorated, plummeting its popularity. Shifting away from its former colonies, Macron included visits to other non-French colonies such as Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Moving away from regions brewing with anti-French sentiments is strategically important for France if it wants to remain a key player in the region.

The visit launched a strategy of reduced military presence in the African countries. This comes after the setback France faced in Mali and Burkina Faso, where it launched ambitious military interventions to tackle terrorism.

Macron has tried to shift the focus away from politics by announcing French humanitarian aid to eastern DRC, including support for agriculture and forests. Recognising the increasing influence of other powers in the geo-strategically important continent, Macron pointed that "Africa is a theatre of competition. It has to be done in a fair framework ... We have our role to play, neither more nor less."

The visit follows several important developments bearing a significant impact on France - a renewed push from the United

States of America to strengthen its economic ties after a lull of over a decade, build up of Russian presence in Sahel, particularly of its private military contractor Wagner Group and China's diversified interest in Gabon and Angola. These have been coupled with France's exit from Mali and very recently Burkina Faso, breaking up of age-old military ties of these countries and a deepening security crisis in West Africa's Sahel region.

What are the major takeaways?

The following three takeaways can be identified.

1. Need to win hearts and not wars

The African theatre is increasingly becoming more complicated and competitive. What used to be a stronghold of France decades ago has gradually eroded. The anti-French sentiments in these African nations have brought a lens of scepticism through which the erstwhile colonies look at France. Given these underlying sentiments, an attempt to renew France's strategy will be difficult.

"The influence and status it once enjoyed has transformed and eroded to some extent over the years."

After a failed decade-long fight in the Sahel, France's capabilities and its intentions have begun to be questioned by the region. Jean Gaspard Ntoutoume Ayi, vice-president of Gabonese opposition party Union Nationale said there was no political or strategic coherence to this four-day trip. Hence, to win this war of influence, France will have to be a winner of the hearts of the new target states, alongside improving relations with countries it has already been engaged with for decades.

2. Jostling for influence

The tour comes at a juncture when global politics witness another war of influence, with different actors this time. Macron's visit follows several high-profile visits to the continent as each tries to expand its sphere of influence. China is known to have decades-long presence and deep-rooted economic ties, albeit often criticized for its debt-creating development projects across Africa. Russia is another entrant, which has been ousted with sanctions from Western countries for its year-long war in Ukraine. Russia has been eyeing Sudan, which was kept out of the Second US-Africa Leaders Summit in December 2022, for its strategic location next to the Red Sea and has a swaying influence over Sahel, a region where France had strategic interests up till now. The Wagner Group, Russia's private military contractor, is said to have entered regions where France has had influence. But anti-French sentiment has pushed France to withdraw from Sahel with Macron stating "France's role is not to fix all the problems in Africa." The tight rope on which France is walking on now needs to be tread with a balancing act.

3. Resetting a long due Africa policy

Macron pointed to a reduction in French military presence in the continent, but not a complete withdrawal. Following setbacks in

Mali and Burkina Faso, Macron is now looking for co-running France's military bases with the host nations. Macron claimed FrancAfrique, a reference used to explain France's relations with its erstwhile colonies, is a thing of the past. The time is ripe for France to reflect and reassess their policies in Africa. More unarmed cooperation with African nations will enable it to restore some trust and rebuild deeper relations if it wishes to maintain influence in the region.

The visit, thus, points to a shift in France's approach to the continent. The influence and status it once enjoyed has transformed and eroded to some extent over the years. Macron's strategy will have to make room for a sustained presence of France in this increasingly competitive arena. The President's approach of reduced military footprint in the continent is a step in the right direction to tackle the anti-French sentiment and suspicion on its intentions. The focus now should be on building a stronger democracy and ensuring grassroots development.

Trisha Roy is a PhD scholar at the CHRIST (Deemed-to-be University), Bangalore.

War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan, Rishika Yadav, Nityashree RB, and Sreeja JS



Source: Kremlin.ru, AP, AP/Alex Brandon/RT, REUTERS/Alexander Ermochenko/File Photo, gov.si, Concord Press Service/Reuters

War in Ukraine: Day 401

War on the Ground:

On 31 March, Ukraine observed the one-year anniversary of the liberation of Bucha, a Kyiv suburb, where Russian forces had left behind the bodies of executed civilians and destroyed military vehicles. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, along with leaders from Croatia, Moldova, and Slovakia, attended a ceremony in Bucha. A stage was constructed at the Saint Andrew church, for the commemorative ceremony.

On 31 March, Ukraine criticized the decision of Wimbledon organizers to lift the ban imposed on Russian and Belarusian tennis players. The players from these countries can participate if they are considered "neutral" athletes and comply with certain conditions, such as refraining from expressing support for Russia's invasion and not receiving funding from Russian or Belarusian state entities. Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba condemned the decision, urging the UK government to deny

visas to athletes from Russia and Belarus, whom he referred to as "accomplices in crime."

On 30 March, officials reported that Ukrainian forces successfully defended against multiple Russian assaults along the eastern front. According to a statement on Facebook by the Ukrainian military, they repelled a total of 47 enemy attacks. The areas targeted included Kupiansk, Limansk, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Mariinsk.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 31 March, Deutsche Welle reported that Russia is relying on volunteers rather than implementing a new partial mobilization to continue its war against Ukraine. The ongoing recruitment of former soldiers is another method used to enlist Russians for combat in Ukraine. The spring draft for basic military service is set to begin, with 147,000 men expected to be drafted, marking a 10

* 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.

per cent increase compared to the previous year.

On 31 March, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov presented an updated foreign policy doctrine, highlighting "existential threats" faced by Russia from "unfriendly states," particularly the United States. Lavrov stated: "Russia would respond with symmetrical and asymmetric measures to counter unfriendly actions."

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 31 March, Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez urged Chinese President Xi Jinping to engage in a conversation with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy regarding Ukraine's peace plan. Sanchez praised the plan as aligned with the principles of the United Nations, while criticizing Russia's invasion. On 31 March, the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, called for a ceasefire in Ukraine, proposing a truce without conditions for resolving all issues through negotiations. Lukashenko warned that a Ukrainian counteroffensive would hinder talks, and claimed that Russia's leadership would resort to devastating weaponry if faced with collapse. Additionally, he accused the West of plotting an invasion of Belarus, stating: "Their actions had sparked a full-scale war in Ukraine, raising the specter of a nuclear third world war."

On 31 March, according to the British Defense Ministry, Russia will face challenges in replacing its destroyed counter-battery radars in the ongoing Ukrainian conflict. The Russian ZOO-PARK-1M system, which detects projectiles and identifies the source, has been significantly depleted, hindering Russia's ability to replenish them due to disrupted supplies caused by sanctions.

On 30 March, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declared its intention to probe allegations of Ukrainian children being deported by Russian occupiers. The OSCE member countries will investigate these claims and present their findings to appropriate legal authorities. Russia denies the accusations, stating that it ensured the safety of the children.

On 30 March, according to the White House national security spokesperson, John Kirby, Russia is seeking to send a delegation to North Korea to exchange food for munitions. The White House accused Russia of actively pursuing additional weapons from North Korea for its invasion of Ukraine. A Slovakian national, aged 56, who allegedly facilitated a secret arms agreement between the two countries, has been sanctioned by the US Treasury. Secretary of State Antony Blinken emphasized that the US will persist in targeting those who support Russia's aggression and war in Ukraine, exposing and countering their attempts to acquire military equipment from North Korea or any other supporting state.

The Global Fallout: Implications of War

On 31 March, according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk, Russia's invasion caused severe human rights violations, displacements, and destruction in Ukraine. The ongoing war hinders global progress and must cease for peace to prevail.

On 31 March, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a four-year financing package of USD 15.6 billion for Ukraine, as part of a larger international support package totaling USD 115 billion. This funding aims to address Ukraine's balance of payments issue, restore debt sustainability, and promote external viability. The IMF's decision will enable the immediate disbursement of around USD 2.7 billion to Ukraine.

War in Ukraine: Day 399

War on the Ground:

On 29 March, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy extended an invitation to Chinese President Xi Jinping to visit Ukraine. Despite China's close alliance with Russia, Zelenskyy stated: "Beijing did not fulfill Putin's request for weapons and ammunition during their recent meeting in Moscow." Zelenskyy suggested that Putin's announcement of moving nuclear weapons to Belarus was a distraction from China's lack of assistance. China has presented a 12-

point plan for a political resolution in Ukraine, which Ukraine appreciates but insists on the withdrawal of Russian troops before negotiations.

On 29 March, Deutsche Welle reported that according to reports, Ukrainian forces have initiated artillery strikes on the Russian-controlled city of Melitopol in southeastern Ukraine. Military experts anticipate an upcoming Ukrainian offensive, with indications that Kyiv's troops may aim to reach the Black Sea through Melitopol in order to create a division between Russian occupying forces.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 29 March, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of the notorious private military group called the Wagner Group, revealed that his forces and equipment have suffered significant damage in eastern Ukraine. He stated in an audio message: "The battle for Bakhmut has inflicted heavy casualties on both the Ukrainian army and the Wagner Group." According to a report by the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Russia's gains include the main market area, and the Wagner troops are rapidly progressing towards the city center.

On 29 March, during a televised government meeting, Russian President Vladimir Putin acknowledged that Western sanctions against Russia could adversely affect its economy in the medium term. Putin, who has previously denied the negative impact of sanctions while warning of their consequences, stated: "While unemployment and inflation in Russia remained low, the country should not become complacent in its pursuit of economic growth."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 29 March, Deutsche Welle reported that the German budget committee has granted approval to a government request for a EUR 12 billion fund that will span until 2032, aimed at providing military assistance to Ukraine. The request, put forth by the defense ministry and foreign office, received approval from the Budget Committee of the German Bundestag. The fund includes EUR

08 million for direct supply to Ukraine and an additional EUR 04 million for replacing equipment provided by the German Bundeswehr to the Ukrainian military.

On 29 March, the Danish Energy Agency confirmed that the unidentified object found near the Nord Stream 2 pipeline was an empty maritime smoke buoy and does not pose any safety risks. The object was successfully retrieved from the Baltic Sea after a salvage operation conducted at a depth of 73 meters. The pipeline, designed to transport Russian gas to Europe, had previously experienced a suspected attack following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The New York Times reported that "pro-Ukrainian" groups were allegedly responsible, although Kyiv denied involvement.

On 29 March, Sweden's Foreign Ministry announced that it would call in Russia's ambassador to Stockholm for releasing a statement on the embassy's website. The statement warned that Sweden and Finland would become "legitimate targets" for Russian military measures if they joined NATO. Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom expressed the ministry's intention to strongly denounce this attempt at influence and reaffirmed that Sweden's security policy is determined solely by Sweden.

The Global Fallout: Implications of War

On 29 March, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi, arrived at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southeastern Ukraine. The IAEA and the international community have expressed ongoing concerns about the situation at Zaporizhzhia, where the plant has been targeted by Russian shelling and faced power outages, raising a potential nuclear disaster. The IAEA has had inspectors at the plant since September, but the situation remains precarious, according to Grossi.

War in Ukraine: Day 398

War on Ground:

On 28 March, according to Deutsche Welle, Ukrainian forces initiated artillery strikes on

the Russian-controlled city of Melitopol in southeastern Ukraine. Witnesses have observed power outages and damage to the city's train depot. Melitopol, situated approximately 120 kilometers away from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, has been under Russian occupation for over a year.

On 28 March, Deutsche Welle reported that Melitopol serves as a vital resupply for Russia, due to its strategic location between Crimea and other regional cities. On the same lines, military experts anticipate an upcoming Ukrainian offensive, with indications that Kyiv's troops may aim to reach the Black Sea via Melitopol in order to create a division between Russian occupying forces.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 28 March, Moscow claimed to have intercepted a Ground-launched Small Diameter Bomb (GLSDB), a guided smart bomb, fired by the Ukrainian military. This would be the first reported instance of Russian forces shooting down this weapon, which has the potential to extend the reach of Ukrainian attacks. Ukraine had long sought these weapons to target Russian command centers and supply lines beyond the front lines, and it is believed that the United States began supplying them this year.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 28 March, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Belarus's Foreign Ministry stated: "It has agreed to host tactical nuclear weapons as a means of self-protection," following years of "unprecedented pressure" from the West. Russian President Vladimir Putin recently announced plans to deploy weapons in Belarus, which received criticism from Ukraine and Western allies. NATO affirmed that Western allies adhere to their international commitments and dismissed Russian claims, noting that the US has followed a similar approach for many decades. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki stated that Belarus would face additional sanctions in response to this plan.

The Global Fallout: Implications of War

On 28 March, Deutsche Welle reported that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have issued guidelines recommending that Russian and Belarusian athletes participate in international sporting events as individuals or under "neutral" flags. The IOC advises against forming teams consisting of athletes with Russian or Belarusian passports or those who actively supported the war. The head of Russia's Olympic Committee, Stanislav Pozdnyakov, criticized the recommendations, deeming them "completely unacceptable" and asserting that they constitute nationality-based discrimination, as highlighted by international human rights experts.

War in Ukraine: Day 397

War on the Ground:

On 27 March, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense stated: "The soldiers have returned home to continue their fight against Russia's illegal invasion." After starting in January, Ukrainian crews finished their training on the British Challenger 2 main battle tanks, according to the UK government.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 27 March, despite Western criticism, the Kremlin affirmed its commitment to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus, disregarding potential sanctions from the EU and Ukraine's push for a UN Security Council meeting. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated: "Such reactions would not impact Russian plans." Putin emphasized that the agreement with Belarus aligns with international nuclear non-proliferation agreements, citing the United States' similar actions. The US National Security Council stated: "They haven't observed any indication of Russia planning to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine."

On 27 March, a Russian diplomat indicated that Moscow might seek compensation for the damage caused to the Nord Stream gas pipelines last September, without specifying any particular country. Russia's head of the Foreign Ministry for economic cooperation, Dmitry Birichevsky, mentioned the possibility of raising the issue of

compensation. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated: "Russia would determine the responsible parties before pursuing any compensation, accusing state actors and expressing Russia's determination to prevent any cover-up attempts by Western countries."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 27 March, *Deutsche Welle* reported that German Chancellor Olaf Scholz confirmed the delivery of 18 Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine, stating they were provided as promised. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius expressed confidence that the tanks would make a difference on the ground. Additionally, reports indicate that Britain's Challenger 2 tanks have also arrived in Ukraine, reflecting strong support from international partners.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of War

On 27 March, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Chief Rafael Grossi met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. Grossi expressed support for Ukraine's nuclear facilities and emphasized the need to protect the plant from potential meltdowns, given the ongoing conflict. Shelling has disrupted power supply, prompting the use of backup generators. Grossi has previously urged the establishment of a protection zone around the facility and criticized the presence of Russian military personnel and vehicles.

On 27 March, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Russia's attempt to obtain a UN Security Council request for an independent inquiry into the Nord Stream gas pipeline explosions was unsuccessful. Russia, China, and Brazil supported the proposal, while other members highlighted ongoing comprehensive investigations by Sweden, Denmark, and Germany. Russia's UN Ambassador emphasized the need for an objective and transparent international investigation to uncover the truth.

War in Ukraine: Day 394

War on the Ground:

On 24 March, according to one of the Ukrainian Ground Forces Commanders

Oleksander Syrskyi, the Wagner Group is losing their stand in Bakhmut. He added that Ukraine will make advantageous gains through offensive strategies. Ukraine's General Staff said that Russian attacks had rendered useless in Lyman, Avdiivka, Mariinka and Shakhtarske. In Kosyantynivka, airstrikes killed three people.

On 24 March, a homeless shelter in the Donetsk region was hit. According to Ukrainian Emergency Service, three women have died and two people were injured.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 24 March, the former Russian President who is now the Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said that Russia should advance until Kyiv or Lviv. He added that Russia has no intentions to go against NATO but it will not give up Crimea. Russia would resort to any weapon against those who threaten its sovereignty in Crimea, he asserted.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 24 March, German President Olaf Scholz and the French President acknowledged China's peace plan. Scholz said at an EU conference in Brussels: "We find it a matter of course that one should not only speak to the Russian president but also to the Ukrainian one." He added that the Ukrainian war would end if Russia withdraws its troops. He asked China to be wary of providing weapons to Russia though such accusations have not been confirmed by the US and the EU.

On 24 March, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Denmark's decision to involve Gazprom to help retrieve an object related to the pipeline explosion of 2022 is welcomed.

Danish government said that the object is tubular in size and of 10 centimetres in diameter, protruding 40 centimetres out of the sea.

On 24 March, Macron said, ahead of the visit to China with European Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen, that they would

unitedly urge China to push Russia to end the war in Ukraine.

Global Fallouts: Implications of War

On 24 March, according to Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine's head Matilda Bogner, summary executions were committed by Ukraine and Russia. The UN expressed its concerns. She added that the Wagner Group has been involved in 11 such executions. Ukraine is involved in five cases and Ukraine threatened the Prisoners of War with death, mock executions and sexual violence. Russia is accused of treating the Prisoners of War in a similar way and didn't provide basic needs.

Reference

["Ukraine updates: Kyiv prepares for counterassault,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 24 March 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 392

War on the Ground:

On 22 March, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Bakhmut which according to him has witnessed the bloodiest and longest battles. On visiting the Ukrainian troops in the frontlines he said: "I am honoured to be here today to award our heroes. To shake hands and thank them for protecting the sovereignty of our country."

On 22 March, Russian drones hit a high school near Kyiv. According to Ukraine's State Emergency Service, three people are dead, two are injured and one was rescued. They added that the attack has destroyed student dormitories situated on two floors and a studying area. The attack has caused the fire to spread 300 square metres. Ukraine's military said that the drones were Iran-made. According to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 20 Iranian drones along with several missiles were used during the attack.

On 22 March, former Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Ivanna Klymush Tsintsadze said that through the Chinese peace plan, peace can't be attained. She added that the plan contains no preconditions for peace as the plan doesn't involve Russia leaving Ukraine.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 22 March, Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit culminated. Xi left from the Vnukovo airport where a Guard of Honour was present and the Russian national anthem was sung.

On 22 March, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the West is always hostile towards China and Russia coming together while responding to US's comments. According to Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov: "As for the reaction of the collective West, the fact that on all issues this reaction took on an unfriendly and hostile nature is not new to anyone."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 22 March, the IMF approved a USD 15.6 billion loan to Ukraine for economic recovery. According to *Bloomberg*, this is the first time that IMF has provided a loan to a country involved in a war. The fund will be provided over four years. According to US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, along with the IMF loan, corruption-free governance is crucial for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

On 22 March, British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly rejected Russia's claims that the UK is supplying nuclear ammunition to Ukraine. He said that the ammunition doesn't contain any nuclear components. Cleverly said: "The only country in the world that is talking about nuclear issues is Russia. There is no threat to Russia, this is purely about helping Ukraine defend itself."

On 22 March, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Warsaw and met with his Polish counterpart Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. Kishida pledged support to Poland which is providing humanitarian, military and political aid to Ukraine. During the meeting, Marawiecki said that Poland and Japan understand that Russia is threatening world peace and international order through imperialist means.

On 22 March, the British Ministry of Defence said that Russian troops are slowing as Bakhmut grows resilient. The ministry

added that the slowdown of the Russian troops can be a consequence of the reallocation of the Russian units.

On 22 March, according to German Green MEP Reinhard Butikofer, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin are building a hegemonic order. He added that the visit was not just about providing support to Russia but about world domination.

On 22 March, the Swedish Parliament voted on the NATO bill and 269 members voted in favour of the bill while 37 voted against it. Finland has expressed interest to join NATO. Turkey has opposed Sweden joining NATO while it had ratified Finland joining NATO in the parliament. Hungary has also approved of Finland's accession into NATO.

Reference

["Ukraine updates: Zelenskyy visits troops near Bakhmut," Deutsche Welle, 22 March 2023](#)

War in Ukraine: Day 391

War on the Ground:

On 21 March, Ukrainian troops pushed back Russian advancement in Bakhmut. According to the Commander of Ukrainian Ground Forces Oleksander Syrskyi, Ukrainian forces are successful in destroying the Russian troops in the outskirts of Bakhmut. According to Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malyar: "the defence of Bakhmut is holding and the possibilities are not yet exhausted."

On 21 March, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Kyiv. He was supposed to return to Tokyo but made an unplanned visit to Ukraine. Kishida pledged solidarity and support to Ukraine. He expressed his anger towards the destruction of lives in the town of Bucha during his visit. Ukrainian First Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzheppar said that the strong cooperation between Ukraine and Japan was reflected through Kishida's visit.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 21 March, the second day of talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian

President Vladimir Putin continued.

According to Putin, the peace plan put forth by China aligned with the Russian approach and can be a possible solution to the war. Xi assured that China will play a constructive role to settle the conflict peacefully. Xi also extended an invitation to Putin to visit China.

On 21 March, Russia criticized the UK's supply of armour-piercing ammunition containing depleted Uranium. Putin said Russia might use weapons with nuclear components as the West did so, after the meeting with Xi. According to Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, this development might lead to a nuclear collision.

On 21 March, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said that two Tupolev Tu-95MS which have nuclear capability made a routine flight check in the Sea of Japan. He added that the planes complied with International Laws and flew over neutral waters.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 21 March, the White House said that China must urge Russia to end the war in Ukraine. According to the White House's National Security Spokesperson John Kirby, China must push Russia to withdraw from Ukraine. According to Kirby: "a cease-fire right now, freezing the lines where they are, basically gives him the time and space he needs to try to re-equip, to re-man, to make up for that resource expenditure." He added that China has not supplied arms and ammunition to Russia but it might do so in the future.

On 21 March, US Pentagon announced that it will be sending renewed M1A1 Abrams tanks which are easier to use as the new M2A2 will take more than a year to make. The US pledged that it will fast-track the supply of advanced air defences.

On 21 March, according to a senior fellow at the Munich Security Conference Niko Langa, China is making advantageous gains from Russia's isolation by buying oil for cheap prices. He added that the bilateral trade between China and Russia is increasing as

Russian raw materials and resources are being sold cheaply to China. The Chinese President Xi's visit comes after ICC's arrest warrant on Russian President Vladimir Putin. Commenting on this Langa said that Putin is proud now that he has an important visitor.

Reference

["Ukraine updates: Japan PM Kishida offers support to Kyiv," Deutsche Welle, 21 March 2023](#)

War in Ukraine: Day 390

War on the Ground:

On 20 March, the Ukrainian defence ministry's intelligence directorate claimed that the Russian Kalibr-KN cruise missiles exploded during transportation. The ministry added that the explosion took place in Dzhankoi in Northern Crimea.

On 20 March, the UK signed a deal with Ukraine that allows businesses to trade using electronic transactions, electronic signatures, and electronic contracts. According to British Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch, the deal will set a new path towards an era of modern trade. The UK has also extended the cutting of tariffs on Ukrainian imports till 2024.

On 20 March, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appreciated ICC's arrest warrant on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 20 March, reported that the Russian-installed head of the Dzhankoi administration Ivor Ivin has called the explosion a drone attack. Wagner Group head Yevgeny Prigozhin in a letter to Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu warned him that Kyiv will launch a large-scale attack in late March or April. He added that his forces will be isolated.

On 20 March, as a response to ICC's arrest warrant on Russian President Vladimir Putin, Moscow launched a probe into the ICC prosecutor Karim Khan who issued the warrant. Moscow will investigate judges involved in the arrest warrant issuing

process. According to the Investigative Committee, the arrest warrant on Putin was unlawful due to his immunity as a head of a State. The committee accused Khan's actions of complicating international relations.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 20 March, the EU decided to supply EUR two billion worth of ammunition to Ukraine. Through the deal, EUR one billion will be used to reimburse European countries which helped Ukraine by supplying arms and ammunition. The remaining EUR one billion to fast-track the supply of weapons to Ukraine. 1 million 155-millimetre artillery shells will be sent in the next 12 months by the EU.

On 20 March, Norway sent eight Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine. According to Lieutenant Colonel Lars Jansen, the tanks will give Ukraine an upper hand, in its offensive operations against the Russian troops.

On 20 March, the US announced that it will send EUR 326 million worth of military aid package. The package includes ammunition for weapons such as HIMRAS rocket launchers and HARM missiles.

On 21 March, as a response to Xi's meeting with Putin, and its 12-point peace proposal, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken asked the world not to be fooled by Chinese-backed plans. He added that war should not be stopped on Moscow's wishes after Xi called for a ceasefire.

Global Fallouts: Implications of War

On 20 March, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Russian President Vladimir Putin to propose a 12-point position paper on the Ukrainian war and to call for a cease-fire. The presidents will have an informal discussion over dinner and have a formal meeting on 21 March 2023.

On 20 March, China criticised the ICC's arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin on war crime charges. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin called out the

ICC to be impartial and respect the immunity of heads of State.

Reference

[“Ukraine updates: EU agrees €2 billion ammo plan for Kyiv,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 20 March 2023

Natasha May, Leonie Chao-Fong and Martin Belam, [“Russia-Ukraine war at a glance: what we know on day 390 of the invasion,”](#) *The Guardian*, 20 March 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 389

War on the Ground:

On 19 March, the Ukrainian Defence Ministry criticized Putin for visiting Mariupol in the Donetsk region and called the visit “as befits a thief.” Ukrainian Presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak slammed the visit by saying, “criminal always returns to the crime scene.” Russia launched its attack against Mariupol in February and continued fighting until it took the last defenders captive in May 2022.

The Moscow View:

Claims of Russia

On 19 March, the Kremlin announced the surprise visit of Putin to the occupied port city of Mariupol. It was the first time he visited the Russia-occupied Ukrainian territories. He visited several other locations in the city and spoke with the residents. Putin also met the top commander of his military operation in Ukraine at the Rostov-on-Don command post in Southern Russia.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 19 May, the German Justice Minister Marco Buschmann said in a newspaper interview that he expects ICC to contact signatory member states and ask them to enforce the warrant. He further added that if Putin enters Germany, it is obliged to arrest Putin and hand him over to ICC.

On 19 May, in its daily update, the British Ministry of Defence said that the Russian-installed government of Zaporizhzhia published a decree that temporarily declared Melitopol as the Oblast capital. Zaporizhzhia is one of the four oblasts Putin has claimed to have annexed by Russia in 2022. The Russian-installed head of the oblast, Evgeniy

Balitsky claimed this as a temporary measure until the city is under the direct control of Russia. According to the Ministry, Russia has never occupied the city and this move is a tacit acknowledgement that its forces cannot execute their previously planned major objectives in the near future.

The Global Fallouts:

Implications of War

On 19 May, the South African government commented on the ICC arrest warrant against Putin and remarked that it is “cognizant of its legal obligation” to arrest him if he sets foot in its territory. Putin is expected to visit the country for the 15th BRICS Summit in South Africa. There are no official confirmations yet. The government said it wants to remain neutral on the war in Ukraine.

Reference

[“Ukraine updates: Putin visits occupied city of Mariupol,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 19 May 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 388

War on the Ground:

On 18 March, Ukrainian Air Force reported the widespread drone attacks by Russia on Ukraine following the ICC’s arrest warrant against Putin and Russia’s commissioner for children’s rights. They said 16 drones attacked Ukraine, and 14 were shot down in the central, western and eastern regions headed primarily towards Kyiv and the Western Lviv province. The attacks were carried out from the Eastern coast of the Sea of Azov and Russia’s Bryansk province that borders Ukraine.

The Moscow View:

Claims of Russia

On 18 March, Putin arrived in Sevastopol, home of a major Russian naval base in Crimea, to mark the ninth anniversary of Russia’s annexation of the peninsula from Ukraine. Moscow-installed governor Mikhail Razvozhayev welcomed him, and they visited a new children’s centre and art school.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 17 March, Joe Biden said that Putin committed war crimes and justified ICC’s

decision to issue an arrest warrant against him. He further added that ICC makes a strong point even if the US does not recognize the body. US State Department spokesperson in an emailed statement said that Russia had committed war crimes in Ukraine and extended their support to ensure that the perpetrators are made accountable for the war crimes.

On 18 March, Zelenskyy's chief of staff said three senior US security officials held a video call to discuss providing military aid including particular vehicles, weapons and ammunition to Kyiv.

On 18 March, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz welcomed the decision of the ICC to issue an arrest warrant against Putin. He added that ICC is the right institution to investigate war crimes and the arrest warrant shows that "nobody is above the law."

On 18 March, the British Defence Ministry conveyed that the Russian authorities might be preparing to facilitate wider military conscription to support its military requirements. According to the ministry, Russian Duma deputies have introduced a bill to change the age bracket for conscription of men from 18 to 27 to 21 to 30. The law might be passed and likely to come into force in January 2024 because men belonging to 18 to 27 age are claiming exemption due to being in higher education in large numbers. Even if the law is passed exempting the students, they will be forced to serve eventually.

Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 18 March, mediators from the UN, Turkey, Russia and Ukraine said that the grain deal allowing the safe export of grains from Ukrainian Black Sea ports is extended after a long series of discussions and disagreements. Russia said it would extend the deal only by 60 days while Ukraine wanted 120 days. After the talks concluded, both Moscow and Kyiv claimed to have won the argument.

On 17 March, IMF approved rule changes that will allow it to sanction new loans to countries facing "exceptionally high

uncertainty." Thus Ukraine is likely to receive a new Ukraine loan program and is seeking a package of around USD 15 billion. IMF's previous rules did not allow non-emergency loans for countries facing uncertainties like wars or natural disasters. According to the revised rules, the countries can receive loans if official bilateral creditors and donors provide upfront assurances about repayment to IMF.

Reference

"[Ukraine updates: Putin visits Crimea on date of annexation](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 18 March 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 387

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 17 March, Russia's Defence Ministry said it would award pilots involved in crashing the American drone on 15 March based on the recommendation of Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu. Moscow said it had established airspace restrictions over the Black Sea following international norms as part of its military intervention in Ukraine.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 17 March, the Slovak government approved sending 13 MIG-29 to Ukraine to accelerate its military assistance to Kyiv in its fight against the Russian invasion. Slovakia thus became the second country to send planes after Poland announced it would send four MIG-29 jets to Ukraine a day before. According to Slovakian Prime Minister Edmund Heger, Slovakia will also supply part of its KUB air defence system.

On 17 March, the British Defence Ministry remarked that the Russian forces made significant progress in Bakhmut and gained the west of Bakhmuta River in the centre of the contested town. According to its daily intelligence update, the river marked the front line. Ukrainian forces continue to defend the west of Bakhmut.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 17 March, ICC (International Criminal Court) issued an arrest warrant against Putin, accusing him of committing war

crimes in Ukraine. The warrant came into force because of the suspicious unlawful deportation of children and transfer of people from Ukraine to Russia. The court also issued a warrant against Russia's commissioner for child rights on similar charges.

On 17 March, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that President Xi Jinping plans to travel to Russia next week at the invitation of Putin from 20 to 22 March. This will be Xi Jinping's first visit to Moscow since Russia's Ukraine invasion.

Reference

["Ukraine updates: Slovakia to send MIG-29 jets to Ukraine,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 17 March 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 385

War on the Ground:

On 15 March, during his daily address, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated the determination of Ukraine's military leaders in inflicting maximum damage on Russia. The military officials have unanimously agreed to defend Bakhmut, where intense fighting has been going on with Russia pushing to take control of the area in Donetsk province. Bakhmut could boost Russian offence to take control of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, the two big Donetsk cities. The commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, in his meeting with Zelenskyy, said that the defensive operation in Bakhmut is of paramount strategic importance to deter the enemy. It is also the key to the stability of the defence of the entire front line.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 14 May, Russian fighters intercepted an American drone over the Black Sea. Russia's ambassador called on Washington to stop "hostile" flights near Russia. He said that any action involving US weaponry would be considered openly hostile. Russia retaliated by dumping fuel on the drone, causing it to crash. Russian Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev said that Moscow would work to retrieve the drone's ruins. He also claimed that the incident confirmed the

direct participation of Washington in the war.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 14 May, the US military slammed Russia for wrecking an American drone calling the manoeuvre "reckless." Ukrainian Air Force defended the deployment of US reconnaissance drones after the incident saying that the Black Sea is not an internal sea of Russia. Germany's armed forces commissioner Eva Högl, called for additional funding to be earmarked for the armed forces beyond the EUR 100 billion already supplied as part of a one-off fund.

References

["Ukraine updates: Kyiv adamant about defense of Bakhmut,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 15 March 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 383

War on the Ground:

On 13 March, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his address stated that winning Bakhmut and the situation in the front line would be a decider for Ukraine. He added: "It is very tough in the east — very painful. We have to destroy the enemy's military power. And we will destroy it." According to the report in *Deutsche Welle*, the "trench warfare" in the zone incurred heavy losses for Ukraine and Russia.

On 13 March, Ukraine's military analyst Oleh Zhdanov in an interview with Reuters highlighted how Ukraine has begun to send its reserves for the fight in Bakhmut. He warned over the use of such reserves as they were scheduled to be used for counter offensives. According to Oleh: "If we simply give up Bakhmut and withdraw our troops and equipment, nothing terrible can happen."

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 13 March, TASS reported on extension of the grain deal. Russia stated that it would continue automatically if there are no objections from the parties to the agreement. It conditioned that it would agree the extension period to be only half of the 120-day of the earlier renewal.

On 13 March, Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu stated that relations between Russia and China had been the major support to the stability. On the same day Russia's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stressed that Russia's priority will remain to win war through military means and it does not foresee any "preconditions" in the war to shift into a peaceful course.

The West View:

Responses from the West and Europe

On 13 March, Germany's Air Force issued on statement on the usage of its fighter jets. Since August 2022, the group has deployed fighter jets 27 times in the Baltic area. During the operation it identified Russia's military aircraft and the air force's Eurofighter had issued an alert without transponder or radio. Till now the three Baltic states which lack their own air forces, has now been utilised by the NATO in the Åmari and Siauliai in Lithuania zones to oversee the airspace position in the Baltic.

On 13 March, France's President Emmanuel Macron and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban discussed on the EU's stance in Ukraine war. Orban termed the war as "indirect war" and Macron recalled for the united posture of the EU to face Russia. They also discussed on Finland and Sweden's accession.

On 13 March, the UK announced the update to its foreign policy framework on investing additional GBP five billion to its armed forces in next two years. This means the total defence expenditure will now come to 2.5 per cent of its GDP. Of the allotted five billion, three is expected to be spent on nuclear and submarine capabilities and remaining to help Ukraine restock its weapons.

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["Ukraine updates: Zelenskyy says future depends on Bakhmut,"](#) *Taiwannews*, 13 March 2023

["Russia's goals in Ukraine now can only be achieved by military means, says Kremlin,"](#) *TASS*, 13 March 2023

["Grain deal to be extended automatically unless sides object — source,"](#) *TASS*, 14

March 2023

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[world,"](#) *independent.co.uk*, 13 March 2023

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["Ukraine updates: Zelenskyy says future depends on Bakhmut,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 13 March 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 381 & 382

War on the Ground:

On 11 March, *Ukrinform* reported on Kharkiv's nature management committee estimated a total environmental damage of UAH two trillion during the war. This includes "land and air pollution, burned forests, and destroyed objects." According to the committee, it will be assessing the damage to the environment on the basis of intentional or accidental. Ukraine's Environmental Ministry has urged the government agencies to draft concept and restoration programme to bring back Ukraine's ecology.

On 11 March, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba demanded Germany to fasten the ammunition delivery due to the growing shortages. He remarked that Ukraine does not expect fighter jets to be supplied but the Ukrainian soldiers require training.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 12 March, *TASS* reported on Russia's Air Defence claims on shelling down Ukraine's "two Mi-8 helicopters, seven HIMARS and Uragan rockets. On the same day, Russia's retired Colonel Andrey Marochko reported on Russia's air force position in critical industrial zone of Artyomovsk (Bakhmut). He said: "...to control the movement of the enemy and also creates a good bridgehead for further advancement."

On 11 March, the Wagner group Founder released a video from Bakhmut confirming the advance of the forces into Bakhmut and capturing of the eastern part of the city. He said the Russian forces are near to the center, 1.2 kilometres away from the administrative center.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 11 March, ISW on the contrary to the claims of the Wagner Group Founder, observed no advance by Russia in Bakhmut. Although the report confirms a heavy shelling and due to the group hold in “urban areas,” advancing could be difficult. On 12 March, ISW brought out the possible clash between Russia’s military and the Wagner Group over heading the war and securing ammunition.

On 11 March, Denmark’s Defence Ministry issued a statement on the delivery of first set of Leopard 1 tanks to Ukraine. The project was carried under the collaboration of Denmark, Netherlands and Germany, which has pledged to provide 100 tanks to Ukraine. On the same day, Canada announced a ban on Russia’s steel and aluminium product imports along with iron, non-alloy steel and semi-finished goods such as tubes and pipes.

On 11 March, the UK Ministry of Defence confirmed the advance of Wagner Group in the front line of Bakhmut and warned that it would be difficult for the group to go further. In a statement: “It will be “highly challenging” for Wagner forces to push ahead, as Ukraine has destroyed key bridges over the river. Ukrainian sniper fire from fortified buildings further west has made the thin strip of open ground in the center “a killing zone.”

On 12 March, UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update reported on the intensity of the casualties in Russia. It observed Russia’s elite cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg seem to have no damages, whereas the eastern regions the number of deaths were 30 times high. The Ministry also reported on how the ethnic minorities experienced the worst damage accounting for 75 per cent.

On 12 March, Switzerland’s State Secretary for Migration reported on the total registration of refugees totalling to 75,000 at six asylum centres. According to the State Secretary, before the war, 11,000 Ukrainians lived in Switzerland, who bridged in taking the other fleeing after war. The count of the

Ukrainian refugees at present is three times of those from Afghanistan, Turkey, Syria.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 12 March, the Government of UAE announced a humanitarian support of USD 100 million to Ukraine. The move follows the meet Ukraine’s First Deputy Minister and UAE’s Economy Minister to Ukraine. UAE has also volunteered to give five million “energy-saving LED lamps.”

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War in Ukraine: Day 379

War on the Ground:

On 09 March, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported on sporadic strikes across Kyiv, Odesa, and Kharkiv, which affected the power supply. Ukraine’s Air Force claimed on Russia’s missile launches numbered to 81 along with eight

Shahed drones and six Kinzhal hypersonic missiles. Ukraine's Foreign Minister called the attack as "just Russian barbarism."

On 09 March, Ukraine's nuclear energy generating company Energoatom reported on power outage due to the attack on the power grid. In a statement: "Today, the last line of communication between the occupied Zaporizhzhia NPP and the Ukrainian power system has been cut off. Fuel for operation remains for ten days."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 09 March, the Wagner Group Head, Yevgeny Prigozhin continue to claim the capture of east part of Bakhmut. This is yet to be confirmed, but Ukraine armed forces has said that in spite of massive loss, Russia still continues to fight in Bakhmut.

On 09 March, on the Nord Stream pipeline damage, Russia's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded to report in The New York Times. He stressed on finding out those responsible behind the damage and added that Russia would not blow "its own infrastructure." Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov highlighted Saudi Arabia's efforts in facilitating the prisoner exchange with Ukraine.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 09 March, on the fighting in Bakhmut, NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg observed more troops being deployed by Russia, while the quality is limited as it focuses on quantity. Despite Russia facing too many losses, capturing of Bakhmut can still be possible according to Stoltenberg.

On the same day, EU Foreign Policy Chief, Josep Borell proposed for an additional spending of EUR one billion to purchase ammunition for Ukraine and replenish EU's stock. This came after the defence minister's meeting.

On 09 March, following Poland's statement on providing fighter jets to Ukraine, Slovakia's Defence Minister said that they will soon decide on sending the MiG-29 fighters jets.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 09 March, on the Russian attacks on the Ukraine's energy grid, IAEA Head Rafael Grossi urged the board of governors to ensure protection of Zaporizhzhia plant. He mentioned that it was sixth time the plant went short of power completely and has been functioning on emergency mode.

War in Ukraine: Day 378

War on the Ground:

On 08 March, Ukraine's state energy entity's Head, reported on growing difficulty for Ukraine in meeting the power shortage while new Russian attacks take place. The Head remarked that the worst winter was over but the recurring attacks on the energy grids of Ukraine has resulted in power outages, scare heating and water.

On 08 March, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres arrived to Ukraine to meet Zelenskyy. The discussion centered on the extension of the grain deal. Guterres stressed on the independence and continuity of the deal. According to him, the deal which is about to expire had helped in reducing the global food cost and has helped in critical segment of people from paying high prices. He added: "We will continue to support solutions for humanitarian problems wherever possible on every front."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 08 March, *RT* reported on position of Russia's military in Bakhmut. The Wagner Group Head Evgeny Prigozhin claimed of capturing the eastern part of the city. On the same, a video from the zone along with T-34 tank was released. The report also indicated the confirmation of ISW think tank on the capture.

On 08 March, *RT* reported on Zelenskyy's comments on Ukraine's goal in Bakhmut. In the report, the capturing of Bakhmut by Russia would mean link to reach Kramatorsk and Slavyansk giving Russia advantage to move further towards Donetsk.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 08 March, in the EU Defence Ministers meet, they announced the investment of EUR

two billion toward purchase of artillery shells and rounds for Ukraine. Estonia's Defence Minister proposed its plan to the EU, stating the assured investment might be insufficient and stressed on the EU to spend EUR four billion in purchasing one million 155mm shells for Ukraine.

On 08 March, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg warned that Bakhmut might fall, but it would not decide the larger gamut of war. He stressed on the US and Europe to speed up the military production as the consumption rate is much higher.

On 08 March, Poland's President Andrej Duda announced the intension to support Ukraine with MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine and to also consider US F-16 in the future. He said: "We are ready to deliver these aircraft and I am sure Ukraine would be ready to use them immediately."

On 08 March, the White House released a statement on the call held between the US President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron. The discussion was on efforts to continue the support for Ukraine in the second year along with addressing the challenges posed by China in the world order.

On 08 March, Sweden's Ministry for Foreign Affairs announced EUR 11 million aid to support Ukraine's women and girls. The provided aid aimed to help humanitarian aid and create opportunities for both short and long term. It will also support the health care infrastructure. According to Minister for International Development Cooperation: "These earmarked funds can be used for.... clinics, equipment to prevent maternal and infant mortality, and protection and support for victims of conflict-related sexual violence."

On 08 March, the German Federal Ministry of Defense during the EU Defence Ministers meeting announced its target to train 9000 soldiers of Ukraine armed forces by 2023. The meeting mainly focuses on discussion efforts to improve military aid to Ukraine.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 08 March, the IMF initiated discussion with Ukraine official to create a "cooperation" programme. In a statement:

"An IMF mission, led by Gavin Gray, starts policy discussions today with the Ukrainian authorities on a potential Fund-supported program." The IMF team is expected to work on the agenda of the programme from 08 to 15 March from Poland.

On 08 March, South Korea along with Poland agreed to supply howitzers to Ukraine that are manufactured with "components" from South Korea. The weapon systems known as "Krab" has been claimed by the South Korea's Defence Ministry as holder of components from many countries and not narrowing to South Korea alone.

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War in Ukraine: Day 377

War on the Ground:

On 07 March, *Ukrinform* reported on Severodonetsk District Military Administration, Head reported on how Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, and Rubizhne has been used by Russian military as base. He said: "There are places where troops are stationed, ammunition depots. There are training centers on the outskirts of

Severodonetsk. There are bases of Russian troops almost everywhere in the district.”

On 07 March, Ukraine State Border Guard Service with help from aerial surveillance forces reported on elimination of seven Wagner groups in Bakhmut. According to the report in the attempt by Wagner group in Bakhmut were blocked by Ukrainians which pushed them to step back. The surveillance took place using drone, and mortar units. On the same Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said: “The command unanimously supported this position. There were no other positions. I told the commander-in-chief to find the appropriate forces to help our guys in Bakhmut.”

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 March, *RT* reported on Ukraine’s demand for “cluster munition,” to target Russia’s military. According to the report, the weapons are barred in 100 countries due to its “high risk” nature for people. It especially highlighted Ukraine’s ask for MK-20 Cluster bombs that can be deployed through drones.

On 07 March, *RT* reported on Russia’s Defence Minister comments on benefit of capturing Artyomovsk (Bakhmut). According to the Defence Minister: “Taking [Artyomovsk] under control will allow further offensive actions deep into the defense of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.” Artyomovsk is observed as key base for Ukraine to operate its supplies as it provides a 70 kilometres line and functions as protection against fighting in Donbass. The report also confirmed the circling of the are from north, east and south, the Defence Minister accused the West for boosting the military supplies and equipment to Ukraine. On the same the Wagner group Head, Yevgeny Prigozhin continues to warn about the shortages in “ammunition, and reinforcements.”

The Defence Ministry also confirmed on the prisoner exchange where 90 were sent back into Russia and 130 were sent into Ukraine, including 126 being servicemen and service women.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 07 March, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg issued a statement on increasing the need to boost military aid to Ukraine in the meeting with Defence Ministers in Sweden. He highlighted the situation to be turning into “war of attrition” and so increasing problems in logistics, thereby ensuring increased ammunition production has become important.

On 07 March, Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the extension of training period to October. Apart from this Canada also committed to provide USD one billion as military aid to Ukraine which includes Leopard tanks, armoured vehicles, surface to air missiles and munitions.

On 07 March, *The New York Times* reported on the US’s report on Nord-Stream pipelines. According to the report, the pro-Ukrainian groups have been suspected behind the damage in the Nord Stream pipelines. Germany’s *Die Zeit* a weekly says that Poland based company had influenced the Saboteur team, but the investigations does not give evidence on those responsible for the destruction of pipeline.

On 07 March, Poland’s Defence Minister announced to supply 10 more Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, with four already delivered 14 will be the total pledged number of tanks.

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War in Ukraine: Day 376

War on the Ground:

On 06 March, Ukraine's Ground Force Commander, Oleksandr Syrskyi stated that the fight in the Bakhmut had reached its peak point as Russia adds more forces from the Wagner Group. He said: "The enemy threw into the battle Wagner's additional forces. Our soldiers are courageously defending their positions in the north of Bakhmut, trying to prevent encirclement." On the same, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy issued a statement on the meeting with army general. He calling for "operation in Bakhmut" in the meeting, where they vouched for reinforcement and not withdrawal.

On 06 March, Ukraine's spokesperson reported on demographic challenges faced by the government in bringing back the people who fled during the war. The spokesperson urged the respective community chiefs to take efforts to ensure the return. Only through such efforts Ukraine economy can grow back and for production, capacity would be needed to deploy.

On 05 March, Ukraine's National Guard for Bakhmut area, Volodymyr Nazarenko reported on Ukraine forces hold over Bakhmut-Kostiantynivka highway. This highway is seen as the most crucial for Ukraine supplies to enter and exit and according to Nazarenko there have been no "tactical changes." He denied withdrawal and assured Ukraine's defence hold.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 06 March, TASS reported on losses suffered by Ukraine in Artyomovsk (Bakhmut). According to the report it confirmed the destruction of bridges by Ukraine and deployment of small troops in the zone. Till now neither Russia nor Ukraine have disclosed the exact number of losses.

On 06 March, DPR spokesperson Denis Pushlin reported on the number of Ukrainian soldiers in Artyomovsk. He stated that close to 10,000 were present, while many have been attempted by Russia to shell down, the Wagner group claims "strong resistance" from Ukraine forces.

On 06 March, Wagner mercenary group head, Yegveny Prigozhin reported on the permission denial to get access of Russia's military headquarters in Ukraine. The request to access came after the Wagner group demanded for ammunition supply earlier. He said: "The situation will not be sweet for all military formations protecting Russian interests."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 06 March, on the situation in Bakhmut, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin stated that Russia winning control over the city would not mean Ukraine's losing in the larger conflict. He said: "I think it is more of a symbolic value than it is strategic and operational value." On the same *ISW* reported on strained supplies and narrowing routes for Ukraine to replenish its weapons into Bakhmut.

On 06 March, Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anusauskas after the meeting with Ukraine's Defence Minister, announced the preparation of new aid package for Ukraine. He said since the war, Lithuania has not only strengthening its military capabilities but also supporting Ukraine. Till now Lithuania has sent military aid worth EUR 409 million.

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War in Ukraine: Day 374 & 375

War on the Ground:

On 04 March, Ukraine's East Group of Armed Forces spokesperson reported on Russia destroying the bridge linking Bakhmut with Khromove, a nearby village. According to the report the situation remains difficult and has become the prime target for both Ukraine and Russia.

On 05 March, Ukraine border service reported on the incapability of the forces to get through the "zone of permanent fire damage." In the report it stated the investigation on Russian losses was on going and observes the attacks by Russia to be severe across Donetsk. In a statement: "The enemy set up positions by the forest strip, firing at Ukrainian positions. Due to effective spotting by our aerial reconnaissance, the target was destroyed."

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 05 March, *RT* reported on Ukraine's new automatic system which screens out "malicious websites" used in scamming and phishing. According to the report, the system will list out such websites every 15 minutes that can be blocked. The Ukraine's National Center for Operating and Management of Telecommunication Networks said: "The system is not intended for filtering domains and restricting access to Internet resources that are used to spread malicious programs, propaganda, disinformation, etc., as well as for Internet resources restricted under sanctions."

On 04 March, Russia's Defence Minister, Sergey Shoigu visit to Donetsk was reported in *RT*. Upon the visit the Defence Minister discussed on "medical units and broader supply issues." The visit comes amidst heavy shelling in the Bakhmut area.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 05 March, UK's Intelligence observed that Russia had advanced further into Bakhmut "northern suburbs," which pushed Ukraine to destroy its two important bridges which operated as "resupply route. On the ISW, the US based think tanks reported on Ukraine making move to withdraw from the eastern front of the Donetsk. According to *Deutsche*

Welle, Russia capturing Bakhmut would mean a on ground benefit to bar Ukraine's supply route and additional advantage to proceed to hold strong in eastern Donetsk.

On 05 March, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz after meeting US President Joe Biden stated that only on Russian withdrawal can initiate negotiation. He mentioned how static the next months can be, but Germany will continue to support Ukraine in all domains. Scholz assured the help to Ukraine and expressed his intention to talk with other EU member states to guarantee security for Ukraine.

On 04 March, NATO's Commander in Chief, Christopher Cavoli reported on the total loss of personnel for Russia were 200,000 soldiers and 1800 officers since the war began. In an average he observed close to 23,000 artillery rounds to be fired each day by Russia.

On 05 March, Italy's Minister of Entrepreneurship and National Production highlighted the importance of helping Ukraine build the transport corridor linking Northern Italian cities. This is expected to facilitate as "logistics and port platform" to alternate the sea blockade Ukraine experiences. The Minister said: "One of the cornerstones on which measures to restore Ukraine will be based is precisely the railway infrastructure and port logistics platform of northeastern Italy."

The Global Fallouts:

Implications of the war

On 04 March, the Republic of Korea sent four excavators as part of the restoration aid to Ukraine. This will help in speeding the repair work of energy infrastructure according to the Energy Ministry of Ukraine. It also reported of receiving 10 sets of "humanitarian aid from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. Since the war Republic of Korea has focused in ensuring support to Ukraine energy sector thorough solar panels, critical infrastructure and civil protection.

On 05 March, *RT* reported on highest record of oil exports to India. According to the report India ranked the third highest importer of Russian crude oil after China and the US. It also highlighted an increase of 28

per cent in the oil exports on month-on-month basis. In 2021 Russia had imported less than one per cent and as of 2023 it amounts to 35 per cent.

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War in Ukraine: Day 372

War on the Ground:

On 02 March, Ukrinform reported on German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announcement to provide Gepard self-propelled guns, and Iris-T systems. He also assured the production of projectiles and spare parts for Ukraine. Till now close to 3,000 Ukrainians have been trained in Germany, which has become the central hub for training.

On 02 March, Ukraine's Finance Ministry reported on the total borrowings of Ukraine against the state budget. The borrowings was summed to UAH 226.8 for the period January – February 2023, accounting for 58.8 per cent of the budget. According to the report, the allocation for placement bonds

was increased to UAH 84 billion, military government bonds was for UAH 21.8 billion and UAD 142.8 billion was raised through external support. For 2022 state borrowings to the state budget amounted to UAH 1,261.1 billion.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 02 March, RT reported on the meet between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during the G20 summit in New Delhi. During the meeting Blinken urged Russia to sign back to the START treaty, while Lavrov stressed on the "hybrid war" of the US on Russia as deterrence to discussion.

On 02 March, Russia's Bryansk Region Governor, reported on Ukraine strike in Russia's border villages Lyubechane and Sushany. According to the Governor: "...today a sabotage-reconnaissance group intruded from Ukraine." On the same, the Federal Security Service (FSB) confirmed that the situation in Bryansk was in control but two were reported to have injured. Russia's President Vladimir Putin called the incident as "terrorist attack." He did not assert it to be Ukraine but issued a warning.

On 02 March, Bank of Russia Head Elvira Nabiullina, stated that the sanctions imposed by the West would not create shock for Russia's banking system. According to her, the banks that were subject to sanctions had adjusted and remaining had enough time to reduce the assets that were restricted by sanctions. She added that, it can impact the "dynamics of the banking sector and to some extent Russia's economy. Although the measure taken by Russia was not disclosed, Nabiullina says that they are being take to reduce the impact of sanctions.

On 02 March, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson condemned the movement of "Serbia-made ammunition" into Ukraine. In a statement: "This is too serious an issue, with implications on Russian-Serbian relations, to react reflexively." In the report, Krusik weapons works had sold rockets to a Turkish which was reported to have sent into Ukraine through Slovakia. RT reported that the 122-millimeter projectiles used in

M-21 multiple rocket launcher is used by Russia and Ukraine. In response, representative from Krusik countered saying the sale contract included a condition of being used by the Turkish and not re-export. On the same lines, Serbia's Defence Minister denied such export of weapons to Ukraine.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 02 March, UK intelligence in its daily update observed how increasing temperatures during spring would form "muddy conditions" which will restrict cross country movement. This is seen as an advantage for those defending and impose limitations in movement of heavy armoured vehicles, especially in Bakhmut.

On 02 March, Olaf Scholz in his address to the parliament urged China not to provide weapons to Russia in the Ukraine war. Instead he urged China to use its influence in making Russia withdraw. He stressed that there can be no peace without inclusion of Ukrainians and added: "The government I lead never takes decisions on arms deliveries lightly."

On 02 March, during the G20 meeting organized by India, the major discussion among the Foreign Minister weighed on Ukraine war. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "We should not allow issues that we cannot resolve together to come in the way of those we can." EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell expressed his confidence in India to take efforts in making Russia understand about bringing the war to an end. On the same Blinken said: "If Russia — President Putin — were genuinely prepared to engage in meaningful diplomacy necessary to end the aggression, of course we'd be the first to work to engage, but there's zero evidence of that."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 02 March, the IMF mission on Ukraine stated that from 08 March to 15 March, discussion on future cooperation programme will be discussed. According to the Finance Minister parameters to establish a full programme will be discussed during the meet along with terms and scope.

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War in Ukraine: Day 371

War on the Ground:

On 01 March, Ukraine armed forces, General Staff updated on the ground situation. According to the report Ukraine's air force had carried out 16 strikes in Russian controlled areas in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, as it observed Russia shifting into offensive mode. It observed the Russian strikes to be targeted in "Kupiansk, Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Shakhtarsk directions."

On 01 March, Ukraine's armed forces eastern command spokesperson Serhii Cherevatyi reported on the nature of the Wagner Group soldiers. He stated that Russia had deployed soldiers who had previously fought in Syria and Libya for the fight in Bakhmut. He said: "A characteristic feature is that the enemy threw the most prepared Wagner units into the attack." Cherevatyi confirmed the continued "heavy fighting" in Bakhmut and how Ukrainians have been successful in inflicting "enormous losses" for Russia.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 01 March, on the fight in Bakhmut, the Wagner Group Founder Yevgeny Prigozhin reported on fierce fighting by the Ukraine forces to deter Russia from capturing the city. He added that Ukraine was deploying extra reserve units in Bakhmut which has challenged Russia's move to encircle the city. Prigozhin said: "Tens of thousands of Ukrainian army fighters are putting up furious resistance. The bloodiness of the battles is growing by the day."

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 01 March, Finland's Parliament passed a bill with maximum votes in favour of Finland joining NATO. Due to Turkey and Hungary's bloc on Sweden and Finland over security concerns, the accession has been prolonged, but Hungary will be holding a vote by 09 March to decide its stance. While the both place a block, Finland is expected to join first as Turkey is against Sweden's accession, as it consider it be protecting the Kurdish terrorists.

On 01 March, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced the plan to increase the "ammunition production capacity," along with "replacement and repair" capability. This would continue to proceed as the support to Ukraine goes on.

On 01 March, US President Joe Biden announced the extension of sanctions on Russia for another year. The decision comes after the US made an assessment that action and policies taken by Russia continue to threaten Ukraine's "peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity."

The Global Fallouts:

Implications of the war

On 01 March, Germany's car manufacturer Volkswagen (VW) reported on its efforts to sell the plant located in Kaluga, a city in Russia. According to a spokesperson from VW: "One of the options is to sell the assets of Volkswagen Group Rus, and thus also the plant in Kaluga, to a third party... Talks on this are ongoing and a decision has not yet been finalized." Russia's car dealer Avilon was reported to be interested in taking over the plant. The VW operating in Russia stopped its manufacturing along with

exports to Russia in March 2022, upon one of its co-owner Oleg Deripaska coming under the sanction list.

On 01 March, Deutsche Welle reported on G20 Foreign Ministers meeting in New Delhi. US spokesperson Antony Blinken, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is expected to attend the meeting. Although the discussion will be on addressing poverty, and climate finance, Ukraine war will form the center of the discussion.

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War in Ukraine: Day 370

War on the Ground:

On 28 February, the Ukraine armed forces Commander reported on the battle situation in Bakhmut to be "extremely tense." He remarked that despite Russia facing losses, it has been deploying Wagner group to break into the defences held by Ukrainian forces. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy added: "The enemy is constantly destroying everything that can be used to protect our positions for fortification and defence."

On 28 February, Ukraine government announced its decision to apply for candidacy in the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for 2023 to 2025. Ukraine's Energy Minister highlighted how Ukraine continues to strive to align with European energy market as per

the Ukraine energy strategy till 2050. It prioritises nuclear generation and renewable energy as way to bifurcate Ukraine's power system.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 28 February, Russia's President Vladimir Putin in his address in the meeting with the Federal Security Service, took stock of 2022 operations and highlighted areas to work better for future. He asked to continue the assistance given to the armed forces especially in "counterintelligence" and exchange of "operational significant information." Putin stressed on increasing the support for the security agencies in DPR, LPR, Zaporozhzhia and Kherson areas by adding more equipment, and operational capability. He called for protection of law enforcement structures, critical technologies, personal data and strengthening of economic security in the face of special military operation. On the same day, Putin signed the law ending Russia's contract to the New START Treaty.

On 28 February, Russia imposed a fine on Wikimedia Foundation for "spreading misinformation." It fined EUR 25,000 on the Organization for not removing two articles relating to war.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 28 February, after the Samak Nordic summit NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that Ukraine becoming a NATO member remains a long-term goal and the present issue relates to fighting for sovereignty and providing support. He stressed on how NATO must act to prevent such future wars and has to take measure to ensure Russia does not break into European and Ukraine security. Stoltenberg added: "I hear concerns that our support increases the risk of escalation. But as long as our biggest neighbor is willing to invade another country, there are no risk-free

options...supporting Ukraine is not only the morally right thing to do. It is also in our own security interest." He also highlighted how NATO keeps Finland and Sweden accession as first and increase the exercises in the Nordic to assure the security.

On 28 February, Turkey's State Agency of Land Melioration and Fisheries approved the quality standard certificate to Ukraine to export its fish products. According to the report: "From now on, Ukrainian producers of fish products have new opportunities to sell their own products - the export market to Türkiye has opened." *Ukrinform* reported on 2022 figures, where Ukraine had exported 8,400 tonnes of fishes and aquatic biological products. This is exported to Moldova, Germany, the US, Denmark, and Lithuania. Since the approval, Ukraine now will be able to export to Turkey.

On 28 February, Finland began to construct 200 kilometre fence on the border shared with Russia. This will start with forest clearance and then proceed to road construction and plotting of the fence, it is planned to be three-kilometer long in the southeastern border crossing, estimated to be completed by June. Another set of construction is scheduled to happen between 2023 and 2025 for another 200 kilometres at cost of EUR 380 million.

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EM Short Notes*

By Padmashree Anandhan, and Femy Francis



Source: Ansa.it, AP Photo/picture alliance, Sébastien Nogier (EPA-EFE), Chris J. Ratcliffe/Bloomberg, Angel Garcia/picture alliance

ALBANIA

Opposition disrupts parliamentary session demanding resignation of Edi Rama

On 13 February, Albanian opposition lawmakers disrupted parliamentary sessions to put pressure on their demand for the government's resignation for alleged corruption, hundreds tried to push into the building amid protests. The demonstrations threw smoke bombs and fireworks but no arrest was made. The protest was organized by the Centre-right democratic party and left-wing freedom party inside the hall of Berisha. Where they started blowing whistles to drown down the sounds if anyone was trying to speak. The opposition held Socialist party Prime Minister Edi Rama for corruption and links to organized crime. (Llazar Semini "[Albanian opposition disrupts parliament as supporters rally](#)," *ABC News*, 14 February 2023)

Population reduces by 1.3 per cent says INSTAT

On 13 March, *Euractiv* reports that the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) published that there has been a 1.3 per cent decline in the Albanian population in 2022. Further, there has been a drop in the birth rate and this is further aggregated by young people emigrating from the country every year. In the last decade, only some 700,000 people have left the country with the country's population reaching 2.79 million in 2022 a drop from 2.83 million in 2021. The data when analyzed is more worrisome as the people migrating from Albania are relatively young belonging to the age group of 20-24. It is estimated that 15,000 people left and that there has been a decline of 6,300 people in the age group of 25- 29 years old. This means the number of people who aid and provide for economic activity has drastically decreased with a down of 32,000. Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama said, "These people return with a different mentality, they come with some experience, and they open enterprises, they do things differently, and they make successes," he

* 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.

said: "I think we should we should do everything to keep going, to improve conditions." (Alice Taylor, "[Albanian population fell by 1.3%, mainly youth, in 2022](#)," *Euractiv*, 13 March 2023)

BELARUS

Lukashenko discusses financial plan for procuring military equipment and weapons

On 27 February, Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko said that they are keeping close tabs on the military and industrial production given the threats Belarus is facing. He reiterated that despite the threats and sanctions imposed they are able to produce enough weapons and military equipment. As they are easily able to procure hardware from Russia and preserved technologies inherited from Russia. Lukashenko stated that they could export to 57 countries as they have also been able to develop modern weapons while they are mastering new areas including calibre artillery ammunition. Russia has supplied Belarus with Iskander operational tactical missile system and an S-400 long-range anti-aircraft missile. ("[Lukashenko: Belarus keeps tabs on defense industry given modern threats](#)," *Belta*, 27 February 2023)

BELGIUM

Prime minister proposed a new migration deal

On 08 March, Belgium announced a new migration provision presented by Prime minister Alexander De Croo. Belgium's migration system has been criticised for failing to aid asylum seekers. Migration State Secretary Nicole de Moor said: "With this first package of measures, we are on the path to reform. Reception places will only be allocated to those who are undergoing an asylum procedure, cooperation on return will be enshrined in law, abuses will be combated, and vulnerable persons will be protected." They would provide the asylum seekers with new housing facilities made up of shipping containers located at 700 new locations. Another focus of the provision would be on outflows and aiding the return policy of the migrants, with that children

would be granted refugee status and the parents can apply for humanitarian regularization to stay with them (Anne-Sophie Gayet, "[Belgium announces new migration deal](#)," *Euractiv*, 10 March 2023)

DENMARK

Total aid to the Ukraine war has made a significant difference

On 13 March, Acting Minister of Defense Troels Lund Poulsen of Denmark stated that their contribution to the Ukraine war was DKK five billion. Throughout the war, they have been provided with armed vehicles, drones and training the soldiers and a few weapons exchanges have been Denmark's donations for the war. Poulsen said: Denmark developed the Harpoon coastal defence system so that it suited Ukrainian conditions and, together with other countries, donated missiles which gave the Ukrainians the opportunity to prevent Russian attacks in the Black Sea." Denmark has provided vital support for the war but the with depleting nation reserves can put the nation at compromise and therefore they need more support. ("[Troels Lund Poulsen: Danish donations have made a big difference in Ukraine](#)," *Fmn.dk*, 13 March 2023)

Government removal of a national holiday to increase defence spending lead to protests

On 28 February, Denmark plans to remove the public holiday of "Great Prayer Day" to generate more funds and boost defence savings. As the nation tries to reach NATO's spending target they want to alter the country's welfare model. The bill passed with 95 votes stating that shops and businesses will remain open. The government argues that this move would add EUR 403 million to the public sector as people would work for additional 7.4 hours. Unions, churches and opposed the move through protest against the bill. ("[Denmark abolishes public holiday to boost defense spending](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 01 March 2023)

ESTONIA

Reform party to form coalition with Eesti 200 and Social Democratic Party

On 07 March, Kaja Kallas Reform party, the winner of Estonia elections announced their coalition invitation to Eesti 200 and Social Democratic Party. The Reform Party was able to lock 37 seats where the other two would make them into a 60 seat coalition. Kallas expressed her reason to invite the parties as mutuality of interests said: "Security, the green transition and people's welfare ended up the deciding factors," The party also announced its aims to eliminate "Tax Hump" where most of nominal wages goes up. (["Kaja Kallas: Reform inviting Eesti 200, Social Democrats to coalition talks," ERR News, 07 March 2023](#))

Kaja Kallas won with record high to form a coalition government

On 05 March, the Reform Party in Estonia won with a landslide of 37 seats in the 2023 Riigikogu elections where Kaja Kallas will be returning as the Prime Minister forming the coalition. Kallas said: "It seems that the voter has spoken. From what I gathered from the screen, we did quite well for ourselves." She also received 31,821 personal mandates a record high for any Estonian politician. The turnout of the elections was around 615,009 and over half participated through online voting creating another record-high event since Estonia's independence. (["Reform Party takes landslide win in 2023 Riigikogu elections," ERR News, 06 March 2023](#); ["Top six takeaways from Estonia's 2023 Riigikogu elections," ERR News, 06 March 2023](#))

FINLAND

Adopts Sami Climate Change Council Decree

On 09 March, Government of Finland plans adopted the decree on Sami Climate Council to address climate change. The council is an independent body under the Climate Act, which looks at the issue of climate change from the perspective of the Sami people and their community. They are an indigenous group that inhabits the northern region of Europe, their traditional practices and cultural practices are intertwined with the Arctic environment which makes them highly vulnerable to the climate change

process. The Sami Council wants to focus on the climate initiative discourse to focus and include Sami voices and perspectives. Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Maria Ohisalo said: "The warming climate has very particular impacts on the Sámi culture and traditional livelihoods that are based on the Arctic environment. This is why it is an absolute necessity to integrate the knowledge of the indigenous Sámi people strongly into the decision-making concerning climate policy." The climate change effects can be visible in the arctic region which directly affects the lives of the Sami people therefore their perspective is vital in the world initiative to curb climate change. (["Finland adopts decree on Sámi Climate Council to bring indigenous knowledge into climate policy processes," Helsinki Times, 10 March 2023](#))

FRANCE

Pension Reform Bill approved in the senate, final draft yet to be approved by National assembly

On 11 March, the French Senate voted in favour of the Pension Reform Bill proposed by President Emmanuel Macron. The bill was passed with 195 to 112 votes for pushing the retirement age from 62 to 64. Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said: "It is a key step to make a reform happen that will guarantee the future of our pension system." There will be a final draft produced for the bill and then represented in the Senate and National Assembly. This would be a test for Macron's government as they don't have an absolute majority in the National assembly and the French lower house. The party would aim to gather votes from Les Republicans to approve the bill, if not a highly controversial provision under Article 49/3 can be used for legislation approval without voting. With the approval in Senate, the protests are going strong in the Senate as thousands of people gather. (["French Senate votes to raise retirement age amid protests," Deutsche Welle, 12 March 2023](#))

Protestors aim to halt government's operations against the pension reform bill

On 07 March, France came to a "standstill"

as the country witnessed a mass gathering with 1.3 - 3.5 million people gathering against Emmanuel Macron's government "pension reform bill." To further push Macron the unions have called for two more strikes scheduled for 11 March including the departments of transportation, education, refineries and energy. The protests also witnessed several power cuts demonstrations which have been criticized for negating the rights of protesting and several chemical plants shut down halting various sectors of the country. Nearly 47 per cent of EDF employees organized against the bill, a vital electricity provider for France. The demonstrations also took place in Paris with 700,00 protestors taking the road. It's estimated that nearly 24.4 per cent of civil servant employees have participated in the strike and the Senate is still debating the bill with many rejecting the amendments proposed by Macron to incentivise opting for the bill stating CDI provisions of a permanent employee where an employee can get the economic benefit. ("[Pensions: what to remember from the mobilization day of March 7](#)," *Les Echos*, 07 March 2023)

Les Echos reports on the right to strike for protests

On 06 March, *Les Echos* reports on the right to strike in the public service amid calls for the new announcement for protests and put France on standstill over the pension reforms bill. There have been renewed calls for a strike, where service sectors plan on massive mobilization. While unionized branches are used to protest and mobilise, certain sectors of services especially public sector protests are heavily guarded by rules and are reprimanded by cutting wages or salaries. Almost all French employees in theory can strike while respecting three principles that is total stoppage of work, collective stoppage of striking employees and checking professional and political demands. The civil services include nurses, firefighters, police, army and ministry employees. Where some of them like police, and judicial magistrates don't have the right to strike, others can with a prior five-day notice. The cutting from wages is calculated by the "thirtieth rule" where one hour, half

day or whole day leave will lead to the cutting of thirty per cent of their salaries cut. These certain professionals have the obligation to provide minimum services and maintain a sufficient number of employees, if not followed the state can requisition workers to ensure that there is continuity in services. (Josephine Boone, "[Pensions: five questions on the right to strike in the public service](#)," *Les Echos*, 06 March 2023)

Pension reform bill adds new provision for CDI

On 05 March, French Senate came up with a new provision for the pension reform bill where they would create a permanent employment contract (CDI) to promote senior employees, as they would be exempted from family contributions in order to compensate for the cost of a senior employee. As they have more experience and should be remunerated with higher pay supporting that under this provision, the employee can terminate the contract if they don't wish to continue or, they can seek the benefit of completion of full employment. This provision saw criticism as the cost incurred can be heavy for the family branch causing a deficit of EUR 800 million. (Solemn Poullennec, "[Pensions: senators create a contract to promote the employment of seniors](#)" *Les Echos*, 05 March 2023)

Survey reveals fall in popularity of Macron over passing of pension reform scheme

On 02 March, *Les Echos* reported on an exclusive survey conducted by the Elabe Barometer calculating popularity and trust in the French leader. Emmanuel Macron saw a decline in popularity and trust in his pension reforms this was furthered by far-right opposition voicing their dissent. The Trust rating has seen a minimal rise of two per cent for Macron after the gradual decline since the pension reform announcement. The distrust is still at large with 63 per cent of French people doubting his leadership. The drop out of favour can be seen in the age group of 50-56-year-old individuals, mostly close to the retirement population as most of the population can't forget the tensions the reforms brought. (Isabelle Ficek "[EXCLUSIVE SURVEY](#) -

Emmanuel Macron stems his decline in public opinion thanks to retirees and the right *Les Echos*, 02 March 2023)

GEORGIA

Mass protests over Foreign Agent bill

On 08 March, Georgia saw massive protests against the Foreign Agent bill where 15,000 protestors gathered. The protest turned violent with clashes between police and people as they threw stones and petrol bombs trying to break barriers. This led police to detain 66 individuals for "petty hooliganism" and disobeying the police stated the Interior Ministry. This bill was proposed to promote "Transparency of Foreign Influence," where any organization whose international funding exceeds 20 per cent would be quoted as "foreign agents." The bill has gained criticism as the law will reduce possibility of Georgia joining the EU and due to the similarities with Russia's law. ("Georgia: Dozens arrested during 'foreign agent' law protest," *Deutsche Welle*, 08 March 2023)

Georgian parliament witness scuffle over the foreign agent bill

On 06 March, the Georgian parliament saw fight among the members over the proposed "foreign agents" law. The new proposal has been linked to Russian law in 2012 where Kremlin used the same term to stifle opposition. The law states that any organization that receives more than 20 per cent of its funding from abroad would be reinstated as a "foreign agent." The supporters of the bill state that the public should know what organisations are funded by which sources by tagging them specifically. The critiques said that it curtails the freedom of civil society groups who engage in society from a more transnational perspective, this law would take away the opportunity for the opposition of critiques of the government to act freely. (Richard Connor, "Georgia: Lawmakers brawl over proposed 'foreign agents' law," *Deutsche Welle*, 06 March 2023)

GERMANY

200 Flights cancelled as German workers

hold strike demanding higher pay

On 13 March, 200 flights were cancelled in Germany affecting 27,000 passengers as the workers went to strike over the demand for higher pay and against the unsociable working hours. This walkout was initiated by the Verdi trade union over pay for working nights, weekends and bank holidays. The union is demanding a 10.5 per cent raise and they have been offered a five per cent raise by their employers. The unions have refused to accept the offer stating that they are insufficient to make a difference in their expenses. ("Germany: Flights cancelled as workers strike over pay," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 March 2023)

Germany's Federal Criminal Police reports a rise in crime rate against press

On 13 March, Deutsche Welle reports that Germany's Federal Criminal Police (BKA) stated they have recorded 320 criminal acts committed against journalists in the year 2022. The attacks can be categorized as 320 were politically motivated, 46 were purely violent threats, 31 were related to property damage and 27 owing to incitement. The Saxony region was the most affected with 69 crimes reported, 66 in Berlin and 40 in Bavaria. The Left Party first came up with a report stating that the rise of attacks against police was owed to the Coronavirus Protest where there were 64 instances registered. The left party spokesperson said, "Recorded crimes against media professionals reached a sad new high in 2022. This also applies to violent crimes, one-third of which — as in the previous year — were committed in connection with COVID-related protests." ("Germany sees record number of crimes against the press: report," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 March 2023)

Shooting in Hamburg Jehova's witness hall kills seven

On 09 March, seven people were killed in a shooting sphere at Jehovah's witness hall in Hamburg. The suspect Philipp gunned down for allegedly having "ill feelings" towards to religious community, it is to be noted that he was previously was a member of the said community. Additionally, eight people were injured among those were Ugandan and

Ukrainian nationals. The suspect then went ahead and killed himself when the police were looking to apprehend him minutes after the said attack. The Jehovah's witness community issued a statement: "Deeply saddened by the horrific attack on its members at the Kingdom Hall in Hamburg after a religious service." (Jenny Hill in Hamburg, Jaroslav Lukiv, "[Hamburg shooting: Seven killed in attack on Jehovah's Witness hall](#)," *BBC*, 09 March 2023)

43 per cent support the reintroduction of compulsory military service says survey

On 10 March, *Deutsche Welle* reports that a survey was conducted on the reintroduction of military service by the Ipsos MORI group. They took a sample survey of 1000 eligible voters from varied age groups and their opinion. Wherein, the majority of Germans wanted to restore the compulsory military service that was suspended in 2011. Additionally, they wanted this rule to apply to both genders. The aggregate was 43 per cent supported the compulsory service for both men and women, while 18 per cent supported that this should only be applied to men. The polls also convey that most people who supported this provision are in the older age bracket and those who don't have to face military service. Since the invasion of Ukraine, there has been an urgency in Germany to create a stronger military and introduce a special one-off fund of EUR 100 billion. ("[Most Germans want compulsory military service return — poll](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 10 March 2023)

Federal Statistical Office estimates 23 per cent of its population to be immigrants

On 03 March, *Frankfurter Allgemeine* reports that according to Federal Statistical Office 23 per cent of the population today migrated to Germany since the 1950s. In 2021 around 14.2 million people migrated to Germany making it 17.3 per cent, and now with their descendants born in Germany adding another 4.7 million people saw a 5.7 per cent rise. While comparing to other EU countries Germany stood in seventh place

with an above-average rate than their 27 member states. This was a micro census based on a sample survey, the study focused on two groups of immigrants the 'first generation' where both parents came here in the 1950s and the 'second generation' the descendants of the above immigrants, the study purposefully opted out the census including single immigrant parents and is yet to study the effect of Ukraine war on German immigration trend. ("[In Germany, 23 percent of the population have immigrated since 1950](#)," *Franffurter Allgemeine*, 3 March 2023)

GREECE

Massive protest against the train crash

On 08 March, Greece saw thousands around 50,000 protestors striking against the deadliest Train crash which killed 57 individuals. The strike has brought the nation to a halt where the labor unions have stopped the ferries and disrupted public transportation. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis blamed the crash on human error, while the rail workers have been striking demanding for better working conditions. There plans to conduct a bigger strike until the protestors will get the government to impose safer railways. ("[Train crash protests: Strikes bring much of Greece to a halt](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 08 March 2023)

Thousands of protests against the negligence of the train crash

On 05 March, Protests were held in front of the Greek parliament on Syntagma Square against the government and the rail company for the deadly rail crash. The protest also saw violence as the police clashed with the protestors who gathered and released black balloons in memory of the lost lives. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis expressed his sympathies and regret for the train crash killing 57 people said: "As prime minister, I owe a big apology to everyone, but above all to the victims' relatives." A 59-year-old was held responsible for the accident under Negligent Homicide. The negligence by the rail company and the negligence of the government with the staff responsible were heavily criticized. ("[Greece: Thousands](#)

[protest train crash as PM offers apology](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 05 March 2023)

HUNGARY

Viktor Orban addresses the state on the Ukraine war, inflation and Child protection

On 25 February, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban addressed the state in Budapest. He began by acknowledging the efforts of rescue workers in Turkey and Syria who have saved 35 individuals from the rubble. Talked about his electoral success even in the face of the united left being against them and that not even US left funding could defeat them. The economy and the call for national reunification were stressed stating the focus on family policy, a work-based economy and pensioners' aid to be the focus of the coming year. Orban criticized the sanction imposed saying, "Providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine does not mean cutting off relations with Russia, so we will not agree to sanctions that would destroy Hungary." He expressed the want for peace and how EU and US sanctions are also affecting the world economy. The coming US elections would be a vital turning point for the war strategy as they said Orban as their "Republican friends" would opt for pro-peace demanding to cease fire. He stressed how the sanctions have taken EUR 10 billion out of Hungarian pockets in 2022 which has reached record inflation. He further enlisted no tolerance for paedophilia and stated the Child protection policies would be strengthened in protecting the children. ("[Viktor Orbán Holds State of the Nation Address](#)," *Hungary Today*, 25 February 2023)

ITALY

Meloni says Frontex didn't announce an "emergency signal" for the shipwreck

On 04 March, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni announced that Frontex didn't not issues an emergency when the EU border coast guard informed about the crowded nature of the boat which later sank 60 people. The victims were from Turkey, Syria and Afghanistan where roughly 80 survived the accident. The Frontex did share

evidence regarding potential distress at sea, where the number thermal screen found a high number of people in the boat. There were two patrol boats taking part in the rescue mission which was halted due to bad weather conditions. When the tragedy was revealed to the public the GDF did not mention the warning made due to thermal signs for distress signals. ("[Italy did not classify Frontex's communication as 'emergency' before the shipwreck](#)," *Euractiv*, 05 March 2023)

Giorgia Meloni proposed for safer migrant regulation to the European council

On 01 March, Giorgia Meloni proposed to the European Council the need for safe and legal migrant entry to the Union saying, "We must all work together to reaffirm the principle that you only enter Europe legally and therefore in a condition of total safety and security." She urged for a boost in legal migration system channels to be split between those who are entitled to be protected and those who intend to enter for the reason of employment. They also need to work on halting the fuel that engines mass illegal migration and the EU needs to take a concrete intervention. This comes to light as there has a major shipwreck in the Calabria claims over 100 lives, adding pressure to provide better channels with Meloni asking for funding from various nations. ("[EU must work for legal, safe migrant entry says Meloni](#)," *Ansa.it*, 01 March 2023)

KOSOVO

EU grants Visa-free travel for Kosovo passport holders

On 09 March, the European Council adopted the provision for visa-free travel by Kosovo passport holders. This new provision allows Kosovo passport holders to visit EU countries without a visa for a period of 90 days. The Swedish Minister said, "Kosovo has made great efforts to improve its security and migration management and to align its visa policy with that of the EU. We hope our cooperation in these fields will continue to be fruitful." ("[Kosovo: Council gives green light to visa-free travel](#)," *European Council*, 09 March 2023)

LATVIA**Soaring inflationary price hike for 20.4 per cent**

On 08 March, Centre Statistical Bureau (CSB) reported that Latvia saw a 20.4 per cent rise in inflation prices. Compared to Europe where the inflation would reach 8.5 per cent, Latvia's inflation is more than double. In Latvia prices for food went up by 25.3 per cent, heat energy by 66.4 per cent, electricity 90.2 percent and Natural gasses 79.5 per cent. Difference between one month of January and February prices has been increased by 0.6 per cent. The government predicts that possibility of lowering of inflationary prices would be based on the fluctuation of fuel prices. (["Inflation level remains over 20% in Latvia," Latvian Public Broadcasting](#), 08 March 2023)

POLAND**Defence Minister announced the installation of anti-tank barriers**

On 13 March, LRT English reports that Poland is taking measures to erect anti-tank barriers along the route of Belarus and Kaliningrad. This was announced by Polish Defence Minister Mariusz Błaszczak as a move to protect itself from possible aggression. National Security and Defence (NSGK) have suggested Lithuania also invest in border fortification and the required measure that needs to be taken, while the Lithuania still is only considering if it wants to. The threats from Russia and Belarus can be problematic and therefore it's suggested that Lithuania works together with Poland. Retired Colonel Vaidotas Malinionis said: "We are connected by the Suwalki Gap, and we have a common interest in securing that particular area from the Kaliningrad and Belarusian side." (Vilius Narkūnas, ["Poland builds anti-tank barriers on its borders. Should Lithuania follow suit?"](#) LRT English, 13 March 2023)

RUSSIA**President launched the world's longest subway project**

On 01 March, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that they would be launching a 'Big Circle Line' as part of the

Moscow metro project. The metro line is amongst the most ambitious projects Russia has seen with 31 stations covering up to 70 kilometres of railroads making it the largest subway line in the world. This comes in light despite Russia waging war on Ukraine and being heavily burdened by the world with sanctions and boycotts, a move to show their ever-growing domestic economy despite the international tensions. (["Putin Opens Up Biggest Underground Circle Line in the World," Sputnik](#), 01 March 2023)

SWEDEN**Migration Minister proposes way to increase support for migrants who return voluntarily**

On 01 March, Swedish Migration Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard proposed to work on ways to increase 'voluntary return migration.' Malmer states that the return of migrants has been poorly treated and not focused upon as there has been a large influx of migrants who were not able to integrate themselves into Swedish society. There is a proportionately large population of Sweden's around 20 per cent that live abroad with 33 per cent having at least one parent abroad. The proposal stressed that those people who want to go back to their home countries including Swedish natives should be provided with information and support. This move has been criticized by several as a gambit to push fair right political agenda. The migration issues can strain the Swedish government financially as voluntary migration relies on economic incentives with financial support to leave Sweden. (Charles Szumski, ["Sweden's new 'voluntary return' migration push raises eyebrows"](#) Euractiv, 2 March 2023)

SWITZERLAND**Divide amongst the residents over nuclear energy plan to id the energy issue**

On 13 March, Sotomo Institute reported that they survey 9,000 residents out of which 55 per cent supported nuclear power energy should be used to solve the issue of the energy crisis. While 64 per cent opposed the initiation of a Swiss nuclear power plant by 2037. Nuclear energy still remains the

third choice after solar and wind power energy where 77 per cent were in favour of their installations and the building of wind turbines or hydroelectric power to aid the energy issue. ([“Swiss split over nuclear power to plug energy shortages,” Swissinfo](#), 13 March 2023)

THE NETHERLANDS

Impose restriction on semiconductor technology sales to China

On 08 March, Netherlands decided to impose restrictions on semiconductor technology exports to China stating to protect its national security. They now have joined the US where in October restricted exports of chip making tools to China and to make it more effective it required other key exporters Japan and Netherlands to agree to halting the shipment as well. The provision lays emphasis on “DUV” technology that would be affected the most which is ASML’s second largest product sold to China. ASML, a Dutch company exports to China for about EUR 2.2 billion in the year of 2023 as the sales grow to only 25 per cent. ([“Netherlands to restrict chip exports after US pressure over China threat,” Financial Times](#), 08 March 2023)

THE UK

Junior Doctors to hold three-day strike for higher pay demands

On 13 March, *Financial Times* reports that NHS junior doctors are planning to go on major strike for three consecutive days demanding higher pay. This walkout is different as unlike nurses and ambulance which maintained their emergency services, Junior doctors walkout have not agreed to such arrangements for maintenance services. This comes as a major hit to health and emergency services and might lead to major unpredictable mass casualty by postponing consultancy. According to the BMA survey, 98 per cent of junior doctors proposed a strike. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said: “It is very disappointing that the junior doctors union are not engaging with the government. We are actually having constructive dialogue with other unions who have accepted our offer to come in and talk ... I would urge the junior doctors to

follow suit.” (Sarah Neville, Bethan Staton and Philip Georgiadis, [“NHS braced for three-day walkout by junior doctors,” Financial Times](#), 13 March 2023)

Rishi Sunak proposes to increase defence spending by EUR five billion

On 12 March, UK's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak plans to push for military spending of EUR five billion for UK defence amid threats from Russia and China. The funding would be provided in a span of two years to revive the ammunition stocks that have been depleting due to exports to Ukraine. The plan further looks into modernizing submarines to further strengthen defence capacity. This comes in light of the US, UK and Australia pact which plans to provide Australia with submarines to keep Chinese aggression in check. Sunak said: “The UK will remain a leading contributor to Nato and a reliable international partner, standing up for our values from Ukraine to the South China Sea.” (Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe in San Diego and John Paul Rathbone, [“Rishi Sunak promises to ‘fortify’ Britain against threats from Russia and China,” Financial Times](#), 13 March 2023)

Government discloses the plan to halt access for asylum for migrants reaching through small boats

On 07 March, the UK announced its plan to halt the access for asylum seekers who reach in small boats crossing the English Channel. The number of migrants reaching England increased to 45,000 in 2022, threatening the International Boundary Law. According to the proposed law, migrants arriving from small boats won't be granted asylum and would be detained where they would be kept under trial for 28 days and later deported. The only exception would be made for women and children or people who are medically unfit and in need of assistance. The opposition has called this move taking a risk at creating 'Chaos', while the refugee council called this move a shattering of the UN Refugee Convention where the refugees would be locked up like criminals. The UK government owes this move as a way to aid more legal channels of migration and stop illegal trafficking and dangerous crossing. ([“UK reveals plan to](#)

[stop asylum-seekers in small boats](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 07 March 2023)

Budget for 40 new hospital plan hit by inflation

On 05 March, *Financial Times* reported that the UK government in the face of high inflation is struggling to keep up with the flagship pledge, of building 40 new hospitals by 2030 with a budget shortage of EUR 2 billion for the NHS. The health department and the treasury are facing a dilemma and are likely planning to put the project on halt, prioritizing five hospitals that need urgent attention with roof fixing. While the building of the new hospital was the main part of Boris's campaign in 2019, most of the projects focused on refurbishment with only 10 projects securing full planning permission. Downing Street is facing the dilemma as if to announce cuts in infrastructure cuts in one statement or individual announcement for singular projects. (Sarah Neville, Jim Pickard, "[Inflation hits UK government pledge to build 40 new hospitals](#)," *Financial Times*, 05 March 2023)

Sunak plans to bar cross-channel migration

On 05 March, *Financial Times* reports that Rishi Sunak will be introducing new laws halting anyone reaching the UK by small boats. In a move to control cross-channel migration, the government plans to place a bill where they would set boundaries with tightening of rules. They aim to stop both people trafficking and illegal migration across the channels. He also plans to meet French president Emmanuel Macron for improving cooperation in halting illegal migration. Sunak said: "I have made the issue of illegal migration one of my top five priorities — pledging to stop the boats once and for all." The democrats have criticized this move as half-baked and that they were no pragmatic legal steps taken to stop unsafe routes for asylum seekers. (Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe, "[Rishi Sunak to introduce new laws to stem cross-Channel migration](#)," *Financial Times*, 05 March 2023)

TURKEY

Earthquake damages to cross USD 100 billion says UNDP

On 07 March, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) estimated that the cost of Turkey's earthquake damage might exceed USD 100 billion. This estimation is excluding the cost that needs to be incurred for the recovery and rebuilding of Turkey. They also expressed their dissatisfaction over the low-level response for funding pleas, stating that thousands of homes have been destroyed and the needs are rising while the resources are depleting. ("[UN says Turkey's earthquake damage exceeds \\$100 billion](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 07 March 2023)

Kemal Kilicdaroglu nominated as candidate by opposition coalition

On 06 March, Turkey's opposition party announced Kemal Kilicdaroglu as the candidate that would be competing against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the May elections. There has been a rift amongst the opposition where the parties do not agree with the nomination because they believe the chances of the selected candidate winning are slim. The opposition bloc has promised to end the presidential system and bring back the parliamentary system last disarmed by President Erdogan. He has been in power for the last 20 years and gained more power by abolishing the position of Prime Minister. ("[Turkey: Opposition nominates a candidate to challenge Erdogan](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 06 March 2023)

FT reports on Turkey's GDP increase of 5.6 per cent

On 28 February, *Financial Times* reported that the Turkish economy grew owing to the rapid rise in consumer spending where the GDP rose to 5.6 per cent on an inflation-adjusted basis. The period before the earthquake was focused on economic pumping output while now even with inflation consumer buying has increased as they prefer to purchase items before they become more expensive. According to the report, Turkey has adapted to high inflation through government support under Erdogan there has been a boost in minimum

wage and public sector salaries. While the full impact of the disaster on the Turkish economy remains to be seen. There is a growing expectation for a short time hit to growth and dependency on government funding amid recovery efforts. (Adam Samson, "[Turkish economy's growth driven by strong consumer spending](#)," *Financial Times*, 28 February 2023)

UKRAINE

Controversial media reforms criticised

On 05 March, *Les Echos* reported the controversial media law that reforms Ukraine's media regulations. The reforms extend biased powers to the regulators extending their influence to not only radio and television but to social media platforms like Youtube. Giving the right to regulators to impose fines and revoke the license to publish content without a court decision. They would also establish strong censorship tools by giving disproportionate powers to regulators. The move has been criticised by many as curbing the freedom of expression as the state plan to extend its control over them. The law also strictly prohibits material questions of the territorial integrity of war or any pro-Russian propaganda. ("[In Ukraine, a law reforming the media is controversial](#)," *Les Echos*, 05 March 2023)

REGIONAL

EU and Greece delayed in creating provisions for train safety

On 13 March, *Euractiv* reports that the EU and Greece for years have been trying to form a modern safety system for railway cross-border interoperability that could possibly connect the rest of Europe. This comes after the rail accident that cost 57 people's lives as there have been multiple delays in the provision to be put into action due to Greece's insufficient investment planning and the EU not monitoring it properly. In the early 2000s, EU and Greece wanted to upgrade train safety systems and install digital mechanisms to avoid any form of 'human error' which was never implemented. EU commissions admit project delays with many projects having the deadline being 2023 while this does not

disqualify expenditure till the said deadline. (Sarantis Michalopoulos, "[REVEALED: Greece, EU lost in Babel of train safety deals](#)," *Euractiv*, 13 March 2023)

STRATCOMCOE investigates social media companies' inability to detect manipulation

On 13 March, NATO's Strategic Communications Center of Excellence (STRATCOMCOE) published a report called "Social Media Manipulation" in the year 2022-2023. Where the research found how easy it is to manipulate facts and opinions on social media platforms and that online companies are unwilling to do anything about it. They held an experiment called the "inauthentic interactions" to test how well social media platforms are at detecting manipulations. The report spend EUR 168 on fake engagements "225 comments, 6,560 likes, 15,785 views, and 3,739 shares on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok and VKontakte, enabling them to identify 6,564 accounts used for social media manipulation purposes. Of the 27,309 fake engagements purchased, more than 93 per cent remained online and active four weeks later." ("[STRATCOMCOE: It's 'easy to circumvent sanctions' to buy Russian manipulation online](#)," *Latvian Public Broadcasting*, 13 March 2023)

SIPRI forecasts increase in arms exports of the US and France

On 13 March, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reports that there has been a significant rise in arms export in the European regions with US exports reaching record highs. The arms imports to Europe from the US increased by 47 per cent and by 65 per cent by NATO. This rise is owed to the Russian invasion of Ukraine where the five main exporters in order are the US, Russia, France, China and Germany. The US accounts for 40 per cent of global arms trade with a recent hike of 14 per cent included, there has been a record shift in France's arms trade seeing a record high 44 per cent increase and reaching position number three. Germany's latest visit to India can be seen to aim at encouraging India to stop relying on Russian arms supply and work with Europe.

China has seen a dip in arms trade with only 23 per cent in exports while Russian arms trade is majorly providing for Africa surpassing China. (Christoph Hasselbach, [“SIPRI: US arms exports skyrocket, while China’s nosedive,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 13 March 2023)

Dutch farmers hold protests against nitrogen emission-cutting plans

On 11 March, 10,000 farmers protested in The Hague against government plans for limiting nitrogen emissions. The Dutch protestors came in tractors to join in the protest and held signs reading, “No farmers, no food” and waved upside-down flags protests. The massive livestock and heavy usage of fertilizers aid in the increased production of nitrogen oxides in soil and water. The Dutch government plans cuts emission by 50 per cent by 2030 a provision reasoned to facilitate the quality of land and water. Another protest was held nearby by climate activists demonstrating against the fossil fuel subsidization provisions. ([“Dutch farmers, climate activists hold protests in The Hague,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 11 March 2023)

UK and France look to a renew friendship

On 10 March, French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak met to mend ties. This is the first joint summit in five years, the relations saw a slowdown after failed submarine contract (Aukus deal) and a row over fishing rights. The change in UK leadership and the Ukraine invasion has once again ignited the relationship between the two countries. They plan to form a strategic partnership in energy focusing on nuclear energy. This is a vital move as they try to define a common ambition and a stance of renewed friendship. (Davide Basso, “France-UK to attempt mending ties with the joint summit,” *Euractiv*, 09 March 2023)

NATO hosted Turkey, Finland and Sweden to address security concerns

On 09 March, Permanent Joint Mechanism members Turkey, Finland and Sweden were hosted by NATO. The NATO Secretary-General said: “Finland and Sweden have

taken unprecedented steps to address legitimate Turkish security concerns.” The representatives from each country discussed the steps to strengthen trilateral relations where they could exchange arms and have increased counter-terrorism measures. The discussion agreed on adding Finland and Sweden to NATO as beneficial to the larger interest of the alliance. (“NATO Secretary General hosts meeting of senior officials from Türkiye, Finland and Sweden,” *NATO*, 09 March 2023)

Norway to allow UK to set camp Viking

On 10 March, *Sputnik* reported on UK's plans to establish a military base in the arctic called "Camp Viking." This establishment violates Norwegian law on the permanent presence of “foreign forces” during peacetime against the law. The UK defines this as a vital move for the modern era where they would be situated 120 kilometres south of the city of Tromsø. During the winter 1000 UK commandos were deployed in the Camp Viking station as part of the Joint Expeditionary Force and Nato drills. The critics have found this deal as a violation of long-standing Norwegian policy and this was refuted by the authorities setting that the presence is only temporary. (Igor Kuznetsov, “UK to Establish Arctic Military Base in Norway,” *Sputnik*, 10 March 2023)

European Parliament agreed on energy efficiency directives

On 10 March, European Parliament agrees to reduce final energy consumption by 11.7 per cent by 2030. This would mean an aggregate of 763 million worth of oil should be targeted for consumption. The consumption limit would be binding and final for all member states. This does not include primary energy used for the production and supply of energy. They agreed that gradual annual saving of the energy target would ensure 1.49 per cent of energy consumption on average. They highlighted the obligation of the public sector to reach the yearly target by reducing consumption by 1.9 per cent. (“Council and Parliament strike deal on energy efficiency directive,” *European Council*, 10 March 2023)

EU plans for 40 per cent green tech production to be developed within

On 07 March, Guardian reported that EU plans under Net Zero Industry Act want to focus 40 per cent of green tech production to be made within Europe, a counter measure against US and China. This comes in light against the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that would subsidize green technology production by giving a budget of USD 369 billion, with China's growing influence as importers give them a monopoly of consuming power. The IRA bill has been heavily criticized by EU leaders and policy makers; the new bill would be further discussed during the Brussels Summit. The net zero bill proposes that large plant producers would be getting permit within a year to hasten the production process and would ask EU companies to reduce dependence on imports. (Jennifer Rankin, "[EU targets 40% of clean tech to be made within the bloc by 2030](#)," *The Guardian*, 07 March 2023)

EU plans to propose Critical Raw Material Act

On 07 March, *Euractiv* reported about the Critical Raw Material Act draft set to be introduced on 14 March, which aims at making Europe a more self-sufficient nation. The proposal wants to minimise supply risk by strengthening the EU's capacity of production in all stages, especially of raw material, extraction and recycling. The draft states, "10% of the Union's consumption of strategic raw materials" should be mined in the EU. In addition, 15% of the Union's annual consumption of each critical raw material should come from recycling and 40% of the bloc's annual consumption of each strategic raw material." Europe is heavily dependent on the imports of raw materials, whereas it is 100 per cent dependent on foreign suppliers, especially for raw materials. This move comes after the EU seeks to minimize dependency on China, which holds a monopoly where they import 93 per cent of magnesium and 86 per cent of rare metals. The draft also proposes to include special treatment of projects which are considered "Strategic" to the region, where the permitted time for mining projects will be

drastically reduced from 10 years to 2 years and be aided by additional financial support to boost the industry's development. (Oliver Noyan, "[LEAK: EU Commission wants 10% of critical raw materials mined in Europe](#)" *Euractiv*, 07 March 2023)

EU proposal for Net-Zero Industry Act

On 08 March, *Euractiv* reported that the European Commission's Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA) draft aims to decrease dependency on foreign clean tech products, laying in parallel to the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The proposal aims to push European production of renewable technologies, this comes in light of their criticism of US IRA subsidies as discriminatory. The draft very clearly mentions that the public authorities have to be conscious of whether the green technology they are buying is produced in the EU or not. Some experts have called this move dangerous because they would be solely focusing on domestic requirements with EU bias and hence violating WTO provisions. (János Allenbach-Ammann, "[The 'Buy European' clauses in the Net-Zero Industry Act](#)" *Euractiv*, 08 March 2023)

Survey warns about the rising number of child poverty in the EU

On 07 March, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the Save the Children estimate that almost 20 million in EU countries are facing poverty. When aggregated puts every one in four children at risk of being in poverty. The report states that this was further pushed by the rising cost of living and the COVID-19 pandemic added an edge to the issue. According to at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) Spain and Romania rated the worst with 33 per cent and 41.5 per cent of children risked at the line of poverty. While Finland at 13.2 per cent and Denmark at 14 per cent did the best among the European member states. The rise in cost and the soaring food prices affect the families of lower to middle-income class groups the most, where there is a large aggregate of migrant families, refugees and asylum seekers facing the worst of it. ("[1 in 4 children at risk of poverty in Europe, report says](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 07 March 2023)

Toblerone Matterhorn mountain peak packaging is to be replaced with Tobler's signature in Slovakia

On 06 March, *BBC* reported on Toblerone plan to remove its signature Matterhorn mountain peak as the chocolate production moved from Switzerland to Slovakia. The pyramid-shaped bar that imitates the alpine peak would be altered with a more generic summit. There has been a provision since 2017 where strict rules have been applied as to what should be considered "Swissness." The rules state that the symbol cannot be used to promote milk-based products that are not exclusively curated in Switzerland with at least 80 per cent of the raw material from the region. The US firm Mondelez confirmed that as the production moves to Slovakia owing to the rise of demand, there would be a new face of the packaging different from the previous one. (Beth Timmins, ["Toblerone: Swiss rules mean chocolate bar to drop Matterhorn from packaging,"](#) *BBC*, 06 March 2023)

Turkey and France push for a "New NATO"

On 05 March, *TFI* reported that Hungary and France are looking towards the creation of a new NATO excluding the US. Hungary which is yet to ratify Finland and Sweden's application to join the transatlantic defence alliance, President Viktor Orban pushed for the creation of a separate European NATO. Where he argued that Europe needs a military bloc that is free from influence of the US. He contended that the EU often serves American concerns and interests rather than their own and that they should look for peace negotiations for the Russia-Ukraine war. French President Emmanuel Macron also suggested a stronger European-only bloc, a real European army so that they can reduce their dependence on the US. (Ansh Pandey, ["A New NATO? Sounds like a good plan to Hungary and France may approve it"](#) *TFI Global News*, 05 March 2023)

Turkey accused for committing crimes against humanity by Belgium firms and NGOs

On 02 March, *Euractiv* reports that a

complaint has been filed against Turkey for "Crimes against Humanity." The petitioners are the Belgian law firm Van Steenbrugge Advocaten (VSA), the Belgium-based NGO Turkey Tribunal, and the European judges' association Magistrates. International Criminal Court finds evidence against Erdogan regime for crimes committed after a failed coup initiated by a Belgium-based firm and NGO. It is estimated that around 200,000 people were tortured, disappeared and incarcerated without due process. The petitioners claim that the Erdogan regime systemically attacked the civilian population to safeguard their governmental policies. (Anne-Sophie Gayet ["Turkey taken to International Court for 'crimes against humanity',"](#) *Euractiv*, 2 March 2023)

French Court Auditor estimates Ukraine refugees to have received EUR 630 million aid in France

On 28 February, French Court Auditor estimated that they received 115,000 displaced Ukrainians who have been receiving EUR 630 million. Under the temporary protection regime, they have been receiving satisfactory conditions that allow them to settle freely while being protected by unprecedented social rights, access to health care, school and emergency accommodation. The accommodation cost per place and per day could be aggregated to EUR 38 with shelter provision under common law. Since the end of 2020, nearly 900 homes have received financial aid from the state with EUR 150 enveloped every month aggregating to some EUR 786,000. There has been rising concern over the long-term nature of the war and how much can the state provide. (["Reception of Ukrainian refugees in France: after the emergency, the challenge of duration,"](#) *Les Echos*, 28 February 2023)

European Council aims to establish system to monitor sustainable goals of entities

On 28 February, European Council reports that they would be implementing strategies for financing sustainable growth as they move closer to transitioning to climate-neutral goals and a resource-efficient economy. In 2021 they proposed the

establishment of European green bonds (EuGB) aiming to pursue environmentally sustainable goals as the Council look to form a system to supervise entities.

It laid down the uniform requirement for the use of bonds that are aligned with EU taxonomy and environmentally sustainable goals. ("Sustainable finance: Provisional agreement reached on European green bonds," *European Council*, 28 February 2023)

EU and UK sign Windsor framework reforming the Northern Ireland protocol

On 27 February, Britain and the EU settled their dispute over Northern Ireland's trading rules. As UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen took a step towards a 'new chapter' dubbing it as the 'Windsor framework.' The protocol established will prevent hard borders in Ireland island. Sunak maintains that this would slash trade bureaucracy and reduce EU laws in Northern Ireland. The agreements aim to make shipment easier including pets, medicines, parcels etc. A 'Green Lane' would be established in Irish Sea ports reducing checks and a 'red lane' created for goods continuation into Ireland. However, the acceptance of the agreement by the Democratic Unionist Party would decide the formation of the government in Northern Ireland. (George Parker, Sam Fleming, Jude Webber, "EU and UK strike Brexit deal on Northern Ireland" *Financial Times*, 27 February 2023)

European Parliament members amend the AI act

On 15 February, Members of the European Parliament part of the amendments made to the AI act extended the ban on social scoring to private companies and installed of a regulatory sandbox to check compliance as the role of AI has been downsized. They also look to introduce a fundamental rights framework assessing the impact of AI uses especially in areas related to high risks. The formation of conformity assessment recognition is to be established as well for mutual recognition assessments among countries so that they are comparable. (Luca Bertuzzi, "AI Act:

MEPs extend ban on social scoring, reduce AI Office role," *Euractiv*, 28 February 2023)

CLIMATE

Europe records the second mildest winter

On 08 March, the EU scientists announced that according to the climate monitor, Europe saw the second-warmest winter ever to be recorded. The mild winter was a relief to the citizens amid Russia and Ukraine wars and the soaring prices faced due to inflation, this change in temperature is an indication of wording climate change. EU Copernicus Climate Change service shows a 1.4 degree rise in temperature. The high winter was faced by countries from France to Hungary which also led to the halting of seeking recreational services. The milder winter has greatly affected farming and habitats, where the animals would find it difficult to adjust themselves to the new temperature conditions. (Richard Connor, "Europe has second mildest winter on record — climate monitor," *Deutsche Welle*, 09 March 2023)

ENERGY

Germany to import Hydrogen from France

On 09 March, Germany plans to support France in the recognition of hydrogen energy made from nuclear power as they plan to import. Advisor to the German Chancellor said: "We will not erect barriers or create rules that prohibit or discriminate against hydrogen made from nuclear power." Hydrogen power creates energy without emitting CO2, a system used in France's energy-generating nuclear power plant. France has long argued that hydrogen produced by nuclear power is 'green' as part of the European rules and would spearhead the nuclear alliance. (Théo Bourgery-Gonse, "Germany 'not opposed' to nuclear-made hydrogen, says will import from France," *Euractiv*, 09 March 2023)

Slovakia plans to invest in wind parks

On 06 March, Slovakia plans to launch two wind park projects, as stated by the state-owned energy supplier SSP. Amid the rampant energy crisis, the country is

considering investing in wind parks but this has met with resistance. This comes in light to halt the dependence on Russian energy and building the first one near Piestany city with a capacity of 50 megawatts costing them EUR 63 million. This move has been heavily criticised by activists and environmentalists stating that this would have major implications for the natural landscape. (Michal Hudec, "[Slovakia now turning towards wind](#)," *Euractiv*, 06 March 2023)

French National Rally party proposed a mandate for environmental concerns

On 01 March, French National Rally a far-right party proposed their environmental concerns and the need for a local response to the global disorder. According to them, it is absolutely prohibited to build more wind turbines in the countryside because they destroy the landscape. When it comes to agriculture, they should not just focus on halting pesticide use which is vital for market competition and mostly affects the farmer's livelihood. The manifesto proposed states to look inwards, pushing preference for French products and French jobs and French investment in French companies. The critics have called out these acts as a "Façade manifesto" and a move to flatter the electorate rather than being backed with research and data a political move to garner attention. (Davide Basso, "[Sovereignty and conservatism: Environmental approach of France's far-right](#)" *Euractiv*, 2 March 2023)

Danish Energy agency halts 'Open Door' policy suspends offshore wind turbine projects

On 02 March, Nord News reports that the Danish Energy agency have suspended the "Open door" policy halting 28 wind turbine projects that are worth billions. This came as a shock as the open-door policy allowed companies to submit a project proposal to municipalities rather than them only tenders for the set company for particular projects. Critics argue that this is a major setback for green transitioning measures as companies have done the major groundwork to build on green energy initiatives where the government have suddenly "pulled the plug". The critics are

asking for a reason for this suspension as they slammed the offshore wind turbine projects. ("[Offshore wind turbine projects on the rocks](#)," *Nord News*, 2 March 2023)

Natural gas wells found in Hungary to produce 1.4 billion cubic meters

On 28 February, Hungary drilled three shallow gas wells discovering natural gas within two months by Hungarian oil and gas company MOL. It's estimated that the amount found can provide for 20,000 average-sized family homes for a few years which comes the as good news, especially in times when the world is facing an energy crisis. They launched the shallow gas program in 2019 as they targeted gas fields near the surface. At present they have drilled 18 wells out of which 16 were successful, and shallow gas accounts for five per cent of company production accounting for 1.4 billion cubic meters'. Hungary sits over huge gas fields that in theory could supply energy for a century, but they are hard to reach as they are unconventional gas. MOL Hungary, Director of Exploration and Production, Ádám Homonnay said: "Hungary currently has a well-developed gas pipeline infrastructure, which allows for the production of the discovered material in a short time (5-6 months on average), and the delivery of the produced gas to the population and industrial consumers." ("[Thousands of Homes to Be Supplied with Newly Found Natural Gas](#)," *Hungary Today*, 02 March 2023)

Neoen's net revenue increases by 10 per cent

On 01 March, *Les Echos* reported that the French renewable producer Neoen's revenue went up to 10 per cent in 2022 and is for 20 gigawatts of installation by 2030. As the demand is pushed by the consumers for green electricity, Neoen is set to take its place as a vital actor among vitality firms. In 2021 they introduced a 10-gigawatt goal in operation or less which has now reached 7.4 Gigawatts closely reaching its potential with the company's net worth being EUR 4 billion. The CEO of Neoen points out that "fundamentals that help the world's electrical energy desire, and extra

importantly, the demand for environmentally friendly energy has not modified, and has even strengthened even more." The company rose 50 per cent in value to EUR 503.2 million as they enter a new quarter. ("Renewable energies: Neoen wants to enter the big leagues," *Les Echos*, 01 March 2023)

ENVIRONMENT

McDonald criticizes the EUs on packaging law

On 04 March, *Euractiv* reported on McDonald's criticism over the EU packaging waste regulation (PPWR), where they want to shift from single-use packaging to reusable ones. This shift has to be in phases with 10 per cent in 2030, and 40 per cent by 2040. A study by Kearney consulting firms found that this would inevitably lead to a surge in plastic prices to replace paper bags. The total plastic waste might increase to 300 per cent whereas reusable packaging would lead to increased consumption of water requiring 1.4 billion litres. McDonald's says that this move will affect their efforts to remove plastics and that the reusable method can be unhygienic which would eventually reach the landfills. The packaging law came under scrutiny to find out alternatives other than just the reusability of containers. (Valentina Romano, "McDonald's warns EU packaging law will cause plastic surge" *Euractiv*, 04 March 2023)

GENDER

Women proportionally engaged in lower-paying jobs

On 05 March, *Frankfurter Allgemeine* reports that in Germany there is a large proportion of women engaged in poorly paid jobs. The presence of women in food retail, florist and personal care, gastronomy and horse industry are proportionally high which can be compiled in the section on lower-paying jobs. According to Federal Employment Agency (BA) when it comes to more lucrative jobs except for the medical sphere women are low in number for the highest-paying jobs. There are only 6.5 per cent of aircraft pilots, 14.8 per cent of technical researchers and

only 22 per cent who are managing directors and board members. The only lucrative field women have proportionate representation in is the medical field with 53.9 per cent estimated. There has been a proposal to promote women in higher-paying jobs and award equal representation. ("High proportion of women in poorly paid jobs," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 05 March 2023)

Spain to announce gender parity law

On 03 March, Spanish Prime Minister Sanchez addressed the gathering of the socialist party rally about the Equal law representation bill to be held for cabinet discussion. The legislation planned proposes to form a planned gender parity law for equal representation of women in politics, business and other public fields. The law will demand a list of companies with more than 250 employees and with an annual turnover of EUR 50 million to assign 40 per cent of their women employees to management roles. The law also announces the need to bring the party obligation for women representatives in parliament to 50 per cent. ("Spanish PM Sanchez announces planned gender-parity law," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 March 2023)

Germany's Foreign and Development minister's proposes inclusion of gender in foreign policy

On 01 March, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and German Development Minister Svenja Schulze proposed to invest in gender equality policies. They released a list of new directives to develop lobbying for prioritizing women in all fields. Schulze stated the benefits of "feminist foreign policy" being a more equal society would mean less suffrage, hunger and poverty as it works towards making the society more equal in all senses. Germany seeks to invest EUR 12 billion in development projects where they specifically tackle gender equality with that they are looking into the creation of an 'ambassador of feminist foreign policy' to further the cause. Greens party spokesperson said: "We will also more systematically allocate our financial resources in the service of feminist foreign policy." The main plan of the proposal is to

allocate eight per cent of the development project funds to gender equality initiatives and that the government would make sure that they can participate in equal footing by being accessible to women. Germany also looks into promoting this initiative worldwide by establishing feminist women mediators in the African Union. ("[German government to promote 'feminist foreign policy'](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 March 2023)

MARITIME

UK government cuts back on highly protected marine areas

On 28 February, *The Guardian* reports that England plans to create three Highly protected Marine Areas (HMA) instead of five as part of their scale-back plan. There were five sites proposed to receive the highest level of protection for the regeneration of marine life but two were dropped concerning socioeconomic impacts especially the livelihood of fishers. Conservationists and environmentalists have criticized this move, as the sites were removed after protests by the locals. The remaining three sites Allonby Bay in Cumbria, Dolphin Head in the eastern Channel and northeast of Farnes Deep, in the North Sea would be developed by the sixth of July. The marine conservationist said that it took them three years to reach this decision at this rate to protect 30 per cent of marine life it would take 260 years. The move has been called nonsensical by marine biologists who are saddened by the cutdown but happy for the other three. ("[Government scales back plan for highly protected marine areas in England](#)," *Guardian*, 28 February 2023)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

WhatsApp to agree with EU consumer protection rules

On 06 March, WhatsApp the meta-owned messaging service agreed to the committee suggested by the EU consumer probe. This was based on complaints registered by Consumer Protection Cooperation, which were concerned about the WhatsApp privacy policy and terms and conditions launched in 2021 under which they were putting pressure on users to

accept the changes without understanding the proper implications. Agreeing to the EU provisions WhatsApp has agreed to be more transparent when modifying the terms of service, and give option to users to more changes if they disagree with the policy and terms and conditions, and with that also mentions the implication of rejecting such services. (Luca Bertuzzi, "[WhatsApp commits to comply with EU consumer rules over policy updates](#)," *Euractiv*, 06 March 2023)

INTERNATIONAL

SVB collapse to not affect Estonia and the European banking sector

On 13 March, *EER News* reports that the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank will not affect Estonia or the European banking sector. As the issue will be limited to the business limited sector and limited to specific banks whereas the steps taken by Federal banks would minimize the collateral damage as they provide assurance. A startup Head Eve Peeterson said: "while some companies do have money in SVB, no problems have been reported so far. All these banking concerns are often linked to speculation and fears." (Mart Linnart, "[Experts: Estonia, Europe unlikely to be impacted by US banks collapsing](#)," *EER News*, 13 March 2023)

Belarusian president to reach Iran for their 30 years anniversary of bilateral relations

On 18 March, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko will be meeting Iran officials as the country celebrates their 30 years of diplomatic relations. The discussion plans to look into developing their bilateral relations and cooperation and the meeting will be focused on expanding trade and economic provisions between the two countries. They plan to further focus on relations on developing industry, agriculture transport and logistics and to work as a region. ("[Lukashenko off to Iran on an official visit](#)," *Belta*, 12 March 2023)

Silicon Valley Bank collapse, UK government finding provisions to fund

On 13 March, *The Guardian* reported on the

collapse of the Silicon Valley Bank which would be protected by the UK government as they look to establish an emergency deal. The SVB is a venture capital financing that has sent shockwaves to Global markets. It's estimated that USD 175 billion of customer deposits in under the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, which ensures full access by the depositors. The issue came when the customer's withdrawals led to the liquidation of securities caused by Federal Reserves interest rate hikes.. The rise in customers' withdrawals was owed to their securities being sold for less prices than they bought them from. The UK PM Rishi Sunak has proposed to look to provide for cash lifeline to support startups. The US has announced its own emergency support for the affected customers, with other regulators offering USD 25 billion in emergency lending. Bank of London Chief Executive said: "Silicon Valley Bank cannot be allowed to fail given the vital community it serves." (Kalyeena Makortoff, Aubrey Allegretti, "[UK racing to secure a deal to protect firms from Silicon Valley Bank collapse](#)," *The Guardian*, 13 March 2023)

UK, US and Australia joint venture for Aukus pact

On 08 March, *Financial Times* reported that the UK will play a more prominent role in Australia's nuclear submarine development Aukus deal, a joint venture between UK, US and Australia. The three nations leaders plan to meet on 13 March and discuss the future planning. The Aukus pact came as a venture to counter Chinese developments and military aggression. The meeting is expected to unveil the design proposed for the submarine which would be a hybrid design matching the pragmatic needs for Australia. Rishi Sunak mentioned to his colleagues that the negotiations were a "Success for Britain". ("[Britain to play bigger role in Aukus submarine deal than envisaged](#)" *Financial Times*, 08 March 2023)

Volkswagen plans to halt battery plan in Europe

On 08 March, Volkswagen announced that they are planning to halt battery plant projects from eastern Europe. This comes after the US Inflation Reduction Act aiding

with a USD 369 billion package where now companies like Volkswagen have started to prioritize facilities in North America reckoning to get USD 10 billion in financing. The US incentives subsidies on green technology, luring companies to invest in their deals. The new bill faced much criticism from the EU due to which they came up with their own green deal to counter the US offer. The Volkswagen company have started looking at the US over Germany for their factory location. ("[VW puts European battery plant on hold as it seeks €10bn from US](#)," *Financial Times*, 08 March 2023)

NATO discussed the role of technology and gender parity on women's day

On 08 March, as part of the Women's Day initiative NATO held a conference with panels across the alliance. They deeply discourse on the role of women and gender parity with its effect on the future. The meeting was titled "Innovators and Game Changers: Women in Tech Shaping the Future," discussing gender equality and the role of technology to bridge the gap. Irene Fellin NATO special Representative for Women, talked about how the digital gap can be further dissected to the level of gender parity stating, "we must all work together to bridge the major gender gap in technology. Across the NATO Enterprise, with partners, industry and academia... By including women in science and tech, you take on more brain power, more ideas, more creativity. That is what we need, what NATO needs, what all of us need." They discussed the role of women in the Tech industry and that while there has been a rise in the role of women in the industry it is far from being equal. With time and progressing technology would play a vital role in security and military domain therefore a push has to be engaged in to look into developments through the lens of gender. ("[NATO marks International Women's Day with conference on gender equality in technology](#)," *nato.int*, 08 March 2023)

NATO to provide Jordanian women's military with transportation facilities

On 05 March, Nato's Defence Capacity

Building (DCB) provided women's Jordanian armed forces with buses. The donation was made by Australia and Netherlands to the Military Women's Training Centre (MWTC) who were facing the issue of transportation to train their women in combat. To address these two 23-seater buses were delivered that would cover the distance of eight kilometres, this would facilitate training and education of the women. ("NATO delivers buses to the Military Women's Training Centre of Jordan," *nato.int*, 08 March 2023)

Saudi Arabia to send aid to Turkey

On 06 March, Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with Turkey to deposit EUR 4.7 billion. This comes in light of the disasters Turkey has been facing with high inflation and the aftermath effects of the massive earthquake. Saudi delegates said, "a testament to the close cooperation and historical ties that exist between the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Turkey and its brotherly people". This comes as a move to strengthen bilateral ties between the two nations which were severed after the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. ("Saudi Arabia deposits \$5 billion in Turkey's central bank," *Deutsche Welle*, 06 March 2023)

EU textile waste reaching Africa

On 05 March, European Environment Agency (EEA) announced that Europe is struggling to handle an ever-growing amount of used textiles which end up being exported to Africa. The remnant of textiles adds to the fourth largest source of climate change and environmental degradation. According to EEA "As reuse and recycling capacity in Europe is limited, a large share of used textiles are exported to Africa and Asia, where their fate is "highly uncertain, as limited and mostly anecdotal evidence is available." IN 2019 46 per cent of textiles ended up in Africa where most of it was either reused or reached open landfills and informal waste streams. The Fashion industry is responsible for 10 per cent of carbon emissions with microplastics and synthetics reaching the ocean every year. If the use of average use of garments is double downed they could reduce the carbon

emission by 44 per cent. (Valentina Romano, "From Europe to Africa and Asia: the journey of discarded textiles," *Euractiv*, 05 March 2023)

UN to opt for high sea protection to ensure sustainable use of the ocean

On 03 March, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the UN aims to alter historical deals to protect the high seas ensuring sustainable use of ocean biodiversity. After several rounds of negotiations, 100 countries agreed to legally bind the agreement for high seas protection. The change in the treaty aims to ensure sustainable use of ocean biodiversity which might reverse the effect on marine biodiversity. The step marks significant efforts to protect the high seas and marine life while protecting the interests of all countries involved. This deal will fulfil the motive of protecting 30 per cent of world oceans by 2030, as the ocean is a vital part of biodiversity there needs to generate a suitable wave of tidal energy and ocean biodiversity protection. (Tim Schauenberg, "UN states strike a historic deal to protect high seas," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 March 2023)

Meloni and Modi discuss future peace negotiations for Ukraine war

On 02 March, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and stated that India is a major player in brokering peace between Ukraine and Russia. Meloni said that India is well aware of Italy's support of Ukraine and that she hopes to see India facilitating the ending of hostilities between the two countries as the G20 president. They further discussed strategic bilateral ties aiming for increased trade cooperation where it now stands at EUR 15 billion a double amount since 2020. Both leaders agreed on how more can be done to further their bilateral relations and that they should take proactive measures to increase ties. ("India can facilitate 'just peace' in Ukraine - Meloni," *Ansa.it*, 02 March 2023)

EU to aid Somalia for smooth transition of powers

On 02 March, The Political and Security Committee of the EU agreed to provide

support for the Somalian National Army (SNA) and the African Union of Transition Mission Somalia (ATMIS). The aim is to hand over responsibility to both institutions and to strengthen their capacities. EU plans to provide with EUR 85 million for ATMIS and EUR 23 million for SNA. This would provide ATMIS with troops allowance for African deployed soldiers and for SNA it would aid the production of non-lethal equipment and infrastructure work under the supervision of the EU. ([“EU support to Somalia: Council approves further support under the European Peace Facility to the Somali National Army and to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia \(ATMIS\).”](#) *European Council*, 02 March 2023)

Viktor Orban and Abdel Fattah met Hungary and Egypt strengthening bilateral relations

On 28 February, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban met with Egypt president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. They discussed their historical and bilateral relations. The Ukraine war led to Hungary to stress on peace and its efforts to reduce tensions. Orban said: "We are also prepared to engage in disputes with the Western world because we want a diplomatic solution, a ceasefire, and peace talks." They discussed the issue of illegal migration and that there is a need to provide a strong baseline. Hungary and Egypt look forward to strengthening economic ties to invest in agriculture, food, energy and tourism. They also announced inter-company negotiations to purchase Liquefied natural gas from Egypt so that it can be supplied to the Hungarian government from 2026. ([“Viktor Orbán Holds Talks in Cairo,”](#) *Hungary Today*, 02 March 2023)

China to become the largest importer of

LNG

On 01 March, *Frankfurter Allgemeine* reports that China's increased investment in Liquefied Natural Gas can be threatening to Europe. USD 60 billion have been contracted between China and Qatar, making China soon to be a dominant player in the world market of LNG. Starting in 2026 Beijing will be supplied by Qatar with four million tons of LNG every year for a period of 27 years. Now that the covid restrictions are down the second largest economy looks to get energy from Qatar, Russia and other pacific rivals therefore 'China buys what it can get. 'China can be seen as becoming soon the world's largest importer this means for Europe it won't be as easy to get LNG as they would have to compete with Chinese buyers. ([“China buys whatever gas it can get,”](#) *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 01 March 2023)

Lukashenko talks to Chinese media on future cooperation with China

On 28 February, Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko talked to Chinese media and expressed the high-level cooperation between Belarus and China. He also discussed the future prospects between the two countries where there are free economic ones and trade partners. Talking about the Belarusian National Biotechnology Corporation (BNBC) the launch of a vitamin production facility would need some support and for that, they believe Xi Jinping would become a possible facilitator. Expressing the years of cooperation he said, "There are very few states with which China has such a level of cooperation. We appreciate this very much, given the difference between giant China and our Belarus. We appreciate it very much." ([“Lukashenko: Belarus has been reliable friend of China and will remain so,”](#) *Belta*, 27 February 2023)

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