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ISSUES IN EU INTEGRATION



Europe Monitor #20 | Vol. 03 | Issue 05 | May 2023
An initiative of NIAS and KAS-India Office



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

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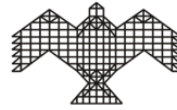
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Europe Monitor

Europe Monitor # 20, Vol. 03, No. 05,
May 2023



NIAS EUROPE STUDIES BRIEF

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WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES



Source: Murat Cetinmuhurdar/Presidential Press Office/Handout via REUTERS, eos-aus.com, SCMP/AFP, Valentin Sprinchak / TASS, nato.int, REUTERS/Igor Tkachenko/File Photo

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 402 to Day 428 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

EM SHORT NOTES



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

By Padmashree Anandhan, and Rishika Yadav

NIAS EUROPE STUDIES BRIEF

Assessing EU Integration over the Years by Analysing the Response of Member Countries to Refugees

By Amrita Purkayastha

The EU is known for its unified and harmonious ideals which are reflected in its supranational institutions; however, universal decisions being taken by the European Parliament are not implemented by the respective governments of member states.

Introduction

The supranational structure of the European Union has been revered by many as the ultimate framework of a regional organization.* However, integration within the Union has been challenged in recent times as evidenced by the reaction of the member countries towards the refugees, especially the ones from the MENA region. The oneness of the region, known for its liberal and open policies, has been criticised for the increased securitisation of region policies and division among the member states' response based on religion and ethnicity. The 2015 refugee crisis brought Europe to a crossroads between the supranational ideals of one area with common justice and freedom for all and the rise of nationalistic democracies with their populist agenda.¹ The Russia-Ukraine war has not only dragged the region back to Cold War-era politics, but it has larger implications for the member countries of the European Union. This research tries to map the process of integration over the years through the arrival of different waves of refugees. It argues that there is a disparity between the decisions taken at the supranational level and the way it is implemented in different EU states. The study further asserts that EU decisions do not always reflect the will of the citizens of the member countries.

Over the years- Background

The Europe Union is considered the model framework for all regional organisations. Commencing with six western European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) to foster interdependence to make another war unthinkable, the bloc consists of 27 states in the present day and includes countries from central and eastern Europe and has helped to promote peace and stability in the region. The reality of the EU has come about as a result of many treaties and member states have strengthened it by adopting common laws and policies over the years. The EU is a supra-national authority which has modified the contours of nationalism in the European region.²

Although the EU was created in 1992 under the Treaty of Maastricht, the integration of the region started much before that and over the years it has gone through several stages of integration in terms of refugee laws and policies and the responses of the member countries can be analysed in these different stages. Before establishing and adopting global or regional norms for refugees, most countries followed national or customary laws. Some of these norms and mechanisms were similar in most European countries. Though these did not have a pan-European approach, their existence helped the refugees in general before the establishment of the League of Nations. Major norms which

*The essay is based on a presentation made at the first "NIAS-KAS Annual Conclave on Europe," organised by NIAS Europe Studies in collaboration with the Delhi office of KAS. Views expressed in the brief are author's own and do not represent any institute.

¹ Postelnicescu, *Europe's New Identity: The Refugee Crisis and Rise of Nationalism*, 203-209.

² Archick, *The European Union: Questions and Answers*, 1-17.

date back to the 19th century are nonrefoulement, the right to asylum, and non-extradition. Free border choice was another norm prevalent in the 19th century which provided individual liberty to the refugees to cross the border without checks.³ Religious proclamations and domestic legislations were the usual ways through which refugees were welcomed to settle in different territories. Although these legislations did not have a pan-European approach, they were used as one of the mechanisms to deal with refugees.⁴ Another prevalent mechanism was resettlement agencies that voluntarily worked for the resettlement of the refugees. However, they did not always adopt ways that were legit and often helped the refugees cross the borders.

The popularism of liberalism continued well into the 20th century. The period was marked by world wars and regional conflicts which resulted in millions of refugees across Europe. As such, the refugees became a major humanitarian and political issue for the first time. The major problem related to the treatment of refugees started when it became embroiled in Cold War politics. While the Eastern bloc wanted refugees to be repatriated, the Western bloc believed in the individual choice of the refugees. Following the tensions between the two blocs, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was shut down in 1947, and its responsibilities were transferred to other UN agencies. As the refugee status was granted based on ideological considerations, the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) became easier as it did not have to negotiate hard with the Western countries that were receiving them. During this period, the UNHCR carried out the practice of protecting the refugees according to the desire of Western countries. As part of the Western bloc, the European countries

continued the practice of dealing with refugees through the UNHCR. A major interest of the Western nations was to maintain international attention on the issue of refugees from communist countries and encourage them to emigrate from the Eastern bloc to the West, thus keeping alive the ideological battle of the Cold War. This affected the ability of the UNHCR from playing an independent role.⁵ The partiality of the UNHCR in handling the refugees was manifested in its dealing with the refugees from the crises in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The Hungarian crisis of 1956 started due to the collapse of the Hungarian Communist party as the result of a chaotic de-Stalinization process and leading to anti-Soviet sentiment. It resulted in violent confrontations with the Soviet forces. The Soviet position was that the crisis was triggered by American interference in the domestic affairs of Hungary which instigated the revolt.⁶ Most of the 200,000 refugees who fled their homes took refuge in Austria, which sought help from other countries. The refugees were immediately resettled in many of the European states. The Hungarian crisis of 1956 illustrated the bias of the Western nations who used the UNHCR as a tool to settle a score against the Eastern bloc.⁷

The Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia on 20 August 1968 citing the Brezhnev doctrine according to which it had the right to invade any country in the Eastern bloc if it felt that their actions threatened the security of the Eastern Bloc. The invasion of Czechoslovakia resulted in another flow of refugees who fled the Soviet suppression of the nationalist uprising in 1968.⁸ The movement of refugees from Czechoslovakia was showcased within the ideological propaganda of the Cold War. The goal of the Western bloc, including the west European countries, was to portray the east European countries in poor light. The

³ Caestecker, *The Transformation of Nineteenth-Century West European Expulsion Policy, 1880-1914*, 5

⁴ Orchard, *The Dawn of International Refugee Protection: States, Tacit Cooperation and Non-Extradition*, 282-300.

⁵ Loescher, *The UNHCR and the World Politics: State Interests and Institutional Authority*, 34-35.

⁶ Barnett, *Global Governance and the Evolution of International Refugee Regime*, 247.

⁷ Zieck, *The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Emergency, an Early and Instructive Case of Resettlement*, 45-63.

⁸ Nayudu, *When the Elephant Swallowed the Hedgehog: The Prague Spring & Indo-Soviet Relations*, 1-24.

continuous flow of refugees from the Eastern Communist bloc towards the Western bloc, mainly the West European countries, was a permanent characteristic of the Cold War era. The Western countries adopted a very welcoming policy for refugees from the Eastern bloc. Thus, the politics of the Cold War unwittingly set in motion the first stages of EU integration, but it also divided the region into east and west during the Cold War. The different events and events of this period were dictated by politics where the divided European West was more dominant than the East.⁹

Although the EU as a regional organisation was legally established in 1992, the idea of regional integration was initiated when Europe's coal and steel industries were brought together under the treaty of Paris proposed by Robert Schuman in 1951. Since then, the EU has come a long way in strengthening its regional integration over the years. The EU member states share central powers and responsibilities with the supranational institutions of the EU. The consolidation of the region also had its origin in the Schengen Agreement of 1985 which abolished all checks on persons at their internal borders. This Agreement was signed by Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany. The signatories committed towards the gradual abolition of barriers to movements across borders and between them, to coordinate the fight against drug trafficking and crime as short-term measures, and to dedicate themselves towards harmonizing the laws for common police cooperation and common visa policies. The convention started to work on the implementation of the Schengen Agreement in 1990 to set out the application of abolishing border controls. It also aimed to strengthen the external border check and defined laws that would help in issuing visas.

The number of asylum seekers from Eastern Europe (towards Western Europe) increased

significantly with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. An influx of approximately 2.7 million refugees and internally displaced persons took place. Traditional concepts like borders and sovereignty became less important, and it became easier to move people between nations in Europe under the Schengen agreement.

This resulted in a steep rise in applications from asylum seekers in Europe, which made the European countries rethink their asylum policy; instead of the liberal attitude that existed during the Cold War, the European countries began implementing very regressive measures against the refugees.¹⁰ Only temporary visas were given that had limited rights to move outside the camps. The member states felt the need for a proper regional refugee policy because of the influx of refugees from Eastern Europe and more so later with the development of other refugee crises. Germany and Austria were the major countries that accepted many of these refugees. Ethno-political movements in Eastern Europe, mainly in countries like Bulgaria and Romania where minority groups were discriminated against or subjected to exploitation, have also resulted in many refugees in the post-Cold War period. With the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Europe received 5,750 asylum applications and the refugees were mainly absorbed into countries like Belgium, France, and Germany.

This restrictive period brought the European countries together for the first time and they sought to tackle common problems together at the regional level where common mechanisms could help them to work together on different aspects relating to refugee management. The Europeanisation of the region made possible by the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, opened up the borders. It eased the movement of refugees from one country to another within Europe. Due to the numerical increase of refugees, European countries began viewing refugees

⁹ Chiusiwa, *How Effective has the UNHCR been in Fulfilling its Mandate to Protect Refugees?* 3-8.

¹⁰ Cooper, *Prospects for the governance of refugee protection: Exploring the effect of an unbalanced level of asylum recognition rates amongst European countries*, 1-32.

as an economic burden rather than a humanitarian issue.¹¹ Select EU member countries insisted on restricting the movement of refugees. They insisted that the refugees stay out of their region. They were particularly concerned about the asylum shopping practice of the refugees. The asylum seekers entered through one member country but travelled to another country where their application was more likely to be successful. These unhindered movements within the region resulted in two specific challenges – asylum shopping and refugees in orbit.¹²

Dublin Agreement- Different phases

The refugee framework of the European Union is complex and has five major parts. The Dublin Regulation is one of the most controversial EU policies which elicited different responses from different countries. It was initiated in 1990 and was later added to the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The Dublin Regulation determines which member country will be responsible for asylum protection. It was responsible for establishing the first country of an asylum seeker through the fingerprint system of Eurodac and accommodating them accordingly. The EU Commission considered it a duty to protect every person who sought international protection and accordingly suggested steps to make the asylum process more uniform and safer.¹³

Although initiated years before the CEAS framework under the European Union, the Dublin Regulation is one of the fundamental elements of the CEAS framework. The major objective for initiating the Dublin Convention was to find a way to determine the member state that will be responsible for asylum seekers. The major purpose was to avoid multiple applications in a single region. The Dublin Convention of 1990 initiated the principle of first country of asylum which meant that the first country where the claimant has petitioned for

protection will be responsible for his or her shelter whereas the country where the claimant preferred was the last considered country. This norm allowed applicants to be recognized as refugees requiring protection and made the country which first received the asylum seekers or where the refugees had applied for shelter responsible for their protection. The first country of asylum would, therefore, allow asylum seekers to enter its territory for basic assistance before they are resettled locally or in a third country.¹⁴ A country could be recognized as a first country of asylum if the applicant has been recognized as a refugee in that territory, and he/she enjoys certain protection within that territory. Other norms that were included in the first phase included the 7riticized7on principle and the safe third-country norm. However, in practice, the arrangement has been found inefficient as it adds responsibility and pressure to the border countries that end up being the first country of asylum. In addition, there were clear differences that could be observed in national practices and their interpretation of the provisions.

The Dublin Convention was revamped in the second phase in 2003 when it was transformed into the Dublin Regulation. The Dublin Regulation aimed at removing the confusion among the member states in determining the country responsible for taking in the refugees. It aimed to establish a community instrument, adopting minimum standards for reception, and qualification directives. The Regulation stated that only one country will be responsible for processing the asylum application from an individual. In cases where the asylum seeker already has valid documents and a visa permit, the state which issued it will be responsible for the application, and when an asylum seeker has different documents issued from different states, the state which issued the residence permit will be responsible for examining the application

¹¹ Loescher, *Refugee Movements in the Post-Cold War Era*, 707-717.

¹² Desimpelaere, *The Dublin Regulation: Past, Present and Future*, 5-104.

¹³ European Commission, *EU Asylum: judgement of the European Court of Human Rights on the transfer of asylum seekers under the EU Dublin Regulation*.

¹⁴ European Commission, Directive 2013/32/EU

form. The Eurodac Regulation, a fingerprint database that is an EU-wide system of taking fingerprints of asylum seekers facilitates the Dublin Regulation by documenting the point of first entry for the asylum seeker. No matter where they are in the EU, their fingerprints are transmitted to the Eurodac central system. Eurodac has been operating since 2002 and has proven to be a very successful tool and an effortless mechanism for the member countries to examine asylum applications through their fingerprints.¹⁵

The Dublin Regulation tried to reform the shortcomings of the Dublin Convention, but more or less it has the same framework. It made a territorial expansion to add countries like Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and Iceland. But the most significant outcome of this phase was the Europeanisation of the asylum framework by forming the CEAS which included various directives in favour of asylum seekers. The responsibility of family reunification also expanded as unmarried couples and dependents were taken into consideration for the first time. The changes brought about through the Dublin Regulation were also substantial because it criticized the entire Dublin system. However, despite these improvements, the second phase of the Dublin system could not solve the refugees in orbit situation.

The Dublin Regulation was upgraded to the third phase in 2013 and replaced the earlier Dublin Regulation of 2003. Dublin III expanded the criteria for different claims through which the asylum seekers could reunite using the family reunification norms. Its scope was expanded yet again to include additional safeguards to stateless persons and primary attention was given to unaccompanied minors.

A major shortcoming of previous mechanisms was that many asylum seekers were not aware of their legal rights and the other procedural information before applying for asylum. Dublin III tried to address these issues. Additional safeguards

like the right to information, informing the applicant about the procedure, and providing information about legal remedies were adopted. Dublin III determined the country responsible for the asylum seeker. It aimed to align with various mechanisms like the EUREMA project based on the will of the asylum seeker and the concerned country, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), and the Asylum Information Database (AIDA). However, like in previous phases, the Dublin III phase criticized Europe according to the national policies of member states.

However, the Dublin Regulation, overall, has been criticized for being an inefficient system. Although the idea behind the system was to share the burden of asylum seekers equally among the member countries of the European Union, its implementation was dominated by intergovernmental politics and some states feared that their national sovereignty would be compromised. The Dublin system was also found not to be very successful in the long run as it created several cracks in the harmonious structure of the Union. The border countries had to bear greater costs owing to the first country of asylum principle. In addition, the Dublin system has been criticized for creating an uneven burden-sharing system given that all member countries are not equally equipped to carry out their responsibilities under the Dublin system. For instance, Greece had the least equipped system with its reception centres and other procedures not up to the mark and experiencing major shortcomings.¹⁶ Another major idea behind the Dublin initiative was to address the problem of asylum shopping, but secondary movements have been consistent in the European region. The foundation of the Dublin system has changed over the years through reforms, but the basic problems persist.¹⁷ The Dublin system was replaced by the

¹⁵ Malmström, A Common European Asylum System.

¹⁶ Gott, *Solidarity and Dublin I: A Missed Opportunity*.

¹⁷ Fratzke, *Not Adding Up: The Fading Promise of Europe's Dublin System*, 1-24.

Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management (RAMM) which too aimed to establish a common framework for asylum seekers.¹⁸

Over the years the Dublin system went through different phases of upgrade and reform. It tried to unite the member states of the European Union by distributing the responsibility of taking in asylum seekers. But the implementation of the Dublin system reflected the division within Europe as each of these states was dictated by their national politics. The supranational issues mattered little to the citizens of these countries who expressed their unhappiness through populist agendas and the rise of right-wing parties. The challenges to the implementation of policies at the supranational level revealed the lack of integration among the member states. The United Kingdom exited the Union to prevent itself from sharing the responsibility of asylum seekers.

Refugee Crisis and EU integration

The EU's asylum framework is often regarded as the model of regional asylum protection. However, the handling of refugee crises since 2015 has exposed the inconsistencies between the asylum framework and the actual treatment of the refugees by the EU member states. In addition, the huge influx of Syrian refugees has tested the solidarity of the EU as a whole. It revealed the failure of the EU members to demonstrate solidarity and joint effort to manage the Syrian and Libyan refugee crises.

Firstly, the existence of two parallel systems – at the EU level and at the level of individual member countries – has been at the core of the refugee crises. Instead of implementing the EU framework for refugees, each member country adopted its refugee system that varied from the EU system. In addition, the EU had no mandatory power to enforce its norms and

mechanisms. Together, these have created tension and a wide rift among the member states. More and more member states do not see the EU as a community of values and solidarity.¹⁹

Secondly, the refugee crisis has highlighted the restrictive attitude resulting from racial and religious differences between the host country and the refugees. The member states have resorted to the call of national interest, and several politicians have used the issue of refugees in general, and the Syrian refugees in particular, to secure votes in elections instead of committing to a united EU approach to refugees. For example, the Hungarian Prime Minister made it clear in his speech that the people of Hungary should consider a homogenous country first before the idea of a multicultural Europe.²⁰ Slovakia argued that it would only accept Christian refugees. The huge influx of refugees has resulted in the development of xenophobia and racial differences among the people of Europe in addition to the rise of far-right parties throughout Europe. The EU member countries have also expressed their concern over the rising Islamic population with the entry of refugees after the terror attacks in Paris and Berlin.²¹

Most member states from Eastern and Central Europe sport a negative attitude towards refugees in general, and refugees from the Middle East in particular. With the required cooperation from Western European countries not forthcoming, they have been left to carry the major burden of dealing with the refugees from the Middle East at their borders.²² The Balkan countries along with Slovenia, Hungary, and Croatia, have started erecting fences on their borders and are in the process of strengthening them to prevent refugees from crossing over. This kind of East-West split is not only apparent between countries, but has also permeated within countries. For example, the Western part

¹⁸ ECRE, *The Implementation of Dublin III Regulation in 2020*, 1-14.

¹⁹ Faure et al, *Challenges to Comprehensive EU Migration and Asylum Policy*.

²⁰ Hoel, *The European Union's Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis: An Analysis of the Response of the Member States and EU Institutions*, 30.

²¹ Upadhyay, *Migrant Crisis in Europe: Causes, Responses and Complexities*, 1-28.

²² Dullien, *A German model for Europe?*

of Germany is more liberal in accepting refugees than its Eastern part. The refugee crisis has proved that the member countries, although a part of the Union, do not necessarily share the same values nor follow the EU norms and mechanisms relating to the treatment of refugees in general, and Syrian refugees in particular. Britain's exit, overshadowed by the refugee issue, has signalled the beginning of the split in the EU and would serve to further weaken the integration for the time being.²³

Thirdly, the refugee crisis has revealed the lack of trust among the member states despite being part of a supraregional organisation. The EU has norms for the relocation of refugees whereby the member states have a legitimate duty towards the refugees and share the burden of refugees equally amongst them. In reality, the lack of mutual trust among the states stems from the absence of commitment between each other on resettling the refugees. The individual EU members' borders have created a burden on the bordering countries and as such, just a handful of member states have borne the entire burden of the Middle Eastern refugees.²⁴ In addition, the EU also reached an unethical agreement with Turkey to prevent Syrian refugees from entering the territories of the EU member states. As a result, only a small percentage of the refugees could get shelter in Europe as the borders were tightly controlled and the resettlement programmes and humanitarian admissions in Europe were relatively limited.

Fourthly, financial solidarity was also another problem among the members of the EU as there was no external source for funding the refugees and much of the costs had to be borne by the smaller and poorer countries of the EU. The increase in the number of refugees due to the war and conflicts in the Middle East and budgetary constraints in southern Europe due to the

financial crisis resulted in the disparity in financial burden-sharing.²⁵ The lack of financial solidarity to deal with the Syrian refugee crisis was yet another cause of rift amongst the EU member states.

Lastly, the EU does not have any executive authority to ensure the implementation of its asylum policies and systems. Thus, differences between the EU members over the treatment of Syrian refugees have exposed deep division and tension. Differences in religion and ethnicity have played a major role in the differential treatment meted out to the refugees from outside Europe. For instance, many countries like Hungary and Bulgaria have been openly against refugees being Muslims, and refugees from outside Europe have been expelled unlawfully from countries like Bulgaria, Greece, and Spain without giving them any access to asylum procedures.

Although the pressure of the influx of refugees has lessened over the years, Europe remains polarized into three zones – the liberal countries of western Europe, the moderate countries of the Mediterranean region, and the erstwhile communist countries of eastern Europe. A visible securitization of the region proves the tensions that were created due to the large influx of refugees in the region. The rise in xenophobic tendencies against the arrival of refugees is evidenced by the sudden rise of right-wing parties throughout Europe. Many have been echoing the opinions and extreme ideas of the right-wingers regarding the influx of refugees suggesting that the citizens in many cases were against the homogenous structure of the European Union.

To sum up, the 2015 refugee crisis highlighted the shortcomings of the European Union as an organisation even though the EU is regarded as a model regional organisation. It exposed the dichotomy between the asylum framework

²³ Horn, *Is European Integration in Trouble?* 12-26.

²⁴ Kneebone, *Comparative Regional Frameworks for Refugees: Norms and Norm Entrepreneurs*. 153-172.

²⁵ Trauner, *Asylum Policy: the EU's Crises' and the Looming Policy Regime Failure*, 311-325.

and the actual treatment of the refugees by EU member states and revealed their failure to maintain solidarity to tackle the Syrian refugee crisis. On the contrary, the member countries bolstered their borders and set up sophisticated surveillance. The EU's policies towards refugees are inadequate, to say the least. It has been trying to contain them in neighbouring countries such as Syria in a bid to prevent them from coming to Europe. The refugee crisis has also led to the rise of several right-wing parties in different European countries. Moreover, the refugee crisis has also highlighted the divisive attitude among the member countries in their response towards the refugees. The refugee crisis has resulted in the securitization of the EU as a whole though their responses were different, and each country deferred its responsibility to others.

Russian-Ukraine War and EU integration

The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine has once again brought to centre stage the fragility of integration within the EU. While it is too early to understand the full impact of the conflict on EU integration, many analysts observe that it is a turning point for the EU which will test the institutional unity between member states. Even the decisions taken by individual member states in terms of Ukraine reflect the unity of the Union. The Russo-Ukrainian War has altered the power dynamics in the region, taking it back to the days of the Cold War. The War is reflected even in the EU's smaller powers and it has renewed the impetus for a common foreign policy for Europe as a region.

The complex relationship between Russia and Ukraine along with its western alliance including both NATO and the EU has been the major reason for the present crisis. Given their history, Ukrainians have had bitter relations with Russia. Ukraine was a territory of Russia until 1991 when it split from the erstwhile Soviet Union and became an independent country. Though Crimea is the most prominent

Russian-speaking territory in Ukraine, there are other eastern areas like Donetsk, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, and Kharkiv where there are significant Russian-speaking populations.²⁶ The Russo-Ukrainian areas also have a strong influence of Russian culture and ethnicity even though they identify themselves as Ukrainian. The people in these areas have a bicultural identity where both the Russian and Ukrainian identities are interchangeable. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has identified itself with the European Union and declared itself as a part of the European family and has officially declared its goal to integrate with the European Union.²⁷ The EU, for its part, has tried to have stronger ties with Ukraine as Europe's security depends on harmonious relations with Ukraine. Similarly, Russia has always maintained its presence in Ukraine as it considers Ukraine a part of Russia because of its ethnic connections. After the disintegration of the USSR, the usual connection between language, citizenship, and ethnicity got broken, but, Ukraine and Russia remained economically tied as Ukraine is dependent on Russia for about 80 per cent of its oil and gas imports. Ukraine had to give up its nuclear status in return for economic guarantees, which proves the relationship was one-sided.²⁸ Ukraine's closer ties with the EU and the subsequent desire to join NATO was the major cause of the 2014 conflict and the recent war in 2022. Both these crises were Europe's worst crises since the end of World War II. The 2022 crisis is, however, far more dangerous and destructive than the 2014 crisis which only affected the eastern territories of Ukraine which predominantly has a Russian population. Regardless, both crises resulted in refugees although the numbers might be vastly different and cannot be compared.

The response from the EU in both these crises has been very liberal in providing humanitarian aid. Many projects were funded by the EU to provide basic needs

²⁶ Marples, *Ethnic and Social Composition of Ukraine's Regions and Voting Patterns*. 8.

²⁷ Averina, *The Future of EU Ukraine Relations*, 2-16.

²⁸ Inusah, *Russia-Ukraine Relations Since the Demise of Soviet Union*. 28-52.

like food, water, and shelter apart from psychological help to those who needed it. However, the response in terms of refugees has been different as the 2014 crisis directly did not affect the EU member states who, therefore, were passive in terms of the application of EU refugee norms and mechanisms for Ukrainian refugees. There was not much media focus on the Ukrainian refugees. They were not even criticized as refugees but as migrant labour. They did not go through the application process like refugees from most other countries. Instead, they were absorbed into the eastern European countries and provided employment. The eastern European countries accepted and helped in integrating the Ukrainian asylum seekers much more than the western European countries. Even in dealing with the Ukrainian refugees, there was a lack of solidarity among the EU member states as western European countries adopted a restrictive attitude towards the Ukrainian refugees.

The EU's response to the Ukrainian War has been rapid and unparalleled although it was mainly different kinds of sanctions. Additionally, the EU countries are also trying to cut down their dependency on Russian energy. The war has brought the spotlight back on NATO since the fall of the iron curtain and has also significantly increased defence funding across Europe. Their actions have shown harmony among the EU members regarding their stand against Russia.

The present crisis has witnessed an influx of approximately 8.7 million refugees and the response from the EU member states to the current wave of Ukrainian refugees has been much different given that the EU is comparatively vocal in favour of Ukraine. The EU invoked the Temporary Protection Directive to prevent pressure on the asylum system of respective countries. The Temporary Protection Directive is an immediate solution for asylum seekers in the absence of durable

solutions. The idea is that a state could remove an asylum seeker from another state's jurisdiction based on the grounds that protection could be sought anywhere. More than half of the 8 million refugees have been put under this scheme which allows them to move within the EU without a visa for three months. Given that the Russia-Ukraine War is headed towards a stalemate, the possibility of a continuous inflow of refugees into the EU is high. However, the European governments have expressed their support for the Ukrainian refugees. Geographical proximity and cultural similarities appear to have played a role in the EU member states' positive approach towards the refugees.²⁹

The relevance of the EU had been questioned in the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis; however, the unified voice of the member states was once again apparent in their response to the 2022 Russia-Ukraine War. The EU has demonstrated a unified front in introducing sanctions against Russia and supplying arms and ammunition to the Ukrainian army. A sense of solidarity was also reflected in the humanitarian aid that was continuously sent from the EU member states, many of whom also offered temporary protection to the refugees coming from Ukraine. However, the litmus test for this unified appearance came with the politics of natural gas and energy during the war. These instances once again bring into question unity and integration within the EU.

Conclusion

Europe has witnessed different stages of integration over the years. Although integration was formally initiated by the western countries to prevent calamities such as the World Wars and instead benefit from an economic community, a common understanding between the European countries predated such efforts as evidenced by the acceptance of refugees during the 19th century when customary laws played a big role in integrating the region. The beginning of the 20th century was marked by conflict and division among the European countries,

²⁹ Dhian Ho et al, *Long-Term Protection in Europe Needed for Ukrainian Refugees*.

but with the end of World War II, efforts towards integrating the countries formally commenced through the ECSC agreement. Though the Cold War period witnessed liberal attitudes towards accepting refugees, this period was marked by a divided western and eastern Europe. Economic integration was witnessed as Schuman brought six countries together, but political integration came much later during the last stage of the Cold War with the initiation of the Schengen Agreement in 1985. This resulted in the first steps towards integrating and creating a supranational entity of the European Union. But even before the region could consolidate the establishment of the European Union, it had to bear the huge influx of refugees resulting from the disintegration of the Soviet Union. To address this, the European nations created the Dublin system through which the responsibility of the refugees was to be shared between nations. However, the Dublin system proved to be inefficient despite its revision several times over the years. Regardless, the European Union maintained its position as a model regional organization for over two decades. It saw its biggest expansion between 2004 and 2007 when ten countries from eastern Europe joined the EU reflecting the strength in integration.

However, the European Union and its integration came to be criticized yet again for its response to the refugee crises emanating from the Middle East and North Africa. It revealed the inherent cracks as different countries had different responses to the refugees. The welcome to the wave of refugees following the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 and 2022 exposed the racial and

xenophobic tendencies of European countries as Ukrainians were better accepted in Europe. The Ukrainian crisis also politically united the EU against Russian actions, but the recent energy crisis has strained the cracks in the integration as countries like Germany have maintained a diplomatic position because of their dependency on Russian gas, and Poland similarly has revoked its sanctions against Russia.

The EU is known for its unified and harmonious ideals which are reflected in its supranational institutions; however, universal decisions being taken by the European Parliament are not implemented by the respective governments of member states. This was reflected in the way the Dublin system operated over the years. In addition, the citizens of the EU member states do not always agree with all the decisions taken at the EU level which can be seen in the rise of right-wing parties across Europe and the xenophobic tendencies towards the refugees. The EU should look for a common ground that all member countries will agree on and come to unanimous decisions to preserve its integration element.

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NIAS EUROPE STUDIES BRIEF

Ukraine crisis: Relooking the Security Debates in Europe

By Ankita Dutta

While the EU has been working towards a comprehensive defence integration since 2017, the crisis has led to a realisation that the EU needs to bolster its defence capabilities to be recognised as a credible security actor.

The European defence architecture has been defined by its quest for balance between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as established by the European Union (EU) post-1993.^{*1} In the past few decades, NATO and the EU have worked together, in accordance with their respective strengths and capabilities to handle different crises. While NATO has assumed the tasks related to combat, the EU has focused on post-conflict stabilisation with Afghanistan being the most cogent example of this division of labour. However, the geopolitical churning in the past few years- such as the Crimean Crisis of 2014 and the Trump Presidency - have led the European leadership to re-look at the security architectures established in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Cold War. The conversations regarding an independent and strategic security architecture were already underway when the Ukrainian crisis of 2022 added renewed momentum for defence integration within the EU.

This paper looks at development of the security architecture of Europe and analyses the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on the EU's defence integration. It highlights the steps taken by the member states individually and collectively, and provides major takeaways from the security debates in Europe following the outbreak of the crisis.

Development of European Security Architecture

The devastation in the aftermath of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War resulted in a European security architecture that was centred on a balance of conventional power backed by nuclear deterrence. The idea was to not only prevent large-scale aggression but also to limit conflicts within the continent. The architecture was developed at two distinct levels - first at the transatlantic level with NATO and second at the European level with the initiatives first taken by the European Community and later by the EU.

The development of the European security architecture can be understood by analysing various periods of its development with each period defined by the era's most pressing geopolitical challenges. The first period during the Cold War (1947-1989) was defined by antagonism between two superpowers and the security guarantees for Europe were provided under the combined umbrella of the US and NATO. The second period from 1990-1999 was the decade following the end of the Cold War which saw a rapid expansion of NATO to include members from central and eastern Europe, the establishment of the EU, and a reappraisal of security structures under the Common Security and Foreign Policy.

The third period from 2000-2013 witnessed the only time Article 5 was invoked (by the US) in the history of NATO in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The period saw a resurgence of NATO as its role expanded and it took part in

^{1*} The essay is based on a presentation made at the first "NIAS-KAS Annual Conclave on Europe," organised by NIAS Europe Studies in collaboration with the Delhi office of KAS. Views expressed in the brief are author's own and do not represent any institute

operations outside its traditional geographical space. For the Europeans, the period was marked by the expansion of the Union to include ten central and eastern European countries in 2004. The period also witnessed divergences emerge within the EU over its response to the US actions in Iraq - the new members pushed the EU to play a proactive role in the American mission compared to the older members, such as France and Germany, who favoured restraint. This period also saw the beginning of the economic crisis in the EU in 2007-8 that led to a reorientation of the attention of member states towards economic recovery, with security policies taking a backseat. The fourth period from 2014-2022 began with the European leadership re-focusing on security issues following the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. The NATO allies committed to spending two per cent of their GDP² on security and defence at the Wales Summit. Moreover, with the growing ambivalence of the US's commitment towards European security during the Trump Presidency, a strategic rethinking over security began in Europe. The period also saw the release of the Global Strategy of the EU in 2016 which set in motion the integration of European defence structures. The current fifth period commenced with the Ukrainian crisis in February 2022 which moved the debate from security integration to the need for a drastic overhaul of the European security architecture to better reflect the shifting priorities of contemporary European security.

The following section provides a brief analysis of the structures as they developed at the transatlantic and European levels.

NATO

Twelve founding members³ of NATO
"resolved to unite their efforts for collective

defence and for the preservation of peace and security,"⁴ when they signed the North Atlantic Treaty on 04 April 1949, making the alliance the core security provider for the West. The North Atlantic Alliance (another term for NATO) was established to counter the threats posed by the Soviet Union⁵ and was backed by the nuclear deterrence provided by the US. For 45 years during the Cold War period, this was the sole purpose of NATO. However, with the end of the Cold War, the challenges before NATO have diversified to include hybrid and cyber warfare. However, the core of the Alliance continues to rest on three integrated pillars⁶ comprising collective defence, common interest, and values and faith in the UN Charter.

In the post-Cold War period, the Alliance evolved into an outward-looking organisation from its Cold War character of a military coalition designed for warfare against the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. During this period, NATO expanded to become an organisation of 30 member states and undertook varied operations beyond its traditional areas of interest. It has also adapted itself for expeditionary interventions and acting as the force integrator in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. Closer home, it worked to strengthen its eastern borders following the 2014 Crimean crisis by establishing new command centres in eight member states (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) and bolstered its maritime defences in the Black Sea region by creating a new multinational force in Romania.

European Security Initiatives

During the Cold War period, European security was guaranteed by the US and NATO, giving the fragile European Community time to integrate politically and

² "The Wales Declaration on the Transatlantic Bond," NATO, 5 September 2014, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112985.htm

³ Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States

⁴ "The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C.," 04 April 1949, [nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

⁵ "A Short History of NATO," NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_139339.htm

⁶ "The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C.," 04 April 1949, [nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

economically. The European Community also made attempts to carve out a defence identity for the region. One such attempt was made in the 1950s with the French proposal of establishing a European Defence Community; however, the initiative did not gather enough support from other members as their focus was on economic and political stability and integration. Another attempt was made in the 1970s with the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) which defined the security principles for the European regions as respecting the territorial integrity of each of the participating states and refraining from making each other's territory the object of military occupation, as no such occupation or acquisition will be recognised as legal.⁷ With the end of the Cold War, signatories of the CSCE signed the Charter of Paris for New Europe which added an important caveat that the signatories "fully recognised the freedom of States to choose their own security arrangements."⁸ This clause is particularly significant as this (freedom of a state to choose whatever security arrangement it wants) has been cited to have been breached by Russia in the current Ukraine crisis.

With the establishment of the EU in 1993, European defence integration gained momentum with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) becoming a critical pillar. The idea behind the common policy was that "the Member States of the EU make their weight felt internationally."⁹ The next step towards the integration of European defence was taken in 1999 at the Cologne European Council and the establishment of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which enabled the EU to "use civilian, police and military

instruments to cover the full spectrum of crisis prevention, crisis management and post-crisis rehabilitation."¹⁰ Under this mandate, the EU launched multiple crisis management operations in Asia, the Middle East, the Balkans, Africa, and eastern Europe. Thus far, it has launched over 30 missions including military, civil, and police missions.

Period of Stagnation

However, from 2005 onwards, there was a period of stagnation due to the failure of the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty which was followed by the economic crisis in 2008. While the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 institutionalised the achievements of the CSDP and further expanded the Union's policy and scope, the economic crisis led to the reprioritisation of the economic integration and stabilisation of its currency, the Euro. This led to security concerns taking a back seat.

This reprioritisation also led to chronic disinvestment by the member states in their respective defence expenses resulting in their militaries losing their capabilities. According to Pierre Morcos and Colin Wall,¹¹ "European navies lost 32 percent of their main surface combatants (frigates and destroyers) between 1999 and 2018. Collectively, Europeans had 197 large surface combatants and 129 submarines in 1990 but only 116 and 66 respectively in 2021. Europe's combat power at sea is considered to be half of what it was during the height of the Cold War." The reduction of military budgets also created substantial defence capability gaps in European states. This was witnessed during the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 where the European allies were unable to evacuate their citizens without logistical help from the US. These shortcomings were further

⁷ 'The Helsinki Process and the OSCE', <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf>

⁸ 'Charter of Paris for a New Europe', OSCE, Paris, 1990, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/6/39516.pdf>

⁹ 'Aims and characteristics of the CFSP', Federal Foreign Office, Germany, <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/en/aussenpolitik/europa/aussenpolitik/gasp/-/228304>

¹⁰ 'Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)', Federal Foreign Office, Germany, [Common Security and Defence Policy \(CSDP\) - Federal Foreign Office \(auswaertiges-amt.de\)](https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/en/aussenpolitik/europa/aussenpolitik/gasp/-/228304)

¹¹ Pierre Morcos and Colin Wall, 'Are European Navies Ready For High-Intensity Warfare?' War on the Rocks, January 2022, <https://warontherocks.com/2022/01/are-european-navies-ready-for-high-intensity-warfare/>

exposed during the recent Ukraine crisis¹² where the European countries were struggling to supply Ukraine with weapons and ammunition.

Towards Strategic Autonomy

Over the course of the past decade, several issues led the EU to seriously contemplate the revival of its defence programme. First, the 2014 Crimean crisis catalysed NATO's European allies to commit at the Wales Summit to meet the Alliance's target of spending two per cent of GDP on defence. Second, the 2016 Brexit vote proved to be a rude awakening for the Union regarding the implications of its main security and military contributor exiting, thereby creating a substantial capability gap. Third, the growing ambivalence of the US policies towards Europe as it refocused its attention towards the Indo-Pacific. The cumulative impact of these developments was the strategic rethink within the EU regarding its defence policies and integration. The release of the *Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* in 2016 was the first step towards articulating the EU's vision of an independent security architecture.

With the release of the policy and the election of President Trump increasing uncertainty in the US policy towards Europe, the idea of an independent European defence policymaking gathered renewed pace in 2017. To increase its military capabilities, the EU launched a comprehensive defence package in 2017 which included four components. First, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) aimed at enhancing cooperation among EU member states in different formats such as joint training and exercise or acquisition and development of military equipment. Its scope varied extremely, from developing new capabilities to the

harmonisation of requirements or training.¹³ Currently, there are over 60 projects at various levels being implemented under PESCO. Second, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) aimed at monitoring the defence plans of member states to help coordinate their spending and identify possible collaborative projects. The first CARD was launched in 2019 and completed in 2020.¹⁴ Through this review, a total of 55 collaborative opportunities throughout the whole capability spectrum were identified. The second CARD cycle (2020-2022) called for an increase in defence spending following Russia's aggression against Ukraine which represented both an opportunity and a challenge for European defence.

Third, a European Defence Fund (EDF) was set up to coordinate and increase national investment in defence research and improve interoperability between national armed forces through annual work programmes structured along thematic and horizontal categories of actions. The Fund has been allocated EUR eight billion¹⁵ for 2021-2027 of which EUR 2.7 billion was meant for collaborative defence research and EUR 5.3 billion for collaborative capability development projects complementing national contributions. Fourth, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) was established as a permanent operational headquarters for military operations of up to 2500 troops deployed as part of the CSDP. The MPCC assumed command of non-executive EU military missions, which currently include the EU Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia, EUTM République Centrale Africaine (RCA),

¹² *Financial Times*, 1 December 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/a781fb71-49bb-4052-ab05-a87386bf3d5e>

¹³ 'Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)', Europa, <https://www.pesco.europa.eu/>

¹⁴ 'Coordinated Annual Review on Defence', European Defence Agency, [https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defence-\(card\)#:~:text=CARD%20provides%20an%20overview%20of,pathfinder%20for%20defence%20cooperative%20activities.](https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defence-(card)#:~:text=CARD%20provides%20an%20overview%20of,pathfinder%20for%20defence%20cooperative%20activities.)

¹⁵ 'European Defence Fund', European Commission, https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf_en

EUTM Mozambique, and EUTM Mali.¹⁶

While the EU was in the process of implementing these initiatives, the Ukraine crisis added momentum to the idea that European defence needs to be strengthened through its independent efforts and by strengthening NATO.

Ukrainian Conflict - A Crisis of Many Firsts

There is no denying that the Ukraine crisis has led the debates on a complete overhaul of European security structures and the need for independent decision-making on defence within Europe. The urgency for defence integration was visible in French President Macron's remarks at the Versailles Summit in March 2022 where he said "Europe must prepare itself for all scenarios...Europe must prepare itself to be independent of Russian gas, to be independent to ensure its own defence".¹⁷ Even as the crisis initiated the process of strengthening NATO, it has also provided a fresh impetus to the EU and its member states to take key policy decisions in terms of defence integration.

A Unified and Strengthened NATO

The relevance of NATO as a security alliance has been questioned since the end of the Cold War. While the Alliance worked towards remaining a crucial security provider for the European countries, it faced its severest criticisms in the past few years ranging from the French President's comment on the 'brain death' of NATO in 2019, to former US President Trump discrediting the Alliance altogether and the destabilisation it faced due to US' unilateral exit from Afghanistan. With the Ukraine crisis, NATO is facing its most difficult challenge since its inception. However, the crisis has resulted in strengthening the Alliance, which was evident by NATO

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's statement, "If Kremlin's aim is to have less NATO on Russia's borders, it will only get more NATO. And if it wants to divide NATO, it will only get an even more united Alliance."¹⁸

Part of strengthening the Alliance included fortifying NATO's eastern borders. At its March 2022 summit, NATO announced the increase in the number of its Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) missions to eight, with new battlegroups for Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria to "reinforce Allied deterrence and defence"¹⁹ in the region; in 2017, NATO had approved four EFPs to be deployed in the Baltic countries and Poland. Moreover, in response to the Ukraine crisis, it activated, for the first time, part of its Rapid Reaction Force, which is a multinational force consisting of air, sea, land, and special operation forces that can be deployed quickly to support the allies. It also increased the strength of the Force from 40,000 to 300,000 troops and enhanced its prepositioned forward equipment. In addition, NATO has been helping the member states in the delivery of humanitarian and non-lethal aid to Ukraine. To further strengthen itself, NATO adopted its new Strategic Concept²⁰ in June 2022 which outlined the priorities for the Alliance in the next decade. One of the key assessments made in the Strategic Concept was the realisation that "the Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace...We cannot discount the possibility of an attack against Allies' sovereignty and territorial integrity." The document also made a marked reference to the enlargement of the Alliance and reaffirmed the decision taken at the 2008 Bucharest Summit and all subsequent decisions concerning Georgia and Ukraine; at its 2008 Bucharest Summit, NATO had

¹⁶ 'The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)', EEAS,

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/military-planning-and-conduct-capability-mpcc_en

¹⁷ *Euronews*, 10 March 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/03/10/eu-leaders-meet-in-versailles-to-discuss-the-ukraine-war-and-energy-independence>

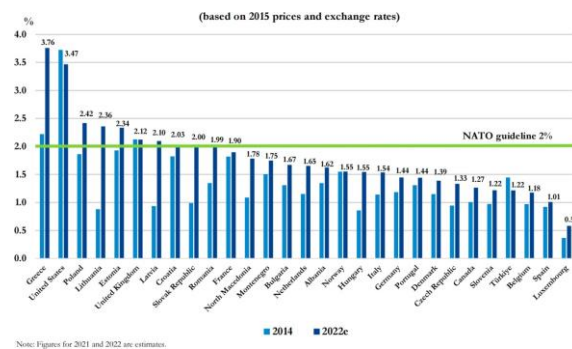
¹⁸ 'Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg', Munich Security Conference, 19 February 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_192204.htm

¹⁹ 'Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg', Extraordinary Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government, 24 March 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_193613.htm

²⁰ NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Madrid Summit, NATO, June 2022, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf

welcomed Ukraine and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership and agreed that these countries would become members of NATO. However, it remains to be seen how the process would pan out given the emerging security situation. While these initiatives represent a renewed push towards strengthening the Alliance, the critical issue of burden sharing remains. There is no denying that the members have committed to a robust NATO, however, many of them fall short of their commitment to spend two per cent of their GDP on defence. While this is not a new commitment, only nine states out of 30 have met the threshold²¹ (see Figure 1 for defence spending by NATO member states). Burden sharing and increase in defence spending remain critical issues in the wider transatlantic relations with the US pushing its European allies to fulfil their commitments.

Figure 1 - Defence Spending by NATO Member States



Source: NATO.

https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/a

[assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220627-def-exp-2022-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220627-def-exp-2022-en.pdf)

The Ukraine crisis has also compelled the neutral countries in the continent to re-evaluate their security architecture as evidenced by the prospects of NATO expanding towards northern Europe. Iceland, Denmark, and Norway have been part of the Alliance since 1949, but Sweden and Finland have remained neutral. Though they were part of various initiatives under the EU, they were not members of NATO. Following the crisis, the Prime Ministers of Sweden and Finland reiterated that "Russia's invasion of Ukraine had changed Europe's whole security landscape and dramatically shaped mindsets in the Nordic countries"²² and formally applied to join the Alliance in May 2022. Following the signing of a trilateral memorandum with Turkey,²³ which had initially objected to Finland and Sweden joining NATO, all 30 members signed the accession protocols at their June 2022 Summit.

Both countries would bring highly advanced military and civil defence capacities and expertise at sea, land, and air to the Alliance. Their accession would expand NATO's border with Russia and bolster the Alliance's collective defence in northern Europe. Russia has already warned Sweden and Finland against joining the Alliance arguing that "it would not bring stability to Europe as the alliance remains a tool geared towards confrontation."²⁴ With both countries now pushing for membership, it symbolises a critical re-posturing in Europe as it marks the end of

²¹ Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2022), Press Release, NATO, 27 June

2022, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220627-def-exp-2022-en.pdf

²² *The Guardian*, 13 April 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/13/finland-and-sweden-could-apply-for-nato-membership-in-weeks>,

²³ After the initial opposition to Sweden and Finland's membership application by Türkiye – the three countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 28 June 2022. In the MoU, Stockholm and Helsinki committed to extend their full support to Türkiye against threats to its national security. To that effect, Finland and Sweden will not provide support to YPG (People's Protection Units)/PYD (Democratic Union Party), and the organisation described as FETO (Fethullah Terrorist Organization) in Türkiye. Both countries also confirmed that the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) is a proscribed terrorist organisation and committed to prevent activities of the PKK and all other terrorist organisations and their extensions. The agreement further stated that both the Nordic states will have no national arms embargoes in place for Türkiye. Additionally, they will address Ankara's pending deportation or extradition requests of terror suspects, which is to be done in line with European treaties.[v] With the signing of the MoU, Türkiye withdrew its opposition to the membership application of the Nordic countries, paving way for NATO to formally invite them to join the Alliance.

²⁴ *BBC*, 11 April 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61066503>,

neutrality and military non-alignment that Sweden has followed for more than 200 years and Finland, since its defeat by the Soviet Union during World War II. In addition, both countries also overturned their policy of not supplying arms to war zones. They were the first to announce their intent to support Ukraine through arms transfer. Sweden provided 10,000 anti-tank weapons and other military equipment along with EUR 572 million in military aid.²⁵ Finland^{26,25} has sent 11 tranches of military aid to Ukraine bringing its total contributions to EUR 189.2 million.

EU - Towards a Geopolitical Union

As the crisis unfolded, the EU has emerged as a proactive player showing unprecedented unity and rapid decision-making. It utilised all the available tools be it sanctions, diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, and military support. What stands out in its response is that it activated the European Peace Facility to support the Ukrainian army. It introduced the possibility of the EU delivering lethal aid to a third country. Thus far, through the EPF, the EU has provided over EUR 3.1 billion²⁷ in financial support to Ukraine's armed forces. It also invoked the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time in the EU's history which granted protection to the Ukrainian refugees, including rights to residence, labour market, medical assistance, and education. To support people in Ukraine directly, the EU also announced a significant package of humanitarian and financial aid. The EU also implemented coordinated sanctions on

Russia along with its allies. It has put in place ten rounds of sanctions²⁸ on Russia that cover economic and individual measures, a ban on transactions with the Central Bank of Russia, expulsion of Russian banks from the international SWIFT system, and most importantly, a ban on Russian coal and oil imports among others. In addition, along with its allies, the EU also implemented a price ban on Russian oil.

It also released its most awaited Strategic Compass for Security and Defence²⁹ in March 2022. The document outlined four key directives: -

- *Act* - under this EU will establish a Rapid Deployment Capacity of up to 5000 troops for different types of crises and will become ready to deploy 200 fully equipped CSDP mission experts within 30 days, including in complex environment.
- *Secure*, so as to anticipate, deter and respond to current and fast-emerging threats and challenges, and safeguard the EU's security interest, the EU will boost intelligence analysis capacities, further develop the Cyber Diplomatic Toolbox and set up an EU Cyber Defence Policy, develop an EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence and strengthen the EU's role as a maritime security actor.
- *Invest* - to enhance defence expenditures to match the

²⁵ 'Sweden will allocate an additional €17.9 million to support Ukraine', 27 December 2022, <https://mil.in.ua/en/news/sweden-will-allocate-an-additional-e17-9-million-to-support-ukraine/#:~:text=In%20total%2C%20since%20February%202022,was%20allocated%20for%20military%20aid.&text=The%20Swedish%20government%20also%20allocated,%2C%20reconstruction%2C%20and%20reform%20support>.

²⁶ *Euractiv*, 22 December 2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/finland-sends-11th-military-aid-package-to-ukraine/>

²⁷ Press Release, European Council, 17 October 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/10/17/ukraine-council-agrees-on-further-support-under-the-european-peace-facility/>

²⁸ 'History of Restrictive Measures Against Russia over Ukraine', European Council, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/history-restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/>

²⁹ 'A Strategic Compass for Defence and Security', EEAS, March 2022, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf

collective ambition to reduce critical military and civilian capability gaps and strengthen our European Defence Technological and Industrial Base.

- *Partner* - in order to address common threats and challenges, the EU will: strengthen cooperation with strategic partners such as NATO, the UN and regional partners, including the OSCE, AU and ASEAN; develop more tailored bilateral partnerships with like-minded countries and strategic partners, such as the US, Canada, Norway, the UK, Japan and others; develop tailored partnerships in the Western Balkans, our eastern and southern neighbourhood, Africa, Asia and Latin America, including through enhancing dialogue and cooperation, promoting participation in CSDP missions and operations and supporting capacity-building.

At the national level, member states have committed to increasing their defence budgets. For example, eastern European countries such as Poland and Romania along with Baltic countries like Latvia have announced an increase in their defence budgets by 2.5-three per cent. In addition, countries that are considered neutral, like Ireland, have also declared their intent to increase their defence spending. However, the biggest development has been in Germany which reversed a few of its key policies such as its policy of not transferring lethal weapons to a conflict zone. Chancellor Scholz also announced a one-off sum of EUR 100 billion for investments and armament projects within the 2022 federal budget, in addition to committing to increase Germany's defence expenditure to two per cent of its economic output by 2024.

Currently, the EU is well placed with all the required instruments for a European Defence Union. It has a single market, formulates its own industrial policies, and implements multi-annual budgets. The European Defence Fund, CARD, the Joint

Task Force for Short-Term Procurement, etc. all demonstrate the EU's efforts towards defence integration. In addition, the EU's Strategic Compass brings together the different strands of initiatives and developments onto a single platform. It has all the pieces in place for effectuating the integration needed for a true Defence Union. The key question is whether this momentum and political will can be maintained.

Key Takeaways from the Conflict

The Ukraine crisis has altered the strategic outlook for European defence integration by highlighting the multi-dimensional nature of security and has provided the member states with a renewed impetus to further enhance their defence capabilities. Though it remains to be seen how much of this momentum can be sustained, the changes brought about to the security and defence landscape are set to define the future of defence integration in Europe.

While the EU has been working towards a comprehensive defence integration since 2017, the crisis has led to a realisation that the EU needs to bolster its defence capabilities to be recognised as a credible security actor. Even though the members have currently come together to support Ukraine through various measures, in the long term, significant efforts are required to strengthen NATO's and EU's deterrence and to formulate a comprehensive security framework with increased investments for enhancing their respective defence capabilities.

Second, the Ukrainian crisis has provided a fresh impetus to the member states to push for reforms, as evident from the reactions across Europe, but as the crisis drags on, the question that emerges is whether these initiatives will be sustained beyond just a knee-jerk reaction to the crisis. For instance, the push for increased European defence spending and defence integration is not new and French President Macron has been advocating for independent defence structures for the EU since 2017. However, budgetary allocations have been reduced for initiatives such as the European Defence Fund (from EUR 13 billion in 2018 to EUR

eight billion)³⁰ and Military Mobility Initiative (from EUR 6.5 billion in 2018 to EUR 1.5 billion)³¹ under the multiannual financial framework for 2021–27. Third, the push for comprehensive action on European defence will not remain forever. This is because, Europe has many other policy priorities such as post-Covid economic recovery, migration, climate change and the energy transition, and tackling inflation. This is further compounded by the fact that decades of declining defence budgets have led to a dramatic downsizing of European armed forces and generated major capability gaps. As witnessed with military engagements in Afghanistan, European armed forces had to rely on American support for critical capabilities such as air-to-air refuelling, strategic airlift, and reconnaissance and intelligence. The chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan highlighted these limitations, and European states were incapable of evacuating their citizens and allies without logistical support from Washington. Fourth, despite the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the US Department of Defense has continued to prioritise China, which the unclassified summary of the National Defense Strategy calls “our most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge.” In short, the US pivot to the Indo-Pacific may have paused due to events in Europe, but it has not been cancelled. The need for the US to provide precious military assets to defend Europe against Russia, support its allies in Asia, and maintain other global commitments, such as in the Middle East, is set to strain Washington which will most likely require Europe to shoulder more responsibility in terms of its defence and security. Fifth, while European countries, even those who had traditionally favoured normalisation of relations with Russia, showed exemplary unity in implementing the sanctions on Russia, the fissures in the unity have started to appear. The case in

point is the ban on Russian oil imports. Even after intense negotiations, the member states initially failed to reach an agreement on the oil embargo. The unity on the crisis, and in particular, the future of defence integration, therefore, remains perilous.

Sixth, as the European states move towards a more independent defence policy, the question arises of the relevance of NATO for the European partners. Critics have argued that the policies initiated by the EU have made the member states divide their limited resources between the EU and NATO, thereby making them competitors. For example, the EU’s defence initiative PESCO prioritises the development of the EU’s defence requirements over NATO’s by allowing member states to jointly develop new weapons. As many EU member states are part of the Alliance, it will be imperative that NATO collaborate with the European strategic institutions to bolster European security.

The range of developments in the defence and security sector within Europe over the past decade is significant, but it would be too early to say whether they represent a paradigm shift in European defence integration. There are fundamental challenges in sustaining the political will, developing the technical capabilities, and committing to the financial resources required to transform the EU into a militarily independent bloc capable of countering Russia, and acting independently of the US. Although the EU leaders are pushing for an independent defence policy, there is a realisation that it is going to be a long process for a credible European defence to emerge.

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³⁰ ‘EU budget: Stepping up the EU’s role as a security and defence provider’, European Commission, 13 June 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_4121

³¹ Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027,

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/mff_2021-2027_breakdown_current_prices.pdf

NIAS EUROPE STUDIES BRIEF

European Integration: Why Recognition of the Armenian Genocide Matters for the EU

By Kasturi Chatterjee

Any potential recognition of the Armenian genocide by Türkiye will be the outcome of internal changes rather than the pressure exerted by international actors, including the EU.

Introduction

Going against established scholarship on the issue and international pressure demanding it to face up to its past, Türkiye maintains that the estimated death of 800,000 to 1.5 million Armenians that occurred in the Ottoman Empire during 1915- 1923 does not constitute a genocide.* It denies that there was state intention behind the massacres, lowers the number of casualties, accuses Armenians of committing genocide against Turks, and argues the excesses as a tragedy resulting from the chaos of war.¹ Türkiye expends massive amounts of resources and energy in pushing forward the denialist agenda that one scholar characterized it as “an industry of denial.”² and another termed it as “an industry of denialism.”³

Sadly, Türkiye continues to deny the Armenian genocide at great cost to itself and its image. Barring a majority of Turkish

historians and a handful of scholars from outside Türkiye, most serious scholars and historians now agree that what happened to the Armenians in 1915 deserves the label of genocide. The United States, Russia, France, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, and Brazil are some of the countries that have officially passed resolutions recognizing and formally condemning the Armenian genocide, and denying it constitutes a crime in France,⁴ Belgium, Switzerland, Greece, Cyprus, and Slovakia.⁵ Numerous international organizations, state and provincial governments, and municipalities have passed similar resolutions in Europe, North and South America, and Australia. Though these resolutions are non-binding and lack a sense of “real” threat or consequence for Türkiye, it is evident that the issue negatively impacts Türkiye’s international image.

*The essay is based on a presentation made at the first “NIAS-KAS Annual Conclave on Europe,” organised by NIAS Europe Studies in collaboration with the Delhi office of KAS. Views expressed in the brief are author’s own and do not represent any institute.

¹ “The Armenian Allegation of Genocide: The Issue and the Facts / Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” accessed February 13, 2023, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-armenian-allegation-of-genocide-the-issue-and-the-facts.en.mfa>.

² Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Signal Facts Surrounding the Armenian Genocide and the Turkish Denial Syndrome,”

Journal of Genocide Research 5, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 269–79,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520305671>. ³ Taner Akçam, *Dialogue Across an International Divide: Essays Towards a Turkish-Armenian Dialogue*. (Cambridge, MA and Toronto: The Zoryan Institute, 2001), 10.

⁴ Thomas Crampton, “French Pass Bill That Punishes Denial of Armenian Genocide”, *The New York Times* (13 October 2006), <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/13/world/europe/french-pass-bill-that-punishes-denial-of-armenian-genocide.html>

⁵ Shirli Sitbon, “Why French Jews Changed Their View of the Armenian Genocide”, *Haaretz* (6 February 2022), <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2022-02-06/ty-article/.premium/why-french-jews-finally-changed-their-view-of-the-armenian-genocide/0000017f-e8dd-dea7-adff-f9fd6d90000>

In addition, Turkish denial makes little practical sense; the costs of denial seem to outweigh its benefits. One potential benefit of denying the genocide could be to avoid any Armenian claims on Turkish territory or demand for monetary reparation, but these are not the grounds on which Türkiye denies the genocide. Turkish sovereignty is guaranteed by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), and the real possibility of returning parts of “historic Armenian” territory to Armenia is so remote to be practically inconsequential. Further, former Armenian President Robert Kocharian has publicly assured that “Armenia will not present any legal claim after Turkey admits having committed genocide”⁶ and further reiterated it in his interview with

Turkish journalist Mehmed Ali Birand on CNN Turk:

MAB: You say there will be no territorial claims or demands for compensation if Turkey admits genocide. Is it your position that Turkey should open archives and offer an apology?

RK: Yes—it is. It is our only goal. It is a matter of morality and—most importantly—it is a matter of honor.⁷

Thus, the risk of paying reparations or potential territorial loss cannot be the reason for Türkiye not recognizing the Armenian genocide. On the other hand, Türkiye continuing to deny the genocide could prove costly. Its potential reconciliation with the Republic of Armenia depends on the acknowledgement of responsibility for the genocide. Recalling ambassadors, as Türkiye continues to do in protest of resolutions passed in third countries recognizing the Armenian genocide, harms the diplomatic goodwill existing between Türkiye and these

countries.

Most significantly, Türkiye’s accession to the European Union is significantly impacted by its refusal to recognise the genocide. The importance of the issue in the context of EU integration cannot be overstated, as evidenced by the resolutions passed by many European states and entities within the European Union that continue to recognize the genocide “in a spirit of European solidarity and justice.”⁸ Although the recognition of the genocide is not mandatory for Türkiye for its potential membership in the EU, only a few would dismiss it as a non-issue. What drives European states and institutions to recognize the Armenian genocide, and what prevents Türkiye from acknowledging it at the cost of its accession to the EU and international goodwill? This paper suggests that the answer might be found in the conflicting ideas of what Europe means for both sides. On the one hand, the post-Holocaust refashioning of the “European” identity seems to resonate with the need to recognize a genocide that is sometimes understood to be “the first genocide of the twentieth century.”⁹ In this context, Türkiye can conform to “European values” only when it atones for its violent past in the manner of post-war Germany. On the other hand, the Turkish denial of the genocide and exasperation in the event of its recognition by other European entities stems from its narrative of victimhood vis-à-vis Europe, based on its traumatic memories of the loss of the Ottoman Empire for which it holds the European powers responsible. It is argued that Türkiye perceives the current demands to recognize the Armenian genocide as a kind of Western ploy to humiliate the country and intervene in its domestic affairs, akin to the role

⁶ “Kocharian Discusses Territorial Claims in Interview with Turkish TV – Asbarez.Com,” accessed February 8, 2023, <https://asbarez.com/kocharian-discusses-territorial-claims-in-interview-with-turkish-tv/>.

⁷ “Kocharian Discusses”, [Asbarez.Com](https://asbarez.com/kocharian-discusses-territorial-claims-in-interview-with-turkish-tv/).

⁸ European Parliament resolution of 15 April 2015 on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide (2015/2590(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0094_EN.html

⁹ Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Historical and Legal Interconnections between the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust: From Impunity to Retributive Justice,” *Yale Journal of International Law* 23 (1998): 503.

European powers played in exacerbating the so-called “Armenian Question” in 1915. This paper examines both these perspectives to explore what “Europe” means for each side.

“European Values” and the Armenian Genocide

Of the 33 states that have formally recognized the Armenian genocide, 18 are located in Europe.¹⁰ In addition to parliamentary resolutions passed by countries such as Germany, France, Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands, the European Parliament has referred to the genocide at least eight times in 1987, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2015, and 2022.

Denying the genocide, in effect, constitutes a crime in France,¹¹ Belgium, Switzerland, Greece, Cyprus, and Slovakia.¹² Why are actors and institutions in the EU so committed to recognizing an atrocity that took place over a century ago? Is the issue of genocide recognition tied to the self-definitions of Europe and the stated centrality of human rights in what is understood as “European identity”? This

holds even greater significance in the context of Türkiye’s accession to the EU.

Scholars of European integration have often elaborated on the uniqueness of European power. Europe has been regarded as a “normative power”^{13 14 15 16} or a “civilian power”¹⁷ imbued with what some term as “international identity.”^{18 19} Support for human rights, it is argued, acts as a *constitutive norm* for the European Union and has been used as a conditionality for EU membership. Menon et al. even claim that the EU is a “pioneer in long- term inter-state peacebuilding... one of the most formidable machines for managing differences peacefully ever invented.”²⁰ One of the most commonly held notions is that the European identity is founded on the negation of Europe’s own past, most crucially the Second World War and the Holocaust. According to Ole Waever, “Europe’s Other is Europe’s own past.”²¹ It is also a self-conscious “return to Enlightenment values”²² as evidenced in key documents such as the Declaration on European Identity (1973) and the

¹⁰ Countries that Recognize the Armenian Genocide (as on 27 November 2022), https://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition_countries.html

¹¹ Thomas Crampton, “French Pass Bill That Punishes Denial of Armenian Genocide”, *The New York Times* (13 October 2006), <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/13/world/europe/french-pass-bill-that-punishes-denial-of-armenian-genocide.html>

¹² Shirli Sitbon, “Why French Jews Changed Their View of the Armenian Genocide”, *Haaretz* (6 February 2022), <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2022-02-06/ty-article/.premium/why-french-jews-finally-changed-their-view-of-the-armenian-genocide/0000017f-e8dd-dea7-adff-f9fd6d90000>

¹³ R. Whitman, *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (Springer, 2011).

¹⁴ Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads,” *Journal of European Public Policy*, August 19, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760500451600>.

¹⁵ Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 235–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00353>.

¹⁶ Ian Manners and Richard Whitman, “The ‘difference Engine’: Constructing and Representing the International Identity of the European Union,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 10, no. 3 (January 1, 2003): 380–404, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350176032000085360>.

¹⁷ Francois Duchêne, “Europe’s role in world peace”, in Richard Mayne, *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead.*, First Thus edition (Fontana, 1972), p. 32- 47.

¹⁸ Karen E. Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

¹⁹ R. Whitman, *From Civilian Power to Superpower?: The International Identity of the European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1998).

²⁰ Anand Menon et al., “In Defence of Europe: A Response to Kagan,” *Journal of European Affairs*, Vol. 2, no. 3 (2004): 11.

²¹ Ole Waever, “European Security Identities,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996): 122

²² Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (Knopf Publishers, 2003)

Copenhagen Criteria (1993).²³ For instance, the Declaration on European Identity clearly lists representative government, the rule of law, and respect for human rights as “fundamental elements of the European Identity.”²⁴ Similarly, the Copenhagen Criteria has underlined the protection of minority rights as part of its political criteria for membership in the EU.²⁵ Likewise, the Treaty on European Union (2009) has established the European identity firmly on the concept of universal human rights drawing from “the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.”²⁶ From a European perspective, membership to the EU is inevitably predicated on applicant states’ adherence to European values, evidenced by the repeated genocide recognition resolutions passed by

European entities, with the European Parliament taking the most proactive role on the matter.

Although Cyprus was the first European state to recognize the Armenian genocide in April 1982, the European Parliament mentioned the genocide for the first time in 1987. Over time, other countries joined. For instance, Greece recognized the genocide in 1996,²⁷ followed by Belgium²⁸ and France²⁹ in 1998, and Sweden³⁰ and Italy³¹ in 2000. On 24 April 1998, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Resolution recorded the genocide as “the first genocide of the 20th century” and noted that the “date of 24 April 1915 marked the beginning of the implementation of the plan to exterminate Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire.”³²

²³ Anne Jenichen, “The Politics of Normative Power Europe: Norm Entrepreneurs and Contestation in the Making of EU External Human Rights Policy,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 60, no. 5 (2022): 1299– 1315, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13157>.

²⁴ “Declaration on European Identity (Copenhagen, 14 December 1973)”, http://www.cvce.eu/obj/declaration_on_european_identity_copenhagen_14_december_1973-en-02798dc9-9c69-4b7d-b2c9-f03a8db7da32.html

²⁵ “EUR-Lex - Accession_criteria_copenhagen - EN - EUR-Lex,” accessed February 13, 2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/accession-criteria-copenhagen-criteria.html>.

²⁶ CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION, Official Journal of the European Union, (26 October 2012), [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

²⁷ “Greece (Hellenic Republic) Parliament Resolution”, Hellenic Parliament Resolution 2397/1996 (25 April 1996), <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/Greece.php>

²⁸ Belgische Senaat, Zitting 1997- 1998, “Voorstel van resolutie betreffende de genocide in 1915 van de in Turkije levende Armenie`rs” (17 March 1998), <https://www.senate.be/www/webdriver?MItabObj=pdf&MIcolObj=pdf&MInamObj=pdfid&MItypeObj=application/pdf&MIvalObj=16778005>

²⁹ “PROPOSITION DE LOI ADOPTÉE PAR L'ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE EN PREMIÈRE LECTURE, relative à la reconnaissance du génocide arménien de 1915”, *TEXTE ADOPTÉ no 140, ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE (29 May 1998), SESSION ORDINAIRE DE 1997-1998*, <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/ta/ta0140.asp>

³⁰ Sweden parliament Report 929 March 2000), http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/Sweden_Parliament_Report.php

³¹ “TESTO AGGIORNATO AL 27 NOVEMBRE 2000”, Allegato A Seduta n. 813 del 17/11/2000 (27 November 2000),

http://leg13.camera.it/_dati/leg13/lavori/stenografici/sed813/amos02.htm

³² Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Resolution, “Commemoration of the Armenian genocide of 1915” (24 April 1998), Written Declaration No. 275, Doc. 8091, https://www.armeniangenocide.org/Affirmation.153/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html

In November 2000, another significant resolution was passed by the European Parliament. This was followed by the French law³³ on the genocide and Pope John Paul II's prayer visit³⁴ to the Genocide Memorial in Armenia. Similarly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted another resolution on 24 April 2001 condemning the genocide.³⁵ The European Parliament mentioned the genocide again in 2002 on "EU relations with South Caucasus", where it reiterated the recognition of the genocide in the 1987 resolution and called on Türkiye to facilitate conditions for reconciliation.³⁶ This was followed by separate resolutions in 2005, following the initiation of membership talks with Turkey, and in 2015, to mark the 100th year anniversary of the beginning of the genocide.

The timing of many of these resolutions is noteworthy. For instance, the first resolution passed by the European Parliament in June 1987 on the subject could be argued as a response to Türkiye's application to join the European Community on 14 April 1987. The resolution gave particular importance to human rights, emphasizing the importance of minority rights and implying that without the protection of minority rights, Türkiye had little hope of meeting the Copenhagen criteria. It said, "The refusal by the present Turkish Government to acknowledge the genocide . . . [Is an] insurmountable obstacle to consideration of the possibility of Turkey's accession to the Community."³⁷

Another important resolution that was

passed by the European Parliament came in the context of Türkiye's progress toward accession in 2000. Clause C of the resolution categorically stated: "whereas accession negotiations cannot begin until Turkey complies with the Copenhagen criteria." Further, items 9 and 10 highlighted that the Parliament "recalls the importance it attaches to recognition of the basic rights of the cultural, linguistic and religious groups in Turkey, who make up the country's multifaceted population" and "calls therefore, on the Turkish Government and the Turkish Grand National Assembly to give fresh support to the Armenian minority, as an important part of Turkish society, in particular by public recognition of the genocide which that minority suffered before the establishment of the modern state of Turkey", respectively. These statements are particularly revealing the importance the EU placed on the Armenian issue while dealing with the Turkish membership.³⁸ Similarly, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Resolution passed on 24 April 2001 to commemorate the Armenian Genocide ended with an appeal "to all the members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take the necessary steps for the recognition of the genocide."³⁹

The European Council began its membership talks with Türkiye along with accession negotiations on 03 October 2005. However, just prior to the beginning of the talks, the European Parliament resolution on the commencement of negotiations with Türkiye on 28 September 2005 underlined the importance of the matter to the EU and Türkiye's accession to the union.

³³ "Loi n° 2001-70 du 29 janvier 2001 relative à la reconnaissance du génocide arménien de 1915" (29 January 2001), <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000403928>

³⁴ "Prayer of John Paul II", Memorial of Tzitzernagaberd Yerevan (26 September 2001), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2001/september/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20010926_prayer-yerevan.html

³⁵ "Recognition of the Armenian genocide", Doc. 9056, Written declaration o. 320 (24 April 2001), https://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.218/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html

³⁶ "European Parliament Resolution on EU relations with South Caucasus" (28 February 2002), <http://www.parliament.am/library/cexaspanutyun/19.pdf>

³⁷ European Parliament resolution on a political solution to the Armenian question (18 June 1987), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/dsca/dv/dsca_2016012021_10/dsca_2016012021_10en.pdf

³⁸ European Parliament Resolution on the first annual "1999 Regular Report from the Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession (COM(1999) 513 - C5-0036/2000 - 2000/2014(COS))", 15 November 2000

It stated: "The European Parliament has called on Turkey to recognise the Armenian genocide; considers this recognition to be a prerequisite for accession to the European Union." Clause L of the resolution stated, "only by demonstrating readiness to embrace EU values through determined implementation and continued reform will Turkey be able to ensure the irreversibility of the process of reform and to gather the necessary support amongst the body of EU public opinion," and Item 5 called "on Turkey to recognise the Armenian genocide; considers this recognition to be a prerequisite for accession to the European Union."⁴⁰ The European Commission's spokesperson for EU enlargement at the time, Krisztina Nagy, said "We call on Turkey to work on reconciliation and face its historic past...recognition of the genocide [does] not fall under the Copenhagen criteria...The accession process should be seen as an opportunity for Turkey to confront its past."⁴¹

To emphasize the importance of the recognition, the Commission Reports on Turkish progress towards accession to the EU and an assessment of its conformity with "European values" have almost always contained references to the genocide in recent years, such as the European Parliament "having regard to its resolution...of 15 April 2015 on the centenary of the Armenian genocide"⁴² "encourages Turkey, once again, to recognize the Armenian Genocide..."⁴³ As the European Parliament sees it, Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide is a test for its conformity with "European values," and failure to do will be perceived as evidence of its 'lack of Europeanness."

2015 was an important year for the global recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Several states and agencies within the EU, and the Pope openly acknowledged the genocide to mark the hundredth year since the beginning of the genocide. The European Parliament took the opportunity to pass its landmark resolution on the topic and on 15 April 2015, it organized a plenary session on the commemoration of the genocide and emphasised that its action of the genocide was done "in a spirit of European solidarity and justice."⁴⁴ It called on "all the Member States legally to acknowledge it, and encourages the Member States and the EU institutions to contribute further to its recognition."

The European People's Party's (EPP) resolution on "The Armenian Genocide and European Values" on 03 March 2015 was significant because as the largest political party in Europe, they called upon Türkiye to follow "the finest example of integrity and leadership proffered by the Federal Republic of post-war Germany" and take conscious steps to come to terms with its past. To realise its "European identity," the resolution urged Türkiye:

- to recognize and condemn the Armenian Genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire, and to face its own history and memory through commemorating the victims of that heinous crime against humanity;
- to provide a vision and implementing plan of action worthy of a truly European Turkey, including a comprehensive resolution of issues relating to the freedom of expression and reference to the Genocide in state, society and educational institutions, as well as the repair of religious and other cultural sites and their return to the Armenian and other relevant communities;

³⁹ Recognition of the Armenian genocide, Doc. 9056 2nd edition, Written Declaration No. 320 (24 April 2001), https://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.218/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html

⁴⁰ Opening of negotiations with Turkey, "European Parliament resolution on the opening of negotiations with Turkey" (28 September 2005), P6_TA (2005)0350, <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/uploads/Affirmation/901.pdf>

⁴¹ "Why Armenia continues to haunt Turkey", *Politico* (26 April 2006), <https://www.politico.eu/article/why-armenia-continues-to-haunt-turkey/>

⁴² MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION on the 2016 Commission Report on Turkey (26 June 2017), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0234_EN.html; European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey (2018/2150(INI)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0200_EN.html

- to launch the long-awaited celebration of the Armenian national legacy based on a total Turkish-Armenian normalization anchored in the assumption of history, the pacific resolution of all outstanding matters, and a complete Europeanization of their relationship.⁴⁵

The resolution passed by the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly⁴⁶ on 17 March 2015 in Yerevan stated: “whereas the absence of unequivocal and timely condemnation of the Armenian genocide contributed to a large extent to the failure to prevent future crimes against humanity...Invites Turkey to come to terms with its past.”⁴⁷

All these resolutions establish beyond doubt that the EU places a great deal of importance on the recognition of the genocide. Therefore, it can be argued that the acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide has emerged as a litmus test for Türkiye to demonstrate its commitment to “European values” and “European identity.”

Turkish Response to the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide

Despite the recognition of the Armenian genocide globally, Türkiye continues to deny the events ever took place.

At every instance when the European Parliament raised the issue, Türkiye has denied and accused the European Parliament of being biased or politically motivated. Turkish official statements have repeatedly rejected the European Parliament's resolution on the issue, calling them meaningless, based on one-sided Armenian narratives, or politically motivated. What could possibly explain Türkiye's motive behind its consistent denial of the genocide at the cost of its integration into the EU? Is it perhaps that Türkiye sees itself as a victim/ oppressed state- a *mazlum millet*- that has been historically wronged by Western powers? Hakam Yilmaz calls it the “Tanzimat Syndrome” and the “Sèvres Syndrome.”⁴⁸ In short, Türkiye holds the West (primarily, Britain, France, and Russia) responsible for encouraging nationalist independence movements by ethnic minorities that led to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire through the Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1876), and foreign occupation and the Treaty of Sèvres that proposed a complete dismemberment of Türkiye.

It is important to understand that Türkiye's relationship with Europe has been fraught with complications since the Ottoman period.^{49 50} Although it went through large-scale westernization of almost every aspect of its society under its first President, Kemal Atatürk, a deep suspicion of the “West” took root among its nationalist elite from the early days of the republic.⁵¹ Thus, while aspiring to become a part of the “European Community,” the Turkish nationalist elite also view the state as a victim of western machinations.

⁴³ European Parliament resolution of 7 June 2022 on the 2021 Commission Report on Turkey (2021/2250(INI)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0222_EN.html

⁴⁴ European Parliament resolution on a European commemoration of the centenary of the Armenian Genocide (2015/2590(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2015-0343_EN.html

⁴⁵ EPP, “The Armenian Genocide and European Values”, Resolution Adopted by the EPP Political Assembly, March 3, 2015, <http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/The-Armenian-Genocide.pdf>

⁴⁶ The Euronest Parliamentary Assembly was established in 2011 as an interparliamentary forum including the European Parliament and the national parliaments of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia.

⁴⁷ “RESOLUTION (1) on the centennial of the Armenian genocide” (2015/C 315/05), Official Journal of the European Union (17 March 2015), [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22015P0923\(05\)&from=HR](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22015P0923(05)&from=HR)

⁴⁸ Yilmaz, Hakam (2006), “Two Pillars of Nationalist Euro-scepticism in Turkey: The *Tanzimat* and *Sevres* Syndromes”, p. 29- 40

⁴⁹ Wulf Reiners and Ebru Turhan, *EU-Turkey Relations: Theories, Institutions, and Policies* (Springer Nature, 2021).

⁵⁰ Meltem Müftüler-Bac, *Turkey's Relations with a Changing Europe* (Manchester University Press, 1997).

Türkiye's aspiration to be a part of the European bloc can be traced back to 1949 when it became a member of the Council of Europe. Thereafter, Türkiye joined NATO in 1952, applied for "associate membership" in the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959, signed the "Ankara Agreement" with the EEC in 1963, and established the Customs Union in 1995. Türkiye became an official candidate for full membership in 2005, with the obligation to meet membership conditions but the progress was painfully slow. Between 2005 and 2016, less than half of the 35 chapters necessary to complete the accession process had been opened. In light of its human rights violations and departure from the rule of law, talks with the EU were stalled in 2016. Türkiye has since been charged with violating the Copenhagen Criteria, with the European Parliament passing a resolution to formally suspend the accession negotiations in 2019.

The "Tanzimat syndrome" embodies the suspicion with which Türkiye views the issue of third-party advocacy of minority rights within the state. The Tanzimat reforms were initiated by the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century in response to demands by non-Muslim minorities for more rights and privileges. The Ottomans resented the frequent European advocacy for their Christian minorities and suspected that the European states were instigating the minorities to rebel against the empire. By initiating some reforms, the Ottomans had hoped that the reforms would prevent the minority-inhabited territories from breaking free.

However, the reforms triggered a fresh wave of independence movements from which the Turkish elite deduced two beliefs that continue to shape its policies towards minorities: one, more rights and freedoms do

not make minorities more loyal to the state, but rather, they find further opportunities to organize and revolt; and two, the real reason behind European support for human rights and freedom for minorities was to weaken Türkiye.

It is argued that this syndrome, symbolised by the suspicion with which Türkiye views the issue of minority rights and European intervention as being intrinsically connected is partially responsible for the way it responds to the Armenian issue. The Armenians and other minorities continue to be perceived as untrustworthy collaborators of Western powers.

Meanwhile, the demands by third parties for recognising the genocide and foreign Parliaments passing resolutions on the genocide are perceived as Western attempts to weaken Türkiye by encouraging rebellion within the state. According to President Erdoğan, "We will never allow those, who do everything they can in order to divide this country and separate this nation" (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 30 May 2015).⁵²

The Sèvres Syndrome is another marker of Türkiye's scepticism towards the West. After losing War World I, Türkiye was occupied by Allied forces. According to Türkiye, the peace treaty that the Ottoman Empire signed with the Allies in 1920 compromised Turkish sovereignty and caused widespread public outrage. The Treaty of Sèvres, although never really implemented, dealt a big blow to the Turkish psyche. The treaty had proposed limiting the country to a much smaller territory than its current borders and contained provisions for independent states for the Armenians and the Kurds. The Turkish War of Independence was

⁵¹ Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008).

⁵² "We will not allow those, who want to put out the conquest's fire that has been ablaze in our hearts for 562 years", Presidency of the Republic of Turkey (30 May 2015), <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/32505/istanbulun-yureginde-562-yildir-yanan-fetih-isigini-sondurmek-isteyenlere-asla-izin-vermeyecegiz>

fought over this treaty, after which the Kemalists succeeded in 1923 to wrest a better deal from the West in the form of the Treaty of Lausanne. Through its wartime experience, the Turkish elite learnt never to completely trust the West. The idea that Western powers desire the dismemberment and downfall of Türkiye became ingrained in the minds of Turkish leaders and society, and suspicion of the West became a part of the Turkish worldview. Post-war Turkish official histories thus portray Türkiye as a victim of the West, the “oppressed nation” (*mazlum millet*) which had to rely on its own abilities to gain independence from hostile foreign intentions against it. The minorities who collaborate with the West are seen as “the enemy within” within this thought framework.

The Sèvres syndrome explains the general Turkish scepticism towards the West and its persistence in denying the Armenian genocide. Türkiye perceives the recognition of the Armenian genocide as part of a Western agenda against it, rather than a genuine humanitarian concern for its minorities. Further, within Türkiye, the Armenians are still viewed as enemies and collaborators, just as they were seen when the Ottoman Empire confronted the West. Demands for recognising the genocide are therefore seen as an affront and an insult to Türkiye.

Turkish President Erdoğan can be seen playing up to the narrative of Turkish victimhood on multiple occasions by invoking the historical atrocities committed by European powers. This is evident in his statements such as “The latest countries to speak of genocide are

Germany, Russia, and France. What happened during the two world wars that had been initiated by Germany in the past century is before our eyes... First, they (Germany, Russia, and France) must, one by one, clean the stains on their own histories”⁵³ or “the countries that are blackmailing us with these Armenian genocide resolutions have the blood of millions of innocents on their hands.”⁵⁴

Confronted with the wave of genocide recognition in 2015, the Turkish Ministry of External Affairs even accused the European Parliament of “religious and cultural fanaticism” and argued that “members of the European Parliament may better encounter their own past and remember especially their roles and responsibilities in the most abhorrent calamities of humanity such as World War I and World War II, well before dealing with the 1915 issue.”⁵⁵ This was in line with its earlier response to the European Parliament’s resolution in 2000, where it accused the former of having a “Turkey complex.”⁵⁶ The state’s official position on the issue has been clearly encapsulated in its 2018 statement:

We do not attribute any value to this unilateral and by no means objective stance of the European Parliament ...the Resolution is deemed meaningless on our end...the reference made once again this year to the unfortunate assessment of 15 April 2015 of the European Parliament are based on one-sided Armenian narratives, reflects the

⁵³ “Erdoğan hits back in genocide row”, Deutsche Welle (25 April 2015), <https://www.dw.com/en/Erdoğan-lashes-out-at-west-and-russia-for-recognizing-armenian-killings-as-genocide/a-18408666>

⁵⁴ “Erdoğan: Armenia ‘genocide’ used to blackmail Turkey”, Al Jazeera (4 June 2016), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/6/4/Erdoğan-armenia-genocide-used-to-blackmail-turkey>

⁵⁵ “Erdoğan says European Parliament’s 1915 vote shows enmity against Turkey”, Hurriyet Daily News (17 April 2015), <https://www.hurriyetcailynews.com/Erdoğan-says-european-parliaments-1915-vote-shows-enmity-against-turkey-81168>

⁵⁶ “Morillon Report Regarding Turkey’s Progress Towards Accession No:217 - November 15, 2000”, Republic Of Türkiye Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/morillon-report-regarding-turkey_s-progress-towards-accession_br_no_217---november-15_-2000.en.mfa

biased and political character of this report.⁵⁷

However, a subtle shift in the state's attitude towards the Armenians became noticeable in Türkiye in 2005. Reassured by the negotiations with the EU, human rights groups, activists, academics, and the liberal intelligentsia in the country began holding conferences and initiating public conversations about what happened to the Ottoman Armenians without uttering the word genocide. President Erdoğan also spoke of Armenian "suffering" during World War I for the first time in 2013, and then in subsequent years without acknowledging the genocide.⁵⁸ In one of the most radical developments, several human rights organizations got together and launched the "100th Year- Stop Denialism" campaign to mark the centennial commemoration of the genocide in 2015 and called for recognition, apology, and reparations for the victims. Many prominent Turks publicly lent support to the enterprise at the time.

However, the widening gap between the EU and Türkiye since 2016 has undone most of these changes. The Turkish government's move towards populist authoritarianism and widespread human rights abuses have eventually led to the abandonment of membership talks with the EU. As of early 2023, Türkiye's stance on the genocide remains as hard as it was prior to 2005, characterized by the suppression of alternative opinions domestically and outright denial in the international political landscape.

Conclusion

Will Türkiye recognize the Armenian

genocide anytime in the near future? The answer is negative. The Armenian genocide issue is closely tied to the narrative of victimhood in Türkiye. The resolutions passed in foreign parliaments recognizing the genocide have only fuelled this narrative of victimhood further and strengthened Turkish suspicion of the West. Unless there is a fundamental revision in this narrative, acknowledging the genocide seems very unlikely. Any potential recognition of the Armenian genocide by Türkiye will be the outcome of internal changes rather than the pressure exerted by international actors, including the EU. On the other hand, until such time the Turkish elite and the society talk about it, recognise it, and dealt with it honestly, the Armenian genocide will remain a taboo and a curse that will continue to haunt the country.

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⁵⁷ "No: 52, 13 March 2019, Press Release Regarding the European Parliament's Resolution Regarding 2018 Report on Turkey", Republic Of Türkiye Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_52_avrupa-parlamentosu-2018-turkiye-raporu-hk.en.mfa

⁵⁸ It is important to note that his statements place emphasis on the joint suffering of Armenians and Turks; Armenian groups and genocide scholars have thus argued that his statements do not acknowledge the genocide of Armenians and continue the denial of the genocide through subtler means.

COMMENT

Pentagon leaked documents: Russia-Ukraine Conflict a Tactical Lens

By Padmashree Anandhan

The leaked document offers a grim overview of the Ukraine War.

On 19 April, The Wall Street Journal reported on the leak of classified documents after it found four documents on Telegram account named “Donbass Devushka.” The leak is considered to have released from “Discord” a messaging platform in January which was reposted in a gaming platform leading to a mass leak. Of the leaked documents, the critical intelligence data on Ukraine military, position of Russia’s forces and involvement of third-parties in the military aid has come out as shocking revelations. The following takeaways aims to bring out the key findings or fill the gaps from the leaked data comparing the proceedings of the war.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict From a Tactical Lens: Four takeaways

First, a negative prediction for Ukraine’s air force and counteroffensive. The document leak confirmed that Ukraine is fighting with limited air defence systems. Since 2023, Ukraine began demanding modern aviation and fighter jets which can change the gears from defensive to offensive. It faces a threat of exhaustion of medium to high-range air-defence systems (S-300, SA-3, and SA-12) such as IRIS-T by March, SA-11 by April, and NASAMS by May 2023. Additionally, the inability to match the “Russian air superiority,” and increased usage of SA-10, while SA-11 depletes. It claims the increased capability of Russia in ariel manoeuvring and improved accuracy in “long-range munitions.”

Second, fragility and frustration in the Ukraine Armed Forces (UAF). The maps in the leaked documents disclose the vulnerable position of the Ukraine forces in the southwest, northern, eastern, and southern. It confirms the Russian encirclement of the Bakhmut, leaving out West of Bakhmut, the only supply route for

UAF subject to attacks. The document also confirms the defeat of Ukraine’s forces in the north, forcing it to withdraw from Berkhivka resulting in the loss of the Ground Line of Communication (GLOC) between Bakhmut and the M-03 highway. This highway is considered essential for Ukraine as it connects to Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, losing the GLOC would challenge its ground force operation. To ease the difficult position in the Bakhmut, Ukraine plans to involve Shaman or Kraken units of Ukraine’s Main Intelligence Directorate (HUR) for a maximum of two weeks. In the battle of Bakhmut as per the leaked documents, clashes have emerged between the UAF and Ukraine’s Main Intelligence Directorate (HUR), as UAF demands only the “combat element” of the HUR units without its “command and control.” HUR Officer has criticized the UAF leadership for asking only for combat as it mandates a “clear ground control” to reduce the complexities faced by Ukraine forces and to secure Yahidne (located in the centre of Bakhmut, another side of Berkhivka). Securing Yahidne is crucial for Ukraine as it is predicted to host an important supply road for Ukraine.

“It confirms the Russian encirclement of the Bakhmut, leaving out West of Bakhmut, the only supply route for UAF subject to attacks.”

Third, third-party entities and the US allies’ role in military support and strengthening. Throughout the war, Ukraine and Russia have accused each other of receiving support from external actors. On the one hand, the US, the EU, and NATO allies have been supporting Ukraine. On the other, Belarus

and Iran have been supporting Russia. The leak has exposed the involvement of other actors in the conflict and revealed the military exercises conducted by NATO allies in a 24-48 hours span. The documents confirm the transfer of the Iskander-M division, and Russia's air defence units into Belarus to launch an offensive into Ukraine. This shows Belarus's approval to switch from training to launching an offensive into Ukraine from its territory. In the case of South Korea, it has faced pressure from the US to send ammunition to Ukraine. To avoid the public debate of it adhering to US's demand, it has tried to circumvent its support through Poland, although Poland's reaction was yet to be verified. For Israel, which has so far agreed to provide non-lethal aid to Ukraine, the documents reveal the possibility of different scenarios which can prompt it to provide lethal aid to Ukraine. Especially under the pressure of the US, a shift in Russia's behaviour in Syria and its relations with Iran.

“To ease the difficult position in the Bakhmut, Ukraine plans to involve Shaman or Kraken units of Ukraine's Main Intelligence Directorate (HUR) for a maximum of two weeks.”

Apart from this, the most surprising element would be the engagement of the “joint staff”

of the US, the UK, France, Latvia, and the Netherlands in Ukraine. The joint land, sea, and air military exercises held between the southeast Flank of Europe, NATO allies, and numerous training camps held by the US, Germany, and Netherlands for UAF showcase the intensity and depths of military strengthening.

Fourth, a grim overview of Russia in the battle for Donbas. When Russia began the war, the first step was to proclaim Donetsk and Luhansk regions as its republics. The war later north and south of Ukraine created an inverted “c.” This area coming under Russia's control announced the annexation of the republics along with Zaporizhzhia and Kherson despite Ukraine's successful counteroffensive in Kherson. As a result of Russia's determination to counter Ukraine's defence, challenges in terms of logistics, command control, and personnel emerged. The same has been validated by the leaked documents. It states that due to Russia's decision to involve the forces from the self-proclaimed republics, the Wagner Group, its private military security along with the Russian forces in different tactical attacks has led to exhaustion. Therefore, predicting a difficult recovery of Russian forces and replenishment of stocks, resulted in a “stalemate” beyond 2023.

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COMMENT

Finland: Turkey greenlights its membership into NATO

By Padmashree Anandhan

Finland was ahead in convincing Turkey through pledges to tighten its national laws against terrorism, by amending its Criminal Code, and by approving arms sales

On 30 March, Turkey's General Assembly voted in favour of Finland to join NATO. It becomes the 30th NATO member to ratify after Hungary approved the same on 27 March. According to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's party's legislator: "As a NATO member, we naturally had some expectations and requests regarding the security concerns of our country." Finland and Sweden which jointly applied for NATO membership in May 2022 was blocked by Turkey and Hungary citing the extradition of Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) categorized as terrorists by the EU and the US, combat against terrorism, and cooperation over arms exports.

On 30 March, Finland's President Sauli Niinistö said: "Finland will be a strong and capable Ally, committed to the security of the Alliance." On the same NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg appreciated Turkey's ratification: "I welcome the vote of the Grand National Assembly of #Türkiye to complete the ratification of #Finland's accession. This will make the whole #NATO family stronger & safer."

Sweden denying to extradite the PKK terrorists and burning of a Quran triggered more gap in Turkey agreeing to Sweden's accession into NATO. This led Finland to pass a legislation on 01 March to go ahead alone with the membership process upon the condition of ratification by Turkey and Hungary.

What are the issues?

First, to prevent the national security threat. Turkey's cross-border operations in Syria are aimed to counter the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) or People's Defense Units (YPG) terrorist organisations. Along with the PKK and YPG, Turkey considers Democratic Union Party (PYD), and the

Fetullah Gulen Terrorist Network (FETO) as a threat to its security. Turkey's claims over Finland and Sweden support the individuals and the subsidiary groups belonging to the organisation has been the prime block to vote. The block was to hold them accountable and negotiated for the extradition of such individuals and cut down on military and financial support. Of both, Finland was ahead in convincing Turkey through pledges to tighten its national laws against terrorism, by amending its Criminal Code, and by approving arms sales.

"Finland's membership into NATO is not just to secure the regional security but also adds 800 miles into NATO's border extending into the Baltic Sea and Arctic."

Second, securing Turkey's economy. Increasing foreign debt payments, the falling value of the Turkish Lira, unemployment, and the central bank nearing bankruptcy weigh down heavily on its economy. For Erdogan who will face the elections in May, the vote for Finland and Sweden is the tactical bait to keep an option open for economic aid. If not NATO as a military organisation but for the US to step in to help stabilize its economy. This can be compared to the 1980 case where the US demanded Turkey's approval of Greece's membership in return for economic aid. Apart from the US, Turkey's trade with Finland accounts for EUR two billion and EUR three billion with Sweden. Therefore, crossing this would further its economic burden.

Third, Finland's accession into NATO. Finland which is known for the military neutrality, especially during the cold war became the member of the EU and collaborated with NATO in the peace programme, and exercises. The Ukraine war became the spark point to re-think its stance as it shared a direct border with Russia. Although the goal was to join along with Sweden, considering the security threat Finland along with Turkey and Sweden signed a trilateral memorandum to close down the negotiations to enter NATO. Compared to Sweden, Finland was swiftly able to detach itself from Sweden to join NATO alone and convinced Turkey into accepting its bid. This was through combatting terrorism and disinformation through new anti-terror laws, extradition of PKK individuals, granted first commercial export license to Turkey for military material. Upon the ratification, with completing the remaining procedures Finland is set to join NATO soon.

Fourth, European security. Finland's membership into NATO is not just to secure the regional security but also adds 800 miles into NATO's border extending into the Baltic Sea and Arctic. Along with the ground advantage, Finland and Sweden are known for its "first-rate military forces," especially Finland's artillery forces. For Finland upon

joining NATO meet its immediate threat of securing its 1300 kilometers border with Russia through a "mutual defence" guarantee.

"..new red lines will push for new possibilities for Russia to re-strategize its position in the northern Europe."

What does this mean?

First, military advantage for NATO. Finland membership places NATO in an militarily strategic position to expand its exercises across the Baltic Sea and Arctic. Although this heightens the risk of direct border with Russia, NATO has to ensure in preventing escalation. It's access into Finland's defence ministry and decision-making guarantee's security of Finland.

Second, From the Ukraine war point of view, it would be backlash for Russia, as Finland joining NATO has brought it more closer. Therefore, the new red lines will push for new possibilities for Russia to re-strategize its position in the northern Europe and NATO's operations in Finland.

War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Murat Cetinmuhurdar/Presidential Press Office/Handout via REUTERS, eos-aus.com, SCMP/AFP, Valentin Sprinchak / TASS, nato.int, REUTERS/Igor Tkachenko/File Photo

War in Ukraine: Day 428

War on the Ground:

On 27 April, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported on attacks in Mykolaiv city. Missile attacks are observed to have been launched from the Black Sea, killing more than 23 civilians and destroying residential buildings. Mykolaiv city is known for its shipbuilding and consists a population of 470,000 before the war began. Till Russia has denied the accusations of attacking residential buildings.

On 27 April, Ukraine Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal reported on the phone conversation with Pope Francis. The discussion focused on establishing a way to execute Zelenskyy's "peace formula." In response, Russia's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated that Russia welcomed "anything" to settle the conflict.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 27 April, Kremlin reported on Russia's

President Vladimir Putin's visit to Rudnevo, an industrial zone of Russia. The visit aimed to examine the UAV production along with operators of unmanned aerial systems. A meeting was held by Putin with the representatives of the UAV producing organisations. During the meeting, Putin highlighted the importance of UAV production and the need to push investment from 500 billion roubles to a trillion.

On 27 April, Kremlin reported on Putin's meeting with Russia's Association of Fertilizer Producers, the head on fertilizer production. According to the report, Russia had overtaken the US and India and stays in second place after China with an increase of 40 per cent in its output. Despite the increase in production, the exports had reduced by 15 per cent due to the Black Sea block. The report highlighted how the Ukraine Grain deal had been extended many times while Russia's demand to export its agricultural and fertilizer products still remain unattended. On the same, Putin said:

* 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.

“Sanctions were imposed by countries that do not particularly need our fertilizers, and the developing markets now suffer from it.”

The West View:

Responses from the West and Europe

On 27 April, tensions over the extension of the grain deal emerged as Russia warns of rejecting the extension if its previous demands are not met. On the same, Germany’s Agricultural Minister Cem Özdemir asked Russia to stick to the deal as Ukraine’s grain exports were key to Global South and Ukraine survival in the war. He said: “Russia wants to let the agreement expire already in mid-May — 60 days ... Putin is accepting the loss of human life for his criminal war of aggression.”

On 27 April, Council of Europe’s, Parliamentary assembly which is responsible for ensuring human rights and the rule of law passed a resolution stating children who were forcibly deported from Ukraine will be considered in a Genocide. Earlier, ICC issue of warrant against Putin under charges of “abducting children” have also added pressure on Russia.

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War in Ukraine: Day 427

War on the Ground:

On 26 April, in the phone conversation held between China’s President Xi Jinping and Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Xi reiterated that China will be “on the side of peace.” He stressed China’s position to promote negotiations and assured to send representatives to hold talks with the parties to the conflict. China published a 12-point position paper in February indicating it as a

“neutral mediator in the Ukraine war along with mentioning “no limit” to its relations with Russia. Zelenskyy remarked the call as “long and meaningful.” France, and Germany welcomed the phone conversation as a positive signal. France said: “..encourages all dialogue that contributes to a resolution of the conflict [in Ukraine] in accordance with the fundamental interests of Ukraine and international law.”

On 26 April, Ukraine’s Presidential Office Spokesperson Andriy Yermak reported in his Telegram account on the exchange of prisoners. During the exchange, 42 soldiers and two civilians had been brought back, while Russia’s Defence Ministry reported the return of 40 Russian soldiers from Ukraine.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 26 April, Russia’s Ambassador to the UN, Gennady Gatilov, complained over insufficient progress in fulfilling Russia’s condition in exchange for the grain deal. According to him, despite the UN efforts, Russia’s demands to allow its Agricultural Bank reconnect with Swift payment, freeing the supplies of agricultural machinery, spare parts, granting insurance for its ships and access to foreign ports have remained standstill. Gatilov said: “I don’t know whether they will be able to achieve sufficient progress in the time left.”

On 26 April, Russia’s Foreign Ministry criticised Ukraine’s government for undermining the efforts towards negotiations to settle the conflict. In a statement: “The Ukrainian authorities and their Western minders have already shown their ability to mess up any peace initiatives.” Highlighting China’s attempts to establish the peace talks, it blamed the Ukraine government for rejecting it.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 26 April, Italy’s Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, asked the EU allies to fasten Ukraine’s membership process. The remark comes after the bilateral conference held between the Italy and Ukraine business in an effort to plan for reconstruction. Meloni said: “The future of Ukraine must include an

always wider capacity of integrating with the European dynamics and institutions.” Appreciating Ukraine’s efforts to “reform its system,” she stressed that it should be given an opportunity to become part of the EU.

On 26 April, the US **General** Christopher Cavoli assured on Ukraine receiving arms from the US on time to help its counteroffensive. He highlighted that 98 per cent of the combat vehicles pledged for Ukraine had been delivered. He added: “I am very confident that we have delivered the material that they need, and we’ll continue a pipeline to sustain their operations as well.”

On 26 April, the Czech Republic’s Foreign Minister announced a sanction on Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill due to his support for the Ukraine war. Kirill’s public remarks in support of the war, which has made the acts committed by the Russian forces acceptable has been taken as evidence to impose sanctions.

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War in Ukraine Day: 423 & 424

War on the Ground:

On 22 April, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated that new fighting units are preparing brigades and units for the counteroffensive. The aim of his meeting have focused on taking all steps for “de-occupation” of its territories from Russia’s

hold. Ukraine which has been fighting the war past 14 months, the Western allies met in the US Ramstein Air Base to discuss on giving aid to Ukraine.

On 22 April, Ukraine’s Deputy Minister Andrew Melnyk tweeted that Ukraine was thankful for the military aid received till now, but has not been enough for Ukraine. He expressed the need of 10 times of such military aid to counter Russia’s aggression in 2023. He asked the allies to “cross all the artificial red lines” and give Ukraine “powerful arms,” at least one per cent of their GDP.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 22 April, Russia announced that it will be expelling more than 20 German Diplomats as a counter move for Germany expelling Russian Diplomats. On the same Russia’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson in telegram said: “..mass expulsion of employees of Russian diplomatic missions in Germany.” was in response to Germany’s move. The news agency of Germany DPA reported on a permission being granted a diplomatic permission to Russia’s aircraft, without mentioning the actual reason.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 22 April, Latvia’s Defence Ministry after the Ramstein talks announced to deliver all of its Stringer anti-aircraft missiles to Ukraine. The missile which are in its armed forces hold will be given to Ukraine to adhere to its demand for more air defence systems. Although the time of delivery of the missiles, and number was not disclosed, intense training of the Ukrainian soldiers is also expected to take place.

On 22 April, Deutsche Welle reported on Spain’s delivery of its first batch of Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine. Six Leopard 2A4 main battle tanks are in transit along with 20 light armoured transport vehicles. Another four battle tanks are expected to be delivered later.

On 23 April, in an intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence reported on Russia’s new recruitment efforts. A new set of ads

have been launched to be relayed in TV, billboards and social media to recruit volunteers for military. The Ministry predicts that Russia can achieve attracting 400,000 volunteers in this. It also observed the cautiousness of Russia in delaying a mandatory mobilization to avoid public dissent.

On 23 April, think tank of the US, Institute for the Study of War observed advance made by the Ukraine Armed Forces in the eastern bank of Dnipro River in Kherson. The area which was partially withdrawn by Russia in November, the advance of Ukraine indicate a weakening grip of Russia.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 22 April, IAEA Director Rafael Grossi issued a warning over a possible nuclear accident in Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. He confirmed the military operations near the plant and nuclear experts have recorded explosion near the site. This has created a concerning situation.

On 23 April, G7 Ministers called for an "expansion" of the deal for Ukraine to export grains through Black Sea. Earlier Moscow had signalled to not allow the extension of the deal more than 18 May. During the communique in Japan, the G7 Ministers expressed a strong support for the extension of the deal beyond May and expansion into the Black Sea. In a statement: "We condemn Russia's attempts to use food as a means of destabilization and as a tool of geopolitical coercion and reiterate our commitment to acting in solidarity and supporting those most affected by Russia's weaponization of food."

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War in Ukraine: Day 421

War on the Ground:

On 20 April, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, during the visit of the NATO Chief, stressed how a majority of the Ukrainians support joining NATO and that it was the right time to decide. He also requested help to handle the challenges posed by allies in sending specific weapons - "long-range, modern aviation, and armoured vehicles."

On 20 April, Ukraine claimed destroying 21 such drones along with "55 ground attacks." The fight in Bakhmut is also observed to be intense fighting increasing day by day.

On 20 April, Kyiv city Mayor, announced the termination of the "land lease deal" held with Russia. This means Russia will have to return the property. According to the Mayor, the appeal by the Cabinet of Ministers had been put forward to Russia to return the "diplomatic establishment" to Ukraine.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 20 April, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during his meeting with Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega criticized the role of the US and its allies in thriving their "hegemony" in the Ukraine conflict. According to Ortega: "Today, the United States sanctioned three judges because they have applied justice against terrorists. We already have hundreds of fellow state officials sanctioned, but we are no longer afraid of that." The reason for the criticism was the US announcement on sanctioning three Nicaraguan judges for taking away the citizenship of opponent party members.

On 20 April, in response to the NATO Chief's visit, Russia's spokesperson stated that Russia sees Ukraine's NATO membership as a threat and will lead to serious security danger.

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

On 20 April, NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Ukraine for first time since the war. On the question of Ukraine joining NATO, Stoltenberg said that its accession would be a priority in its agenda in the upcoming July summit. He added: "Ukraine's future is in the Euro-Atlantic family, Ukraine's future is in NATO, all allies agree on that." The surprise visit was due to Ukraine's ongoing preparation for the "Spring counteroffensive." In his address, he highlighted that EUR 150 billion support being provided by NATO allies and training help to the soldiers. Although the time period of the war was unknown he stressed that Russia's aggression has to be "stopped."

On 20 April, POLITICO reported on Denmark and Netherlands' announcement of sending 14 Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine. Netherlands' Defence Minister stated that Ukraine's determined fight against Russia had given it a strong motivation to support it continuously. The tanks are estimated to cost EUR 165 million and are expected to deliver by early 2024.

On 20 April, Deutsche Welle reported on the end of the Petersburg Dialogue. The aim of the dialogue was to identify issues relating to civil society groups, think tanks and decision makers from Germany and Russia. This was formed to pursue a different channel of dialogue with Russia.

On 20 April, Estonia's Defence Minister announced to send 155 mm ammunition to Ukraine. This will be under the EU agreement to send one million rounds of artillery ammunition to Ukraine. In a statement, the Minister said: "The Estonian initiative to send a million rounds to Ukraine was approved by the EU institutions with unprecedented speed and now Ukraine needs quick decisions from its European Allies to make sure these rounds reach Ukraine."

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War in Ukraine: Day 420**War on the Ground:**

On 19 April, the surprise drone attacks in Odesa were reported by Ukraine's forces. Although no casualties were observed, according to Odesa district military administration, the attacks have been carried out through Shahed-136 UAVs. The drone is known for being programmed to target using a "payload of explosives." The report states that the Russian setback in replacing its damaged drones due to sanctions has pushed it to depend on foreign weapon systems. Ukraine's South Operational Command Chief said: "They were flying trying to avoid detection, exploiting landscape peculiarities. They still try to deceive our anti-aircraft defenses and locate the launchers."

On 19 April, Ukraine's Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov confirmed the receipt of the first patriot defence system from Germany. The patriot system is armed in combat enemy aircraft, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles and of all it is observed to be advanced. He said: "Today, our beautiful Ukrainian sky becomes more secure because Patriot air defence systems have arrived in Ukraine."

The Moscow View:**Claims by Russia**

On 19 April, DPR leader Denis Pushilin met Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko to discuss bilateral cooperation. Belarus has been maintaining close relations with Russia since the war; Pushilin expressed interest in cooperating over equipment, tractors, construction products and furniture.

On 19 April, in response to South Korean President's announcement to send weapons to Ukraine, the former President of Russia,

Dmitry Medvedev issued a warning. He said that what would be a response of South Korea when it sees Russian-manufactured weapons in North Korea. Russia's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said: "Unfortunately, Seoul has taken a rather unfriendly position in this whole story."

On 19 April, *RT* reported on *WSJ* article on the challenges faced by the US manufacturers in building missiles for Ukraine. According to the report, due to difficulty in obtaining rocket motors, the production target has been logged back. Despite the US not disclosing the exact count of GMLRS projectiles sent to Ukraine, as per *Reuter's* investigation, close to 5000 had been delivered. Due to the delay in the production of artillery and guided missile, Ukraine has been observed to be facing a shortage in sustaining its artillery rounds.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 19 April, the European Commission proposed to offer EUR 100 million to help farmers in the EU countries bordering Ukraine. Under the plan, Hungary and Poland will be covered, as they began to impose ban on import of Ukraine's grain, according to the Commission, the proposal will also include measures to impose restrictions on "wheat, maize, sunflower seeds and rape seed." The move comes due to the accumulation of Ukraine's agricultural products in EU member states in the process of export to other countries. Along with others, Bulgaria has also joined in the import ban against Ukraine.

On 19 April, Nordic country's joint journalistic investigation reported suspicious Russian vessels to be spying on the Scandinavian peninsula. In the report, the investigation team stated that close to 50 such ships were found to be spying their windfarms, gas pipelines, electricity and internet cables. The men in the ships were observed to be masked, and armed.

On 19 April, the Pentagon announced its additional military aid worth USD 325 million to Ukraine. The package includes HIMARS rocket systems, anti-armour systems, and nine million rounds of small

arms and artillery rounds. This totals to USD 36 billion of total military aid given by the US. Similarly, Germany and Portugal fulfilling its pledge, delivered 21 Leopard 2A6 main battle tanks together. According to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz: "What's needed now is essentially more of the same," referring to the need of battle tanks, ammunition, and anti-aircraft systems.

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War in Ukraine: Day 419

War on the Ground:

On 18 April, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met the forces in Avdiivka to know the battlefield situation. The city has been under Russia's target since its winter offensive, but has been able to make only little advance. In the video released by the President's office shows the awards being presented to the soldiers and the heavily damaged residential building. According to the report, only 1,800 civilians are present in the area currently.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 18 April, Kremlin reported on Russia's President Vladimir Putin's visit to southern Kherson and eastern Luhansk. The visit comes as Ukraine is observed to be getting ready for new counteroffensive in the self-proclaimed areas by Russia.

On 18 April, *TASS* reported on usage of a facial recognition system by Russia to track young men who would be eligible for

military service. Since the signing of the conscription law, the measures have become narrow for those trying to avoid the service. According to the report: "To determine the place of residence of the conscript, video surveillance systems in the city of Moscow are being used."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 18 April, Poland which was the first to ban Ukraine's grain imports, struck a deal with it set a system to ensure no backlog of grains remained in Poland. Through signing of the deal, the grains will be transited into Poland for exporting to other place, but will not stagnate its market. According to the spokesperson Miriam Garcia: "The main purpose of the solidarity routes was to provide Ukraine with alternative routes for the export of agricultural products and other products, guaranteeing the functioning of the Ukrainian economy in the context of the blockade of the Black Sea ports."

On 18 April, in the row of ban on Ukraine's grain imports, Romania has joined stating it would ask for an immediate decree to impose a temporary ban. The move comes as the increasing internal pressure to safeguard their agricultural markets.

On 18 April, Poland's Interior Minister announced the construction of an electronic barrier in the land border shared with Russia. The barrier is aimed to carry out 24 hours monitoring, extending to 210 kilometers.

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War in Ukraine: Day 418

War on the Ground:

On 17 April, Ukraine's Defence Ministry stated that Ukraine drones will be able to fly now to Moscow and more further. The Ministry also met with the US Department of Defence to discuss on strengthening bilateral relations in defence collaboration. On the same day, the Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malier observed the situation in Bakhmut. He said: "The enemy's offensive in the east continues. Bakhmut and Maryinka remain at the epicenter of hostilities." The shelling in Bakhmut is on peak with heavy artillery, damaging all the buildings in the city.

On 17 April, Ukraine forces General Staff, Oleksiy Reznikov reported on continuing attacks in Bakhmut and Marjinka by Russia's forces. He provided an estimate of 182,000 Russian soldiers to have died in the war.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 16 April, Russia's President Vladimir Putin welcomed China's Defence Minister Li Shangfu. During the meeting, Putin stated that the discussion had focused on cooperation on useful information, military-technical, and joint military exercises. He said: "Undoubtedly, this is another crucial area that strengthens the extremely trusting, strategic nature of our relations."

On 17 April, Russia's Foreign Minister in the meeting with Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira expressed Russia's interest to end the Ukraine soon. He appreciated Brazil for understanding the situation.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 17 April, Slovakia's Defence Ministry announced the delivery of 13 MiG-29 fighter jets, which was earlier promised to Ukraine. Along with Poland, Slovakia pledged to give jets and urged the other EU countries for a "fighter jet coalition."

On 17 April, in response to the grain import ban by Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia the European Commission expressed its objection. Commission's spokesperson Miriam Garcia stated that the EU member states cannot decide its trade policy by its own. She said: "In such challenging times, it is crucial to coordinate and align all decisions within the EU." While Poland and Hungary countered stating the competition its local farmers faced, Slovakia took a similar decision over pesticides.

The Global Fallouts: Implication of the War

On 16 April, China's Defence Minister Li Shangfu after the meeting with Putin highlighted the importance of relation shared between China and Russia. He said that the equation goes above military and political alliance during the cold war and it was very stable.

On 17 April, the G7 Foreign Ministers released a statement assuring support to Ukraine. The Japan Foreign Ministry, in its statement said: "Committed to intensifying, fully coordinating and enforcing sanctions against Russia." It also criticised Russia for transferring nuclear tactical weapons to Belarus. The Ministers also vowed to coordinate to prevent Russia from circumventing the sanctions imposed. During the meeting, the G7 group also signed an agreement to block Russia from getting access to nuclear energy market.

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War in Ukraine: Day 416 & 417

Bakhmut: Russia claims to control of two more areas

War on the Ground:

On 15 April, in his address, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, accused Russia of targeting residential buildings in Sloviansk. According to the report, 11 were killed and 20 were injured, and Russian forces have been observed in both Sloviansk and Kramatorsk.

On 15 April, during the fight in Bakhmut, the UK Defence Intelligence observed that Ukraine was forced to withdraw due to the "renewed assault." Russia also accused Ukraine for destroying infrastructure during its withdrawal to slow Russia's forces. While the Ukraine forces denied the Wagner Group claims of capturing 80 per cent of the city.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 15 April, Russia's Defence Ministry reported on the Wagner Group's progress in capturing two more areas in Bakhmut. It said: "Wagner assault units have successfully advanced, capturing two districts on the northern and southern outskirts of the city."

On 16 April, Russia's President Vladimir Putin, in a meeting, asked the Russian billionaires and the elite to make more investments in new technology, production and enterprises. The statement comes as Russia faces "sanction war." Since many Western firms have been observed to be exiting from Russia, adding pressure on it, Putin thanked those who have stayed till now to sustain its economy.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 15 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Finland's construction of a fence in its southeast border. One of the border guard estimated that close to three kilometres of fence and called it a "significant part of border control."

On 15 April, Poland's ruling party Head, Jaroslaw Kaczynski announced the ban to import Ukraine grain. The move comes to

protect the farmer, as part of the grain supply was accumulating in Eastern Europe resulting in the drop in prices. He said: "Today the government decided on a regulation to ban the entry, imports of grain into Poland, as well as of dozens of other kinds of food."

On 16 April, Sweden's government released a statement on its deal with the UK to sell 14 of its Archer mobile cannon system. On the same, the UK said, the purchase would help replace its 32 AS90 artillery systems. The system developed by Sweden, would be a fully automated howitzer with a provision for guns that can be operated from distance.

On 16 April, Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced further arms support to Ukraine. He said that it was necessary to send the ammunition at right time. After the announcement, Olaf added that it would further discuss with the European Council to improve the support.

The Global Fallouts: Implication of the War

On 16 April, the UN's investigative body reported that Russia had committed "wilful killings, torture and deportation of children." According to the investigators, there was no proof of genocide, but some aspects had indicated relating to that crime. The report published by the UN body was carried out with the help of 500 interviews, satellite images and site visit. The ICC aims to arrest the responsible Russians for deporting the children by force and damaging civilian infrastructure. In the report: "Russian authorities have committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law and violations of international human rights law, in addition to a wide range of war crimes."

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War in Ukraine: Day 415

Russia's new conscription law to recruit through a digital platform

War on the Ground:

On 14 April, the Ukraine forces reported intense artillery attacks in the last "48 hours" in Bakhmut. The UK Ministry of Defence confirmed the same, which disclosed a new possibility of fresh attacks in Bakhmut due to "improved cooperation" between Russia's Defence Ministry and the Wager Group. According to its observation, Russia's airborne forces (VDV) had replaced Wagner Group units in northern and southern zones.

On 14 April, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal reported on a site double the size of Austria to have been mined by Russia. Germany's Tagesschau, a news programme, also reported the same on the impact of anti-personnel landmines on Ukrainians. According to a UN report, 740 have been reported to have either dead or injured due to mines and explosions. The HRW has criticized Russia for using illegal devices posing a danger to civilians in Ukraine. It said: "...appear to have extensively scattered landmines around the Iziurm area."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 14 April, RT reported on Russia's President Vladimir Putin signing of new conscription law to change the provision of the mobilization. One of the fast-tracked regulations will involve the Ministry of Digital Development to collect data on people from their employers and universities. This would help identify eligible conscripts by mail and through e-platform,

where once the summons is issued, the recipient has to respond within 20 days. Russia, which mandates military service for men between 18 and 27 for one year, is now changed to 21 and 30 and will apply to those who reach the bracket in 2026.

On 14 April, Russia's Ministry of Defence reported on the completion of training of Belarus's air force in "operation and combat" of Su-25. In a statement: "...master new ways of using modern aviation weapons, including special munitions." However, it is unclear if the tactical nuclear weapons were part of the training.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 13 April, the EU announced sanctions on Russia's Wagner Group for its active support in the war. This would be the second time as the Group already faces sanctions for the violation of human rights in Africa. According to the report, the Wagner Group was added "...for actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine." In a statement released by the EU: "...apply to a total of 1 473 individuals and 207 entities. Those designated are subject to an asset freeze and EU citizens and companies are forbidden from making funds available to them."

On 14 April, Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock during her visit to China urged Russia to "stop the war." During the discussion with China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang, she highlighted how China's signal to bring a solution is positive while it is also blurry why it has not taken effort to call out Russia.

On 14 April, US military intelligence head Kyrlo Budanov assured that the leaked classified documents would in no way affect Kyiv's offensive plan. He said: "This will not be able to affect the real results of the offensive operation." The leak contains classified information on Ukraine's fight, the US's assessment of the war, and sensitive data on Ukraine's military and limitations. Although the US investigators have arrested the responsible individual, the impact of the leak is yet to be observed.

The Global Fallouts: Implication of the War

On 14 April, in the meeting with Baerbock, China's Foreign Minister Gang mentioned how China is stubborn in not giving weapons to Russia for the Ukraine war. He said: "We do not and will not supply weapons to parties in conflict."

On 14 April, IEA reported on stats on Russia's oil exports. According to the report, the export had peaked three-year high in March, but the revenue had reduced by 43 per cent compared to 2022. The oil exports had increased to 8.1 million barrels a day despite sanctions, and it was mainly due to the return of economies from the pre-pandemic levels.

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War in Ukraine: Day 414

Diverging claims emerge among the actors in the Bakhmut Battle

War on the Ground:

On 13 April, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy who attended the meeting conducted by the US with IMF representative, requested for a concrete system to be placed to use the frozen Russian assets as compensation for the

damage in Ukraine. According to the report the reconstruction cost comes to EUR 411 billion with an estimated time period of 10 years. Ukraine demanded for EUR 14 billion on immediate basis as per World Bank. It announced to give USD 200 million for energy and heating infrastructure reconstruction, whereas its members agreed to give another USD 300 million to expand that.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 13 April, Russia's Defence Minister Igor Konashenkov claimed that the Wagner Group had engaged in intense fighting to push Ukraine forces away from the central parts of Bakhmut. On the same the Russian forces claimed to have blocked the paths used by the Ukraine forces to fight the frontline of Bakhmut. Russia's Defence Ministry in a statement: "Airborne troops are providing support to advancing assault troops, blocking the transfer of Ukrainian army reserves to the city and the possibility of retreat for enemy units." According to the founder of the Wagner Group, denied the claims stating it was too early to confirm the encirclement.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 13 April, UK's Finance Minister Jeremy Hunt announced the decision to grant an additional USD 500 million to Ukraine as a loan. The total comes to USD 15.6 billion under the four-year package of IMF loan guarantee to Ukraine. He said: "This funding will enhance Ukraine's economic resilience and strengthen its resistance against Russia."

On 13 April, the US sanctioned more than 120 entities to add pressure on Russia. This will include Russia's state energy company, Rosatom, Russia's private military company, along with its partner firms in Turkey and Hungary. One of the key target of the sanctions was Russia's businessman Alisher Usmanov, who is known to be the host of larger network of businesses that provides space to avoid sanctions.

On 13 April, in the intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence reported on the challenges faced by Russia ahead of the

"victory day" in May. It observed that due to "sensitive communication" issues, has risked the management of the campaign in Ukraine. According to the report: "Putin couches the 'special military operation' in the spirit of the Soviet experience in World War Two." On 13 April, the Norway's Foreign Ministry announced the expulsion of 15 Russian officers working in Norway. Out of the 40 Russian Diplomats, three were already expelled in 2022. According to the Foreign Minister: "We have followed their activities over time. They have increased since the invasion of Ukraine... Their activities pose a threat to Norway."

War in Ukraine: Day 411

Bakhmut: Ukraine forces report on Russia's special forces involvement

War on the Ground:

On 10 April, Ukraine Ground Forces, Commander on the battle for Bakhmut, reported that Russia had switched to "Syrian scorched earth tactics" against the Ukraine forces to hold restraint. According to the Commander, the strong defence held by its forces has pushed Russia into involving special forces and air assault units. The situation remains to be challenging the capacity of both forces in the war.

On 10 April, the German Staff of Ukraine forces claimed eight strikes on M-24 helicopter, and six unmanned aerial vehicles along with missile troops and artilleries. They also reported that 21 strikes by Russia resulted in equipment and manpower loss in Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, Marinka, Tokmak, and Zaporizhzhia area.

On 10 April, Ukraine's Defence Ministry, Deputy Minister reported on the increased artillery attacks and use of aircraft in Bakhmut. According to the Minister: "Wagner units have lost their strength, and that's why they [the invaders] use both air assault troops and special forces."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 10 April, Russia's Deputy Chief of Russia's aerospace force reported on Russia's efforts to address the defence issues at the northwestern border shared with Finland. According to the Chief, stated that

Russia would work in its air defences to guard its northwest.

On 10 April, *RT* reported on India reaching the peak point in purchasing oil from Russia. According to the report, close to 1.64 million barrels per day in March was exported. It also reported on the unaffected Swiss exports despite sanctions. Between March 2022 and February 2023 the total export accounted for 2.9 billion, which was previously 3.5 billion. The major trade lies in watches, machines, and medicines.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 10 April, in the intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence reported on how Russia continues to invest resources for small wins. This was observed in the operations in the Marinka and Avdiivka districts. There is also increased armoured assaults in the Marinka, which has been on the battle field since 2014.

On 10 April, the Germany government announced another package of military aid, which includes antenna mast systems, drones and ammunition. Under the new package, armoured engineer vehicles, antenna mast, reconnaissance drones,

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War in Ukraine: Day 409 & 410

War on the Ground:

On 08 April, Ukraine's Naval Forces reported on Russia's deployment of seven warships carrying Kalibr missiles in the Black Sea. According to the report the warship's location were traced in Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and in the Mediterranean Sea.

On 08 April, *Ukrinform* reported on the presence of 70-kilometre defence line containing Russia's forces in Zaporizhzhia. According to the report the captured area of Zaporizhzhia under Russia remains in guard in the west as spotted in the Sentinel-2 satellite. This extends to the center of Mariupol, which Russia sees as capital of the region.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 08 April, *RT* reported on Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev comments on Ukraine. Medvedev stated that Ukraine would soon vanish since the west nor its people care for it to exist. He said: "Why would Ukraine disappear? Because nobody needs it." He substantiated this saying the EU would not need to continue the conflict as it leads to financial and political turmoil. Medvedev warned: "The prospect of decisively planting Ukrainian blood-sucking parasites on the neck of the shriveling EU." According to him this would lead to the "demise" of the EU.

On 09 April, one of the Russia's military center Head, remarked on the Russia's plans to bring tank-killer groups to counter the "modern armour" given by the West to Ukraine. According to the Head, there have been "instructional guidelines" have been drafted by Russian military to carry out training. In the statement of the military expert: "This is large-scale, systemic work which is being carried out at state level."

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 07 April, the US National Guard reported on the upcoming NATO schedule to hold a largest aviation exercise called "Air Defender 2023," from 12 to 23 June. According to the report, the aviation drill will take place in NATO's eastern front and to quickly deploy

its aviation. The exercise led by Germany will also look into “operational and tactical field training.” In the statement of NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCDCOE) will host the largest cyber defence exercise including more than 3,000 individuals.

On 08 April, in the intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence reported that Russia attempts to bring down Ukraine’s energy grid during 2022 was not successful. According to the statement: “Russia has conducted long range strikes since October 2022, but large-scale strikes have become rare since early March 2023.” It observed Ukraine’s power system was able to replace the needed components including transformers despite logistical issues. The Ministry also suggests that energy system of Ukraine will get better with warmer weather.

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War in Ukraine: Day 408

Wagner Group advances in the west of Bakhmuta River: UK Ministry of Defence report

War on the Ground:

On 07 April, in the war update, Ukraine’s Military reported on continued attacks by Russia’s forces in Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Maryinka. It confirmed countering 40 attacks, but missile and air strikes were observed to be highly used by Russia. The report also revealed the continued use of

Belarus airspace and border areas to deploy offensive groups in Kursk and Belgorod.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 April, RT reported on Russia’s claim on Ukraine using NATO-provided ammunition to kill people in Donetsk area. The claim states the usage of NATO “supplied howitzers and rocket launchers.” Both were found to be used to attack Donetsk, according to Russia’s investigation.

On 07 April, RT reported on a “secret plan” leak on the scheduled offensives for Ukraine. In response to the accusation of Russia’s disinformation campaign for the leak, Moscow denied saying that since the start of the war, there has been “blatant falsification” of information where it provides the data on military equipment, offensives of Ukraine. Still, it views this as “planted misinformation” to project the combat weapons low in number.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 07 April, in the intelligence update, UK’s Ministry of Defence reported a significant advance of Russia’s forces in the Bakhmut. Earlier, the Wagner Group had circled Bakhmut from three sides, leaving out West. It is now observed to have taken control of the “west bank of the Bakhmuta River” which operates as key route for Ukraine to replenish stocks. The report also mentioned the possibility of the Wagner Group and Russia’s military in a better-cooperated way closing down the differences.

On 07 April, The New York Times reported on leaked documents which reveal the assistance for the “spring offensive” by the US and NATO to Ukraine. According to the report, the documents were put out on Twitter and Telegram and contained information on weapon delivery, battalion strength and “sensitive material.”

On 07 April, Deutsche Welle reported on the joint statement released by France and China on assuring their commitment to stand for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and disarmament.

On 07 April, Cyprus Defence Minister Michalis Georgallas announced its offer to help Ukraine in receiving “landmine clearance training” under its humanitarian assistance provision. Georgallas said: “We will host personnel which will handle de-mining and detection of mines.”

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 07 April, China’s Foreign Ministry released a statement after the meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron. It called for a “political settlement” to bring the war to end and China’s President Xi Jinping stressed the need for the actors involved in the conflict to come “halfway” to create negotiating conditions to reach the settlement.

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War in Ukraine: Day 407

Xi aligns with Macron in preventing the further escalation of the Ukraine war

War on the Ground:

On 06 April, *Ukrinform* reported on Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s address in Warsaw. In his remarks, he highlighted how the freedom of Ukraine, Poland, Slavic and Baltic countries freedom mattered as it guaranteed strength. With a better guarantee, the higher chances remain to hold Russia accountable. During the visit, Zelenskyy announced the latest defence package agreed upon by Poland. This will

include “150 Rosomak armoured personnel carriers, 50 Rak self-propelled mortars, and 100 Piorun MANPADS,” worth up to EUR two billion.

On 06 April, the war update of Ukraine Armed Forces reported on the continued attacks in Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Marinka by Russia. Although it countered 20 such attacks, the situation remains the same with more than 10 MLRS, seven air strikes and missile strikes targeted in “Volyn, Polissia, Siverskyi and Slobozhanskyi directions.”

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 06 April, *TASS* reported on the Wagner Group Head, Yevgeny Prigozhin comments on Ukraine forces’ position in Bakhmut. The fight lasting for more than six months, Prigozhin reported that there was no sign of Ukraine forces moving out of the area and criticized Russia for not supporting the Group. Russia’s Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu stated that Ukraine’s forces had been cornered into a “battle of attrition” and upon capture, Russia would benefit from expanding into the east.

On 06 April, in response to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg’s criticism on Russia moving its nuclear weapons into Belarus, Russia’s spokesperson Dmitry Peskov countered, stating it was done in defence of the NATO’s expansion towards Russia. He said: “It is NATO that is expanding toward Russia, not Russia that is taking its military infrastructure towards the borders of NATO.”

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 06 April, French President Emmanuel Macron, during the meeting with China’s President Xi Jinping released a joint statement assuring the call for “peace talks” between Ukraine and Moscow at the earliest. In the meeting, Macron stated how the Russia war had become a setback for international stability and stressed on China’s role in bringing Russia for negotiation.

On 06 April, Lithuania’s Parliament adopted a resolution for the upcoming NATO summit

and invited Ukraine to join NATO. The document mandates the need for Ukraine to join NATO: “to sign accession protocols, and launch the ratification process once conditions allow.” According to the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chairman highlighted how Ukraine could add value to Lithuania’s security and make NATO stronger.

On 06 April, on the investigation of damage to Nord Stream Pipeline, Sweden’s Prosecuting Authority stated that the due to the “nature of crime” it was challenging to find out the responsible actor. The explosion, which took place 262.5 feet below the ocean floor in the Baltic Sea, the investigation team of Sweden has committed duly to find the criminal despite the challenges. Along with Sweden, Germany also began the investigation in March.

On 06 April, the intelligence update of the UK Ministry of Defence reported on the dismissal of Russia’s Eastern Group of Forces (EGF) Commander. According to the report, the EGF Commander was dismissed due to a high casualty rate, failure to capture the town of Vuhledar, and increased internal criticism.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 06 April, in the meeting with Macron, Xi released a joint statement agreeing to call the international community to prevent the escalation of the Ukraine crisis. He urged cooperation between China and France in “food, energy, finance and transport sectors” in the phase of Ukraine war. Xi said: “[China and France should] adhere to the general direction of a China-France comprehensive strategic partnership....to practise true multilateralism and maintain world peace, stability and prosperity.”

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War in Ukraine: Day 406

Putin emphasizes integrating the annexed regions in the Security Council meet

War on the Ground:

On 05 April, Ukrinform reported on Ukraine’s “Operational Command South” observation in the Black Sea. It revealed the deployment of 15 warships by Russia’s forces in the Black Sea. According to the report: “The naval group in the Black Sea grew to 15 warships, including as many as 6 missile carriers, 2 of which are submarines, which may indicate to an extremely high threat of a missile strike.”

On 05 April, Ukraine’s Ministry of Energy released a joint statement with Germany on expanding the energy partnership with a focus on “green recovery,” and reconstructing Ukraine’s energy infrastructure. According to Ukraine’s Energy Minister, Galushchenko the partnership will include government and businesses and he expects the cooperation to help in stabilising Ukraine’s energy system.

On 05 April, on the situation in Bakhmut, Ukraine’s Border Guard Service reported on countering the attacks on Russia’s Wagner Group. The spokesperson said six groups of Wagner Group launched an attack in the same time which was “decimated” by Ukrainians through mortars, heavy machine guns, and snipers.

On 04 April, Ukraine’s Minister of Health,

Viktor Lyashko confirmed receiving assistance from Canada's Red Cross worth USD 220 million. He highlighted the issues faced by Ukraine's health sector due to infrastructure damage, and economic inflation, which has strained access to medical care. Lyashko stated how the Canadian Red Cross and the Ukrainian Red Cross Society have been key in bringing initiatives to fill such gaps.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 05 April, Kremlin.ru reported on Russia's President Vladimir Putin's Security Council meeting. During the meeting, Putin discussed on ensuring rule of law, public security in Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson. Criticizing Ukraine for committing crimes through artillery and mortar attacks, he called for the integration of historical lands of Russia in Donbass and Novorossiia into its economic, legal and education sectors.

On 05 April, RT reported on Estonia's technical regulatory authority (TTJA) move to block 53 websites which were used to view banned Russian channels. It was done to align with the EU's sanctions. According to the TTJA Director, the per cent of trust in the Russian channels has decreased from 40 to 18 per cent and as per the census, Estonia has only a minor Russian speaking population.

On 05 April, Russia's Foreign Ministry accused Ukraine for interrupting its "civil communication satellites. It called it a violation of international law. The reports state that the SpaceX support given to Ukraine had become the tools of conflict in the war.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 05 April, Poland's President Andrzej Duda in a meeting with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy assured to send all its MiG-29 fighter jets and vowed to "secure additional security" in the upcoming NATO summit in July. In response, Zelenskyy urged Poland's acceptance of the refugees at the border could turn into a solid arrangement.

On 04 April, Romania's Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu announced that Romania would allocate separate funds for NATO's "defense potential development programs." Under the initiative, it aims to give USD 800,000 to Ukraine and USD 750,000 to Moldova to boost their defence capabilities. Aurescu emphasized on supporting vulnerable areas of the EU to defence against Russia.

On 05 April, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced NATO's plans to create a "multi-year assistance" programme for Ukraine. This will focus on the transition, building institutions, and improving interoperability to push towards NATO membership. Stoltenberg said: "We do not know when this war will end, but when it does, we must ensure that President Putin cannot continue to chip away at European security." The programme will ensure Ukraine's integration into the "Euro-Atlantic."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 05 April, 49 countries, the EU objected Russia was using its power as a permanent member of the UNSC in the illegal deportation of people, children and spreading disinformation. In a statement: "These reprehensible actions have taken place in the context of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn unreservedly."

On 05 April, IAEA Chief Rafael Grossi held talks with Russia's nuclear agency Rosatom Head, Alexei Likhachev on ensuring safety of Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Since Russia claimed control of the area from March 2022, continued threats to the safety of the power plant has been raised.

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War in Ukraine: Day 405

Russia sends nuclear capable Iskander-M missile system to Belarus

War on the Ground:

On 04 April, Ukraine’s Foreign Affairs Ministry released a notice on conducting the “First Black Sea Security Conference,” with Romania in mid-April. The conference aims to discuss the impact of the Ukraine war in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov to address the challenges and threats. This will help draw an overall framework for regional security and discuss information warfare and cyber threats.

On 04 April, Ukraine’s Armed Forces released a statement on the state of Russian forces. It highlighted the lag in the logistics to keep up the ammunition supplies for Russian forces. This became the prime reason for the frontline not to take the offensive road. According to the spokesperson, Russia continued to mine in the Zaporizhzhia direction, while it also brazenly (something wrong with the sentence formation here) its defence in the Crimean region. On the Ukraine forces, the spokesperson said that the main target lies in weakening the enemy and complicating the combat operations than launching a counteroffensive.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 04 April, Russia’s Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu announced the transit of Iskander-M missile system to the Belarus Military. The system is reported to be capable of being nuclear-armed. He added that Belarus soldiers had begun training in Russia on from 03 April and Belarus aircraft have become capable of attacking with nuclear weapons.

On 04 April, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov criticised the EU for “deteriorating the relations with Russia.” He added that Russia would opt for a tougher approach, in “reciprocal” towards the EU for supporting Ukraine with weapons.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 04 April, NATO finalized Finland’s membership into NATO. Turkey and Hungary which remained the roadblocks cleared the way for Finland in March and the ratification was complete with Turkey’s parliament passing the vote in favour of Finland.

On 04 April, the intelligence update of the UK Ministry of Defence reported on Russia’s efforts to form an alternate private mercenary group similar to Wagner Group to replace it from the combat operation. According to the report: “Russia’s military leadership likely wants a replacement PMC that it has more control over.” The reason behind the move is said to be due to Russia’s belief in public acceptance of losses in the Mercenary Group compared to military personnel losses.

On 04 April, in the NATO Foreign Affairs, the Ministers are expected to discuss increasing aid and, a “multi-year support programme” to support Ukraine in moving out from the Soviet era and going forwards into Euro-Atlantic integration. The meeting is also expected to involve a discussion with Ukraine’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba in boosting cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

On 04 April, the US announced its plan to provide USD 2.6 billion as military aid to Ukraine. In a statement released by Pentagon: “The United States will continue... to provide Ukraine with capabilities to meet

its immediate battlefield needs and longer-term security assistance requirements.”

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 04 April, the UNHRC issued a resolution asking for access the information on the missing children and civilians who were reported to be transferred into the Russian-occupied territory. In the resolution, Russia was demanded to: “cease the unlawful forced transfer and deportation of civilians and other protected persons within Ukraine or to the Russian Federation.” Apart from this, the UNHRC voted on extending the investigation of war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 404

Australia to supply remote weapon systems to Ukraine

War on the Ground:

On 03 April, Ukraine’s gas transmission system operator GTSOU issued a statement on the extension of the deal with Slovakia’s Eustream to increase gas imports. Initially, the GTSOU aided in providing a gas capacity of 42 million cubic meters in place of 27. Accounting for the new extension, the firm can provide 54 million cubic metres with additional capacity for four more. Therefore, under the current pressure of on gas supply and diversification of sources, maximum

utilisation of existing gas storages proves to be potential according to GTSOU.

On 03 April, Ukraine’s General Staff of the Armed Forces reported on the ongoing training in the UK by the Norwegian National Guard. Under the training, the newly recruited were trained in “combat skills.” This is aimed to improve the security and capabilities of the armed force. On the same day, Ukraine’s Air Force spokesperson highlighted the upper hand held by Russia in the war and to counter Ukraine needed an F-16 multi-purpose aircraft to carry out targets in air, ground and water (on the surface level). On the MiG-29 received from Slovakia and Poland, the spokesperson reported it to be outdated and with Ukraine pilots already trained to use F-16, having that would be an advantage.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 02 April, Russia’s Wagner Group Head Evgeny Prigozhin announced the success in capturing Artyomovsk (Bakhmut) by releasing a video from the city’s administrative building. He said: “We hoisted the Russian flag with the inscription ‘Good memory to Vladlen Tatarsky’ and the flag of PMC Wagner on top of the city administration of Bakhmut.” He added that the Group had taken over western districts. Ukraine has not confirmed on the development yet but has only reported on continuing losses for Russia in the battle.

On 03 April, *RT* reported on increasing fuel imports by the EU. It reported that Poland continued to be the largest importer of Russia’s LPG. While oil and petrol products are subject to sanctions, LPG remains sanction-free and highly imported. According to Unimot, Russia’s LPG company with the increased cost and logistical issue the price of the LPG is higher.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 03 April, International Policy Bureau Head announced the delivery of first MiG-29 fighters to Ukraine. Under the partnership with Slovakia, Poland has planned to give 33 such aircrafts. In replacing the given aircrafts, Poland aims to buy US’s F-35s,

modern equipment, and weapons.

On 03 April, UK Defence Ministry in its update commented on Russia's Defence Ministry's information operation. It revealed Russia's efforts to rebuild its information operation due to its fallout in Ukraine. In a statement: "In reality, the 155th has likely been reduced to combat ineffective status at least twice in the last six months, due to being committed to tactically flawed frontal assaults near Vuhledar in Donetsk Oblast."

On 03 April, Croatia proposed treating injured soldiers through the Croatian hospitals and rehabilitation centres present there. According to Croatia's Veteran Affairs Minister: "We expect Ukraine to prepare the first batch of 20 wounded fighters to be sent to Croatian hospitals for treatment."

On 03 April, Denmark and Norway's Ministry of Defence announced the joint agreement to provide 8,000 artillery shells along with fuses to Ukraine. The assistance will also include 19 Caesar "self-propelled howitzers."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 03 April, UNESCO's Director General met Ukraine's first Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Chernihiv. Discussing on the ongoing international cooperation in science, education, and culture, Zelenskyy indicated that 1190 "cultural objects" had been damaged in the war. The Director General issued a certificate confirming the inclusion of Odesa in the "List of World Heritage in Danger."

On 03 April, Japan government issued an invite to Ukraine's Digital Minister to participate in G7 digital and tech minister's meeting. In the meeting, they are expected to talk about possible threats from Russia, China, and North Korea. During the gathering, they will also assess the impact of sanctions on Russia. Ukraine's minister will have to share his experience in combatting Russia's cyber attacks and gaps in telecommunication infrastructure during the meeting.

On 03 April, Australia's Electro Optic Systems (EOS) announced the contract with Ukraine to supply "Remote Weapon Systems" worth USD 80 million. This is to ensure boost accuracy, readiness, and

reliability and it can be installed into vehicles, allowing the crew to operate inside the vehicle.

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War in Ukraine: Day 402 & 403

War on the Ground:

On 01 April, Ukraine President's Chief of Staff, Andriy Yermak commented on Russia holding the presidency of the UNSC as: "Symbolic blow to the rules-based system of international relations." On the same Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytri Kuleba criticised the move and urged the council members to ensure Russia does not "abuse its presidency."

On 01 April, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy issued a decree imposing

sanctions on companies, organisations and individuals who were found to be supporting Russia in the invasion. The sanctions target the “armament factories, military research institutes, Russia’s Foreign Ministry and the Federation Council,” applicable for 10 years. In the sanction list, Iran’s revolutionary guards were also included under the suspect of providing Kamikaze drones to Russia.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 01 April, Russia’s Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu promised to boost the “munition supplies” to the Russian forces present in Ukraine. In a statement he said: “The volume of supplies of the most demanded ammunition has been determined. Necessary measures are being taken to increase them.”

On 02 April, Russia state investigative committee announced the death of 19 in a blast that took place in St. Petersburg café. In the blast, a Russian military blogger was reported to have died. The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement blaming Ukraine for triggering “domestic terrorism.” Russia’s spokesperson Dmitry Peskov called the bombing as a “terrorist act.”

On 02 April, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was reported to have held a phone call with US Secretary of the State Antony Blinken. They discussed on creating smooth environment for the operation of diplomatic missions.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 01 April, the UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update made remarks on Russia’s progress in the Donbas region. The Ministry observed from the appointment of the Russia’s Chief who was to carry out the winter offensive to expand Russia’s control in the Donbas. Over eight days complete, the progress was found to be only “marginal.” In a statement: “Largely squandering its temporary advantage in personnel gained from the autumn’s ‘partial mobilisation.’”

On 02 April, the UK intelligence released an update on the reason behind Russian casualties. Under the non-combat issues it

found that “increased alcohol consumption, poor handling of weapons, road accidents, and hypothermia,” were the reason behind mass deaths. Close to 200,000 have been estimated to have died since the war began.

On 01 April, Poland’s Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki announced the recent deal with Ukraine to deliver “100 Rosomak multi-purpose armoured vehicles.” The vehicles are planned to be made in Poland under Finland’s license, funded by the EU and the US.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 01 April, North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un’s sister blamed Ukraine for wishing to possess nuclear weapons. The comment comes highlighting an online petition which stated Ukraine’s call to bring nuclear weapons into its territory. She called it a “political plot” of Zelenskyy.

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EM Short Notes*

By Padmashree Anandhan, and Femy Francis



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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)

BELARUS

Lukashenko proposes a coordinated

transformation of Judicial Systems to CIS partners

On 14 April, during a meeting with the heads of the supreme courts of foreign countries in Minsk, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko proposed a coordinated transformation of the judicial systems among CIS partners. He acknowledged the establishment of the CIS Council of Chairmen of the Supreme Courts, which he believes will enable coordinated approaches to justice. Lukashenko stressed that Belarus's judicial reforms were carefully planned without any replication of foreign experience, and he was interested in sharing experiences with other countries in the field of judicial construction. He acknowledged that after the once-unified judicial system collapsed, national models of judicial procedure needed to be established, and Belarus opted for a path of continuous improvements. The president recognized the contribution of the previous generations to judicial construction and believed that the exchange of experience

* 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.

would be of particular interest. ([“Lukashenko offers CIS partners to coordinate judicial reforms,” Belta](#), 15 April 2023)

Lukashenko calls for security guarantee from Russia

On 10 April, the *Deutsche Welle* reported that Belarusian leader, Alexander Lukashenko, called on Russia to defend Belarus as its own territory, and formalize security guarantees for Minsk. The statement was made following a meeting with Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu, where Lukashenko had discussed on formalizing security guarantees with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Currently, Belarus hosts a contingent of Russian forces and serves as a staging ground for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. While Lukashenko has no intention of committing troops to Russia's invasion, pledged to respond to any incursions into Belarusian territory or attempts to incite unrest. Lukashenko argued that the Budapest Memorandum's security guarantees, which Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine gave up their Soviet-inherited nuclear weapons under, had been violated by sanctions on Belarus and Russia. ([“Belarus' Lukashenko asks for Russian security guarantees,” Deutsche Welle](#), 10 April 2023)

Aleksandr Chervyakov calls for technological independence with Russia

On 07 April, Belarus's Economy Minister, Aleksandr Chervyakov highlighted the need for technological independence between Belarus and Russia. He also added other potential areas for cooperation in manufacturing, electronics and building machines. Till now eight programs have been completed include working on nuclear energy and improving product traceability. They have signed 26 different agreements on taxes and customs, with 10 more agreements upcoming in 2023. Russia had bought 60 per cent of all goods traded by Belarus in 2022, while Belarus sold nine per cent of all goods imported by Russia, which is more than usual. The minister wants to increase the amount of goods Belarus sells to Russia by 6.5 per cent this year, which would be worth 1.5 billion USD.

([“Technological independence seen as crucial to Belarus-Russia union security concept,” beltanews](#). 07 April 2023)

Proposals for cooperation with Russia

On 03 April, Belarus's President Aleksandr Lukashenko in a meeting with the Kaluga Oblast Governor Vladislav Shapsha discussed on boosting trade with Russia. In the aftermath of disrupted supply chains due to sanctions imposed by the West, Belarus is looking for counter-allies to promote industrial cooperation, introduce new high-tech technologies, and substitute imports. In trade and economic cooperation, Belarus has expressed readiness to engage in a detailed and substantive dialogue in the construction sector between Belarus and Kaluga Oblast. The agricultural sector is also a priority in Kalimantan Oblast, as the trade between Belarus and Kalgan Oblast remains USD 654 million, which has decreased by six per cent over 2021. While in 2022 it increased exports to the Russian region by almost 70 per cent, the trade deficit for Belarus remained. Henceforth, Belarus is ready to listen to and take on board all proposals to go beyond the designated range of cooperation areas according to Lukashenko ([“Lukashenko seeks to achieve \\$1bn trade with Russia's Kalimantan Oblast,” eng.Belta.by](#), 03 April 2023; [“Lukashenko highlights the importance of Belarus-Russia cooperation,” eng.Belta.by](#), 03 April 2023)

BULGARIA

Preliminary result of elections show close gap while political uncertainty remains

On 02 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the general election result in Bulgaria. In the preliminary results, conservatives and liberals were found to be competing in a small gap. The elections occurring for the fifth time in last two years as the party fail to form coalition government. In the report: “Ex-Prime Minister Kiril Petkov's liberal We Continue the Change (PP) and their allied Democratic Bulgaria (DB) took 24.9%.” For the first time in the election, Petkov's party was able to form coalition with Pro-European DB. According to the report, the

continues political chaos in Bulgaria was due to increased inflation, corruption and anti-corruption protests which have not resolved the problem but led to series of elections. ("[Close race in Bulgaria's fifth election in two years](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 April 2023)

CZECH REPUBLIC

Protestors gather for second time demanding for the resignation of the government

On 16 April, *Associated Press* reported on a rally in Prague by thousands of people protesting against inflation. They demanded for the resignation of the government. Earlier a similar rally took place on 11 March organised by a latest found political party under "against the poverty" slogan. The protestors blamed the EU, and the Czech government for the inflation and called for the resignation. ("[Thousands turn out for anti-government protest in Prague](#)," *AP News*, 16 April 2023)

ESTONIA

New coalition government announces tax hikes and reforms

On 08 April, the incoming coalition government composed of the Reform Party, Eesti 200, and the Social Democratic Party (SDE) revealed their coalition agreement, which includes several tax increases such as a car tax from 2024, a revision of the state budget, and a green reform. The coalition agreement also includes a pledge to raise VAT and income tax rates from 20 per cent to 22 per cent beginning in 2024 and 2025, respectively, while raising the basic exemption to 700 euros a month. Estonia will also introduce a car tax in 2024 and abolish the VAT exception for accommodation providers. The coalition aims to renovate buildings for energy efficiency and to create a separate entity to oversee oil shale mining. Mineral resource surveys prioritized in the EU will continue, and the burning of wood in industrial power generation will end. The coalition also plans to end the burning of wood in industrial power generation and continue efforts to electrify more of Estonia's railways. The coalition agreement also

includes plans to revise the division of tasks and funding model between central and local governments and privatize non-strategic, partially or fully state-owned companies. Additionally, the coalition pledges to amend the Family Benefits Act and allow Unemployment Insurance Fund's retraining support to be used for tuition payments. The coalition aims to abolish Riigikogu protection money and amend the presidential election law to allow for earlier candidate setup. Lastly, the coalition pledges to look for ways to tax international streaming platforms and seek fair taxation for global digital giants. ("[Sides to incoming government unveil coalition agreement](#)," *ERR News*, 08 April 2023)

Locked Shields Exercise 2023

On 07 April, the *ERR* reported on the biggest cyber defense exercise scheduled from 18 to 20 April by the NATO Cooperative Cyber-defence Center of Excellence (CCDCOE), called Locked Shields 2023. It will be a simulation exercise where participants can protect computer networks while simulating real-time tactical and strategic decision-making under critical conditions. The Director of the CCDCOE, Mart Noorma, said: "No other cyber-defence exercise offers such a multifaceted and detailed experience as Locked Shields." The CCDCOE has been hosting this exercise in Tallinn since 2010, and this year, teams consisting of CCDCOE members and representatives will be participating from 38 different countries. (Marcus Turovski, "[Cyberdefence exercise in Tallinn to see over 3,000 participants](#)," *errnews*, 07 April 2023)

Estonia to deploy 110-member unit in Iraq

On 05 April, *ERR* reported on Estonia's Defence Forces statement on its plans to deploy unit of upto 110 members in Iraq for six months as part of the US's "Operation Inherent Resolve." This unit will handle the "base protection, rapid response and providing security for key personnel." The unit will also include Estonian Special Operations Forces (ESTSOF), non-commissioned officers (NCOs). According to Estonian Defence Forces Commander: "The participation of our units in foreign

operations has made a strong contribution to Estonia's good relations and ability to cooperate with our allies." (["Estonian Defense Forces company to be deployed to Iraq," news.err.ee](#), 05 April 2023)

Fears over the effect of the price rise by OPEC's decision

On 04 April, *ERR* reported on the possibility of a rise in oil prices from the banking sector crisis. Even though oil prices recovered, the Estonia Oil Association (Eesti Õliühing) predicts the cut in oil production to be more than a million barrels a day, as the OPEC's decision will soon reach Estonian gas stations. Since the price change on 17 March the global market price of gas increased by ten per cent, which is yet to impact Estonia. However, Estonia's fuel retailer Neste Manager Risto Sülluste said: "If the prices continue to rise, a lot depends on internal competition, and on the positive side, we are moving away from diesel to summer fuel, which is cheaper than winter fuel. We hope that this will help to mitigate some of the price increases." (Mart Linnart, "[Oil Association: Price rises may soon affect Estonian gas stations,](#)" *news.err.ee*, 04 April 2023)

FINLAND

Orpo announces a coalition bid; negotiations remain to be settled

On 27 April, Finland's National Coalition Party leader Petteri Orpo announced his bid to join the Finns Party, the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats to form a coalition government. Orpo said: "We really have big challenges ahead, we have to make difficult decisions, we have to make savings, we have to make reforms but I think they can be done and with this combination I think we can do it." After the announcement, the negotiation between the parties will take place, if successful it will ensure 108 seats in the parliament replacing Sanna Marin's government. The key challenge remains as consensus over immigration, asylum, and skilled workers differ. (["Finland's election winner seeks coalition with far-right,](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 27 April 2023)

Sanna Marin to step down from Social Democrats Party

On 05 April, Finland's Social Democrats party, Head Sanna Marin, decided not to run for re-election in September. She says the last four years have been difficult, with things like the pandemic and Russia invading Ukraine. However, she will still help the party form a coalition, which starts on April 14th. It led to inquiries as to whether she has disappointed the over 35,000 individuals who voted for her in the recent parliamentary elections. Sanna Marin's announcement of not seeking re-election as the leader of the Social Democrats has generated discussions and conjecture regarding her potential successor. Several stakeholders have made their own interpretations. Finn's Party group leader, Ville Tavio, made an interpretation that she made a lot of debt for Finland and now she's leaving. He also thinks that her leaving makes it more likely that the National Coalition and Social Democrats will work together to form a government. (["Marin didn't let down her voters, Tuppurainen states to YLE," Helsinki times](#), 07 April 2023)

FRANCE

Constitutional Council rejects shared initiative referendum

On 14 April, the Constitutional Council announced its decision on the controversial pension reform proposed by Macron's government, followed by heavy protests in France as the government's plan to increase the retirement age from 62 to 64 faced opposition. The Council validated most of the pension reform itself but censored certain measures they deemed to have no place in a budget text, such as the senior index and the senior contract. The decision has not ended to the opposition's fight against the reform, and protests are expected to continue. Macron has invited unions and employers to the Elysée Palace to begin a dialogue. However, the inter-union has refused to attend before 01 May and has asked the President not to promulgate the law. The Council rejected the request for a shared initiative referendum submitted by left-wing parliamentarians, stating that the proposed

bill did not constitute a reform according to Article 11 of the Constitution. However, the parliamentarians have submitted a new request for a referendum, which the Council will decide on 03 May. (Isabelle Ficek, "[Pensions: the Constitutional Council confirms Emmanuel Macron, the opponents do not give up](#)," *Les Echos*, 14 April 2023)

Drier summer ahead due to reduced rainfall

On 13 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported that France is expected to experience a drier summer as compared to 2022's record drought due to lower groundwater levels resulting from climate change. BRGM, the French geological service, has cautioned that the entire country could be affected by the situation. The lack of rainfall during the winter has prevented the ground from retaining more water, exacerbating the situation. Over three-quarters of the country's groundwater levels have fallen below the monthly average, with fruit and vine crops being the most susceptible to damage. Water restrictions are likely to be imposed, particularly in central regions and around Paris. French President Emmanuel Macron has called for a 10 per cent reduction in water usage by all sectors by 2030. ("[France facing even worse summer drought than 2022](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 April 2023)

Protests continue for 11th day over proposed Pension Reform

On 06 April, protestors gathered back against the pension reform bill. This marks the 11th consecutive day with anti-pension reform protesters coming to the streets in cities across France. According to the interior ministry close to 570,000 took part blocking roads, and access point to airport, and universities. The reverse trigger comes as France's Constitutional Council is scheduled to give verdict on the constitutionality of the proposed pension reform bill on 14 April. In addition to the widespread demonstrations, protesters also forcibly entered the building that houses the offices of BlackRock, a significant investment firm on Wall Street. Meanwhile, in the Western city of Nantes, clashes occurred between police and protesters,

with law enforcement employing tear gas to try to disperse crowds. ("[France: Fresh protests over pensions reforms](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 06 April 2023)

Macron's French model of the end of life bill to be introduced soon

On 02 April, in the attempts by the French government, the Head of State announced a bill "end of life" care that will be presented to the Council of Ministers before the end of the summer. In the vote held after four months of work under the aegis of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (Cese), 184 members voted (76 per cent) in favour of active assistance to die, namely assisted suicide or euthanasia while 23 per cent voted against. French President Emmanuel Macron came out in favour of the development of palliative care as well in his remarks on the bill. He announced a national ten-year plan to be launched in this regard since more than twenty departments do not have specific service and promised to improve the health care services. (Gregoire Poussielle, "[End of life: Emmanuel Macron promises a bill for the summer](#)," *Les Echos*, 03 April 2023)

GEORGIA

Protests against the Georgian government continue against democratic backsliding

On 09 April, protesters gathered outside the Georgian parliament building in Tbilisi, expressing their objection to the government. The ruling Georgian Dream party has been accused of being too closely tied to Russia and undermining democracy by imprisoning political opponents and limiting press freedom. The protest was organized by the main opposition party in support of former President Mikheil Saakashvili, who is currently serving a six-year jail sentence for abuse of power, which international human rights groups deem politically motivated. Georgia's chair of the United National Movement party, Levan Khabeishvili, who organized the protest outside the Georgian parliament, demanding the release of "political detainees" and implementation of the reforms required by Brussels. In March 2023, mass protests forced the government

to abandon a bill that would have required NGOs receiving foreign funds to register as "foreign agents." Protesters at the rally waved Georgian, Ukrainian, and EU flags and displayed a banner reading "For a European future." The Georgian government has stated its commitment to joining the EU, but critics argue its actions are undermining this goal. (Christy Cooney, "[Mikheil Saakashvili: Thousands join mass anti-government rally in Georgia](#)," *BBC*, 10 April 2023)

GERMANY

59 per cent opposes nuclear phase-out reveals survey

On 13 April, *Frankfurter Allgemeine* reported that a majority of German citizens oppose the nuclear phase-out, which will occur on 15 April 2023 with the closure of the last three nuclear power plants. The decision is considered wrong by 59 per cent of participants in a recent survey, with only 34 per cent believing it is correct. Older age groups tend to reject the phase-out, while approval is only found among the younger age group. Concerns over increased energy prices accompany the shift towards more climate-friendly energy, with two-thirds of survey participants expressing major concerns. Political party supporters also showed mixed opinions, with the Greens and SPD in favor, and the Union, AfD, and FDP against the nuclear shutdown. Henceforth, abandoning nuclear power as part of the climate policy is a regressive measure, indicating that the German shift was not solely focused on energy policy but also included societal and capitalist critiques. Political party supporters also showed mixed opinions, with the Greens and SPD in favor, and the Union, AfD, and FDP against the nuclear shutdown. ("[The majority of Germans are against the nuclear phase-out](#)," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 13 April 2023; [Jasper von Altenbockum](#), "[Offering to Old Green Men](#)," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 14 April, 2023)

Law proposed to curb 'digital violence' and anonymous hate speech

On 12 April, Germany's Justice Minister, Marco Buschmann, presented a draft law

aimed at combating digital violence and anonymous hate speech. The proposed law seeks to make platform operators accountable for taking more decisive action against hate speech beyond merely deleting offensive posts. One key aspect of the legislation is a civil claim that allows victims to request the blocking of hostile accounts. The proposed law is designed to safeguard those who suffer from digital violence, but it also raises apprehensions regarding privacy and anonymity rights. The divulgence of IP addresses can undermine the privilege of anonymity, which is protected by the coalition agreement in Germany. Legal policy associations will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the key points until 26 May, after which a draft bill will be presented to the Bundestag for voting, expected to take place in the latter half of 2023. (Alina Clasen, "[Germany plans legislation to block cyber-hate accounts](#)," *Euractiv*, 13 April 2023)

HUNGARY

Pope Francis to meet Orban and Ukrainian refugees

On 28 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the schedule of Pope Francis in Hungary for next three days. During the visit, the pope is expected to meet the Hungary's Prime Minister Victor Orban to discuss on the Ukraine war, migration, and Hungary's equation with the EU. Orban tweeted: "In troubled times like ours, it is essential to remember what keeps us together, and faith is the foundation upon which we can build a stable future." Pope is also expected to meet Hungary's President, Katalin Novak and to later meet 35,000 Ukrainian refugees in Hungary.

IRELAND

Riots Erupt in Northern Ireland ahead of Biden's Visit

On 10 April, ahead of the US President Joe Biden's visit, riots broke out in Northern Ireland, with masked individuals throwing Molotov cocktails and objects at a police vehicle during a parade in the city of Londonderry. Biden is scheduled to arrive in Northern Ireland on 11 April 2023; he will deliver a speech at a university, the

parade was opposing the Good Friday peace accord, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary, which marked the end of the troubles, a 30-year-long ethno-nationalist conflict that claimed the lives of around 3,700 people. However, no injuries were reported in the riots. ("[Northern Ireland: Molotovs hit police ahead of Biden visit](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 11 April 2023)

ITALY

Italian coastguard rescues over 1,200 migrants off Sicily coast

On 11 April, the *BBC* reported the conducting of two extensive operations by the Italian coastguard in the attempt to save approximately 1,200 migrants from overcrowded boats off the coast of Sicily. The efforts were made after the Italian coastguard observed that one of the fishing boats was carrying about 800 people while the other was transporting around 400 individuals. They have saved almost 2,000 people in earlier operations since 07 April 2023. However, at least two people lost their lives during the weekend's boat crossings, as per the German non-profit organization ResQship. Despite the right-wing coalition government's efforts to curtail irregular migration, migrant arrivals in Italy rose substantially compared to the same period last year. While one of the boats carrying 400 people was still without assistance late on Monday, an unofficial hotline for migrants in distress, Alarm Phone, informed the authorities of Italy, Greece, and Malta on Sunday. (Alys Davies, "[Europe migrant crisis: Italy moves to rescue 1,200 people on boats](#)," *BBC*, 11 April 2023)

Italy to take action to boost birth rates as population declines

On 10 April, the *Euractiv* reported on the announcement made by Italy's Prime Minister, Georgia Meloni that her government is developing new policies to address the declining birth rate. The number of deaths in Italy has surpassed the number of births, neutralized by migration movements with foreign countries. The National Institute of Statistics (Istat) reveals that as of 01 January 2023, the Italian population is approximately 58 million, a

three per cent decrease from 2022, mainly attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic. The population decline is most pronounced in the south of the country. For the first time since Italy's unification, the number of births in 2022 fell below 400,000. The reduction is attributed to an excess of deaths over births, as well as the aging of the female population of childbearing age and reduced reproductive levels. To tackle the demographic emergency, Meloni created a ministry dedicated to family, nationality and equal opportunities. Italy's Family Minister Eugenia Roccella confirmed that addressing the demographic crisis is a top priority for the government. ([Federica Pascale, "Italy prepares measures to face declining birth rates," Euractiv](#), 10 April 2023)

Proposal to ban the use of English and foreign words in formal communication

On 01 April, Italy's Prime Minister Georgia Meloni defended the Italian language, and the national identity proposed new legislation to penalize those who use English and other foreign words in official communications. The fine will be between EUR 5,000 and EUR 100,000. The legislation has been condemned by the Italy's most renowned scholars of Italian linguistics and philology. A member of Italy's lower Chamber of deputies, Fabio Rampelli tweeted: "In the lower chamber of deputies we speak Italian, we continue our battle for the use of our language instead of English." This new proposed legislation has pushed for a conservative approach that intends to virtually ban English words from public administration, schools, and universities. The proposed legislation is yet to go for parliamentary debate. (Gillian Carbonaro, "[Ciao, hello, no! Italy's right-wing government wants to ban English words with €100,00 fines](#)," *Euronews*, 03 April 2023)

LATVIA

Latvia brings back mandatory defence service

On 05 April, Latvia's Parliament adopted a law to re-introduce the compulsory national defence services. 68 members voted in favour while 11 were against, the service

will include military and alternate civil services. If a person avoids the service, he will be subject to “criminal liability.” This will be mandatorily applicable to men born after January 2004 and for those men and women aged between 18 to 27 can apply voluntarily. They will be an option to be in the National armed forces for 11 months, or five years in National Guard or through five-year education programme assigned for Reserve Lieutenant. (“[Compulsory military service to be re-introduced in Latvia](#),” *eng.lsm.lv*, 04 April 2023)

SCOTLAND

ONS reports drop-in unemployment rate

On 18 April, Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported on the reduction in the unemployment rate in Scotland. According to the report the rate was at three per cent between December and February, which was lowest since 1992. The difference would 75.7 per cent below the UKs rate. It also showed an annual growth in the regular pay which marked at 6.6 per cent. According to Wellbeing Economy Secretary Neil Gray: “Certain industries still face recruitment challenges so we are continuing to call on UK ministers to establish a joint taskforce on labour market shortages.” (“[Unemployment in Scotland falls to record low](#),” *BBC*, 18 April 2023)

THE UK

Deputy Prime Minister resigns over allegations of bullying civil servants

On 21 April, UK's Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab resigned from the government over bullying allegations. Earlier, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak tasked a senior lawyer to investigate eight formal complaints from many civil servants over Raab's conduct during his role as Justice Secretary, Foreign Secretary, and Brexit Secretary. Although Raab denied bullying, accepted to resign if evidence was found. The details of the investigation report are yet to be disclosed, but more than the resignation, questions have arisen over why Sunak did not ask him to resign. This has created a weaker image of Sunak on the governance of the Tory Party.

(“[LIVE Dominic Raab resigns over bullying report](#),” *BBC*, 21 April 2023)

Rishi Sunak to be investigated on declaration of interest

On 17 April, *BBC* reported on the upcoming investigation of the UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak by the Parliamentary standard watchdog. According to the report, the investigation will be carried out under para six of the MPs code of conduct. It is aimed to find if his “declaration of interest was open and frank.” Relating to the childcare where shares are owned by Rishi Sunak's wife. The investigation body will analyse if any rule has been breached after the enquiry. It is considered serious when breached which may lead to the suspension from the “House of Commons.” Sunak stated that his wife's interest was already declared and will ensure to take steps to prevent “any potential conflict of interest.” (Vicki Young & Joshua Nevet, “[Rishi Sunak investigated over declaration of interest](#),” *BBC*, 17 April 2023)

Oil spills in North Sea waters pose a threat to marine life

On 14 April, according to exclusive data obtained by *BBC News*, regular oil spills in UK waters over the past five years have resulted in thousands of tonnes of pollution, endangering marine life. Activists claim that the data reveals that some spills have impacted areas designated to safeguard wildlife, such as porpoises and orcas, and that 40 per cent of monitored releases were in breach of permits. The analysis of the data shows that from 2017 to 2022, approximately 22,000 metric tonnes of oil were discharged into UK waters, equivalent to 164,000 barrels. Uplift, an energy campaigning group that aims to transition from oil and gas to green energy, revealed that Dana, Repsol Sinopec, CNR, Shell, and Apache were the companies that spilled the most oil. The findings also revealed that 58 per cent of releases were allowed under government permits, threatening UK's international leadership on marine conservation, as the UK has made major international commitments to protect UK and global oceans. (Georgina Rannard and Erwan Rivault, “[North Sea oil spills exceed](#)

[safe level - activists](#)," *BBC News*, 14 April 2023)

Junior Doctor strike disrupts NHS

On 11 April, a four-day-strike began by junior doctors in England which has staged the most disruptive strike in the history of the publicly-funded National Health Service (NHS) and is expected to result in the cancellation of up to 350,000 medical appointments. Senior doctors and experienced nurses have been called in to ensure that emergency services and critical care continue during the strike. The strikes come as the NHS is already overwhelmed with approximately seven million patients waiting for hospital treatment. The strike has been triggered by a need for pay rises to make up for increasing inflation. The British Medical Association, which represents doctors, is calling for a 35 per cent pay rise to compensate for 15 years of below-inflation pay increases. However, UK Health Minister Steve Barclay has dismissed the demand as unreasonable, pointing to other medical unions which have suggested a more modest increase of five per cent plus a one-off lump sum. ("[Junior doctors in England launch 4-day strike over pay](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 11 April 2023)

REGIONAL

Sweden to hold joint military exercise to prepare ahead for a possible attack in future

On 17 April, Sweden's Armed Forces announced its launch of largest military exercise called "Aurora 23." The exercise will include soldiers from the US, the UK, France, Germany and Nordic countries. It is aimed to train for a probable armed attack on Sweden. According to the Armed Forces: "Together with military units from our partner countries we build security and, concurrently, reinforce the Swedish operational capability." In the exercise, uniformed soldiers, land vehicles will go around the base and airports. ("[Sweden starts largest military exercise in over 25 years](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 17 April 2023)

Mediterranean Sea crossings indicate record high deaths

On 13 April, the United Nations'

International Organization for Migration (IOM) published in a report that the number of people dying while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe has reached a level not seen since 2017. The report recorded 441 deaths in the first three months of 2023, but cautioned that the actual number was likely much higher. Since the start of 2023, Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Pakistan represented the largest share of people taking the Mediterranean route to Italy. The IOM accused Mediterranean states, without specifying which ones, of failing to launch state-led search and rescue operations in a timely manner, resulting in numerous deaths. It also criticized policies introduced by some countries to hinder humanitarian efforts, such as Italy's impounding of humanitarian boats and new requirements for those carrying rescued people to disembark further from their areas of operations. The IOM called for state support of NGOs and an end to criminalisation of their efforts to save lives. ("[UN reports rise in Mediterranean migrant crossing deaths](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 April 2023)

Latvia to strength gas security through joint use of Paldiski LNG Terminal

On 12 April, *LSM* reported that Latvia's Ministry of Climate and Energy (KEM) plans to enhance the safety of its natural gas supply by collaborating on the use of the Paldiski LNG terminal in Estonia. The Lithuanian-Polish interconnector and the Inkoo terminal in Finland, along with the upcoming LNG terminal in Paldiski, Estonia, have drastically transformed the natural gas system in the region. The KEM emphasized that constructing a Skulte LNG terminal in Latvia is impractical without substantial state guarantees, and an independent LNG terminal in the area is not economically viable. Instead, the KEM will work with the Estonian national regulatory authority to develop joint access terms for the Paldiski terminal to strengthen the gas security of both Estonia and Latvia. ("[Latvia plans joint use of Estonia's Paldiski LNG terminal](#)," *LSM*, 12 April 2023)

Norway expels 15 Russian officials under intelligence suspicion

On 13 April, *BBC News* reported that Norway expelled 15 Russian diplomats who were allegedly engaged in espionage activities under the guise of diplomatic cover. The expulsion is the latest in a series of similar actions taken by various European countries against Russia since its military invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Norway's Foreign Minister, Anniken Huitfeldt, emphasized that Norway would not tolerate Moscow using its embassy to conduct secret intelligence operations. However, Norwegian authorities did not disclose any specific details about the activities of the expelled diplomats. The two countries have a 197 kilometer land border in the Arctic, and their relationship has been strained since the Ukraine crisis began. Norway, which is not a member of the European Union, has followed in the footsteps of several EU countries and imposed sanctions on Russia. The Russian government has promised to respond to Norway's move with an "appropriate" action. Norway claims that Russia poses the most significant intelligence threat to its national security and that the threat is intensifying amidst Europe's deteriorating security environment. Despite this, the government wants to maintain regular diplomatic relations with Moscow. (Sean Seddon, "[Norway expels 15 Russian diplomats accused of spying](#)," *BBC News*, 13 April 2023)

EU to compensate for discontinued pipeline deliveries from Russia

On 08 April, according to a report by Reuters, the European Union's figure for supercooled gas is expected to exceed 50 per cent by 2023 as it has not procured sufficient long-term contracts for liquefied natural gas (LNG) to compensate for the discontinued pipeline deliveries from Russia. To reduce its reliance on Russian energy, the bloc managed to enhance its imports of LNG to 121 million tons in the previous year, marking a 60 per cent growth compared to the year 2021. In 2022, the EU spent approximately 190 billion USD on supercooled gas when LNG prices crossed three times than usual, according to the International Energy Agency. The EU should use long-term sale and purchase

agreements (SPAs) to cover 70 to 75 per cent of its LNG supply, as per the suggestions made by Morten Frisch, senior partner at Morten Frisch Consulting. ("[EU exposed to high energy costs next winter](#)," *Reuters*, 08 April 2023)

Ireland to amend its Good Friday Agreement

On 09 April, the *BBC News* reported that the Republic of Ireland cast a ballot with over 90 per cent in favor of amending its constitution as a component of the Good Friday Agreement. twenty five years ago, this agreement saw the Irish government renouncing its constitutional claim to Northern Ireland, replacing Articles Two and Three with the principle of consent. However, political attention to Northern Ireland waned as new leaders with economic challenges took over in both the Republic of Ireland and the UK. The unexpected Brexit vote in 2016 had significant implications for the Good Friday Agreement, as the EU's single-market borders had become largely invisible by that time. In 2021, the Northern Ireland Protocol was introduced to avoid physical checks on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, but unionists claim that it effectively created a trade border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, leading to the collapse of the power-sharing government at Stormont. The insiders in the Republic are disappointed with the lack of progress on north-south borders, and some believe that Northern Ireland will not exist in its current form in 25 years. (Shane Harrison, "[Good Friday Agreement: The view from the Republic 25 years on](#)," *BBC News*, 09 April 2023)

Genesis Market shut down by International Police

On 07 April, Europol announced that the world's most dangerous marketplace, which facilitated the sale of stolen account credentials to hackers worldwide, has been taken down by the international police. The operation was carried out by 17 countries, and involved the shutdown of the Genesis Market and the seizure of its infrastructure. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation

(FBI) and the Dutch National Police (Politie) led the international sweep, and a command post was established at Europol's headquarters to coordinate the various enforcement measures undertaken across the globe. Its ease of accessibility and low prices made it a popular resource among hackers, greatly lowering the barrier of entry for buyers. This action by international law enforcement agencies will have a significant impact on the criminal underworld and will help to prevent further cyberattacks that cause financial and personal harm to individuals and organizations. (["Police shut down 'one of the most dangerous' cyber market dealing in stolen identities: Europol," Helsinki News, 07 April 2023](#))

Straining relations between Sweden and Hungary

On 06 April, the *Reuters* reported that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's Chief of Staff, Gergely Gulyas, urged Stockholm to take measures to improve trust with Hungary as it seeks Hungary's support for NATO membership. The relationship between the two nations is currently strained. He further mentioned that Sweden and Finland's decision to join a lawsuit filed against Hungary by the European Commission has only exacerbated the situation. Sweden's attempt to join NATO has been hampered by Turkey and Hungary, who have objected to Sweden's criticism of Orban's stance on democratic principles and the rule of law. US President Joe Biden has called on Turkey and Hungary to promptly complete the ratification processes necessary for Sweden to join the alliance while welcoming Finland's entry. (["Sweden-Hungary ties at low point, Orban aide says, amid Stockholm NATO bid," reuters, 06 April, 2023](#))

Increased avenues of nuclear technology cooperation between Russia and Belarus

On 07 April, Rosatom's Belarus office director, Stanislav Levitsky, announced a collaboration agreement between Rusatom Healthcare and Belarus' Medtechnocenter to supply medical equipment manufactured in Russia for Brachytherapy, a type of internal radiation therapy that is used to

treat cancer. The partnership aims to develop medical devices, such as Brachium 2.0, which will include an improved ultrasound device and planning system to meet the needs of Russia, Belarus, and third countries. The cooperation agreement also includes plans to implement two or three Union State programs. Rosatom is also building a radiopharmaceutical plant in Kaluga Oblast, set to be completed by 2025. Additionally, Rosatom is developing storage systems, traction batteries for electric vehicles, and charging stations, with Belarus actively participating in these projects. Overall, the key avenues of cooperation between the two nations are nuclear medicine, nuclear research reactor, radioactive waste management, sterilization of food stuffs, and energy storage systems. (["Rosatom names key avenues of cooperation with Belarus," Belta News, 07 April 2023](#))

NATO foreign minister meet focused on threat rising from China's ties with Russia

On 05 April, NATO Foreign Ministers continued the meeting for the second day. The meeting focused on China's relations with Russia, where the NATO Secretary General highlighted how the legal aid of China to Russia would have "profound implications." According to him, although China stands aloof from objecting to Russia in the invasion, its growing trade partnership despite sanctions raises concerns. The discussion also focussed on the impact of war in the Indo-Pacific and "global ramifications." During the meeting, a proposal of keeping two per cent as the minimum defence target was also pledged as many EU member states such as Germany is yet to meet the target. (["Newly enlarged NATO talks China and Ukraine," Deutsche Welle, 05 April 2023](#))

NATO declares the membership of Finland

On 04 April, NATO announced the joining of Finland as its 31st member. Finland and Sweden applied for NATO membership in May 2022, stepping out from the military non-alignment stance. Upon membership, the Finnish flag will be raised at NATO

headquarters in Brussels. According to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the move assures security in Finland, Nordic and overall NATO. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said in response to Finland's accession that Moscow would strengthen its military capacity. (["Finland to officially become 31st member this week," Deutsche Welle](#), 03 April 2023; ["Finland to join NATO as Allied Foreign Ministers meet," nato.int](#), 03 April 2023)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Spain's extreme temperatures impact farmers and the low income class

On 27 April, *BBC* reported on Spain's latest temperature record of 38.8 degree Celsius. Spain's meteorological service stated that the temperature had increased by 10 to 15 degrees which was hotter than predicted. The reason behind the heatwave was due to mass air from Africa, along with climate change. Increased temperatures are also due to reduced capacity of reservoirs and the ground ability to absorb heat as its already in drought condition. The impact of the heat has been felt among the low-income class, farmers, and land owners who have not been able to tackle due to financial risks and drawbacks. (Matt McGrath & Guy Hedgecoe, ["Climate change: Spain breaks record temperature for April," BBC](#), 27 April 2023)

Spain faces worst drought conditions due to increased temperatures

On 19 April, Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez remarked the drought situation as an "emergency." In 2022, the temperatures have increased to 1.3 degrees, highest since 1960 and by 2023 it has increased to 1.6 degrees. Of all area's Catalonia has been observed to be the most affected and in past three years the water level in northern Catalonia had reduced to 27 per cent. Similarly, in L'Espluga de Francoli, people have been saving water ahead to tackle through water rationing. The key reason behind the drought condition was due to worsening climate change resulting in increased water evaporation. (["Spain's drought a 'national concern,' PM says," Deutsche Welle](#), 19 April 2023)

Renewables lead to drop in fossil fuel use says report

On 12 April, the annual global electricity review by Ember's Global Electricity suggested, by looking at electricity data from 78 countries, that the world will experience a turning point in the use of fossil fuels for electricity production, resulting in reduced emissions of warming gasses This would be the first time in history that there has been an annual decrease in the use of coal, oil, and gas for electricity, excluding global recessions or pandemics. The review attributed this change to the increasing popularity of renewable energy sources, primarily led by China. Wind and solar energy currently produce 12 per cent of global electricity, and enough wind turbines were added in 2022 to power the entire UK. The study predicts that renewable energy sources will meet all growth in demand in 2023, which is a significant step towards reducing energy-related carbon emissions responsible for over a third of global warming. The report reveals that clean sources produced 39 per cent of global electricity in 2022, making it the cleanest year yet. However, energy experts recognize that more still needs to be done to reduce the world's dependence on fossil fuels. (Lottie Limb, ["End of the fossil age': Wind and solar broke energy records last year, report reveals," euronews](#), 12 April 2023; Matt McGrath, ["Climate change: Fossil fuel emissions from electricity set to fall - report," BBC News](#), 12 April 2023; Malgorzata Wiatros-Motyka, ["Global Electricity Review 2023," Ember](#), 12 April, 2023; Nina Chestney, ["Wind and solar hit record 12% of global power generation last year," Reuters](#), 13 April 2023)

France's carbon emissions down by 8.5 per cent

On 03 April, France's Energy Transition Minister reported on the reduction of France's emissions by 8.5 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2022. According to France's carbon agency, the emission had reduced and without considering the imported products, the gas emission had gone down by 2.5 per cent in 2022 compared to 2021. This means France is

now aligned with its target given under the “National Low-Carbon Strategy,” fixed in 2015. (Paul Messad, “[France saw 8.5% drop in CO2 last year, not enough to meet EU goals](#),” *EURACTIV*, 04 April 2023)

ECONOMY

Euro reaches new high as dollar weakens

On 14 April, the Euro price climbed up to USD 1.1074, as the dollar is losing ground due to the Federal Reserve's restrictive monetary policy and positive market sentiment. This is being further fuelled by hope for a less restrictive US monetary policy and central bankers in the eurozone, indicating further interest rate hikes to combat high inflation. Additionally, the friendly market sentiment is causing safe assets like the dollar to be less in demand and giving the euro a boost, resulting in a gain of more than two per cent in trading with the US currency since 10 April 2023. (“[Euro exchange rate at its highest level for more than a year](#),” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 14 April 2023)

UK's growth strategy gets IMF approval despite recent economic challenges

On 15 April, *BBC News* reported that the UK's Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, has announced that the UK's economy is back on track, and his growth strategy has been well-received at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) meeting in Washington. However, IMF's latest figures predict that the UK's economy will shrink by 0.3 per cent in 2023, making it one of the worst-performing economies in the world. The UK economy has only recently returned to its pre-pandemic size, following months of industrial action, price hikes, and labour shortages. The UK's financial services sector faces uncertainty following the collapse of three US banks and UBS's emergency takeover of Credit Suisse. However, Hunt is confident that regulations will adapt to support the growth of the UK's tech and life sciences industries. Hunt's predecessor, Kwasi Kwarteng, faced criticism at the previous IMF meeting in October, but Hunt claims the international lending body supports his efforts to put the UK economy on the right path. (Faisal Islam & Lucy

Hooker, “[Britain's economy is back, says chancellor](#),” *BBC News*, 15 April 2023)

Guardian reports on countries urging to redirect fossil fuel subsidies towards decarbonisation

On 12 April, *The Guardian* reported about the calls by campaigners for the redirection of the EUR 15.7bn in fossil fuel subsidies given by the EU to its fishing industry over the past decade, towards decarbonisation. The proposed ultra-low industry tax rate of 3.6 cents per litter for fishing vessels is being opposed by France, Cyprus and Spain, which prefer the current arrangement of no taxes for the sector. The EU fishing fleet's CO2 emissions stood at a minimum of 56m tonnes between 2010 and 2020, twice Malta's emissions during the same period. Fishing vessels in Europe do not pay any fuel taxes presently, unlike aircraft. The report suggests that the EU could generate EUR 681 million or EUR 1.4 billion annually by imposing a fuel tax of 33, respectively, on its fishing fleet. The report's creators argue that revenues from a gradually imposed fuel tax could be used in decarbonisation projects such as electrifying harbours for shoreside power and providing more fuel-efficient fishing gear that reduces bycatch. To reduce carbon emissions, any investments must replace rather than increase the capacity of the fishing industry as it faces both climate change and overharvesting challenges. (Arthur Neslen, “[Campaigners call for EU to tax fishing industry to fund decarbonisation](#),” *The Guardian*, 12 April 2023)

Swiss lawmakers reject symbolic vote on UBS' buyout of Credit Suisse

On 12 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the lawmakers in Switzerland rejected the government's deal for UBS to acquire Credit Suisse in a symbolic vote, although the rescue package had already been approved under an emergency law. The Swiss lower house of parliament voted against the 100 billion Swiss francs rescue package that saw UBS taking over its rival Credit Suisse. Many in the country, where frequent referendums on various policy issues are common, have been angered by the government's decision to push through the rescue package. Despite

the symbolic nature of Wednesday's vote, it highlights the government's hopes of securing the legislature's approval. The UBS buyout of Credit Suisse was negotiated by the Swiss government to prevent the 167-year-old banking institution from collapsing and potentially triggering further crashes in the global banking system. ([“Swiss parliament symbolically rejects Credit Suisse rescue,” Deutsche Welle, 12 April 2023](#))

Apple's Irish subsidiary pays EUR 7.7 billion in taxes while facing legal challenges

On 09 April, *The Guardian* reported that Apple's Irish subsidiary, Apple Operations International, paid 7.7 billion euros in corporation tax for the financial year ending in September, but paid out nearly three times that amount in dividends to its California-based parent company, Apple Incorporation. The Irish subsidiary's revenue increased to 223 billion USD, with a two per cent profit rise and generating almost USD 190 million per day. Dividends worth USD 20.7 billion paid to Apple are subject to US taxes, but it remains unclear which governments received these taxes, equivalent to 11 per cent of profits. The corporation tax rate of 12.5 per cent in Ireland would have amounted to a USD 8.7 billion bill. Apple has encountered legal difficulties concerning its tax arrangements in Ireland, where it has been present since 1980. In 2020, the European Commission ordered Apple to pay EUR 13 billion in back taxes to Ireland for obtaining a tax arrangement that was a form of illegal state aid between 2003 and 2014. Despite Apple's opposition, a court in Luxembourg ruled that the Commission failed to prove the allegation, and therefore Apple did not have to pay back taxes to the Irish government. ([Kalyeena Makortoff, “Profits at Apple’s subsidiary in Ireland rise to \\$69bn,” The Guardian, 09 April 2023](#))

Russia facing the worst hit to its economy

On 08 April, the *BBC News* reported that the Russian rouble has hit a one-year low against the US dollar, falling to 82 roubles on the Moscow Stock Exchange on Friday

morning. This is the lowest value the currency has reached since the country invaded Ukraine. While the country reported a 2.1 per cent contraction in its economy in 2023, this figure was far lower than the 15 per cent drop previously anticipated. The latest fall in the rouble's value is attributed to a range of factors, including lower oil prices in March and the sale of Western businesses in Russia following the invasion. Despite stabilizing at 50 roubles in July, the currency has since weakened once again. Despite a sharp fall in energy imports to Europe in 2022, China, India, and other regions have taken over the supply by filling up the gap in the market, created by Western companies withdrawing from Russia, despite the sharp fall in energy imports in 2022 in Europe. This has helped to mitigate the economic impact of the invasion on Russia. It has announced plans to adapt its economy in response to the sanctions, with a view to completing the process by 2024. ([Natasha Preskey, “Russian rouble falls to lowest value for a year,” BBC News, 08 April 2023](#))

GENDER

Scottish government to challenge Westminster's block on gender reform proposals

On 12 April, *BBC News* reported that the Scottish government plans to challenge the UK government's block on its Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill, which would allow individuals in Scotland to self-identify their sex. The UK government blocked the proposals due to their potential impact on UK-wide equality laws, which the Scottish government has called an "undemocratic veto". However, the reforms have caused division within the SNP, with one leadership candidate resigning last year due to concerns about their impact on safeguards for women and girls. An opinion poll by Panelbase for the Sunday Times suggested that 18 per cent of Scottish voters believe legal action should be taken, while 44 per cent believe the reforms should be abandoned, and 24 per cent believe a compromise should be reached. UK's Former Supreme Court judge, Lord Hope has stated: “the Scottish government's chances of winning a court case are very

low," as the Scottish legislation affects the Equality Act 2010 and the existing Gender Recognition Act 2004 that apply across Great Britain. (Philip Sim, "[Block on Scottish gender reforms to be challenged in court](#)," *BBC News*, 12 April 2023)

15 EU member states joined in an LGBT lawsuit against Hungary

On 07 April, the *Euronews* reported on a legal lawsuit filed against Hungary's Child Protection Law, which was criticised for its perceived anti-LGBT stance. As many as fifteen EU countries have joined the legal challenge objecting for linking paedophilia with homosexuality, as it aims to strengthen the protection of children against sex offenders. It restricts depictions of homosexuality and gender reassignment in media content and educational material intended for audiences under 18. The European Commission raised questions over the necessity of applying the ban on LGBT content to achieve the law's main objectives. Seeing Hungary's refusal to reconsider, the European Commission lodged a legal complaint before the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in July 2022. The law in question was passed in June 2021 and on 06 April 2023 the deadline for countries to join the case elapsed. Those who joined the legal challenge against Hungary's Child Protection Law belong to Western Europe. This highlights a persistent gap between the East and West regions of the continent in terms of safeguarding the rights of the LGBT+ community. ([Jorge Liboreiro, "15 EU countries, including Germany and France, join legal case against Hungary's anti-LGBT law,"](#) 07 April 2023)

SPACE

JUICE Mission successfully launched after a short delay

On 14 April, the European Space Agency (ESA) successfully launched the Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer (JUICE) satellite from the Kourou spaceport in French Guiana after a delay due to weather conditions. JUICE will be sent on a 6.6 billion km journey, taking 8.5 years to reach the Jovian system, using a series of gravitational slingshots around Venus and Earth to reach its destination.

The satellite will study the three largest moons of Jupiter (Callisto, Ganymede, and Europa) remotely, using radar, lidar, magnetometers, and other sensors, as well as taking countless pictures with its cameras. JUICE will also investigate the moons' electrical and magnetic environments and the particles that surround them. NASA's Clipper satellite will conduct similar investigations, with a focus on Europa, and is planned to arrive in 2024. The mission aims to gather more information about potential habitability to inform future missions that could potentially drill through the ice crust of one of Jupiter's moons to reach the water beneath. ([Jonathan Amos, "European Space Agency: Blast off for Jupiter icy moons mission,"](#) *BBC News*, 14 April 2023)

INTERNATIONAL

Turkey reports fire on its evacuation plane

On 28 April, Turkey's Defence Ministry reported fire on its evacuation plane in Sudan's airbase, Wadi Saidna. According to the report, no one was injured. Sudan's army criticised the Rapid Support Fighters (RSF) for firing at the plane's fuel system, while the RSF denied the accusation. On 27 April, "rival military factions" agreed for an extension of the ceasefire, which did not last long as RSF positions were attacked with army jets. According to Turkey's Defence Minister, the evacuation attempts will continue to help Turkish out from Sudan. ("[Sudan crisis: Turkish evacuation plane fired on](#)," *BBC*, 28 April 2023)

Macron and Biden call brings out the difference over sharing responsibilities in transatlantic security

On 20 April, French President Emmanuel Macron held a call with US President Joe Biden to discuss the "geopolitical vision." Macron stressed on Europe's "Strategic autonomy policy" to keep away from the crisis that are not related to Europe and called to be a "third pole" in the context of the US and China. He added: "Being an ally does not mean being a vassal." In response, the White House release a statement highlighted on assuring peace and stability across Taiwan Strait and discussion of

shared values among the both. In a statement released by the Elysee Palace: "The importance of European countries continuing to re-arm themselves in order to take on their responsibilities in sharing the burden of transatlantic security."

US assures security guarantee for Sweden; Urged Turkey and Hungary to ratify soon

On 19 April, US Secretary of Defence, Llyod Austin in the meeting with Sweden's Defence Secretary Pal Jonson assured US's support to fasten Sweden's membership into NATO. Turkey and Hungary which are yet to ratify, are expected to approve before NATO summit in July. He promised for security assurance to Sweden and urged Turkey and Hungary to ratify soon. The visit also marked for discussion on defence cooperation to ease the US military support process. According to Jonson: "It could be about tariffs and taxes. It could be about pre-stocking of defence material, but it is too early to say." (Charles Szumski, "[US urges Turkey, Hungary to ratify Swedish NATO application before summer](#)," *EURACTIV*, 20 April 2023)

Russian pacific fleet conducts surprise inspection

On 14 April, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu announced that the unscheduled inspection of Russia's Pacific Fleet is aimed at increasing the country's armed forces' ability to defend against potential maritime aggression. This includes refining operational plans, preparing troops for combat actions in a short time, and working out a set of training and combat tasks in both near and far maritime zones. Specifically, the Pacific Fleet will practice repelling potential enemies' landing on the Southern Kuril islands and Sakhalin, and conduct missile launches to destroy naval strike groups and ground targets. According to Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov: "the surprise inspection of the Pacific Fleet is a routine practice to maintain combat readiness in the country's armed forces". When asked if the inspection is related to possible NATO expansion or Japan's potential accession to the alliance, Peskov denied any connection.

The purpose of the inspection is solely to increase the country's defense capabilities and preparedness against potential threats from maritime directions. ("[Shoigu: Check of Pacific Fleet Aimed at Boosting Russian Ability to Repel Ocean Attack](#)," *Sputnik*, 14 April 2023)

FSB claims mass hacker attacks on Russia

On 13 April, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) accused the United States and other NATO countries of using Ukraine to carry out massive hacker attacks on Russian civilian facilities. The FSB stated that Western countries use the network infrastructure of Ukraine for offensive cyber operations, allowing them to use new types of cyber weapons. The Pentagon's joint command is also involved in preparing cyber-attacks against Russia, and the United States seeks to blame the IT Army of Ukraine group to conceal its involvement. The cyberattacks are being prepared in cooperation with international and national hacker groups, including Anonymous, Silence, Ghost Clan, RedHack, GNG, Squad 303, and others, according to the report given by FSB. ("[US, Other NATO Countries Use Ukraine For Mass Hacker Attacks on Russia - FSB](#)," *Sputnik*, 14 April 2023)

US imposes sanctions on Russian-controlled bank in Hungary

On 13 April, *Euractiv* reported about the US sanctions being imposed on three top officials of the Interna Investment Bank in Budapest, which is controlled by Russia, after accusing Hungary of ignoring US concerns over the "opaque Kremlin platform". The US Treasury stated that the bank's presence in Budapest has allowed Russia to enhance its intelligence presence in Europe, and could facilitate corruption and illicit finance, including sanctions violations. The sanctions list includes former chairman of the bank, Nikolay Kosov as well as Russian national Georgy Potapov, and Hungarian national Imre Laszloczki, both high-ranking officials on the IIB's management board. The Hungarian government led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government has fostered friendly ties with Moscow since 2010, despite being

criticized for not personally criticizing President Vladimir Putin while condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Hungary heavily depends on imports of natural gas and crude oil from Russia and has criticized the EU's sanctions against Russia, arguing that they have not effectively weakened Moscow and could harm the European economy. Other NATO allies have responded to the US's concerns, while the Hungarian government has remained committed to hosting the IIB. ("[US sanctions leaders of Russian bank, warns Hungary over ties with Moscow](#)," *Euractiv*, 13 April 2023)

Russia successful in advanced ICBM test launch

On 11 April, Russia carried out a triumphant trial firing of a sophisticated intercontinental ballistic missile. Russia's President Vladimir Putin already said in February that a new kind of intercontinental ballistic missile would be deployed in 2023, known as the Sarmat or "Satan 2," which is capable of carrying multiple nuclear warheads and is described as "invincible." The exercise occurred only a few weeks after Russia announced its decision to discontinue participation in the New START agreement with the United States. The missile launch took place from the Kapustin Yar testing facility, and the Russian Defense Ministry stated that the test was to verify the reliability and effectiveness of advanced combat equipment for intercontinental ballistic missiles. President Vladimir Putin has issued warnings that he could use nuclear weapons in Ukraine if Russia was threatened. NATO has condemned Putin's actions, including the recent deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, which brings arms to the doorstep of the European Union. (Georgi Gotev, "[Russia conducts test launch of 'advanced' ICBM, reaching target in Kazakhstan](#)," *Euractiv*, 12 April 2023)

BBC reports on President Biden's visit to Ireland

On 11 April, the *BBC* reported an analysis of the reasons leading Ireland to be a noteworthy player for Joe Biden. Despite the polarization of politicians in

Washington, they all agree on the importance of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in ending the 30-year conflict in Northern Ireland. The agreement is considered a triumph of diplomacy and negotiation. The US played a significant role in securing peace through the tireless efforts of Senator George Mitchell and President Bill Clinton. President Biden regards the agreement as part of his political legacy and prioritizes defending it against potential Brexit impacts. His upcoming visit to Northern Ireland aims to discuss supporting the region's economic potential, and his trip to Ireland will stress the close relationship between the two nations. In addition, President Biden's Irish roots make his visits to Belfast and Dublin significant to him and the Irish diaspora in America. The locals in Carlingford, where the president's great-great-grandfather lived, are hopeful for constructing a bridge that would improve economic links and want it named after him. (Sarah Smith, "[Why Ireland is so important to Joe Biden](#)," *BBC*, 11 April 2023)

US document leak reveal shortage of ammunition for Ukraine's air defence

On 10 April, *The Guardian* reported that Ukraine's air defences are at risk of running out of missiles and ammunition within a few weeks, according to Pentagon documents that have apparently been leaked. Nonetheless, it is unclear whether there have been any alterations to the usage rate since the document's release. *The New York Times* reported that Ukraine's Buk air defence systems, which are used along with the S-300 to protect vital sites from Russian air power, could encounter problems by mid-April. The originality of the Pentagon documents is yet to be confirmed. The South Korean opposition party called on the government to authenticate the Pentagon documents that allegedly suggest the US attempted to spy on senior officials in Seoul over arms sales. South Korea has backed international sanctions against Russia and given non-lethal aid to Kyiv but has refrained from sending weapons to the war-torn country. Its stance on not selling weapons to countries at war has been criticized as an attempt to avoid

antagonizing Russia, whose support it needs to pressure North Korea into abandoning its nuclear weapons. (["Ukraine's air defences could soon run out of missiles, apparent Pentagon leak suggests,"](#) *The Guardian*, 10 April 2023)

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On 07 April, the *Euronews* reported on a legal lawsuit filed against Hungary's Child Protection Law, which was criticised for its perceived anti-LGBT stance. As many as fifteen EU countries have joined the legal challenge objecting for linking paedophilia with homosexuality, as it aims to strengthen the protection of children against sex offenders. It restricts depictions of homosexuality and gender reassignment in media content and educational material intended for audiences under 18. The European Commission raised questions over the necessity of applying the ban on LGBT content to achieve the law's main objectives. Seeing Hungary's refusal to reconsider, the European Commission lodged a legal complaint before the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in July 2022. The law in question was passed in June 2021 and on 06 April 2023 the deadline for countries to join the case elapsed. Those who joined the legal challenge against Hungary's Child Protection Law belong to Western Europe. This highlights a persistent gap between the East and West regions of the continent in terms of safeguarding the rights of the LGBT+ community. ([Jorge Liboreiro, "15 EU countries, including Germany and France, join legal case against Hungary's anti-LGBT law,"](#) 07 April 2023)

Trilateral talks between EU, France, and China on commercial ties to be held next week

On 03 April, *Euronews* reported on the upcoming visit of Macron and European Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen to China. In 2022, China was the third largest partner for EU goods exports and the largest partner for the bloc's imports of goods, an important indicator of where relations between the two lie. However, the EU has accused China for bullying tactics to blackmail smaller countries into downplaying criticism of Chinese policies. The trilateral meeting will focus on the discussions on commercial ties including market access and fair competition practices. Sensitive technologies are observed to be key for bilateral relations but since China is still an export powerhouse and has access to European markets. However, the EU will focus on having its own strategy to maintain these cutting-edge technologies instead of being dependent on one actor or another. ([Efi Koutsokosta, "All eyes on von der Leyen and Macron's high-stakes trip to China,"](#) *Euronews*, 03 April 2023)

Credit Suisse merger puts 11,000 jobs under risk

On 02 April, *Tages-Anzeiger* a Swiss newspaper reported on the possibility of the Swiss Bank UBS of laying off 30 per cent of its staff after acquiring Credit Suisse. Till now UBS has accepted three billion Swiss Francs in the government mediated deal to help Credit Suisse. Eventually it has been discovered that the Credit Suisse holds USD 1.6 trillion worth assets and employs 120,000 across the globe. Therefore, upon merger with no specification given, close to 11,000 jobs are at risk. (["UBS to slash up to 36,000 jobs after Credit Suisse merger,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 03 April 2023)

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