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RISE AND FALL OF THE WAGNER



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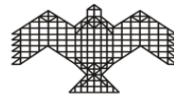
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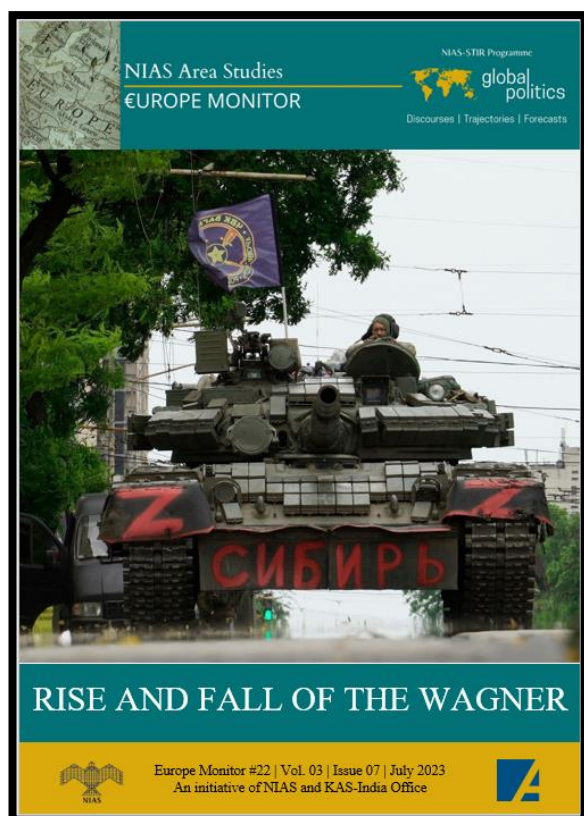


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Source: Associated Press, president.gov.ua, GCIS/Reuters, Sergei Savostianov/TASS, Eurasian Times, Deutsch Welle

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 463 to Day 491 in four dimensions. First, The War on the Ground. Second, The Moscow View: Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war. *By Padmashree Anandhan, Rishika Yadav, Sreeja JS, Nithyashree RB, and Melvin George*

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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.

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COVER STORY

The Wagner Revolt

By Padmashree Anandhan, Rishika Yadav and Sneha Surendran

If the Wagner looks for a re-entry into Russia, if not the mercenary contract, a mutual agreement similar will be mandated by Russia and this time Prigozhin may have to adhere to Putin's rules.

Rise and fall of the Wagner Revolt: Four Takeaways

By Padmashree Anandhan

In June, the Wagner group revolted against Russia, capturing Rostov-on Don and a military facility in Voronezh. Simultaneously, Moscow increased its security measures due to a potential threat from the Wagner group in Russia. The revolt, however was immediately called off after the Belarus mediation preventing Wagner's march into Moscow. Putin allowed the group's exit on the condition of withdrawal and signing of the fighters for a mercenary contract of choice.

Later, on 26 June, Wagner Group head Yevgeny Prigozhin's stated that the revolt was in protest against the Russian military leaders and not against the "political leadership," but the statement was not convincing enough to accept the revolt act. In response, Putin expressed how Russia respects the fighters and those who worked in the Wagner Group and highlighted the financial support of RUB 86 billion and incentives given to the Wagner fighters. This indicates how the Wagner group has been solely dependent on Russia for resources and its development. In such a dependent equation it is important to find what were larger issues behind the trigger, reasons for failure, analyse the nature of Russia's move and what is ahead for the Wagner group and the Ukraine War.

1. Wagner group in crossroads

After the deal with Russia, the Wagner groups moved into Belarus. The satellite images released by Radio Free Europe reveal the structures installed by Wagner and the allocated place in southern Belarus. Prigozhin's meeting with Putin after moving

into Belarus indicates the attempts to revamp the equation and boost support.

For Russia, getting back Wagner will be advantageous in the Ukraine war, especially when its falling short of skilled soldiers, but not at the risk of domestic security. In the case of the Wagner group, despite the reputation of Prigozhin in heading many successful operations across regions, no one except Russia can give unwavering support. Uncertainty pertains overall on who will choose Wagner over Russia, how far Belarus will be a favourable host for Wagner and what will be the state of the fighter groups in other regions.

If the Wagner looks for a re-entry into Russia, if not the mercenary contract, a mutual agreement similar will be mandated by Russia and this time Prigozhin may have to adhere to Putin's rules.

2. Questions on Putin's leadership and Russia's geopolitical goals

The quick deal with Wagner's head prevented a larger revolt in Moscow and devoured Putin's reputation. This highlights Putin's challenges in handling the domestic crisis, but this could have been early detection by Moscow after the continued warnings of Prigozhin to withdraw from Bakhmut.

Although the risk of losing domestic reputation was thwarted, the revolt has triggered concerns amongst Russia's elites over personal security. Currently the support to Putin within the elites may have been promising after the revolt was averted, but over increased frequent threats may force Putin to shift the forces inside Ukraine into Moscow. This defeats the reason for the Ukraine war as it may hinder Russia's larger geopolitical goal.

3. Russia's military in a challenging puddle

Russia's elite units include Federal Security Service (FSB), defence industries, and federal politicians who are highly pragmatic on the shift of skilled soldiers from Ukraine into Moscow. The state-owned and private companies which have been left unguarded may re-think installing units after the failed revolt. This is set to impact Russia's strategy in Ukraine war. Given the limitations of shortage of skilled soldiers, restriction to launch another recruitment and pressure to uphold domestic security, the Russian military is up for challenging months.

Unless and until Russia fixes its rusty command and communication and replaces Wagner fighters, the losses will supersede the success rate.

4. Ukraine to benefit in long run

Russia's failure to advance in Kharkiv and Kherson led to the engagement of the Wagner group in the battle of Soledar and Bakhmut. The exit of Wagner fighters from Ukraine means additional pressure on Russia's ground force and communication lines, which have been tense. The challenge for Russia now is replacing Wagner troops with Russian soldiers, getting back the heavy weapons from the group, and maintaining security at the domestic level. The revolt, which has been projected by the west as a beginning to the end of Putin, should give confidence to further strengthen Ukraine's defence as Russia deals with its internal problem. The internal clash will benefit Ukraine in the long run as Russia complex challenges to fix the communication, command, recoup its soldiers after completion of the ongoing signing of mercenary contract while the West upgrades Ukraine's air defences.

The Belarus intervention: A risky strategy for Lukashenko

By Rishika Yadav

Alexander Lukashenko, the President of Belarus, played a key role in facilitating a deal between the Wagner group and Russia's President. Under the agreement, Prigozhin

will relocate to Belarus to resolve the armed mutiny..

What has Lukashenko achieved with his intervention between the Wagner group and Russia? Has he gained, or will it prove to be a risky gamble?

For Lukashenko, there is potential backlash and unrest within Belarus. Lukashenko's involvement with the Wagner Group rebellion exposes a political crisis within Russia and dispels the notion of Russian invincibility. This could encourage Belarusian opposition forces to challenge Lukashenko's rule, using the unrest in Russia to question his leadership and policies, potentially leading to internal instability. By involving Belarus in mediating conflicts and hosting foreign mercenaries, Lukashenko risks eroding the country's autonomy. This could lead to internal dissatisfaction among those who value Belarusian independence and fear being dragged into international conflicts against their will. His association with Prigozhin offers him an opportunity to reclaim influence in Russia, reminiscent of the Union State project he pursued in the late 1990s.

Lukashenko's ties to Prigozhin's mercenaries may cause disillusionment among Belarusians who do not want their country associated with accused war criminals. Critics, including those who have faced imprisonment or forced exile due to mass protests against Lukashenko's regime, argue that his action to suppress the mutiny was driven by self-preservation rather than saving Vladimir Putin. They believe that Lukashenko recognised the potential consequences of Prigozhin reaching Moscow, which could have led to his own downfall. Opposition figures like Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Belarusian political activist, could exploit this situation to highlight Russia's role in promoting instability and conflict, potentially swaying public opinion against Lukashenko and his government.

On Ukraine, Lukashenko's reliance on Russia's swift victory could backfire if Putin's influence diminishes. Reduced Russian support could leave Lukashenko vulnerable, despite his unwavering loyalty

during the Ukrainian conflict. Striking a delicate balance with Russia in the past, Lukashenko now sees an opportunity for a resurgence of influence through his association with Prigozhin.

The Wagner Revolt: A profile of Yevgeny Prigozhin

By Sneha Surendran

Mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, 62, walked away seemingly unharmed after he led a short-lived rebellion on Russian soil. Prigozhin's name has occasionally cropped up in the international arena, but on 23 June he grabbed the world's attention when he ordered the troops of his private military force, Wagner, to march to Moscow. Beyond his persona as the leader of the Wagner group, Prigozhin is a man who has worn multiple hats.

It all began in St Petersburg

Yevgeny Viktorovich Prigozhin is a native of St. Petersburg, Russia, the same as Vladimir Putin. His mother was a hospital nurse while his father, a mining engineer, died when Prigozhin was nine. His stepfather, a ski instructor, sparked an interest in cross-country skiing in the young boy. Prigozhin joined and graduated from the Leningrad Sports Boarding School in 1977. However, an injury put an end to his sports dreams. Prigozhin's entry into the world of crime began early when at the age of 18, he was first sentenced to prison for theft.

Although the jail term was suspended, in a couple of years he received a 13-year jail term for robbery and theft. Prigozhin spent the next nine years in prison. Following his release in 1990, he set up a stable hot dog stall business with his family. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Prigozhin began looking for opportunities in the entrepreneurial and business sectors. By 1995, he was able to establish himself in the food catering industry, opening restaurants and food catering companies under his major enterprise, Concord Catering. This was to become his first steps to the corridors of power.

As business flourished, Prigozhin began interacting with the elite class of Russian

society. Concord Catering started to get good reviews from its customers, leading to even the military calling for its services. A businessman who knew Prigozhin at the time, remarked: "He can adapt to please any person if he needs something from them. That is definitely one of his talents."

And then came to Moscow as Putin's Chef

While Prigozhin was raising his business empire, Vladimir Putin had been climbing the political ladder. Once Putin became President, Prigozhin's catering business flourished with contracts from the Kremlin and the military. One of Putin's favoured spots for dining was Prigozhin's boat restaurant named 'Novyi Ostrov' or New Island in the Neva River that runs alongside St. Petersburg. Here, he hosted his foreign guests as well as had personal celebrations. Through these events, Prigozhin's ties to Putin began strengthening. Prigozhin once remarked: "Vladimir Putin...saw that I had no problem serving plates to dignitaries in person." This is corroborated by the many photographs available that depict Putin sharing a meal with dignitaries like the former US President George Bush, with Prigozhin in the background.

"Prigozhin has had a tough relationship with the Russian military leaders. However, these connections soured during the time he spent leading Wagner in the Ukraine invasion...."

Grows further but in the shadows to build the Wagner empire across continents. Over time, Prigozhin's companies began earning billions of dollars' worth of catering contracts from schools and colleges in Moscow, facilitated by his political connections. In fact, since 2013, 90 percent of catering contracts from the Russian defence ministry have been in the hands of Prigozhin's network. Eventually, Prigozhin came to be known as "Putin's chef." At the same time, Putin too would benefit politically from his relationship with the businessman as there was more to Prigozhin than just being "Putin's chef."

This began with the origins of Wagner, a private military company that first came on the international radar in 2014. Russia had invaded and annexed Crimea, while Russian-

backed separatists were creating unrest in eastern Ukraine's Luhansk and Donetsk cities. At the time, there were reports of uniformed soldiers dubbed as "little green men" in the regions of tension. Wearing masks, carrying weapons, and donning green uniforms but without the Russian insignia, it was speculated that some of these men belonged to the little-known Wagner group. Although the group is thought to be the brainchild of Dmitry Utkin, a veteran military officer and Nazi propagandist, evidence to verify the true extent of his connection to Wagner is scarce. The EU considers Utkin as the founder of Wagner, responsible for "coordinating and planning operations for the deployment." Meanwhile, Prigozhin has been the face of Wagner before the world. Prigozhin has been the face of Wagner before the world.

While Prigozhin and the Wagner group operated in the shadows for a long time, they came into the spotlight to support Russia's military in the Ukraine invasion. However, for a long time, Prigozhin staunchly refused any ties with the mercenary group. In fact, he even sued journalists who implied the opposite. The Russian state, too denied any connection to Wagner. In 2022, Wagner registered in Russia as a joint stock company named 'PMC Wagner Centre.' Finally, in September 2022, Prigozhin admitted to creating Wagner, saying that he previously denied it to protect the group, stating: "I cleaned the old weapons myself...found specialists who could help me with this...on 1 May 2014, a group of patriots was born...called the Wagner Battalion." Prigozhin reportedly recruited Wagner troops from Russian prisons, promising them freedom if they lasted for six months. These recruits were often people with military experience or a history of violence. To bring them into Wagner's fold, Prigozhin is said to have cited his own prison experiences with the criminals.

Apart from the military sector, Prigozhin also operated in the cyber space on behalf of the state. In November 2022, Prigozhin admitted to meddling in the US's 2016 Presidential elections. In a post made through the press service of Concord Catering, he stated: "We have interfered (in

U.S. elections), we are interfering, and we will continue to interfere. Carefully, accurately, surgically, and in our own way, as we know how to do." Furthermore, in February 2023, he revealed his connections to the company Washington had accused of interfering in the 2016 US elections, Internet Research Agency. Washington had described it as a "troll farm" for spreading disinformation online. Prigozhin revealed: "I thought it up, I created it, I managed it for a long time." He said that the organization aimed to "protect the Russian information space from the West's boorish and aggressive anti-Russian propaganda."

But the trouble starts with the Russia's military leaders, and ends in a revolt

Prigozhin has had a tough relationship with the Russian military leaders. However, these connections soured during the time he spent leading Wagner in the Ukraine invasion, especially during the battle of Bakhmut. He repeatedly spoke out against the competence of the military leaders, alleging that they refused to supply his troops with ammunition, calling it a deliberate move to undermine Wagner. He went so far as to imply that the leaders were committing treason. In one of his online rants, he stated: "The shells are lying in warehouses, they are resting there...There are people who fight, and there are people who have learned once in their lives that there must be a reserve, and they save, save, save those reserves...Instead of spending a shell to kill the enemy, they kill our soldiers. And happy grandfather thinks this is okay." When netizens connected the "grandfather" comment to Putin, Prigozhin was quick to deny it. During his participation in the Ukraine war, he extensively made use of social media to post updates regarding the victories of Wagner and criticism of the military.

So, what next for Prigozhin?

The tension between Prigozhin and the military leaders finally culminated in the Wagner rebellion on 23 June. Prigozhin's troops captured Rostov-on-Don, a military base and began marching towards Moscow. While Putin denounced the rebellion as treason, Prigozhin stated that the revolt was

not against Putin, but rather the defence leadership whom he accused of firing a missile at his troops. The revolt ended when Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus's President negotiated a truce according to which, all charges against Prigozhin were dropped by the state and he was allowed refuge in Belarus. The latest reports locate Prigozhin in Belarus, where he was recently shown welcoming Wagner troops. In a video message, he said that they would no longer be involved in the Ukraine invasion, rather focussing on Africa.

Yevgeny Prigozhin's narrative is complicated. He has owned restaurants, media companies and a private military force, and indulged in selling hot dogs and even writing a children's storybook. He is wanted by multiple agencies for charges ranging from corruption, human rights

violations, and war crimes. Furthermore, Russia is working to erase Yevgeny Prigozhin, the man who undermined their authority, from the public memory while taking over his business enterprises.

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NIAS EUROPE STUDIES BRIEF

Russia and Europe: Understanding Moscow's strategies

By Ramya Balasubramanian

The US policy in the current crisis should continue providing essential economic and energy aid to prevent a gas shortage in Europe from causing the alliance to fracture.

Introduction

Foreign policy decisions, like domestic policy ones, are made in the name of the public interest to accrue legitimacy in the eyes of the general population.* While describing foreign policy objectives, Hans Morgenthau proposed three objectives sought after by countries: imperialism, status quo, and prestige. In international politics, there is a constant conflict between ideal and material power interests. This implies that states can say or do anything, but their conduct can be understood most effectively by analysing their power interests expressed through ideas and worldviews. A nation's worldview serves as a measure that reaffirms the role certain interests play. Russia has developed three schools of self- and other-centred thought over various historical epochs: Westernist, Statist, and Civilizationist. Idealists from these three schools of thought have worked for centuries to present Russia's international choices in ways that are consistent with their previously established views of the country and the outside world.¹

This paper explores the possibility that the current Russia (and previously the Soviet Union's) foreign policy is determined more by the idea of power than ideology. Secondly, Russia (just like the Soviet Union) wants to expand its influence in its neighbourhood because of its geographical location and its fascination with the West. Thirdly, Russia's aggression is strongly motivated by its perception of the threat to its national security due to NATO expansion. This paper also unpacks the historical narrative of the Soviet

legacy having an impact on the current decisions of Russia's leadership, which affect foreign policy, Europe, and the world order.

Background

The idea of geography as destiny probably explains its influence on Russian foreign policy better. For instance, Russia is the largest republic of the former USSR, with a harsh and cold climate and an expansive territory of 6.6 million square miles, making it the world's largest country and almost twice as large as Canada, the second-largest country. From east to west, it covers more than 6,000 miles and eleven time zones, and from north to south, it measures about 2,800 miles. However, the majority of this country cannot be inhabited.

Roughly 50 per cent of the country is in the permafrost zone; the land and most of Russia's significant ports and streams are frozen. The harsh climate, hostile terrain, and absence of natural barriers make it difficult for Russia to defend its borders, making them vulnerable to foreign invasions. The Tsars of imperial Russia began their search for warm-water ports because Russia's navy needed ports that were functional all year. Petroleum, natural gas, coal, gold, bauxite, and iron ore are just a few of Russia's abundant natural resources that cannot be tapped due to the extreme weather. In addition to having a significant impact on labourers, the extreme cold makes it difficult to operate equipment and makes transportation extremely challenging. Russia won numerous wars with neighbouring states under Peter the Great to protect its territory from being invaded and occupied. For the

* 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 Olikier, Olga, Christopher S. Chivvis, Keith Crane, Olesya Tkacheva, and Scott Boston. 2014. "Perspective Expert Insights on a Timely Policy Issue: Russian Foreign Policy in Historical and Current Context: A Reassessment." https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE144/RAND_PE144.pdf

same reason, many of his successors pursued an imperialist foreign policy.

Fascination of the West

Balancing Russia's foreign policy interests in Asia and Europe has become one of the most important goals in the course of the last century. Often, these conversations turned into ideological debates. The main question was whether or not to support the values of Western civilization. Westernizers emphasised Russia's similarity with Western nations and viewed the West as the most viable and progressive civilization in the world.

According to Bruce Porter, "there was not only the liberal west of the Enlightenment, which many Russian 'westerners' love, but they were also influenced by the other west militarised regimented armies of Charles XII, Frederick the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Kaiser Wilhelm." Since the time of Peter the Great, it is clear that Russia's diplomacy focused on Europe primarily, and after defeating Napoleon, they became a full member of the 'European Concert'²

The attempts of Russia to become Westernised met with challenges that threatened internal stability and put state power at risk. A review of the foreign policy of imperial Russia shows that the Tsar allowed Pan-Slavism to reveal itself when it echoed his policy and turned it off when it became aggressive. Russia's diplomacy has always been practical, based on its own needs. Post-Soviet liberal Westernizers argued for their nation's "natural" affinity with the West based on common ideas like democracy, human rights, and a free market. Liberal Westernizers like Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Kozyrev insisted that Russia could only confront its threats and advance from its economic and political backwardness by creating Western liberal institutions and joining the alliance of what was frequently referred to as the community of "Western civilised nations."³

Fall of the Soviet Union and Russia's Foreign Policy

Since 1991, Russia's society has changed significantly, and new theories of international relations have been a sign of this. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, its "Marxist" social science was no longer supported by the government, and Russia's scholars have been making intellectual progress in adjusting to the new world. How does Russia's new government see its place in the world? After the USSR broke up in December 1991, Russia's foreign policy changed. International collaboration to advance political stability, economic progress, environmental protection, and civil values was the subject of greater discussions and initiatives, but traditional political and strategic rivalry did not seem to be going away anytime soon.

After December 1991, the other former Soviet republics, referred to as the "near abroad" in Russia, were the most important foreign policy interests for Russia. Russia's Federation had immense political and military power in many of the former Soviet republics, especially where there were civil or ethnic wars. During the civil war in Tajikistan from 1992 to 1997, Russia's troops went in to help the Tajik government fight against rebel forces. They stayed after the war ended to protect the Tajik-Afghan border and prevent potential attacks by the Taliban. In April 1996, Russia signed an agreement with Belarus that created the "Community of Russia and Belarus." The agreement allowed the countries to work together on their foreign and defence policies and keeps their economies closely linked. The fall of the USSR also caused several other problems for Russia. The most important among them was the large number of Russian-speaking people in the new neighbouring states. Russia had given protection guarantees to these people. With over 25 million Russians residing in each of the successor republics, the likelihood of violence increased. This was evidenced by open conflicts in Moldova and

² Project, Gatis Pelnēns. 2010. "The 'Humanitarian Dimension' of Russian Foreign Policy Toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States." <http://www.icgs.ge/publications/The-humanitarian-dimension-of-Russian.pdf>

³ Bateman, Aaron. 2014. "The Political Influence of the Russian Security Services." *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27 (3). Routledge: 380–403. doi:10.1080/13518046.2014.932626. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264200569_The_Political_Influence_of_the_Russian_Security_Services/citations#fullTextFileContent

simmering disputes over the predominantly Russian-populated Crimea with the Baltic States and Ukraine. At the same time, the Russian economy was in poor health, requiring assistance from other nations. Many of the significant foreign policy objectives of the Gorbachev era were driven by economic principles. Agreements for friendship and cooperation were negotiated with Poland (in October 1990), Mongolia (in February 1991), and Czechoslovakia (in May 1991). Numerous agreements were also reached with the federal entities of Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The second component of Russia's foreign policy from 1996 to 1999 was the policy of alternatives. It started when Evgeniy Primakov was chosen to be the foreign minister of Russia's Federation. The Liberal Democratic Party of Zhironovsky won the election at the start of 1994. Because of how popular his extreme nationalist ideas were, Zhironovsky won, and Kozyrev had to quit because of it. Zhironovsky and the leaders of the Communist Party called for a policy of isolation. This section of Russia's political elite believed that the United States and other Western nations were Russia's unbeatable foes. The other members of the political elite shared this opinion but were less vocal about it. Even the small per cent of the elite that still cared about the West had to start referring to the West as a "partner" rather than "allies." It is crucial to remember that anti-Western sentiment was not as prevalent as it was during the Soviet era. The West and China continued to cooperate, and significant actions were taken. For instance, in 1997, Russia and NATO agreed on a pact. Russia joined the group of seven nations and continued to request loans from the IMF. However, studies show that just 13 per cent of the populace was open to the values of Western democracy, while more than 50 per cent declared their opposition to the West.⁴

Dynamic foreign policy under Putin

Boris Yeltsin appointed Putin as Russia's interim president on December 31, 1999. In just one year, he rose through the ranks from being the director of the Federal Security

Bureau, or FSB, to prime minister, acting president, and finally elected president, who won the March 2000 presidential election on the first ballot. During his tenure as acting president and prime minister, Putin vigorously promoted a single goal: the continuation of the Russian campaign against Chechen separatists. His "New Foreign Doctrine" argued that Russia should adopt a pragmatic foreign policy that upholds its own national interests and fosters economic growth. In an effort to improve ties with European countries, Russia met with the foreign ministers of Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and France to discuss bilateral ties and soften their position on Chechnya.

On March 2, 2000, Tony Blair travelled to Russia and met with Vladimir Putin at a conference in St. Petersburg. Putin broke precedence on April 1 by travelling to Britain the day before taking office as president and meeting with Blair and prominent businessmen there. This demonstrated the flexibility of Russia's diplomacy and Putin's practical, economically motivated style of diplomacy. Putin upheld important tenets of Primakov's foreign policy strategy, which called for strengthening a Russia that is independent and firmly rooted in its own historical traditions, starting a rebuilding process, and focusing its strength on defending its own national interests.

In the 1990s, Russia's influence in international politics declined significantly. The Eastern European nations that had been a part of the Warsaw Pact eventually joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which was formed to counter Soviet expansionism. Although the facts are inconclusive, Gorbachev was assured that NATO would not expand to include these countries; nonetheless, this is what transpired. From Russia's perspective, the expansion of NATO could serve no other function but to contain Russia.

During Putin's presidency, the Russia's government and Putin himself observed a rise in Western threats. Putin viewed the West, particularly the United States, as disruptive and subversive for supporting multiple coups against authoritarian regimes, such as Ukraine.

⁴ Lo, Bobo. 2002. *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*,. Palgrave Macmillan UK. August 2002. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403920058>

Russia's opposition to NATO expansion has not changed. The existing political and military positions of NATO do not, in a number of respects, align with the security interests of Russia's Federation. For instance, the clauses in the NATO Strategic Concept do not prohibit initiating military actions without UN Security Council approval beyond the Washington Treaty's zone of responsibility. In actuality, the Kosovo War and NATO's eastward expansion had really hardened the views of the Russia's political elite on geopolitics. The NATO bombing of the former Yugoslavia led to a rise in the number of militant nationalists in Russia's political establishment. These actions, in their eyes, demonstrated that the West was an aggressive, egotistical foe of Russia. Particularly when it came to Kosovo, the West did not have any consideration for Russia, the UN, or international law. As a result, relations between Russia and the West are far worse than they were immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

At the Munich Security Conference in 2022, Putin questioned NATO's eastward expansion and attacked the United States for forging a unipolar world with "one master and one sovereign." He also questioned the post-Cold War order in Europe⁵. The Primakov⁶ doctrine is where the current aggression's origins may be found. According to Primakov, Russia should work for a multipolar world governed by a coalition of powerful nations that can balance out US unilateralism. Russia should adamantly maintain its supremacy in the post-Soviet space and take the lead on regional integration. Russia must fight the expansion of NATO⁷. Russia's policy changed from a largely passive rejection of Western initiatives to a more active form of resistance as Russia's economy developed and the Kremlin amassed more resources to implement the doctrine. Eventually, it transformed into an activist foreign policy with an ambitious geographic scope.

Threat to national security

Statists have linked the idea of a strong, independent state with that of Russia and have emphasized the state's ability to manage and uphold social and political order. As a key element of Russia's security, they introduced the idea of an external danger. Josef Stalin, the Soviet Union's then-state leader, is renowned for framing his argument for rapid industrialization as a response to serious external threats. According to Stalin, because of its backwardness, Russia's ancient history was one of constant defeats by the Mongol Khans, Swedish, Polish, and Lithuanian feudal lords, English and French businessmen, and Japanese barons. This was the reason, according to Stalin that Russia lagged behind developed nations by 100 years and this gap needed to be closed in ten years. "We will be destroyed unless we act now." To uphold political order and fend against "capitalist" external threats, the socialist Statists emphasized the importance of the Communist Party's tight control over society. While some Statists favoured relative Western accommodation, others favoured balanced measures. A favourable plan was presented for the integration of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) security operations in the 1997 National Security Concept, which referred to Russia as an "influential European and Asian force" and encouraged it to keep an equal distance from "global European and Asian economic and political actors." Russia's Federation was described as "a great power with a responsibility for ensuring global and regional security" in the government's official Foreign Policy Concept of 2000. The concept also foresaw a new threat from "a unipolar world structure dominated by the United States economically and militarily."

Historical Background of the Ukraine War

The armed conflict in Ukraine began when Russia invaded and occupied Ukraine's territory of Crimea in 2014. Ukraine and Russia have been engaged in a continuous struggle over the past eight years, with daily shelling and skirmishes occurring along the

⁵ Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy", 10 February 2022. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/copy/24034>

⁶ Yevgeny Primakov, Russian Foreign minister, 1996-1998, Prime Minister 1998-1999.

⁷ Eugene Rumer, The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action, June 05, 2019 Paper, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/06/05/primakov-not-gerasimov-doctrine-in-action-pub-79254>

eastern Russia and Ukraine's borders. Russia launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, throwing the entire country into conflict and sending shockwaves around the globe. With increasing casualties and more than one million Ukrainians fleeing the nation, discussion and de-escalation have never been more important.

In the first 15 years of both Soviet eras, Ukraine existed as a transitional zone in which West Ukrainians had distinct political commitments, histories, and economic interests from East Ukrainians. And Ukraine was not economically developed.

Politically, Ukraine represented a sort of consensus between East and West Ukrainians. The elected presidents alternated between the West and the East, each representing a different population and pursuing different policies. For instance, the president who was elected from the West made Bandera, a guerrilla leader who fought against the Russians during World War II, a national hero. And when President Yanukovich was elected from the East, Bandera was no longer a national hero. Presidents elected from the West made it illegal to deny that the great famine of the 1930s was a deliberate attempt by the Soviet Union to punish the Ukrainians. However, when Yanukovich became president from the East, he nullified this historical revisionism. Therefore, it is fair to argue that Ukraine was a compromise, and the political Ukraine that served as a buffer between the West and East Ukrainians was acceptable from Russia's perspective. In short, Ukraine was a state, a sovereign entity, but not a nation. It was understood that being a Ukrainian nationalist primarily meant being viscerally hostile towards Russia. Following that, a pivotal historical moment occurred when Yanukovich struck a deal with Western Europe under which he would obtain credit in exchange for enacting anti-corruption reforms or improving Ukraine's economy. The Putin administration saw this as a threat because it

challenged the economic links between Russia and Ukraine. To convince Yanukovich to break his agreement with the West, Putin's response was to offer a bailout plan where Russia contributed \$15 billion to Ukraine's public debt and lowered the amount that Naftogaz, the country's energy firm, pays for Russia's gas by approximately a third.⁸

An adversarial Ukraine on its western border poses a significant security risk to Russia. Ukraine ensured that Russia's agreement to rent the Sevastopol naval facility, the only Russian military base in the Black Sea, could not be extended in 2017. In retaliation, Russia seized control of Crimea. Since the Ukrainian community in Crimea was actually rather small, this operation was relatively straightforward. The Tatar minority, which was more anti-Russian than anti-Ukrainian, was the source of any opposition that existed. It must be remembered that Crimea was only gifted to Ukraine in 1954, when Khrushchev wanted to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's accession to the Russia's Empire. As long as the Soviet Union existed, this was a completely harmless and meaningless concession that was merely a formality. Therefore, Crimea has never been ethnically Ukrainian, not then nor afterwards. Putin's decision to annex Crimea was primarily triggered by the threat to the naval station in Sevastopol, a historically Russia's city.

Russia's Motivations in Ukraine and Beyond

Putin considered Russia a great power on par with the United States and the European Union. In addition, Putin's policy also viewed former Soviet Union-affiliated neighbouring regions surrounding Russia as spheres of influence. He perhaps aimed for a protective ring of friendly countries surrounding Russia that would operate as a buffer against any country that might attempt to invade.⁹ However, the countries along the western border, such as the Baltic nations and Poland in particular, are vehemently anti-Russian. There are historical justifications for their

⁸ Elizabeth Piper, Special Report, Why Ukraine spurned the EU and embraced Russia, December 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-russia-deal-idINDEE9BI08D20131219>

⁹ Andrew Roth, 'Putin Compares Himself to Peter the Great in Quest to Take Back Russian Lands', The Guardian, 10 June 2022 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/10/putin-compares-himself-to-peter-the-great-in-quest-to-take-back-russian-lands>

hostile attitude towards Russia. However, when these countries receive Western help in the form of western armaments, Russians, not just Putin, view the supply as a threat to their national security. The very act of obtaining such support renders the region insecure and unstable. Whenever Polish and Baltic politicians highlighted to the West the expansionist intentions and the real threat posed by Russia under President Vladimir Putin, the Europeans were dismissive. Even after Russia's invasion of Crimea, the West pursued commercial and political accommodation with Putin.¹⁰

Russia's interest in being a regional power is one of the motivating factors for the war against Ukraine. However, the war has only succeeded in alienating Russia from Europe more than before because it has violated international law, including the UN Charter, with this aggression. Thus far, the United States and NATO countries have extensively armed and equipped Ukraine and provided effective resistance to Russia. They have made it clear that they do not wish to place boots on the ground and will not send soldiers into Ukraine but will continue to help the country. Article five of the NATO treaty states, 'An attack against one is an attack against all.' Therefore, an assault in the neighbourhood of NATO member states, such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, would constitute an attack on NATO, and the aggressor would face retaliation. Though Putin may not be interested in striking a NATO country directly, Article 5 can still provide scope for NATO to retaliate against Russia for its war in Ukraine.

After Ukraine, the most defenceless countries in Russia's neighbourhood may be those that are unprotected and alone, such as Georgia and Moldova, both of whom were part of the Soviet Union, along with Bosnia and Kosovo in the Balkans. In addition, analysts have cautioned that even NATO nations near Russia, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Montenegro, may be at risk of either direct military action from Moscow or political destabilisation strategies.

The degree to which Russia has galvanised NATO due to the Ukraine war is unparalleled. Finland and Sweden have abandoned their long-held neutrality to join the US-led military alliance. All NATO members, except Turkey and Hungary, have ratified their membership. In response, Putin has tried to split the EU or NATO members by fuelling diverging interests among the member states and institutions. Further, Moscow has projected itself to be the object of the West's "total hybrid war" and indicated it would weather sanctions by building closer ties with China, India, Arab nations, and others. Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov reaffirmed that the flurry of sanctions imposed by the West had cast Russia as a victim of aggression rather than an aggressor. The Donbas has been declared a constituent by Russia. There are two possible ways to end the war: Ukraine's military victory with the support of the US and the EU, or Ukraine accepting the conditions laid down by Russia to satisfy their power quest. There are some concessions that Ukraine could make, such as granting the Donbas region autonomy in terms of language proficiency and cultural linkages. There is always the potential to bargain disagreements away to identify shared interests. Neither Russia nor the NATO nations, including the United States, want to engage in an all-out war that could escalate.

Further, it will become difficult for many European governments to justify their sustained financial, military, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine in the face of large-scale internal unrest. However, within the EU, member states such as Estonia, Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania (in that order) that are most committed to aiding Ukraine will not buckle under pressure as it is an existential battle for them. Consequently, there will be a divide among the EU member states that has to be carefully addressed. The issue is not one of mistrust among EU member states but rather of future domestic consensus. The EU has decided to simultaneously push back, constrain, and engage with Russia based on a strong shared understanding of Russia's aims and an approach of principled pragmatism.

¹⁰ Kasymov, Shavkat. 2012. "Statism in Russia: The Implications for US-Russian Relations." *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 3 (1): 58-68
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233238381_Statism_in_Russia_The_Implications_for_US-Russian_Relations

The United States provided Ukraine with over \$19 billion in security assistance between February and November 2022. On the battlefield, Russia's army has performed poorly, and its men have struggled with low morale, ineffective execution of combined arms, and corruption. Russia's air force has been unable to establish air superiority and is running out of precision munitions. Putin may assume that by manipulating the West's dependency on Russia's energy, he can dismantle the alliance this winter and eliminate the majority of sanctions. Russia's views of Ukraine are consistent with its historical behaviour of using "buffer states" to border itself. In the past, Russia tended to think of Ukraine as inherently having a Russia's culture and history. Further, Russia's actions in Ukraine prove it puts its economic interests last. Therefore, partial economic restrictions may not be enough to end the conflict.

The US policy in the current crisis should continue providing essential economic and energy aid to prevent a gas shortage in Europe from causing the alliance to fracture. The US government and American corporations have already taken a step in this direction. Over 60 per cent of American liquefied natural gas (LNG) is currently exported to Europe, up from 20 per cent a year before. Long-term strategic planning and a more firmly expressed commitment while supporting dialogue with Russia could provide a solution to this conundrum.

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NIAS EUROPE STUDIES BRIEF

European Union Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS): A Prototype for Global Emissions Reduction Mechanism

By Rubina Pradhan

The EU's mechanism to curb carbon footprints in the region would continue to drive the enthusiasm of the researchers to study the dynamics of the system and its potential to contribute to the global emission trading scheme.

Introduction

Climate change is regarded to be one of the major environmental problems globally. Various efforts have been made to combat climate change and its impact through various mechanisms adopted globally, regionally and locally.* Emissions trading is one of the mechanisms incorporated in the Kyoto Protocol, of 2005. It is considered the best means or instrument for combating climate change, making it cost-effective. Taking this as an inspiration and a guide, the European Union (EU) planned and developed an emissions trading scheme at the regional level. While on the other, China launched the world's largest emissions trading scheme in 2021 which is estimated to cover 1/7th of the global carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels (Busch 2022). Since China is considered the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, the achievement of the Chinese emissions trading scheme would largely determine the nature of climate change. However, it is interesting and significant to study the very first measure implemented regionally by the EU to measure its effectiveness for internationally viable options to curb carbon emissions.

The emission trading Scheme of the European Union (EU) is the model scheme in the world and the first transboundary cap-and-trade system which has been a significant approach in contributing to curbing carbon footprint. Covering approximately 11,000 installations (power plants and factories including airlines running flights within Europe) across the region, EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) is the biggest carbon market in the world (Creti and Joets 2017 and Abnett 2020) and covers 41 per cent of the total EU emissions (Abnett

2020). The system operates across the 27 EU member states including Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein and also has a link with the Swiss ETS (LIFE ETX 2021). The extent of membership to implement the EU's ETS makes the mechanism viable for expansion outside the region.

The rationale behind choosing this area is to assess and analyse the approach's effectiveness in reducing carbon emissions. The paper aims to explore if EU ETS can be a global mechanism for carbon reduction and a forerunner to address climate change. The paper briefly discusses the origin of the EU ETS drawing from the climate change regime like the Kyoto Protocol followed by the mechanisms of the EU ETS highlighting the areas of cap and trade systems, allocation of credits, trading patterns, etc. The paper also highlights certain political-economic nuances of the EU ETS. The paper seeks to reflect on the emissions trading scheme of the EU and to see if it can be a viable option for a comprehensive global emissions trading mechanism to address the impact of climate change.

Background to EU ETS

Emissions trading or market-oriented measures were included in various climate agreements made under the United Nations Framework Conventions on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which began with the concept of activities implemented jointly' (Philibert and Reinaud 2004). The first cap and trade system was introduced in the US to address air emissions following the Clean Air Act of the 1970s (Borghesi and Montini 2016). Its success inspired other countries like Australia, the UK etc. to implement their own emissions trading

* 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

scheme. The EU, for that matter, had been planning for a policy approach based on 'command and control' environmental regulation in the 1990s wherein the EU focussed on adopting carbon tax regionally (Borghesi and Montini 2016). However, this policy was criticised by the industrialists and was abandoned subsequently. There was a major instance wherein the EU started to look into reforming and reviving European policy instruments towards appropriate environmental policies. This led to the adoption of a market-based instrument in a much larger manner. Later, the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 laid down the foundation for emissions trading between countries whose operating rules were agreed upon in 2002, Conference of Parties (COP) 7 in Marrakech (Philibert and Reinaud 2004). The EU introduced its own emissions trading scheme by Directive 2003/87/EC (2003) under the aegis of the US experience in emissions trading scheme (Borghesi and Montini 2016).

Many countries today, have been individually planning a mechanism for emissions trading to curb carbon footprints at the national level. Paris Agreement also enables the use of the Nationally Determined contribution (NDC) Mechanism through Article 6 and the countries like Costa Rica, Cambodia and Cuba are already in a way determining their strategy for delivering NDCs (UNDP 2022). This indicates that the voluntary carbon market is emerging too and is gaining momentum for climate action. There are essentially two major categories of carbon markets viz. a) Compliance market which is a regulatory requirement created as a result of policies made at the national, regional and international levels (UNDP 2022). Examples of the compliance market are EU ETS, and Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) under Kyoto's regulatory requirement. b) Voluntary market—refers to the issuing, buying and selling of carbon credits voluntarily at national and international levels (UNDP 2022).

EU ETS is considered to be a 'flagship measure' (Ellerman and Joskow 2008) and the world's first emissions trading scheme adopted by the EU to meet the obligation of the carbon reduction plan and mechanism inspired by the Kyoto Protocol but is independent of the same. The ETS of the EU became operational even

before the Kyoto Protocol came into force in 2005. It was on 1st January the EU ETS began to operate though the implementation has not been even due to multiple factors (Ellerman and Buchner 2014). However, it cannot be denied that it can be regarded as an important attempt by the countries in the region to adopt such effective measures to limit GHG.

Phases of EU ETS

The plan for EU mechanism for the carbon reduction plan was influenced by the 1997 Kyoto Protocol which set the legally-binding emission reduction targets for the first time for 37 industrialised countries (European Commission 2022, a). As a result which EU started to strategise the agenda for achieving climate neutrality. The phases for the implementation of the EU ETS are:

i) Phase I (2005-2007)

In 2005, the EU launched its maiden carbon trading phase which covered emissions from power plants, steel plants, oil refineries and cement factories in the then-25 EU countries (Abnett 2020). This phase can be considered a preparatory phase for phase 2. Some of the major features of this phase are:

- a) Only CO₂ emissions were included from the energy-intensive industries
- b) Most of the allowances were given for free to the businesses
- c) A penalty was also imposed for non-compliance that amounted to 40 Euros per tonne.

The first phase established a carbon price, it was established that there would be free trade in emission allowance throughout the EU, and a decision was made on the infrastructure that is required to monitor, report and verify emissions from the selected businesses (European Commission 2022, a). However, due to a lack of data on emissions, the allowances exceeded the emissions leading to the fall of price to zero in 2007.

ii) Phase 2 (2008-2012)

During this phase, the Kyoto Protocol also had the first commitment period wherein the European countries needed to meet their emission targets. However, the EU went ahead with phase 2 of ETS with certain key features

like reducing the cap on granting the allowances; this phase also saw the joining of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway; many countries included nitrous oxide emissions; non-compliance penalty was increased to 100 Euros per tonne; around 1.4 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent international credits could be bought by businesses; National registry and Community Independent Transaction Log was replaced by Union registry and European Union Transaction Log respectively; even the aviation sector was brought under the ambit of EU ETS on January 1, 2012 (European Commission 2022, a). By now, the data availability had become easier as a result of which the cap on allowances was reduced in this phase based on emission. The recession of 2008 also had an impact on the carbon price as there was a surplus of allowances and credits.

iii) Phase 3 (2013-2020)

Phase 3 has brought considerable change in the framework of EU ETS as compared to the previous 2 phases. Some of the changes include national caps being replaced by a single EU cap on emissions; instead of free allocation, the auction was chosen as a default method; inclusion of added gases and more sectors; around 300 million allowances were put aside to fund the deployment of new innovative technologies for renewable energy through the New Entrants Reserve (European Commission 2022, a). These policies could also complement the EU's green scheme by fostering new technologies that would curb carbon emissions.

Between 2005 and 2020, the EU ETS has grown to become one of the effective mechanisms to curb carbon footprint. On 04 March 2020, the Commission as a part of the European Green Deal proposed the first European Climate Law to sanctify the climate neutrality target of 2050 into law (European Commission 2022, b). It is now in the 4th phase of its implementation which started in 2021 and will continue until 2030. Its aim during this phase is to attain climate neutrality in the region by 2050 which is in line with the Paris Agreement of 2015 whose objective has also been to keep the global temperature below 1.5 degrees Celsius (European Commission 2022, b). It is a matter of time to see if such an aggressive and ambitious aim of the EU would be achieved given the nuanced nature of the scheme itself.

The Working of the EU ETS

The EU ETS functions on the principle of cap and trade which means that the GHG allowances are considered as a product which can be traded on the carbon market in the EU (Environmental Protection Agency 2022). The regulated companies included in the EU ETS included the installations like power plants, industrial plants, companies that use heavy energy, and airlines. The cap is set at the EU level on the sum of the GHGs emitted by companies included in the EU ETS (Environmental Protection Agency 2022). The EU also sets the timeline on how the pace of limiting emissions should be met and the cap moves downwards every year to meet the target of reducing emissions. The cap is divided into several permits for pollution known as EU Allowances (EUA) and 1 EUA = 1 tonne of CO₂ emissions (LIFE ETX 2021). The EU ETS installations are bound to surrender allowances which are equal to their emissions in the previous year (LIFE ETX (2021).

For example; if an installation emitted one million tonnes of CO₂ in 2020 would require one million EUAs to transfer to the European Commission's central registry in 2021. (LIFE ETX 2021)

The online banking system called the Union Registry was established which holds carbon allowances instead of money and operates electronically (Environmental Protection Agency 2022). Companies under the EU ETS must have accounts on the same to hold carbon allowances. The companies are levied a heavy penalty if not complied to.

A series of legislative proposals laid down on July 2021 highlighted the ways to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and a short-term goal of reducing a minimum of 55 per cent in GHG emissions by 2030 (European Commission 2022, c). The issue of carbon leakage was also discussed. *Carbon Leakage* is a situation which occurs when costs related to climate policies, and businesses transfer production to other countries which have lesser constraints on GHG emissions (European Commission 2022, c). Therefore, a more stringent criterion was set to prevent carbon leakage.

EU's proposal of a "carbon adjustment programme" imposes a carbon price on the

imports from the region where there is no carbon tax (Toplensky 2022). This way, Europe is also seen expanding its market with shipping falling under ETS rules and new policies being formulated for sectors like buildings and transports (Toplensky 2022). Therefore, it may be stated the EU ETS is essentially a work in progress wherein, more strong regional policies may be concluded for its economic gain as well as its effort to curb carbon footprints in the region.

Achievements

The cap and trade system of the EU ETS has been to some extent successful in limiting emissions in the region because of the nature of its integration. According to Convery (2009), the success of the EU ETS was inevitable because of the Single European Market for the economy, and its ability to impose a carbon energy tax based on qualified majority voting which nullifies the veto of any country, etc. The GHG emissions from the stationary installations under EU ETS have decreased from 1530 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2019 to 1355 million tonnes in 2020 which is a decrease of 11.4 per cent and 43 per cent as compared to 2005 (European Environment Agency 2022). This shows that there has been a drop in emissions which was only witnessed during the time of recession in 2009. According to the data by the statista, EU ETS covered around 23 per cent of global emissions (Ties, 2022). Hence, it can be said in terms of the EU and its emissions trading scheme that cost-effectiveness and environmental effectiveness can complement each other and can be strengthened further in their nature and scope.

However, there was an issue of governance during phases 1 and 2 as the member states had the liberty to decide and define the National Allocation Plans (NAPs) for allowances (Borghesi and Montini 2016). Hence, too many allowances were allocated because of the political pressure from the pressure groups on the government who aimed at receiving more allowances. In the initial phases, though the member states allocated allowances for free, some member countries like Denmark, Ireland, and Lithuania preferred to auction some share of them to cover administration costs. These sorts of irregularities occurred at the beginning which to an extent improved in the later phases by

increasing the price of the allowances and imposing hefty fines for emitting beyond a permit. Though the EU has been able to cut down emissions through ETS, there is no denying the fact that the reduction was achieved by shifting production outside the EU into countries which do not have a carbon market (Bayer and Aklin 2020). This is called carbon leakage which has also hampered the achievement rate of the EU ETS. In, other words, it did not have any significant cut on global emissions. The EU at present is negotiating for expanding the scheme beyond the region through a mechanism like the CBAM.

Political Economy of EU ETS— Towards transformation?

The policymakers in the EU made a political calculation that for their plan to take shape, they need to allocate free allowances based on the emission history of the polluters (known as *grandfathering*) and the economist had also advised that the system would be cost-effective irrespective of the way allowances were allocated (Sato, Rafaty, Call and Grubb 2022). It was also stipulated that allocating allocations for free to the highest emitters can create incentives to emit more in the present so that they can obtain more allocations for free in the future. Therefore, there was also a huge public resentment for reforms in the allocation of allowances as the system of providing free allowances would profit the biggest polluters.

It took almost a decade of political lobbying and economic refinement to reform the existing allocation of the allowances that bore fruit. The year 2022 saw allowances price hike beyond 90 Euros per tonne of Carbon after years of depression in carbon prices ((Sato, Rafaty, Call and Grubb 2022 and Toplensky 2022). The figure below shows the

development of European Union futures prices and major events.



Fig: EUA futures prices and major events.

Source: European Energy Exchange (EEX) and EEA for EUA Futures 2007. ICAP Allowance Price Explorer and Member for EUA Futures Series (in Sato, Rafaty, Call and Grubb 2022).

It has been observed by Sato, Rafaty, Call and Grubb (2022) that the allowance allocation is not as simple as it seems, it is a “complex tug of war between environmental ambition, principles of aggregate economic efficiency, and the politics of distribution”. Hence, it is essential to look at the politics of lobbying and bargaining among environmentalists, bureaucrats, politicians as well as other stakeholders which impacts the decision-making regarding allowances. Analysing the political economy of the EU ETS, according to Mallard (2009) has highlighted that most of the research on political economy focussed on either the government, participants and environment groups ignoring the significant role played by the national bureaucracy. The role of bureaucracy is vital because of its effects on policy design in 2 important ways a) it is the medium through which different players lobby the government, and b) it is the significant body that implements policies in reality (Mallard 2009). Hence, the role of bureaucracy must be taken into consideration while designing and developing any environmental policies.

Though the EU ETS has achieved some degree of capturing the attention of the policy-makers, the policies related to climate in particular are usually seen as less significant than other issues to determine any profit-making business

(Laing, Sato, Grubb and Combetti 2013). This can be considered one of the important reasons for the scheme to be included in the major decision-making at the EU level. Therefore, the need of the hour is to include climate policies in mainstream policy-making considering the impact it would have on local, regional and global levels.

It has been highlighted by Toplensky (2022) that the rules can be adjusted according to the needs of the EU objectives as carbon credits are conceptual rather than physical. Assumptions can also be made wherein, Europe’s carbon trading policies and decarbonisation would take a leading role in the conceived industrial revolution also addressing environmental concerns. However, there have been several speculations about the scheme's limited impact on saving the environment. Also, it needs to be realised that the emissions coverage under the scheme is only partial. Vlachou and Pantelias (2016) believe that the EU ETS is but a climate-sustainable scheme as it can be seen deeply embedded in capitalistic ideals and argues on a more radical transformation of society is needed with an emphasis on eco-socialist orientation. It can be argued that due to the capitalistic nature of the scheme itself, it is more profit-oriented rather than environment-oriented which questions the aspect of distributive justice and welfarism.

There has been a lot of speculation on the results of the EU scheme garnering unsatisfactory opinions among researchers as some claim that the EU failed to achieve its aim as prescribed. The criticisms are the result of failures related to issues like allowances surplus, allowance for financial profit rather than environmental benefit, low prices of allowances, and several instances of malfunctioning and fraud (Vlachou and Pantelias 2016). These complications have given rise to the market-oriented nature of curbing emissions instead of an attempt to address climate change and focus on sustainability. A more rigorous and effective transformatory mechanism should be developed for the scheme to work. Given the resources and the level of interconnectedness, the EU can lead the climate negotiation and develop mechanisms that can be viable not only in the region but also internationally.

A Global Emissions Reduction Mechanism?

EU ETS has been functioning in the region with efficiency since its inception but it would be difficult to implement as a global common carbon trading mechanism in future due to multiple reasons. Countries like Canada and Japan, likely to have less complex and more cohesive cultural and institutional contexts, have failed to come up with emissions trading schemes (Convery 2009). The domestic political economy might be one of the reasons for their failed emissions trading scheme.

The recent EU proposal for a carbon border tax might be an impetus for expanding carbon trading from the regional level to the global level and the EU's policy to meet the present climate ambitions. This Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) would lead to setting a global carbon price by imposing a carbon cost on some imports into the union which is one of the biggest markets (Toplensky 2021). Therefore, the CBAM policies would also increase the scope of the market for the EU. The bid is to start coordinating with Washington to create an EU and U.S. carbon Club which would then be strengthened to include countries like China in the first place (Toplensky 2021). It has been observed that to vouch for a global carbon price immediately seems to be a distant dream given Washington's stance on the same.

Countries worldwide are committed to limiting carbon emissions to address the existential crisis of climate change in the globalising era. Some of the major tools or mechanisms used by governments all around the world to curb greenhouse gases include imposing pollution taxes, emission restrictions, emission trading policies, afforestation, promotion of renewable energy, etc. (Wei, Gong, et.al. 2021). Amongst these measures, the market-oriented emission trading scheme is considered to be a more cost-effective option according to Schmalensee and Stavins (2017). However, this argument can be refuted because the mechanism has not been able to take shape as an environmental policy to cope with climate change in the recent 27th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Egypt.

In this summit, the EU proposed the 'Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism' policy

intending to impose a tax on the products like steel and cement which are regarded to be highly carbon intensive and would be effective from 2026 (The Hindu 2022, a). This proposal by the EU has been opposed by India, China, Brazil, and South Africa also known as (BASIC) (The Hindu 2022 a). Instead, the parties including G77 and China insisted on a decade-old demand for the creation of a 'loss and damage' fund to compensate target countries that are bearing the brunt of climate-related tragedies (The Hindu 2022 b). Countries might be adopting the emission trading strategy or carbon market as the policy measures to address climate change, but justifying the global diffusion of the mechanism remains moot. Hence, the real issue is to examine if the model emission trading scheme of the EU will be able to bring the parties to agree to a carbon trading scheme to fulfil the goal of reducing global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Though EU ETS can induce innovation to lower carbon and bring about alternatives and innovative processes for the use of carbon, making countries adhere to a global emissions reduction scheme is an uphill task. It has been observed by Genovese (2020) that considering competitiveness, countries need to accept the scheme from the perspective of equitability or in other words, there is a requirement for mutual recognition of the scheme for global emissions trading. As viewed by classical political economists, it is the national interest of the states which prevents them from committing to any global cooperation credibly (Genovese 2020). The political economy of countries throughout the world is not at par and it would be a tough call for any country to commit to global arrangements for curbing emissions.

Conclusion

The EU's mechanism to curb carbon footprints in the region would continue to drive the enthusiasm of the researchers to study the dynamics of the system and its potential to contribute to the global emission trading scheme. The membership already includes four members outside the EU, therefore it might have an opportunity to involve other countries outside the union. Europe had the mechanism for curbing Carbon even before the Kyoto Protocol came into force in 2005 and has been able to expand and improvise the system since

the trial phase of its implementation. Various technological developments were made in the third phase that would contribute to the union's efforts to curb emissions. Currently, the EU ETS is in the fourth phase of its implementation and it has aimed to attain climate neutrality in the region by 2050. Such an ambitious stance if achieved would contribute to minimising global emissions to a great extent.

The cap and trade system of the EU ETS has proven to be viable to the EU market but it also has some political nuances associated with granting allowances, especially the grandfather allowances. There was public outcry because of the grandfather allowances as it is claimed to have benefitted big polluters.

Though the EU ETS is regarded as a flagship model for curbing carbon footprints, the question that needs to be reflected is if it could be a global model for emissions trading. In the recent COP27, the EU proposed the CBAM which has been rejected by BASIC. This kind of hindrance might be an obstacle to the EU's policy to curb carbon at the International level. At the same time, there is a need to work towards a new methodology like creating opportunities to benefit the most vulnerable by delivering shares and transferring technology to adapt to climate change. Another option may be to expand the scope of emissions to include other emissions like household and transport emissions for a more comprehensive action plan. To stabilise the greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, a major cut in emissions is required which mandates global cuts in emissions, let alone regional or domestic efforts. It implies that the participation of most countries is essential and pivotal in contributing to mitigating climate action plans.

It is pertinent to note that even though the EU ETS has some shortcomings, it cannot be denied that it is a model in the ETS context. The ETS introduced by the EU has necessitated the researchers to examine the pros and cons of the scheme which helped in the formulation of various policies and come up with novel prospects for improvising the scheme. Therefore, there are possibilities of cooperation among international communities for making it a global emissions reduction mechanism.

As efforts are being made by countries around the world to achieve carbon neutrality either through NDC or the compliance market, we must see if a carbon trading scheme like that of EU ETS becomes a viable option to implement globally.

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COMMENT

Russia and Ukraine: A New Drone Warfare

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 28 May, The Guardian reported on the "biggest drone attack" launched by Russia into Kyiv. Ukraine's military confirmed countering 52 out of 54 Shahed drones. It reported Russia to have used the eastern coast of the Azov Sea using unconventional routes. Kyiv's military administration head, Serhiy Popko, said: "The attack was carried out in several waves, and the air alert lasted more than five hours."

On 29 May, RT reported on Russia's defence ministry claim of launching "multiple high accuracies strikes" on Ukraine's military "airfields" during 28-29 May. According to the report, Ukraine's command posts, ammunition storage, and aircraft were attacked in the frontline across Luhansk, Donetsk, and Kharkiv districts.

On 30 May, drone attacks were reported in Moscow. According to Russia's Defence Ministry, eight drones hit Moscow. As per the report from Politico, the attacks were particularly launched in Western Moscow, which comprises the elite Russian community. According to one of the residents in the area, the attacks were "shocking and confusing."

On 31 May, The New York Times reported: "The dueling strikes reflected the dialed-up tension and shifting priorities ahead of Ukraine's expected counteroffensive. Ukraine has increasingly been reaching far into Russia-held territory, while Moscow has been adjusting its tactics in an effort to inflict significant damage on Kyiv." According to reports, the US is still collecting information on the Moscow attacks and denied supporting any strikes inside Ukraine.

Key Issues

First, the drone warfare in the Ukraine war theatre. Since the war began, drone attacks into Russian territory and Ukraine's West were sporadic. After 2023, the intensity gradually increased. This can be seen from

the drone attacks in the airfields of the Ryazan and Saratov districts, which took place in December 2022, the Belgorod attacks (three to seven kilometres from the Ukraine border) that lasted for two days, and lastly in Moscow. Inside Ukraine, the attacks concentrated in the Donbas region have now changed to recurring attacks in the West, especially Kyiv and Lviv.

Second, the Bakhmut trigger. Despite the Bakhmut battle indicating strategic significance, it began to be perceived as a symbol of pride by Ukraine and Russia. It was to showcase who could fight long and still win the battle. The timing of the drone attacks can be equated with the Russian victory claims over the Bakhmut battle, as it despises Ukraine's ability to hold control.

"The timing of the drone attacks can be equated with the Russian victory claims over the Bakhmut battle, as it despises Ukraine's ability to hold control."

Third, Ukraine's repeated demand to augment its airpower. Ukraine's demand for modern aviation and advanced air defence systems has been long waitlisted due to the concerns of the escalation of war across the transatlantic. The Council of Europe meeting in May was a breakpoint when the UK and Netherlands formed a coalition to train the Ukrainian soldiers for fighter jet training. Denmark and Portugal agreed to join the coalition, followed by the US agreeing to support Ukraine with fighter jets upon training. In response, Russia has criticized the move, stating that despite such support, Ukraine lacks a conducive environment and enough maintenance personnel. The larger strategy behind the surprise call to help Ukraine attain the capability remains

unclear, while Ukraine's air defence is on track for a massive upgrade.

Fourth, the diplomatic offensive of Zelenskyy. The US, NATO, and Europe continue to support Ukraine through weapons, economic, and humanitarian aid, but it has never been fulfilling the demands of Ukraine. The Arab League and G7 Summit, which took place in May, allowed Ukraine to reach out to other international actors. Zelenskyy used it to gain diplomatic support from Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. South Korea agreeing to send artillery rounds and Japan agreeing to humanitarian aid has helped expand its diplomatic support.

What Next?

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EM Daily Focus*



Source: ANDREW MEDICHINI/ASSOCIATED PRESS, AFP, EPA-EFE/ANDY RAIN/POOL, Hussein Ben Mosa/AP, Hussein Ben Mosa/AP, Louiza Vradi/Reuters

BELARUS**RIP: Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's Power Broker**

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 12 June, Italy's former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi passes away at the age of 86 in Milan. Berlusconi started his career in real estate and went on to establish a "media empire" in 1974 using the profits from his real estate ventures. Later he expanded into 150 businesses, such as publishing, commercial stores, and a soccer club.

In 1994, Berlusconi established his own political party and went on to serve as prime minister for three terms spanning from 1994 to 2011. Multiple scandals in tax fraud, bribery, sex scandals and, most importantly Italy's economic shortfall paved the way for his fall. Despite that, he played a key role in Italy's politics till his death.

According to Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, he was seen as the most influential in Italy's history and praised for his "courage and determination." She said: "With him,

Italy learned that it must never allow itself to be limited, and it must never give up."

Berlusconi: A Short biography

Berlusconi began a real estate business for young men and women with an aim to bring a posh "lifestyle-driven clientele." He was well known to be a businessman than a politician with persuasion and always on the urge to seek the crowd approval. For some, during his term Italy's society, culture and politics had a transformation. He was also the first prime minister to have served without being an elected official and had a good hold on geopolitics.

The creation of Forza Italia in 1994 was supported by many young Italians and democratic societies creating a cult. This helped him to serve three times. To support his political party, he formed alliance with Northern League to include northern Italy and post-fascist groups which helped in increasing his popularity. Later, the coalition became the basis for launching Meloni as a politician, who was made the youngest government minister under the alliance in 2008.

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

How he dealt with crisis and failure?

During the 2008 financial crisis, Berlusconi missing to portray the crisis and not taking enough measures led to grind down of Italy's economy. This led to unsustainable debt levels resulting in people losing confidence in him. Despite his counter to introduce measures to tackle the crisis, it was taken to protect his public image than real impact to economy. Due to which Italy's recovery slowed which still differentiates it from rest of the developed countries. Followed by the reputational damage over the financial crisis, and expose of the tax fraud and scandals, Berlusconi modified laws and introduced new measures to avoid trials, save his image and at the same to boost his businesses.

What does he leave behind?

Despite his resignation in 2011, remained a highly influential "political powerbroker," till his last day. Although Berlusconi was equally loved and hated, his leadership style of giving importance to centrality and speaking the common people language is shared by Meloni. From the point of Italy's leader, his actions in establishing commercial tv, soccer, politics and economic have always remained unconventional.

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FRANCE

France: Return of violence, this time over a police shooting

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 27 June, France 24 reported on the shooting of a 17-year-old Nahel in Nanterre. The initial police reports accused the teen; however, later the video released on social media showed the police pointing the weapon at the teen. Since the death of Nahel and video, there were spontaneous protests across France leading to violent clashes against the police and government.

On 28 June, France's President Emmanuel Macron called the violence as "unjustifiable." On 29 June, as the violence furthered, interior minister ordered for the deployment of 40,000 police officers and imposed curfew in the northern suburb of Nanterre, where the outbreak of protests is uncontrollable.

Mapping the protest

The protests began in the form of a "White March" in the northern suburb of Nanterre, where Nahel belong. Tensions started when the protestors used projectiles on police and the protest spread to other cities of France. This led to firing tear gas against 6,200 people.

Majority of clashes are in north, central and southwest of Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Pau, Toulouse and Lille. The protestors included a majority of youth, people from working class, African descent, French black and Muslims protesting for "justice for Nahel." The protesters largely point to the issues of racial discrimination, and growing police misconduct, which are not new for France.

Previous riots and debates

Debate over "race, power, identity," and police brutality has existed since 2005 when two teens were killed in similar police run. This resulted in riots across France against racial discrimination. An investigation in 2017 by France's civil-liberties ombudsman revealed that young black being subject more than 20 times of identity check compared to the entire population. In 2020, HRW and Amnesty International launched a "class action" against the government for not addressing the issue of ethnic profiling by police. Other cases have also reflected police misconduct, the lag in legal proceedings, whereas convictions has been exceptional.

The government responses

The investigation which initially did not accept the blame on the police, later the officer was charged and given custody before trial. This provoked further protests and by 29 June differing from earlier cases announced that the police officer would be detained under charges of “intentional homicide.” In response the police unions criticized the government for detention.

In case of the government, citing the reasons of “Public order disturbance,” asked 40,000 police to be deployed to counter the violence and according to France24 the units were “heavily equipped and have armoured vehicles.” The interior minister issued a statement supporting the police officer in controlling the unrest, while the mayor of Paris asked the people to remain calm to let “justice to do its necessary job.” According to the report from France24 till now 421 have been arrested belonging to 14-18 ages. The government’s harsh response to the protests is nothing old. According to the previous report from Foreign Policy, in 2018 and 2019, it dealt with the “Yellow Jackets” protests, by equipping the security forces with weapons that would cause serious injuries. This has turning to become a provoking factor behind the protests on increasing the police brutality and the larger gap in government’s action towards policing.

Macron in crossfire

The timing of the police shooting, and the subsequent unrest is not favor of Macron. France is becoming a frequent place for protests from pension reforms, inflation to police brutality. For Macron, who has a highflyer agenda to make France a key regional player in terms of maritime governance, aviation, regional integration, and diplomacy, the internal problems continue to hitch his domestic governance and continuity.

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GREECE

Greece: Migrant boat disaster and humanitarian crisis

By Nityashree RB

On 14 June, a fishing vessel carrying migrants from Tobruk, Libya, sank in the Ionian Sea, 80 kilometres southwest of Pylos, Greece. On 16 June, a statement from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR informed that the number of people onboard the fishing vessel was between 400 and 750. It stated: “So far 104 people have been rescued and 78 bodies retrieved, while hundreds remain missing, and feared dead.” The UN Human Rights Office reported that 500 people are missing.

On 14 June, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated: “Every person searching for a better life deserves safety and dignity.” The UNHCR office in Greece stated: “We need more safe pathways for people forced to flee. They should not be left with impossible life-threatening choices.” Following the incident, the Greek government arrested nine Egyptians in Kalamata, Greece, and the Pakistani government arrested 14 suspects involved in the migrant shipwreck over human trafficking charges.

Issues at large

First, the migrants crossing across the Mediterranean Sea. Migrants and human traffickers use the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. With stricter rules levied by the EU and countries like Greece, migrants embark on deadly routes to reach Europe. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 20,000 people have died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean since 2014. Most passengers often travel in overcrowded and unsafe boats that are not seaworthy.

Second, maritime laws regarding rescuing victims of maritime accidents. Countries and Masters of ships are bound to rescue

survivors regardless of whether they are migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. Safeguarding life at sea and providing assistance are crucial laws that countries and shipping vessels are to follow. The European Union states the rescue operation should be carried out under the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) guidelines. In the current context, the Greek Coast Guard failed to oblige. Greece has been criticised for handling migrants in several similar instances. In July 2022, a boat carrying migrants sank when the Greek Coast Guards towed it away to Turkey. In May 2023, a video sent to The New York Times confirmed Greece leaving migrants stranded on rafts in international waters.

Third lack of adequate legal mechanisms and a larger debate across Asia, Africa and Europe to deal with migration disasters across the Mediterranean. In the current context - there are three actors - the source countries from Africa and Asia, the transit countries in northern Africa and Southern Europe, and the destination countries in Europe. The legislation and mechanisms to implement the same have proved ineffective, as could be observed from continuous migrant disasters like the one witnessed recently.

What next?

The disaster underlines a larger problem. Despite the risk of drowning, dehydration, starvation during the crossing, and abuse by smugglers/human traffickers, migrants opt for deadly journeys. There is a need for a larger debate at multiple levels and in different places. In the EU, among those countries that are used as entry points, in those countries in Africa, the migrants pursue their journey across the Mediterranean and also at the source countries - from the Middle East, South Asia and other regions.

UKRAINE

Counter-Offensive and Drone Attacks in Ukraine

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 10 June, Reuters reported on Russia's missile and drone strikes in Odessa and Kyiv, in the northwest region of the Black Sea and in Poltava, a city in central Ukraine. The drone attacks are considered to be the largest conducted by Russia in Kyiv so far.

On 10 June, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky announced that the counter-offensive was "underway." He stated: "Counter-offensive and defensive actions are taking place in Ukraine, but I will not say in detail what stage they are at."

On 12 June, Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar claimed Ukraine's advances in several villages in the southwest and southeast of the Donetsk region and south-eastern Zaporizhzhia region. Ukraine's general staff stated: "Over the last week in the Bakhmut direction, the Russian invaders suffered significant losses."

On 12 June, NATO allies conducted the largest air drill exercise in its history, "Air Defender," in Germany. The drill involved 10,000 personnel from the allied countries and 250 aircraft. According to a NATO spokesperson: "Air Defender sends a clear message that NATO is ready to defend every inch of Allied territory."

On 13 June, Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that Ukraine's counter-offensive had begun on 4 June and was unsuccessful due to heavy casualties. He stated that due to Ukraine's dependency on the West's weapons, its ability to produce locally had diminished, resulting in heavy losses in its counter-offensive.

Key issues

First, Ukraine's long-delayed counter-offensive. There were discussions of Ukraine's counter-offensive in April, with little action until early June. During April and May, there were several announcements from the West in delivering advanced missile systems and tanks, initiating a coalition to deliver fighter jets, and pledging other military support. Despite that, Ukraine could not advance in Bakhmut and did not launch its counter-offensive.

Second, Russia's emphasis on drone attacks. Before Kyiv began its counter-offensive, Russia frequently used drones and missiles to target Ukraine's cities. It is believed that Russia was using drones and missiles to compensate for the troops' low on-ground presence and Moscow's inability to replace its forces with Wagner troops in Bakhmut. Moscow's inability to enforce mobilization within Russia is also a reason for its emphasis on air attacks.

Third, the European and transatlantic support to Ukraine. Compared with Ukraine's November 2022 counter-offensive, in June 2023, the West's support - in terms of quantity and quality - has increased. This can be evidenced by UK's support for Storm Shadow missiles, Germany's and Eastern European countries' Leopard tanks, and multiple military packages declared by the US and the Nordic countries to Ukraine. Besides the direct military support, the NATO countries' joint drills in the North Sea, Germany, including massive personnel and advanced weapon systems, are seen as an indirect warning to Moscow. Russia's air attacks and the West's direct and indirect support seem to have been important factors in Ukraine's counter-offensive.

What next?

Ukraine's counter-offensive aims to make strategic gains. Losing Bakhmut to Russia has placed Ukraine in a disadvantageous position to launch its attacks from the North of Donetsk. This could be a reason why the offensive is concentrated in the southwest and southeast. Ukraine's counter-offensive can pressure Russia from the south to make strategic gains in the north.

REGIONAL

Belarus receives tactical nuclear weapons from Russia: Three issues

By Rishika Yadav

On 13 June, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko claimed on receiving some of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons. He emphasized the power of the Russian nuclear weapons as three times more potent

than the atomic bombs. Lukashenko clarified that he would consult with Russian President Vladimir Putin before using the weapons but expressed confidence in their coordination. Lukashenko justified the deployment as a deterrent against potential aggression. He added that Belarus was also preparing facilities for intercontinental nuclear-tipped missiles. Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine previously hosted Soviet nuclear weapons but relinquished them to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

On 25 March, Putin announced his plan to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus as a response to Britain's decision to supply Ukraine with armour-piercing rounds containing depleted uranium. These tactical nuclear weapons are designed for use on the battlefield, and have a shorter range and lower yield than long-range nuclear warheads. Russia will maintain control over the weapons deployed in Belarus, with storage facilities set to be completed by 01 July. Lukashenko also offered nuclear weapons to countries joining the union between Belarus and Russia. Lukashenko's remarks were made in response to Kazakhstan's president mentioning the sharing of nuclear weapons between Belarus and Russia.

Following are the three issues:

1. Domestic opposition to the deployment

If implemented, the plan to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus and involve Belarusian aircrew, would compromise the country's international commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. This deployment raises concerns among the Belarusians people due to its nuclear status which undermines the global non-proliferation regime. According to polls, 74 per cent of Belarusians oppose hosting Russian nuclear weapons. Critics of Lukashenko's regime, including exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, express concern about the transfer of nuclear weapons from Russia to Belarus. As the G7 leaders met to discuss nuclear disarmament, they urged the international community to support Belarus in maintaining its nuclear-free status by joining

the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

2. Risk for further escalation

Russia's plan to place the tactical weapon in Belarus comes in response to the increasing weapon support by the West to Ukraine. The presence of nuclear weapons in Belarus solidifies Russia's control over the country, threatening Ukraine's security and that of Europe. Through control, Russia will now be able to use it as storage while it instills fear in the west over nuclear armament. The tactical nuclear weapons, deployable through Iskander-M missiles or Su-25 planes, bring them closer to the conflict zone in Ukraine and potentially within range of NATO members. Putin also mentioned that Belarus has modernized military aircraft capable of carrying nuclear warheads and Iskander short-range missiles that could potentially launch nuclear weapons. Lukashenko commented: "I am not planning to fight the US... tactical weapons are fine." This move heightens tensions and draws international condemnation, raising concerns in the US and Europe.

3. Deepening reliance on Russia

Belarus served as a launching point for Russian troops during their incursion into Ukraine. Lukashenko disclosed plans to increase the production of unguided rockets for multiple rocket launchers. He has relied on Russia's political and economic support to withstand protests, arrests, and international sanctions. It is important to note that Lukashenko relies heavily on Putin's government, as demonstrated by Belarus allowing Moscow to use its territory for launching attacks on Ukraine last year. This decision widened the front against Ukraine and brought the conflict closer to its capital, Kyiv. Russia's beginning the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, further solidifying their alliance.

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Air Defender 23: A Symbol of NATO's Unity

By Prerana

On 12 June 2023, NATO officially launched the "Air Defender 23" military exercise in Germany, which will run until 23 June 2023. Around 25 NATO countries will participate in the 12-day training drill, which includes more than 250 aircraft and 10,000 personnel deployed from their respective countries. The authorities will supervise the effectiveness of the cargo and fuel flights, both of which are used by Ukraine's troops in Kyiv's war against Russia. This drill is considered the largest air deployment in the bloc's history. The main objective behind the drill is to protect its member nations against drones, and cruise artilleries attacks within the NATO territory. German General, Gerhartz stated that the primary purpose of the drill is to showcase the unity among the NATO force against Russian aggression and to provide reassurance to the member

countries, in defending their territory from upcoming conflicts.

A brief background

NATO exercises focus on the dynamic structure of different variants like systems, map exercise, communication, ground work, capacity analysis and air space training. These exercises contribute immensely on the improvised version of defense reforms. NATO has conducted several air drills since February 2022 till date.

On 14 March, NATO organized a massive military drill named "Cold Response 2022" in Norway, which was exercised till 1 April 2022. It was an edition of 220 aircraft defence strategy, held in Norway. On 7 June, a US held Naval force held an annual naval exercise in the Baltic Sea along with its member allies. It received a high amount of participation from the Sweden force. On 23 September, NATO introduced the first unmanned Maritime systems exercise, which was held in the Portugal Maritime Operational Experimentation Centre, Portugal. With around 1,500 personnel, the unmanned system came to a halt on 30 September 2022. NATO holds the largest annual cyber defence exercise named Cyber Coalition 2022, which began its training on 28 November 2022 and wrapped up on 2 December 2022. This challenges the cyber threat and various advanced infrastructural attacks, which can cause disruption to the NATO force and to its allies. It acts as an experimental campaign which collaborates with various stakeholders and organizations. The exercise is followed by the latest drill named Arctic Challenge Exercise 2023 (ACE 2023). It holds the notable multinational host nations, which include the Air Forces of Finland, Norway and Sweden. The Air Defender 2023 holds the historical impressions of being the largest air force deployment with essential transatlantic solidarity.

Air drills: Location and its equipment

The air crafts from the joined countries will be stationed on several essential air bases, like Jagel Airbase in Germany and the operations are held at three main hubs which includes Schleswig/Hohn, Wunstorf and Lechfeld located in the northern, lower

Saxony and the eastern parts of Germany respectively, while other training events will focus on the ground troops and evacuation missions. The groundwork training areas can extend over northern Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, western Pomeranian region and the Baltic Sea. The Fighter planes used include US F-35 stealth jets F-15s and F-16s, Turkey, US and Greece, Eurofighters from Spain and the UK, German Tornados, US and Finnish F/A-18s, Hungarian Gripens and US A-10 ground-attack jets. The drill focuses on two major activities which includes NATO Air Policing and NATO Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD). NATO Air Policing contributes the strong solidarity among Allies and acts as a shield to the Baltic members, which do not possess the required aircraft. While NATO (BMD) shields the populations and the territories from a varied proliferation of ballistic missiles.

Significance of the drills

The Air Defender exercise is led by the German Air Force, and the country also manages the air operations. The drill signifies the alliance's promptness in reassessing its priorities. The NATO members of the Baltic region, located in north-eastern Europe, are concerned about the Russian invasion and its massive impact on them. Ukraine has received strong supporters in Eastern Europe, which includes Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland etc. The exercise would further address the ongoing tension in the Baltic region. This multi-national military exercise holds a strong political and notable military significance in the Air Force record and highlights Article 5 of the NATO treaty, which features an essential concept of collective defence. Ukraine has received influential IRIS-T (medium range air defence) and Patriot missile defence systems from their partners in combating the ongoing attack. The Air Defender drill acts as an offensive and defensive exercise. Controlling the airspace remains the key element of a successful military, and Ukraine would soon deploy its troop in order to adapt such qualitative technologies.

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EU Reform on Asylum Migration

By Rishika Yadav

On 08 June, the European Council agreed on regulating the asylum procedure and migration management. The purpose of these two regulations, Asylum Procedure Regulation (APR) and Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR), is to simplify and create standardized procedures for member states during the processing of asylum applications. This is done to safeguard the rights of asylum seekers and prevent any misuse of the system. Earlier, in September 2020, the Council of Europe introduced the comprehensive New Pact on Migration and Asylum. The new regulations of June 2023, form a part of its updating the original ones.

A brief about the 2023 regulation

The 08 June regulations introduce mandatory border procedures to assess the validity of applications at the EU's external borders. They reduce the total duration of the asylum and return border procedure to six months. The current Dublin regulation of 2013 (an EU law on the rules about which country should assess your application for international protection), which determines the member state responsible for asylum applications, will be replaced by the AMMR, simplifying the rules and shortening time limits. A new solidarity mechanism is

proposed to address the disproportionate burden on certain member states, allowing for mandatory solidarity contributions, such as relocation or financial support. Measures are also included to prevent abuse by asylum seekers and discourage secondary movements. The agreement introduces charges of EUR 20,000 per head for member countries that refuse to host and accept relocated migrants, aiming to address the burden-sharing issue.

Opposition from Hungary, Poland and other states:

Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Malta, and Slovakia, either expressed reservations or chose to abstain from voting on the deal. This suggests that they may be opposed to certain aspects of the reforms or have concerns about them. Byron Camilleri, the Minister of Home Affairs of Malta, emphasized that Valletta has unique vulnerabilities and circumstances that differ from other member states. Some countries argue that mandatory redistribution of refugees is impractical due to migrants' preference for settling in North European countries. They fear EU quotas will encourage further migration and view the proposals as an infringement of national sovereignty. Concerns over social tensions, far-right political parties, and the difficulty of integrating migrants from Arab and Muslim countries underpin their opposition. Public opinion in the Visegrad states (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) strongly opposes both enforced quotas and receiving migrants. Poland voiced its criticism of the payments for member countries, referring to them as "fines," and expressed its unwillingness to support a deal that it perceived as "impracticable and detrimental."

Focus on excluding children and unaccompanied minors:

Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Portugal advocate EU migration laws to provide better protection for children and unaccompanied minors. The EU has established various measures and outlined crucial steps to ensure the protection of all migrant children, including those who are alone or separated from their families. Unaccompanied minors, in particular, are

highly vulnerable, warranting distinct rules and regulations that differ from those applied to adult refugees or child refugees accompanied by their parents in Germany.

Calls for continued efforts to address the Mediterranean crisis:

While the 08 June agreement is seen as a significant step, there are calls to continue working to prevent tragedies in the Mediterranean, where many migrants have lost their lives attempting dangerous crossings. Moreover, on 16 June, rescue efforts in the Mediterranean dwindled, with more bodies than survivors found from a sunken fishing trawler carrying over 500 people. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed the urgency to act, emphasizing the need to stabilize Tunisia's economy, manage migration, and finalize EU asylum rule reforms. The tragic incident contrasts with the response of former President José Manuel Barroso a decade ago. EU leaders will discuss von der Leyen's plans, but political obstacles persist, hindering equitable refugee sharing. The focus remains on preventing migrant entries, despite a significant increase in unauthorized attempts. Von der Leyen emphasizes limiting irregular departures, fighting smuggling, and establishing comprehensive partnerships with third countries. The New Pact on Migration and Asylum is a work in progress, offering partial agreement but facing potential complications. Saving lives at sea is not a top priority, with the EU responding only to emergency distress calls.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

State of the Climate in Europe 2022: Four Takeaways

By Akriti Sharma

On 19 June, the "State of the Climate in Europe 2022" report was published jointly by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

and the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (EUCCCS). The report underlines the new increase in temperature that Europe recorded in 2022 and its impact on the socio-economic fabric of the region. It reveals that Europe is the fastest-warming continent, and 2022 has been a dreadful year.

Following are the four major takeaways of the report.

1. The rising regional temperature anomalies in land, sea, and rivers

Europe has recorded high temperatures for a decade, making it the fastest-warming continent, with temperatures rising at double the global average rate. In July, the UK recorded 40 degrees Celsius for the first time. The second warmest year recorded for the region was 2022, which was 0.9 degrees Celsius warmer than average. The average sea temperature was much higher, resulting in a heatwave in the Mediterranean Sea. Rivers recorded a below-average discharge; soil moisture was the second lowest in the last 50 years. In 2022, precipitation levels were 21-28 per cent, much less than average, and the year was 10 per cent drier. The Italian Alps were the worst affected, with below-average snowfall. In the Arctic, the Svalbard region recorded 1.4 degrees Celsius above average and up to 2.5 degrees Celsius locally.

2. Increase in extreme weather events

With exceptionally warm and dry conditions, extreme weather events were on the rise. Wildfires and droughts were common during the year. They resulted in the loss of vegetation and higher wildfire emissions. In total, 9,00,000 ha of forests were burnt in the EU countries. In 2022, Europe recorded 40 meteorological, hydrological, and climate-related hazards resulting in 16,365 reported

fatalities and 156,000 people directly affected. Out of the total extreme weather events, 67 per cent were flood- and storm-related, leading to total economic damages of about USD two billion, much less than the USD 50 billion total in 2021.

3. Record-breaking melting of glaciers and ice sheets

The European Alps recorded the loss of ice glaciers by five square kilometres of area, which is 5.4 times the height of the Eiffel Tower. The Alpine ice loss was due to a lack of winter snow and the warmer summers. However, in 2022, glaciers in southwestern Scandinavia benefitted from the above-average number of winter snow days, witnessing a slight gain in ice.

4. The renewable energy sector is a hopeful solution

The report specifically focussed on the renewable energy sector due to its potential for low-carbon energy transitions. It highlighted the significance of solar, wind, and nuclear energy as a solution to Europe's climate crisis. The EU has agreed to increase the binding renewable energy target from 32 per cent to at least 42.5 per cent by 2030. However, there is still a long way to go to achieve these goals. The report also highlights the use of climate services and their role in achieving net zero.

In perspective

The impact of climate change in Europe is visibly increasing and affecting the water-food-energy security of the region. Weather anomalies are an alarm for the impending climate crisis. One of the most affected industries is the food and winter tourism industry. The region must be prepared enough to address and manage more intense impacts of climate change in the future, and this demands special attention from all sections of society, including the EU, national governments, and civil society.

Being one of the primary greenhouse gas emitters and the fastest warming region, Europe has no choice but to step up its climate action. Even though the report only focuses on the renewable energy sector as a hopeful solution to the crisis, climate adaptation is necessary, and devising adaptation strategies and plans is equally important.

War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan, Rishika Yadav, Sreeja JS, Nithyashree RB, and Melvin George



Source: Associated Press, president.gov.ua, GCIS/Reuters, Sergei Savostianov/TASS, Eurasian Times, Deutsch Welle

War in Ukraine: Day 491

War on the Ground:

On 29 June, according to Hanna Malyar, Deputy Minister of Defence of Ukraine the Defence Forces' offensive operation in Melitopol, Berdiansk, and Bakhmut directions is making progress. The troops are engaged in fierce battles, seizing Russian-held territory. Meanwhile, Russia's unsuccessful offensive continues in Lyman, Avdiivka, and Marinka directions. Ukraine's troops are successfully consolidating their positions in Rivnopil-Volodymyr, inflicting significant losses on Russia. Russia is mobilizing reserves, including a marine brigade that previously fled Kherson. Ukraine's forces have made advances of 1300 meters in Berdiansk, intercepted the operational initiative in Bakhmut, and made progress in Klishchivka and Kurdiuvivka directions.

On 29 June, *Ukrinform* reported on a video posted by the Ukraine's State Border Guard Service. As shown in the video, Ukraine's border guard officers successfully targeted

and destroyed Russia's infantry group and ammunition depot using mortar fire, in the Bakhmut direction.

On 29 June, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, expressed gratitude and highlighted the heroic efforts of Ukraine's soldiers on the frontline against Russia's aggression. He emphasized that Russia's weakness is essential for Ukraine's and Europe's security, urging continued support and defence cooperation. Zelenskyy praised the EU's sanctions policy and called for strengthened measures to prevent Russia from evading sanctions.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 29 June, *RT news* reported on the comments on the Wagner Group by MP Andrey Kartapolov, head of the Russia's Duma's Defence Committee. According to him, the Wagner Group, which launched an insurrection last week, was the only military formation that had declined to sign a contract with the Russia's Defence Ministry.

* 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.

Kartapolov stated that the Defence Ministry has mandated all military groups to sign contracts, with Wagner being the exception. Consequently, Moscow's authorities informed Wagner that it would no longer receive financial or material resources, leading to its exclusion from the military campaign in Ukraine. Kartapolov attributed the group's actions to a combination of defunding threats, ambitious aspirations, and emotional agitation.

On 29 June, *RT news* reported on the comments made by Apty Alaudinov, commander of the Chechen special force 'Akhmat' of Russia on Russia 1 TV. He stated that Ukraine's recent offensive has failed to breach any of Moscow's defensive lines.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 29 June, *Reuters* reported on the recent satellite imagery from the European Space Agency's Sentinel 2 satellites captured on 27 June. They reveal the rapid construction of new facilities at a military base southeast of Minsk, Belarus, indicating the potential establishment of a base for Wagner, the Russia's mercenary company involved in a failed mutiny. Reports suggest Wagner's leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, arrived in Belarus and intends to utilize a vacant military facility near Asipovichy, approximately 90 km (50 miles) from Minsk. Images show the emergence of long structures in the nearby village of Tsel, an area that appeared empty on 14 June. The construction's purpose remains unverified.

On 29 June, *BBC* reported that following the mutiny that raised concerns of civil war, the Wagner Group continues to recruit fighters across Russia. Contacting numerous recruitment centers, using a Russian phone number and claiming to inquire on behalf of a brother, it was confirmed that recruitment operations are ongoing.

On 29 June, *nato.int* reported that at the invitation of Charles Michel, President of European Council, Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO Secretary General participated in the European Council meeting. During the meeting, the Secretary General commended the strong partnership between NATO and the EU, emphasizing its unprecedented level.

This partnership plays a crucial role in supporting Ukraine and addressing other pressing challenges. The Secretary General welcomed the cooperation between NATO and the EU concerning critical infrastructure resilience, as well as the release of the assessment report by the NATO-EU Task Force. He expressed gratitude to the European Commission and the European External Action Service for their collaborative efforts in producing the report, which outlines practical measures to enhance cooperation.

On 29 June, *Euronews* reported that EU member states bordering Belarus called for increased solidarity from both the EU and NATO regarding the presence of the Wagner mercenary group and the potential risk of infiltration into their countries. Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš, the Prime Minister of Latvia, expressed concern over the trained fighters joining Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Wagner leader, and emphasized the need for heightened border awareness and control. Poland has urged the EU to fund enhanced border security. Gitanas Nausėda, President of Lithuania, expressed extreme concern, referring to the fighters as potential threats. These developments highlight the importance of NATO strengthening its eastern flank.

The Global Fallout: Implications of the War

On 29 June, the IMF completed the first review of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for Ukraine, allowing the country to access approximately USD 890 million for budget support. The EFF, approved in March 2023, is part of a USD 115 billion support package for Ukraine. The IMF reported that despite challenging conditions, Ukraine has made significant progress in meeting its commitments under the EFF. Continued commitment to reforms and ownership of the program is crucial for macroeconomic stability, institutional improvements, and support for reconstruction efforts, as well as Ukraine's path to EU accession. Ukraine's economy has shown resilience, and efforts to maintain stability and secure external financing need to continue.

On 29 June, *Anadolu Ajansi* reported that

Gustavo Petro, the President of Colombia, announced that his government would lodge a diplomatic protest with Russia following a missile attack in Kramatorsk, Ukraine, that injured three Colombian citizens and claimed the lives of 11 people. The victims, including Sergio Jaramillo, a former chief peace negotiator, Hector Abad Faciolince, a writer and Catalina Gómez Ángel, a journalist, were in Ukraine for a book fair. Petro condemned Russia's actions and called for the safe return of the Colombians.

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War in Ukraine: Day 490

War on the Ground:

On 28 June, *Ukrinform* reported on the unannounced visit of Poland's President Andrzej Duda and Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda to Kyiv. According to the same, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy discussed the "active actions" of Ukraine's troops on the frontlines, preparations for the upcoming NATO Summit in Vilnius, European integration and the Peace Formula summit.

On 28 June, *Ukrinform* reported on the intense fighting in Lyman, Bakhmut and Marinka. General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine announced that the Air Force launched 18 strikes against Russia's missile systems while destroying six reconnaissance UAVs. According to the same report, the military overpowered a Russia's command post, two Buk missile systems, and four personnel, ammunition, and military equipment.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 28 June, *RT News* reported on Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko countered the child abduction accusation in Donbas. According to him, Minsk is co-sponsoring the rehabilitation program for the minors affected by the war. According to RT News, he was referring to the humanitarian program led by Aleksey Talay, a Belarusian businessman and Paralympian who lost all his limbs during World War II.

On 27 June, according to *meduza.io*, 10 people were killed and around 60 people were injured in the Russia's Iskander missiles' strike in Kramatorsk, Donetsk. The main strike hit the centre of Kramatorsk, destroying a popular restaurant, 18 high-rise buildings, 65 private homes, five schools, two kindergartens, a shopping centre, and a hotel. The second strike hit a private home in Bilenke injuring five residents. Three Colombian citizens were injured in the restaurant. Zelenskyy called the missile strikes "terror" by Russia's troops, says *meduza.io*. The Security Service of

Ukraine had detained an agent of the Russia's special services who coordinated the attack on the pizzeria. The search and rescue operations are underway with rescuers admitting there may be people under the rubble.

On 28 June, the tenth interregional forum of Russia and Belarus was held in Bashrika. Russia's President Vladimir Putin in his video statement highlighted the growing cooperation between Russia and Belarus and the integration processes within the Union State framework. He noted that the cooperation agreements and commercial contracts signed in the forum would accelerate the economic development and the interconnectedness of the two countries. Emphasizing the trade relations with Belarus, Putin added that the bilateral trade has increased by 12 per cent and it exceeded RUB three trillion; between January and February 2023, it added another 11 per cent. This boost occurred due to the integration processes aimed at removing trade and administrative barriers, linking the laws of two countries in the economic and social spheres and coordinating the national development tasks.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 28 June, the UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update reported that on the previous strike by Ukraine's Armed Forces on the Chonhar road bridges between Crimea and Russia-occupied Kherson Oblast. These bridges were a crucial road supply route between Crimea and Kerson, connecting Russia's Crimean logistics hub and Zaporizhzhia.

On 28 June, *Reuters* reported that the US has imposed sanctions on four companies in the UAE, Central African Republic and Russia accused of having connections with the Wagner Group and its head Yevgeny Prigozhin. The US Department of Treasury added that these companies were engaged in illicit gold dealings to fund Wagner group to sustain and expand its armed forces in Ukraine and some African countries. Treasury's Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence commented that the US would continue to target the revenue sources of the Wagner. The Treasury has

imposed sanctions also on Andrey Nikolayevich Ivanov, accused of being an executive in Wagner group actively engaged in illicit activities in Mali. According to *Reuters*, the Wagner group did not respond to the allegations by the US.

On 28 June, *The Guardian* reported on NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's comments on Prigozhin's arrival in Belarus. He was quoted saying that NATO is prepared to defend itself against any attack from "Moscow or Minsk." Additionally, the alliance has increased its military presence in the eastern flanks and the leaders would take decisions to strengthen its collective defence capabilities in the upcoming summit in July. According to the report in the *The Guardian* Stoltenberg also cautioned that the West "must not underestimate Russia" and continue supporting Ukraine against the invasion.

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War in Ukraine: Day 488

War on the Ground:

On 26 June, Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar wrote on telegram that Ukraine's defence forces have gained "tactical success" in the east. She noted that Russia's forces are engaged in an offensive in Lymansky, Bakhmutsky, Avdiyivskiy and Marinskyi. Meanwhile, Ukraine's defence forces began counter-offensive in Orekhovo-Vasylivna, Bakhmut, Bohdanivka, Yagidne, Klishchivka, and Kurdyumivka. In southern Ukraine, counter-offensive continues in Melitopol and Berdyansk, increasing the regained area up to 17 kilometres. Tauri witnessed 148 intense Russian attacks. She also said that Ukraine's defence forces have regained Rivnopil, a village in southeastern Ukraine.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 26 June, *RT News* reported on the Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu's visit to the forward command post of the 'West' grouping of forces engaged in the war in Ukraine. According to the statement released by the Defence Ministry, Shoigu assessed the situation in the frontline and noted the effectiveness of Russia's forces operating in Kharkov, says *RT News*. He also held discussions with the commander of the grouping, Colonel General Evgeny Nikiforov.

On 26 June, *meduza.io*, quoting *TASS*, reported that the recruitment centre for Wagner Group in Novosibirsk and Tyumen has resumed work. The advertisement posters removed on 24 June were hung again. The PMC Wagner Center in St. Petersburg also resumed working, says *meduza.io*, the confiscated computers are also being returned.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 27 June, according to the *Financial Times*, Germany raised objections to the European Commission's plans to raid frozen Russia's central bank assets for Ukraine's reconstruction. The European Commission plans to raise billions of euros by requiring financial institutions holding immobilized Russia's assets to share profits for Ukraine reconstruction. *Financial Times* reported

that Berlin and other capitals have called for further reflection over the ideas due to the financial and legal risks it poses. EU spokesperson Christian Wigand said that EU leaders' summit in Brussels will provide further guidance on channelling Russia's central bank assets to support Ukraine. The report also highlighted Canada's support for the proposal.

On 26 June, the European Council decided to increase the European Peace Facility's overall financial ceiling by EUR 3.5 billion, aiming to ensure long-term financial sustainability and predictability. The overall financial ceiling now totals more than EUR 12 billion (in current prices) following the decision. The EPF, established in March 2021, aims to finance actions to strengthen non-EU countries and regional organizations in military and defence matters. The EU has been supporting the Ukraine's Armed Forces through seven support packages along with several other European and African countries.

On 26 June, the UK Defence Ministry in its update, Ukraine's progress in the northern and southern flanks of Bakhmut. According to the update, Russia lacks significant ground forces reserves to counter multiple threats from Bakhmut to the eastern bank of Dnipro River.

On 26 June, the Danish government started the training of Ukraine's pilots on F-16 jets, says AP. Minister of Economy Lund Poulsen said that Denmark is also considering a donation of F-16 fighters to Ukraine.

On 26 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Germany's Foreign Minister Anna Baerbock's upcoming visit to South Africa on 27 June. The visit would focus on discussing South African stance on the Ukraine war and how the country can contribute to end Russia's aggression and uphold the UN Charter. She said: "When the country of Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu raises his voice against injustice, the world listens." She hailed the peace initiative of President Cyril Ramaphosa and commented that the delegation "made it clear that the brutal war in Europe also affects Africa."

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War in Ukraine: Day 486 & 487

War on the Ground

On 24 June, Ukraine's air defence reported on a missile strike in Kyiv and Kharkiv. According to the report, 20 such missiles were destroyed in the airspace in Kyiv. Apart from the two cities, northern Sumy and Poltava and Dnipro were also subject to missile attacks.

On 24 June, Ukraine reported on the meeting held in Denmark to discuss its peace formula. According to an Agence France Presse spokesperson, the meeting aimed at a "lasting peace" for Ukraine. During the meeting, Ukraine was reported to have stressed the US to motivate Brazil, India, and South Africa to attend.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 24 June, the Wagner group marched (calling it "March for Justice") towards Moscow after claiming to have captured Rostov-on-Don. They accused Russia's army of attacking them.

During 24-25 June, in response to the Wagner's revolt, Russia implemented "anti-terror" measures by keeping combat-ready and imposed travel restrictions to protect civilians. The Wagner group was reported to have seized Rostov's military headquarters and exited through the Voronezh area upon the deal signed in the mediation of Belarus. The Voronezh governor said regular activities resumed after the Wagner troop's exit. Later, the Foreign Ministry of Russia reported on China's interest in standing for Russia in case of a revolt by the Wagner group.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 24 June, Germany announced sending Ukraine 45 Gepard anti-aircraft tanks by the end of 2023. According to the plan, 15 will be delivered by Germany and 30 with the support of the US.

On 25 June, on the Wagner revolt, US spokesperson Antony Blinken stated that the tension revealed the "cracks in the Russian façade." He said: "It may be that Putin didn't want to debase himself to the level of negotiating directly with Prigozhin." On the same day, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the death of 13 to 20 Russian soldiers in the Wagner revolt destruction of six helicopters by the Wagner fighters.

On 25 June, Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda warned over the presence of the Wagner group in Belarus. He said that the ambiguity over the plans of the Wagner group in Belarus necessitates the strengthening of the eastern European borders.

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War in Ukraine: Day 484

War on the Ground:

On 22 June, *Ukrinform* reported that the Chongar Bridge that connects Crimea with mainland Ukraine was struck, blocking the traffic. According to *Ukrinform* Crimean Governor Serhii Aksonov said on Telegram that no casualties were reported.

On 22 June, according to *president.gov.ua*, Zelenskyy said: "Russia is considering a scenario of a terrorist attack at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant."

On 20 June, Ukraine's Military Intelligence Chief Kyrylo Budanov told national television that the nuclear plant was additionally mined, including the cooling pond. He added that if Russia's forces blow it up, it could lead to significant problems.

On 22 June, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba remarked that the best way to prevent tragedies is to provide Kyiv with all the necessary ammunition to expel Russia's forces from Ukraine's territory. IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said that they are following the matter with great attention.

On 22 June, according to *The Kyiv Independent*, the Ukraine's forces made gains in the south and east directions and advanced up to one kilometre in Melitopol and Berdiansk. A spokesperson for Ukraine's Military Valeriy Shershen remarked that the towns of Avdiivka and Marinka witnessed intense fighting and Ukraine's forces have not lost their positions in these areas. According to Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar, Ukraine's forces slightly advanced near Lyman in northern Donetsk between the towns of Dibrova and Bilohirivka.

On 22 June, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on the overnight missile attacks in Ukraine by Russia. According to *The Kyiv*

Independent, Russia sent three Kh-22 cruise missiles and four loitering munitions overnight. Ukraine's military reported downing three Shahid kamikaze drones over Odesa. The Air Force also reported that Russia's forces missed their targets in Dnipropetrovsk, says *The Kyiv Independent*.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 22 June, *RT News* reported that IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi denied the Ukraine's government's claim that the cooling pond of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is rigged with mines.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 22 June, *Politico* reported on German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's comment that the upcoming NATO Summit must focus on strengthening Ukraine's military power instead of starting the process for Kyiv to join NATO. He further added that EU and G7 countries would work parallelly to provide "effective and long-lasting security guarantees" for Ukraine. He said that Germany would continue to support Ukraine "for as long as is necessary" and would increase defence expenditure. According to *Deutsche Welle*, he said that German military and economic aid to Ukraine totalled EUR 16.8 billion which clearly shows that Germany stands firmly at Ukraine's side.

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War in Ukraine: Day 481

War on the Ground:

On 18 June, the Ukraine's Main Intelligence Directorate accused Russia for continuing its nuclear blackmail tactics, utilizing the occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and potentially the territory of Belarus for the placement of Russia's nuclear weapons. According to a spokesperson Andriy Yusov, the occupation authorities no longer ensure nuclear safety standards at the Zaporizhzhia plant. This involves the presence of forces, weapons, shelling, and petrifying of power plant personnel. Yusov stated that the safety of these facilities, including environmental and nuclear safety, can only be guaranteed when they are under Ukraine's control. The threat persists as long as Russia's troops remain in the occupied territories.

On 19 June, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak held a phone conversation on hostility situation and defence requirements of Ukraine. They focused on enhancing the capabilities of the Ukraine's army, particularly through the acquisition of long-range weapons. Zelenskyy also highlighted Russia's increased missile production using western components and stressed on intensifying sanctions.

On 19 June, *Ukrinform* reported on Ukraine's Deputy Minister of Defence Hanna Maliar comments on increased Russia's troops presence. According to the report, the Russia's forces were trying to advance in the Lyman and Kupiansk directions. The Russia has concentrated a significant number of airborne assault units in the eastern region. Maliar highlighted the challenging situation in the east, with the Russia's conducting an active offensive, intensifying shelling, and aiming to reach the borders of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The main direction of attack for Russia currently lies in this area. Despite, Russia's offensive Ukraine's troops have successfully preventing Russia's advancement.

The Moscow View: Claims of Russia

On 19 June, *RT news* reported on South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa comments on his visit to Ukraine and Russia. According to the report, the delegation presented a ten-point roadmap to Putin and Zelensky, aiming to end the ongoing conflict. The proposal included de-escalation of hostilities, respect for sovereignty under the UN charter, unrestricted grain exports, prisoner releases, and repatriation of children. While Zelenskyy emphasized the need for the withdrawal of Russia's forces from occupied territories, Russia's President Vladimir Putin expressed a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue based on equity and the recognition of legitimate interests. Russia's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov acknowledged the implementable ideas in the roadmap and confirmed continued dialogue with African countries.

On 19 June, *RT news* reported on Russia's Foreign Ministry's spokesperson comments on the progress of stationing tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. According to the report, stationing of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus has no specified time limits. The initial shipment of nuclear warheads has already arrived in Belarus. The agreement took into account the "destructive practices" of joint nuclear missions by NATO members. Polishchuk emphasized that unlike the US warheads in Europe, Russia's weapons would be situated near their own borders and within the Union State of Russia and Belarus. While the possibility of withdrawing the weapons from Belarus exists, Moscow would only consider it if the US removed its nuclear infrastructure from Europe. The director of the Russia's Foreign Ministry's second department of CIS countries, Alexei Polishchuk, said: "Russia's decision was a response to what they perceive as aggressive actions by the US and NATO."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 19 June, the UK Ministry of Defence in its daily intelligence update noted that Russia started redeploying its Dnipro Group of Forces (DGF) in Zaporizhzhia and Bakhmut. DGF was previously deployed in the eastern

bank of the Dnipro River. According to the Ministry, redeployment reflects Russia's perception that a Ukraine's counteroffensive across the Dnipro is less likely to occur after the Kakhovka Dam collapse and the flooding.

On 19 June, *Reuters* reported on Swedish Parliamentary defence committee's concerns over deteriorating security in the nordic. According to the report the defence and security policy of Sweden should be designed to deal with Russia, which might pose a long-term threat to European and global security. Prerequisites of a Sweden's defence policy had changed due to the Ukrain war, but according to Sweden's Defence Minister Pal Jonson, Sweden was in a "better position" to protect itself compared to a decade earlier. According to Sweden's armed forces chief, it needs more equipment, personnel, and infrastructure to strengthen its defence.

On 19 June, according to *AP*, Russia had means, motive and opportunity to destroy Kakhovka Dam. According to the report, from the exclusive drone photos and information collected, Russia's troops were stationed in the area inside the dam where Ukraine reported on the explosion. Additionally, the photos showed an explosive-laden car atop the structure that might have exploded or not. The Institute for the Study of War also assessed: "The balance of evidence, reasoning and rhetoric suggests that the Russians deliberately damaged the dam."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 19 June, *Nikkei Asia* reported that Japan has agreed to establish a liaison system that will help Ukraine to reconstruct areas damaged because of Russian invasion. Japan's reconstruction minister Hiromichi Watanabe and Ukraine's Deputy Minister for Restoration of Ukraine also signed and MoU regarding the reconstruction support initiative. *Nikkei Asia* also said that Tokyo at the request of Ukraine, intends to advice and provide knowledge to Kyiv on rebuilding devastated regions based on the experience it gained from the earthquake and Tsunami that hit northern Japan in 2011.

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War in Ukraine: Day 479 & 480

African leaders' delegation visited Kyiv War on the Ground:

On 17 June, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on the African leaders' delegation that visited Kyiv to present a peace plan to end the war. Mykhailo Podolyak, an advisor to Ukraine's Presidential Office, was of the opinion that the leaders were more absorbed in suspending the arrest warrant issued against Russia's President Putin by the ICC on 17 March.

On 16 June, *Ukrinform* reported that South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa introduced the African Peace Mission's ten-point peace plan during the visit. The plan called for an end to the war and peace restoration through diplomatic talks. However, Ukraine President Zelensky answered that peace talks would transpire only after the complete withdrawal of Russia's troops from Ukraine's soil.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 18 June, *RT* reported on the statements made by the chairperson of the Zambian Socialist Party that the involvement of African nations in the Ukraine peace initiative was an indication of the African continent's influence in global affairs. An African delegation made official visits to Ukraine and Russia, meeting with the heads of both states. The delegation, which included the Presidents of South Africa, Senegal, Zambia and Comoros, the PM of Egypt, and officials from Congo and Uganda,

introduced a 10-point roadmap to end fighting between the two countries. During his interaction with them, Putin informed the African officials that Kyiv was indisposed to talks, whereas Moscow had “never refused to conduct negotiations.”

On 17 June, African leaders met Putin in Saint Petersburg a day after concluding their talks with Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa said that the delegation respect the positions of both sides while calling for negotiations to end the war. According to *Deutsche Welle*, Putin welcomed the “balanced stance” on the conflict in Ukraine taken by the delegation. He also said that Moscow is “open to a constructive dialogue with all those who want peace based on the principles of justice and consideration of the legitimate interests of the parties.”

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 18 June, *The New York Times* reported that the Kakhovka Dam collapse was likely the result of an explosion set off by Russia. An article titled, “An Inside Job,” in *The New York Times*, suggested that the explosive charge set deep in the structure of the concrete barrier destroyed the dam on 06 June. The dam collapse flooded the battleground and destroyed farmland and cut off water supplies to civilians.

On 18 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported that EU Commissioner responsible for the bloc’s internal market Thierry Barton in an interview with *Le Parisien* said that the EU would step up their efforts to hasten the delivery of arms and ammunition to Ukraine.

On 18 June, the UK Defence Ministry, in its latest intelligence update, highlighted the intense fighting in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, western Donetsk Oblast, and around Bakhmut, where Ukraine has made small advances. According to the update, Russia’s forces are conducting “relatively effective” defensive operations in the South. It also emphasized that both sides are suffering high casualties, and Russian losses are likely the highest since the peak of the battle for Bakhmut in March.

On 18 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Britain would host the International Ukraine Recovery Conference 2023 on 21 June. The Summit hosted by both UK and Ukraine would aim to unlock the potential of the private sector to help make the war-torn nation “financially stronger” and more technologically advanced.”

On 17 June, the UK Defence Ministry said in its daily intelligence update that Russia has stepped up its helicopter attacks as Ukraine began its counteroffensive. Russia has deployed an additional 20 military helicopters to the Berdyansk Airport, which is about 100 kilometres from the front line. It also mentioned the possible temporary advantage Moscow gained in Southern Ukraine as its attack helicopters could launch longer-range missiles against Ukraine’s ground targets.

On 17 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported that NATO defence ministers endorsed plans for a new maritime centre to secure the critical underwater infrastructure at NATO’s naval headquarters in Northwood, near London. The facility would contain a new surveillance system of undersea data cables and pipelines responsible for monitoring alliance areas in the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea. According to *Deutsche Welle*, the new facility could also prevent attacks on energy infrastructure.

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War in Ukraine: Day 477

War on the Ground:

On 15 June, *Ukrinform* reported Russian missile attacks in Kryvyi Rih in the Dnipropetrovsk region at night. Two

industrial enterprises got hit, and the production facilities were significantly damaged. Ukraine's air defence forces shot down one missile, and the soldiers of the Air Command East destroyed five Shahed-131/136 drones.

On 15 June, *The Kyiv Independent* reported that Ukraine's forces gained up to one kilometre in the eastern and southern directions. According to Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy, the Ukraine's military is progressing near Vuhledar in Eastern Donetsk. Ukraine's forces have made limited success so far. According to *The Kyiv Independent*, Ukraine's forces have liberated seven settlements in Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts over the past week reclaiming more than 100 kilometres. They have also advanced up to three kilometres to the south of Velyka Novosilka in Donetsk Oblast.

On 15 June, in an interview with NBC News, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia is putting up a desperate fight against Ukraine's counteroffensive and if the Russia's troops lose this campaign, it would mean losing the war, reports NBC News. He added that the news from the front lines is "generally positive, but it is very difficult."

On 15 June, Zelenskyy addressed the Federal Assembly and the people of the Swiss Federation. He said, "Ukrainian land is a territory of peace," and "the cause of aggression is outside our borders." He expressed his gratitude towards Switzerland for not remaining indifferent to the Russian invasion and for supporting the joint European sanctions against Russia. He also invited Swiss citizens to join the preparation of the Global Peace Summit as part of Ukraine's Peace Formula.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 15 June, *RT* reported that Russia's Central Election Commission (CEC) would conduct elections in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions on Russia's Single Voting Day, scheduled on 10 September.

On 14 June, Russia's Minister for the

Development of the Far East and the Arctic Aleksey Chekunkov during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum told *RT* that the Arctic is crucial for the future of Russia's economy. He said: "The Arctic and the Far East are a treasure trove. The Arctic is where the future economy of Russia is being built. What happens today in the Arctic and the Far East will serve many generations of Russians." He also stressed that Russia is engaged in developing infrastructure in the Northern Sea Route.

On 15 June, during a joint press conference with Algeria's President AbdelMadjid Tebboune, Putin stated that Russia's contacts with African countries now are more intensive than ever. He also said that he would meet the leaders of several other African countries to discuss Ukraine's Peace initiative in the coming days.

The West View: Responses from US and Europe

On 15 June, the UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update mentioned the Russian Ministry of Defence's demand that the members of "volunteer formations" like Wagner Group sign contracts with the Ministry. It noted Wagner Group head Yevgeny Prigozhin's decision that the group would not sign the contracts. According to the UK Ministry of Defence, Prigozhin's rhetoric is evolving into defiance of broader sections of the Russian establishment.

On 15 June, according to a press release in GOV.UK the defence ministries of Denmark, Netherlands, the UK and the US Department of Defence are partnering to deliver air defence equipment to Ukraine. According to the press release, the delivery of equipment has already begun and would be complete within several weeks.

On 15 June, NATO Defence Ministers met in Brussels ahead of the Vilnius Summit in early July. While addressing the NATO-Ukraine Commission, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that NATO Allies should continue increasing equipment delivery to Kyiv. Stoltenberg reaffirmed that "Ukraine's future lies within the Euro-Atlantic family and that all allies agree that Ukraine will become a NATO member.

On 15 June, Members of the European Parliament called upon NATO to invite Ukraine to join the alliance. In the resolution that was adopted, they emphasized that Kyiv's integration into NATO and the EU would enhance security and strengthen the relationship between Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic community. They condemned the Kakhovka dam collapse and called for a comprehensive and adequate EU recovery package for Ukraine for its immediate relief, reconstruction and recovery.

On 14 June, NATO Secretary while addressing Ukraine's ongoing counteroffensive said: "It is still early days, and we do not know if this will be a turning point of the war, but we see that the Ukraine's are making advances and liberating more land." He also stated that the more gains Ukraine makes, the stronger its hand will be at the negotiating table, eventually making Putin realize that he has to negotiate peace.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 15 June, *SAnews* reported that South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has arrived in Warsaw for a visit to Poland, Ukraine and Russia. He is heading a delegation consisting of Heads of State from Zambia, the Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Senegal and Uganda to lead African Peace Mission. Ramaphosa has previously remarked that the aim of the mission is to hear from both leaders to discuss what would it take to end the war that broke out last year. The delegation is expected to meet Zelenskyy and his government in Kyiv followed by a meeting with Putin. Both Zelenskyy and Putin have welcomed African leaders' mission to persuade Ukraine and Russia into talks to end the war.

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War in Ukraine: Day 475

War on the Ground:

On 13 June, *EFE* reported on the comments made by the mayor of Kryvyi Rih city, Oleksandr Vilkul, that at least ten civilians were killed in a large-scale Russian missile strike on the hometown of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with 28 others injured. The strike was carried out with cruise missiles, hit a five-story residential building, causing casualties and fires. On the counteroffensive, Ukraine reported advances in operations near Bakhmut and Zaporizhzhia. Ukraine's forces have gained control of significant areas, including the outskirts of the Russian-occupied port of Berdyansk.

On 12 June, Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar announced that in the past week, Ukraine's Armed Forces had freed seven settlements as part of the counteroffensive. Maliar stated that the

military had regained 90 square kilometers of land, with advances of up to five kilometers in Bakhmut. On the same, UK's Parliament's Defence Committee reports that a "major attack" by Ukraine against Russia's forces in the Donbas region may occur in the coming days.

On 13 June, Zelenskyy held a meeting with IAEA's Director General, Rafael Grossi as part of his visit to Zaporizhzhia. Zelenskyy expressed gratitude for Grossi's prompt response to the Ukraine's challenges, particularly the increased risks to the security of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant due to Russia's destruction of the Kakhovka dam. The discussion focused on minimizing risks, preventing incidents, and collaborating with the IAEA. Zelenskyy also endorsed Grossi's proposal to send a group of IAEA experts to assess the consequences of the dam explosion and provide assistance recommendations.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 13 June, *RT news* reported on Russia's President Vladimir Putin address at Kremlin on Moscow's military objectives in the Ukraine War. He stated that the objectives remain unchanged. He emphasized the gradual demilitarization of Ukraine, due to its reliance on Western weapons and equipment. On Ukraine's counteroffensive, Putin stated that Kyiv had suffered heavy casualties and equipment losses, "without success in any sector." On the possibility of new recruitment, he mentioned that it would occur only upon decision to march on Kyiv. On Russia's defence industry, Putin stated that it had increased 10-fold, while Ukraine had begun to depend more on the West.

On 13 June, *RT news* reported on the Russia's Defence Ministry claim that Ukraine's forces suffered heavy losses in two unsuccessful assaults near Artyomovsk. The attacks targeted Russia's positions near Kleshchevka, resulting in the loss of 350 soldiers, two armored vehicles, and six others. Additionally, according to the report, Ukraine's offensives near the Vremevsky ledge and the settlements of Makarovka and Rovnopol were repelled by Russia's forces, leading to the destruction of tanks,

armoured personnel carriers, and other military equipment. Despite Ukraine's ongoing attempts to breach Russia's Defences as part of a counteroffensive, they have not achieved success thus far. Putin noted that Kyiv's casualties were greater than expected during offensive operations.

On 13 June, *TASS* reported on a meeting between Putin and war correspondents. He was reported to have highlighted Russia's rearmament efforts over the past eight years, creating a strong foundation for the military. While acknowledging the need for more drones, he emphasized Russia's effective utilization of the ones available, particularly in countering Ukraine's tank attacks. Putin expressed the desire for improved quality and quantity of unmanned systems, as well as more effective means of counter-battery warfare as requested by soldiers on the frontline.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 13 June, *AP* reported on the announcement made by the US State Department. According to the report, the Pentagon would provide Ukraine with a new military aid package worth up to USD 325 million, consisting of various rockets, missiles, and munitions. This support aims to strengthen Ukraine's counteroffensive against Russia and will include critical air defence systems, armoured vehicles, and weaponry such as Stingers and Javelin missiles. The US has now committed nearly USD 40 billion in equipment and weapons to Ukraine since Russia's attack in February 2022, with this aid being swiftly delivered under presidential drawdown authority.

On 13 June, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) reached an agreement to provide Ukraine with EUR 100 million in new loans for fast recovery, focusing on municipal and energy infrastructure repairs. This funding is made possible by an EU guarantee and is part of the EU for Ukraine (EU4U) Initiative, which includes the EU4 Ukraine Fund and a EUR 100 million technical assistance package from the EIB. The loans, to be signed later in 2023, will be disbursed upon Ukraine's request and will contribute to addressing the

country's urgent recovery needs following Russia's aggression. The EU has provided substantial support to Ukraine, with a total of EUR 70 billion in assistance, including EUR 2.4 billion from the EIB backed by an EU guarantee.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 13 June, Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko claimed that his country had received some of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons and asserted his willingness to use them in the event of aggression against Belarus. These statements contradict Russia's President Vladimir Putin's earlier remarks, where he stated that Russia's nuclear weapons would be deployed to Belarus but remain under Moscow's control. Putin had previously announced the planned deployment as a warning to the West amidst increased military support for Ukraine. Lukashenko confirmed that preparations for the weapons' deployment were complete and implied that they would be received shortly. He emphasized the power of the Russia's nuclear weapons, which he claimed were three times more potent than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Lukashenko clarified that he would consult with Putin before using the weapons but expressed confidence in their coordination. Lukashenko justified the deployment as a deterrent against potential aggression and stated that Belarus was also preparing facilities for intercontinental nuclear-tipped missiles.

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War in Ukraine: Day 474

NATO's biggest air drills begin in Germany

War on the Ground:

On 11 June, Ukraine's Air Force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat in an interview with *Ukrainska Pravda* said: "If Russia controlled the sky, we probably wouldn't have our country by now." He discussed why Russia's missile strikes are continuing, and the usage of Telegram by military personnel and politicians. He said that because of the inefficiency of sanctions Russia is able to acquire and manufacture missiles. He stated: "The air defence systems our partners have given us are not sufficient." According to him, the current air defense systems mostly consist of Soviet systems and even with the addition of new ones, they would not be sufficient in the long term..

On 12 June, the head of the Luhansk Oblast Military Administration reported in Telegram that a Mavic drone purchased from UNITED24 destroyed two VSAT antennas. The antennas were used by Russia's troops for communication on the Svatore-Kupiansk front. The same was reported by the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine Mykhailo Federov in Telegram.

On 12 June, Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said Ukraine's troops have the control of Storozheve village. According to ABS-CBN, Ukraine's flags were raised in Blahodatne and Neskuchne villages and advances had been made in the Makarivka region. Dutch Defence Minister Kaja Ollongren announced that training of Ukraine's pilots to fly F-16 jets will begin within six months, reported Reuters, quoted ABS-CBN.

On 12 June, according to *The Guardian*, the IAEA's Director General Rafael Grossi expressed concerns over the discrepancy in the water levels in the Kakhovka dam. Grossi said: "The height is reportedly continuing to fall elsewhere in the huge reservoir, causing

a possible difference of about 2 metres." He said that the discrepancy can be a consequence of measuring the water levels of a water body that is isolated from the dam. He added that it may complicate the supply of water to cool the six reactors in the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 12 June, according to lenta.ru, the Russia's Defence Ministry signed a contract with Akhmat Special Forces, a volunteer unit, over the activities in the NVO zone. The Russia's Defence Ministry reported that Russia's Deputy Chief of the General Staff Colonel General Alexei Kim and Russia's Special Forces University's director Adam Dashaev signed the contract. The contract follows the order of the Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu which urged the volunteer units to sign an agreement with the Defence Ministry for efficiency.

On 12 June, according to lenta.ru, the chairman of "We are Together with Russia" Vladimir Rogov, Russia's troops supported by the Russia's Aerospace Force undertook a counterattack in Zaporizhzhia's Vremensky ledge and in Makarivka.

On 12 June, according to TASS, Russia's President Vladimir Putin visited a hospital in Krasnogorsk. Putin spoke with the Russian soldiers in the Vishnevsky Central Military Clinical Hospital and presented awards. He also met with the Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu in the hospital.

On 12 June, according to TASS, a Russia's Defence Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov reported that the Russia's troops attacked the reserves of the Ukraine's Armed Forces. Konashenkov added that sea-based long precision weapons were used the night before to destroy the reserves. He said that the Russia's troops killed Ukraine's soldiers in Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Kupyansk. He stated that Akatsiya and Gvozdika self-propelled artillery mounts in Krasnolymsk, and the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system in Dnepropetrovsk were destroyed.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 12 June, Allied air forces began the "Air Defender" exercise, hosted and led by Germany. It is the largest deployment exercise in NATO's history, and 25 nations will participate in the two-week exercise. It will go on until 23 June. NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu said: "Air Defender is necessary because we live in a more dangerous world. As we face the biggest security crisis in a generation, we stand united to keep our countries and our people safe."

On 12 June, *Euractiv* reported that talks of the Defence Contact Group of Ukraine, also known as the Ramstein Format group, will happen on 15 June. The defence ministers of the Netherlands, Denmark, the US and other countries will participate in the talks, according to Ukraine's Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov. He also said in Telegram that they are only talking about training the pilots, technicians and engineers who would be responsible for the service now, quotes *Euractiv*.

On 12 June, *Reuters* reported Dutch Defence Minister Kajsa Ollongren's comment that Ukraine's pilots could start training to fly F-16 jets as soon as this summer as part of the international jet coalition. She added that the training programme would be fully operational within six months. According to *Reuters*, Ollongren also said that the final decision has not been taken yet to supply F-16s to Ukraine.

On 12 June, *Financial Times* reported that French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Polish President Andrzej Duda met at Élysée Palace to project unity in support of Ukraine for its counter-offensive against Russia's forces. The three leaders pledged support for Ukraine as long as it takes while the Western powers work on "security guarantees" to shore up its defences and ensure its sovereign future.

The Global Fallout: Implications of the War

On 11 June, the first cargo of discounted Russia's crude oil under a new deal between Islamabad and Moscow arrived in Karachi,

said *Dawn*. Pakistan State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik did not disclose any specific details of the deal but said the payment was made in Chinese currency, according to *Dawn*. The purchase consisted of 100,000 tonnes and 45,000 tonnes reached Karachi port.

On 12 June, North Korea's state media KCNA reported on Kim Jong Un's announcement to support Russia in full solidarity. He assured to boost strategic cooperation with Russia to help preserve sovereign rights. He said: "Justice is sure to win and the Russia's people will continue to add glory to the history of victory." The move comes as North Korea accuses the West for its "hegemonic policy."

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War in Ukraine: Day 472 & 473

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met in Kyiv

War on the Ground:

On 09 June, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths provided a three-step plan to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainians who have encountered more than a year of war. The plan aims to get the Ukrainians to safety and provide emergency assistance and life-saving supplies. The first phase of dispatching the aid to Ukrainians in Kherson and indulging in search and rescue operations in flood-hit areas began on 08 June. The next phase includes providing drinking water to 700,000 Ukrainians who lack water. The third phase of humanitarian aid is yet to be discussed based on the future consequences of the Kakhovka dam destruction.

On 10 June, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met in Kyiv and signed a joint declaration. According to the declaration, both countries stated that Russia should withdraw its troops from Ukraine. The declaration expressed Canada's support for Ukraine in international forums and affirmed that it will provide aid and assistance. The declaration remarked that Canada acknowledges Ukraine's peace formula. The declaration said that both countries will ease the devastating results of the war including food price hikes, and to fight against impunity.

On 11 June, Ukrinform reported according to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural resource of Ukraine, the

Kakhovka dam lost around 70 per cent of the water. Dnipro River's water level has dropped to 4.2 metres.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 09 June, according to *RT*, Russia's President Vladimir Putin affirmed Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko that the tactical nuclear weapons will be deployed by July 2023.

On 09 June, according to *Tehran Times*, post the Eurasian Economic Union meeting in Sochi Russia's President Vladimir Putin said: "We can clearly say the offensive has started, as indicated by the Ukraine's army's use of strategic reserves, but the Ukraine's troops haven't achieved their stated tasks in a single area of fighting." Putin added that the Ukraine's troops were unsuccessful.

On 10 June, according to *RT*, the head of the government of Kerson Andrey Alekseenko reported that reparations for the Kakhovka dam will cost USD 138 million. He said that houses affected by the floods are being inspected, and rescue operations are being undertaken.

On 11 June, according to *RT*, the Russia's Defence ministry reported that 94 Russian soldiers have been swapped for 95 Ukraine's soldiers who were involved in the battle of Bakhmut. The ministry added that the Russian soldiers were in imminent danger under Ukraine's custody, according to Russia's Human Rights Commissioner Tatyana Moskalkova. The Russian soldiers will be sent for rehabilitation in medical establishments.

On 11 June, according to *RTE*, Wagner Group's head Yevgeny Prigozhin announced that he will not sign any agreement with the Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu. According to the ministry, Shoigu urged the "volunteer detachments" to sign a deal with the Defence Ministry for efficient manoeuvres before 01 July. Prigozhin commented: "Shoigu cannot properly manage military formations. What could happen after this order is that they will not give us weapons and ammunition. We will figure it out, as they say. What could happen

after this order is that they will not give us weapons and ammunition."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 11 June, the UK's Ministry of Defence, in its daily intelligence update, remarked on the collapse of the Kakhovka Dam and its repercussions in Crimea. The dam collapse has severely disrupted Crimea's primary source of fresh water, the North Crimean Canal (NCC). The water level likely dropped, and water would soon stop flowing to Crimea. The update further read that Russian authorities would meet the immediate water requirements of the people by using reservoirs, water rationing, drilling new wells, and delivering bottled water from Russia.

On 10 June, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau arrived in Kyiv on an unannounced visit. In the joint press conference, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said: "Counteroffensive and defensive actions are taking place in Ukraine; at which stage I will talk in detail." Trudeau pledged around USD 375 million in new military aid. According to a statement released during the visit, Politico quotes, "Canada supports Ukraine to become a NATO member as soon as conditions allow for it."

On 10 June, *Wall Street Journal*, in an article, conveyed that German investigators are examining evidence that suggests a sabotage team used Poland, a European Union neighbour and NATO ally, as an operating base to blow up the Nord Stream pipelines. Investigators first found the yacht following an October tip from a Western intelligence service. The probe has turned to clues inside Poland, which could further strain the relationship between Poland and Germany. German officials have no evidence of Poland's government involvement in the attack. Meanwhile, Ukraine has continuously denied any involvement in the Nord Stream attacks. On 07 June, Zelenskyy again reaffirmed that neither the Ukraine's military nor the intelligence did it.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 09 June, *Kyodo News* reported that

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida promised Zelenskyy USD five million in support following the Kakhovka dam collapse.

On 08 June, according to *Reuters*, Taiwan-based computer manufacturer Acer supplied computer hardware worth USD 70.4 million to Russia between 08 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. The supply was through Acer's subsidiary in Switzerland and several delivery services by order of that subsidiary, says *Reuters*. Acer did not clarify why it continued shipping its goods to Russia despite saying it would suspend business in April 2022.

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War in Ukraine: Day 468

Europe and the UN condemns Russia on destruction of Kakhovka dam

War on the Ground

On 06 June, responding to the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the disaster would not stop the country and its people. He said: "We will still liberate all our land. And each Russian act of terrorism increases only the amount of reparations that Russia will pay for its crimes, not the chances of the occupiers to stay on our land." He also stated that the government is doing everything to help those affected by the dam catastrophe.

On 06 June, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the dam destruction, describing it as: "monumental, humanitarian, economic and environmental catastrophe." The UN Office tweeted that thousands of people are in peril following the disaster. Guterres also called the disaster another devastating consequence of the Russia's invasion of Ukraine. According to IAEA, damage to the dam significantly reduced the reservoir level that supplies cooling water to the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant. It reported no immediate risks and said the supply would last a few days. The IAEA chief Rafael Grossi confirmed that a "large cooling pond" next to the nuclear power plant could provide an alternative water source and said it is vital to protect it. The UN human rights office called for a full investigation into the disaster and accountability.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 06 June, according to TASS, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, during his visit to a Russia's military base in Tajikistan, said: "Anything can be expected from the leaders of the US and other Western countries (which Washington has completely subjugated). They are already proving this when, following advanced long-range weapons and tanks, they are now seriously preparing F-16s." He urged the Russia's Armed Forces to be cautious as one variant of the F-16 is capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

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

On 06 June, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg condemned Russia's destruction of the Kakhovka dam. In a press conference after the Bucharest Nine (B9) summit, he said: "This is an outrageous act, which demonstrates once again the brutality of Russia's war against Ukraine." German Chancellor Olaf Scholz commented that setbacks the Russia's troops have faced have led them to act aggressively. The EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic in a joint statement said that Russia has violated International Laws. They said: "It represents a new dimension of Russian atrocities and may constitute a violation of international law, notably international humanitarian law." Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called the destruction, "largest technological disaster in decades."

On 07 June, the Finnish government announced that it would expel nine Russian diplomats on spying charges. The government claimed that the diplomats were spying for Moscow and added that it was a violation of the Vienna Convention.

The Global Fallouts:**Implications of the War**

On 05 June, South African President Cyril Ramphosa announced that the African leaders are ready to commence the mediation process between Russia and Ukraine in mid-June. The African leaders from Congo-Brazzaville, Egypt, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia and South Africa met virtually to discuss the mediation process. Ramphosa said: "We will be able to give our own point of view as Africans on how we perceive the impact of this war on Africa in terms of food prices, grain, and fuel prices, as well as on Europe and the rest of the world because it has become a rather globalized type of conflict."

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War in Ukraine: Day 465 & 466

Russia's defence ministry claims taking down HIMARS and storm shadow missiles in Donbas

War on the Ground:

On 03 June, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk in a meeting with the ministers from Donetsk and Luhansk discussed on reintegration of de-occupied territories. During the meeting, Vereshchuk said: "Donetsk and Luhansk are the regions most affected by Russian aggression. Therefore, one of the key tasks will be the restoration of critical infrastructure."

On 03 June, Ukraine's Armed Forces spokesperson reported on airstrikes, and clashes in Luhansk and Donetsk. According to the report Bakhmut Russia's forces had launched offensives in Ivanivske but made no advances, while shelling and airstrikes were reported in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. On 04 June, Ukraine's Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov had a bilateral meeting with Japanese Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada at the Shangri-La Dialogue defence summit in Singapore. During the summit on 02 June, Reznikov accused Russia of being imperialist and asserted that Bakhmut is not under Russia's control. Hamada said: "Japan supports Ukraine in its battle to defend freedom and democracy. Our friendship and cooperation will contribute to global peace and stability." Reznikov dismissed the peace proposal proposed by the Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto. He said

that it seemed like Russia's plan and not an Indonesian plan.

On 02 June, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi issued a statement on the vulnerability of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. He presented five concrete principles to the UNSC to safeguard the facility during the conflict. He said: "These principles are to no one's detriment and everyone's benefit." He also added that Russia and Ukraine expressed their willingness to ensure nuclear safety and security.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 03 June, according to *Sputnik*, the Russia's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded to French President Emmanuel Macron's offer to conduct a Ukraine Peace Summit in Paris. He said: "France cannot do it anymore because France is a de facto active participant in the conflict and has sided with Ukraine."

On 04 June, *RT* reported on Crimean leader Sergey Aksyonov on the drone strike. According to him Russia had shot down five drones and four had forcefully landed using electronic warfare. He added that one of the drones crashed in Dzhankoy.

On 04 June, *RT* reported on Russia's Defence Ministry claims on missile attacks. According to the report, airstrikes were conducted on Ukraine's military airfields using long-range precision-guided air-launched missiles. In a statement from the ministry: "Command posts, a radar installation, Ukraine's aviation equipment, and storage facilities with weapons and ammunition were hit." The ministry also claimed to have shot down missiles such as storm shadow missiles, and rockets from HIMARS in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 02 June, the Lithuanian Parliament hosted a meeting of representatives of the Parliaments of the NATO countries, Sweden and Ukraine to discuss the challenges the alliance face. Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament Viktorija Cmilyte-Nielsen

commented that the representatives are convinced that NATO countries should increase spending for the defence system and accept Ukraine.

On 02 June, *Ukrinform* reported on a bilateral meeting between Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and Estonian President Alar Karis in Kyiv. Estonia was the first to start practical reconstruction projects in Ukraine. He acknowledged the first steps of reconstruction by Estonia and noted its leadership in developing a national mechanism to confiscate Russia's assets to allocate them for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

On 03 June, UK's Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update confirmed Russia's continued deployment of VDV (airborne forces) in Bakhmut as the Wagner group completed its withdrawal to rear areas. On 04 June, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas during her speech at Shangri-La Dialogue said that: "NATO does not threaten Russia's security, but Russian Imperialism."

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 03 June, Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto proposed a Russia-Ukraine peace plan and called for a ceasefire. He urged United Nations to conduct a referendum on people living in the demilitarized zones and to deploy a peacekeeping force to stop the conflict. He also added that Indonesia is willing to be the first country to join the peacekeeping force.

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War in Ukraine: Day 464

Norway to continue INTERFLEX training operation

War on the Ground:

On 02 June, Ukraine’s General Staff of Armed Forces reported on Facebook that Ukraine’s defence forces successfully repelled 15 Russia’s attacks on the eastern front line. Russia launched 62 air strikes, 15 missile strikes, and about 20 MLRS attacks. Ukraine’s troops defended all attacks. Eight attacks of Russia were repelled in the Marinka sector, resulting in Russian casualties and vehicle destruction. Russia has also strengthened its border with cadets

from military institutions. The Ukraine’s air force struck Russia’s concentrations, destroying cruise missiles and attacking drones. Ukraine’s rocket and artillery units targeted Russia’s command posts and equipment.

On 02 June, President Volodymyr Zelensky said that Ukraine is expanding its digital solutions export to Europe, Latin America, and Africa. He highlighted the cooperation with Estonia and the development of Ukraine’s Diia government application, which will be adopted in Estonia. The aim is to provide convenient and useful government services to millions globally, emphasizing Ukraine’s leadership in digitalization.

On 02 June, according to Ukraine’s Prosecutor General’s Office, the village of Kivsharivka in the Kupyansk district was targeted by Russia’s military shelling, resulting in the death of a man and a woman. Three civilians, including a three year old boy, were injured. Subsequently, the front-line village of Dvorichna was shelled. Pre-trial investigations for violations of laws and customs of war have been initiated. Earlier, there was a missile attack in the Kharkiv region.

On 02 June, Ukraine’s Air Force announced, Ukraine’s air defences successfully neutralizing 15 Russia’s cruise missiles and 21 attack drones during the night. Ukraine’s Air Force, in collaboration with the Defense Forces’ air defences, thwarted the Russia’s attempts to target Kyiv with drones and missiles. The cruise missiles and drones were destroyed as they entered Ukraine’s territory from different directions.

On 02 June, the Ukraine’s farm minister stated that Ukraine is prepared to pursue a "plan B" for grain exports across the Black Sea if Russia withdraws support from the current grain export deal. The agreement, brokered by the UN and Turkey, aimed to address the global food crisis resulting from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Despite the deal, Russia has restricted the use of Ukraine’s major Black Sea port and limited food deliveries. The minister proposed a new arrangement that excludes Russia,

offering insurance guarantees and creating a special fund for companies. While hoping for the current initiative's success, Ukraine is ready to explore alternative options.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 02 May, Russia's Belgorod Region Governor, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said that two people were killed and at least six were injured because of Ukraine's shelling. An eleven year old child got injured in the left eye with shrapnel. In Shebekino city, two people were injured.

On 2 June, Russia's President Vladimir Putin held an online Russia's Security Council meeting with the permanent members. The meeting was regarding the issues of inter-ethnic relations within the country. He said that this was on account of the intensifying efforts of the enemies to destabilize domestic political security and the security of the whole country.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 02 June, in an interview with *The Washington Post*, Britain's Defence Secretary Ben Wallace expressed optimism about Ukraine's ability to retake Crimea from Russia. Contrary to some NATO officials' doubts, he believed that Russia's forces, facing equipment shortages, could be defeated. He acknowledged differences regarding Ukraine's NATO membership prospects, emphasizing the need for realism and avoiding overpromising. Instead, he mentioned the potential for bilateral or multilateral defence agreements to strengthen Ukraine's military capabilities. Wallace stated that Western countries remain supportive, providing weapons and funding without pressuring Ukraine to negotiate or make concessions. However, he noted that defence equipment donations are dwindling, leading to increased purchases. The extent of Russia's losses suggests Putin's reliance on pouring more troops into the conflict, potentially unaware of the true challenges his military faces. Wallace highlighted the importance of being ready for unforeseen circumstances.

On 02 June, according to a Facebook post by

the Ukraine's General Staff of the Armed Forces, the Norwegian National Guard (Forsvaret Heimevernet) instructors, as part of the multinational training operation called "INTERFLEX," continue to train Ukraine's servicemen and servicewomen in mine safety. The training aims to equip them with knowledge, skills, and practical methods to ensure the safety of their lives and health during combat operations or in areas contaminated by explosive objects. This training enhances the combat skills of Ukraine's servicemen and servicewomen, improving personal and unit security in different scenarios.

On 02 June, during a joint press conference in Kyiv, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Estonian President Alar Karis discussed the potential collaboration in creating joint defence enterprises and involving Estonian experts in demining Ukraine's territory. Zelensky expressed gratitude for Estonia's support, including political assistance, sanctions against Russia, and the provision of weapons. They also addressed the situation at the front and preparations for international events, including the upcoming NATO summit. Estonia has been actively involved in practical reconstruction projects in Ukraine, such as the opening of a kindergarten in the Zhytomyr region.

On 02 June, Ukraine's State Agency for Reconstruction and Development of Infrastructure and the European Investment Bank signed an EU grant agreement worth over EUR 50 million. The funds will support critical infrastructure and the construction of temporary bridges in war-affected regions. Ukraine's state agency heads, Mustafa Nayyem, expressed gratitude for the support and emphasized the importance of restoring logistics and transport services to isolated communities. Till now, 85 temporary bridges have been built, with the aim of providing vital aid and public services to citizens affected by Russia's invasion, which has resulted in the destruction of 346 bridges in Ukraine.

On 01 June, the *Financial Times* reported that the European Commission is developing a four year financing plan worth billions of

euros to provide stable and predictable support to Ukraine. The plan aims to address the criticism of the EU's inconsistent financial assistance to Kyiv, given the country's strained public finances due to the war. If approved, the funds would offer Ukraine greater financial visibility and encourage other allies like the US and UK to make long-term commitments. The proposal, which may involve new debt issuance, could cover Ukraine's general budgetary support and immediate rebuilding needs. Obtaining unanimous agreement from EU member states, however, could be challenging.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 02 June, *Ukrinform* reported that the Ukraine's Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov discussed with defence ministers of the US and Canada to acquire further assistance in war and for the reconstruction of Ukraine during the Shangri-La Dialogue security forum in Singapore. He tweeted that US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Canadian Defence Minister Anita Anand assured their support for Ukraine.

On 02 June, the IAEA updated the Director General's statement regarding the safety of the Zaporizhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). The Director General announced the delivery of essential medical equipment and support to Ukraine's Nuclear Power plants (NPPs) for the people who work in the facilities. The report says that there were two deliveries that happened in recent days, which had Satellite communication systems, antennas and spectrometers to South Ukraine NPP and State Nuclear Inspectorate of Ukraine that were contributed by USA and UK. There were eighteen deliveries in total and totalling EUR 5 million. It says that both Russia and Ukraine expressed strong support for ensuring nuclear safety and security and would adhere to the five principles laid down by Director General Grossi. The report said that the eighth mission of IAEA experts' planned rotation since last September has been delayed because of the local weather condition

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War in Ukraine: Day 463

Romania signs joint declaration in support of Ukraine's integration into NATO

War on the Ground:

On 01 June, the Ukraine's Air Force reported on Telegram that Russia launched a series of attacks on Kyiv, Ukraine's capital. Ten Iskander missiles, consisting of seven ballistic and three cruise missiles, were launched from the north but were successfully destroyed by Ukraine's air defence forces. The attack resulted in the tragic loss of three lives, including an 11-year-old child.

On 01 June, on the air of the national telethon "United News," the Ukrainian Air

Force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat, said: "Today, the enemy used superfast Iskander missiles to strike unexpectedly." Ihnat highlighted the speed of Iskander missiles, emphasizing the limited time for seeking shelter. He emphasized that Russia aims to catch Ukraine off guard, making it difficult for the air defence system to respond. Despite the attacks, Ukraine's air defence forces successfully intercepted all ten missiles, preventing further casualties.

On 01 June, according to Ukraine's Air Force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat, Ukraine could not initiate strikes on Russia's Iskander ballistic missile systems due to its international commitments. He stated that Ukraine has pledged not to attack targets within Russia with the provided weapons. However, if missiles are launched from the occupied territories, Ukraine will use all available means to counter them. Ihnat also noted that Russia's shortage of Iskander missiles limited the scale of the recent attack on Kyiv.

On 01 June, during a working meeting chaired by Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Odesa region, the Ukraine's minister for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development, Oleksandr Kubrakov, reported in Facebook that Russia's blockade of Ukraine's largest Black Sea port, Pivdennyi, is causing food shortages in at least ten countries. Efforts are underway to increase the capacity of the Danube Port Cluster and develop alternative logistics routes for Ukraine's agricultural exports. Discussions also focused on port security, civilian navigation in the Black Sea, and the development of the Danube port cluster. The agreement for safe agricultural transportation through the Black Sea has been extended, but Russia has blocked Pivdennyi port operations for almost a month.

On 01 June, *Ukrinform* reported that explosions were heard in Kharkiv as Russia's forces launched an attack using the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system. Officials urged residents to seek shelter, and initial reports indicated strikes in the Industrialnyi district. Two strikes were confirmed; emergency services responded, and an industrial facility was damaged.

On 01 June, during a summit in Chisinau, Zelenskyy urged a clear invitation for Ukraine to join NATO at the upcoming Vilnius summit in July. He emphasized the need for security guarantees on the path to membership and a positive decision regarding Ukraine's EU membership. Zelenskyy highlighted the importance of making decisive and positive decisions for Ukraine, emphasizing that such decisions would benefit everyone involved.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 01 June, *RT News* reported that the UN envoy from Russia, Stephane Dujarric, said that Russia would restrict the passage of grain ships to Yuzhny port until Ukraine reopens the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline. The implementation of the Black Sea Initiative slowed in May, leaving only thirty-three ships from Ukraine's ports, which is two times less than in April. The Ukraine's Ministry of Renovation and Infrastructure blamed Russia for "another unjustified refusal." Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin said the UN had not addressed any of the five issues that Moscow has identified with the deal, which includes the Togliatti-Odesa pipeline. He said: "Our position remains unchanged – the export of ammonia is part of the existing agreements and was supposed to start simultaneously with the transportation of Ukrainian grain." He added that there is no point in discussing the extension of the deal beyond 17 July without addressing the five issues.

On 01 June, *Sputnik Globe* reported that Russia's armed forces, border guard and Federal Security Service had thwarted three invasion attempts near the Shebekino town by Ukraine's forces. The Ukraine's forces attacked Shebekino town with artillery strikes before the attack that injured civilians and damaged residential buildings. There were two Ukraine's infantry companies supported by tanks which carried out the attack. Moscow said Russia's Western Military District had conducted 11 strikes on the enemy targets. Ukraine's forces lost nearly 30 terrorists, four armored fighting vehicles, Grad MLRS combat vehicle, and one pickup truck.

On 01 June, Russia's Security Council, Deputy Chairman, Dimitri Medvedev, stated that attacks were not military operations and did not fit in with any rules of warfare. He added that the way to counter terrorists is to destroy them. He said: "To cause damage to the civilian population and only that, because those means of destruction, those drones that were used, cannot damage either military facilities or public administration buildings."

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 01 June, during a meeting in Moldova, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy discussed the need to increase sanctions on Russia, hold the aggressor accountable, and support Ukraine's path to EU and NATO membership. They signed a joint declaration expressing solidarity and emphasizing Romania's assistance in countering the Russia's invasion. The leaders also discussed bilateral cooperation in trade, logistics, and humanitarian areas.

On 01 June, during the European Political Community Summit in Moldova, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. They discussed the implementation of the Ukraine's Peace Formula, securing global support for Ukraine's peace initiative, obtaining security guarantees before NATO membership, and lifting export restrictions on Ukraine's agricultural products.

The Global Fallout:

Implications of the War

On 01 June, *Swissinfo* reported that Taiwan donated USD 5 million for the reconstruction project of Ukraine led by Lithuania. Central Project Management Agency said that this contribution would be used to purchase the

educational equipment for the school in Borodyanka and a kindergarten in Irpin. Taiwanese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roy Chun Lee said: "Taiwan sees Ukraine as our own image in a different continent ... If one day Taiwan is facing an increased level of military intimidation from China, we will be looking for your assistance as well, just as we are helping Ukraine."

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EM Short Notes*

By Padmashree Anandhan, Rishika Yadav, Sreeja JS, Nithyashree RB, and Melvin George



Source: EPA/BBC, LUDOVIC MARIN / AFP, Sputnik / Sergei Guneev, president.gov.ua, president.gov.ua, Christoph Soeder/dpa/Deutsche Welle

FINLAND

An elevating case of wildfires can damage the property

On 23 June, *Helsinki Times* reported the increased risk of home damages, due to forest fire. Markus Uimonen, the Director of Property and Operation Compensation Services Pohjola Insurances, has stated his concern on the temperature rise, drought and wind play, which has caused the significant rise of wildfires. He described throwing cigarettes into the forest-fire warning area and disposable grills as human carelessness. Additionally, he advised that midsummer bonfires should include essential water, fire extinguisher and clean wood. He urged safety measures to be exercised to protect from the impact of wildfires. ("[Climate change increases the risk of forest fires- Damage to homes may increase](#)," *Helsinki Times*, 23 June 2023)

Petteri to head the four-party coalition

On 15 June, Finland's incoming Prime Minister Petteri Orpo announced that his

National Coalition Party (NCP) was set to form a four-party coalition with the Finns Party, the Swedish Peoples Party (RKP) and the Christian Democrats. The far-right Finns Party had come second in the general elections that were held in April. Together, the four parties account for 108 out of 200 seats in the parliament. The coalition announcement comes after nearly 11 weeks of negotiations especially since the Finns and the RKP do not see eye-to-eye on topics of immigration, climate policies and public finances. With the formation of the coalition, Finland is on course for a switch to right-wing politics. ("[Finland's conservatives to form coalition with far-right](#)," *DW*, 16 June 2023)

Trouble in the fisheries industry

On 16 June, *Daily Finland* reported on the National Resources Institute Finland's press release that the fisheries sector had recorded their lowest revenue collection in a decade. Still recovering from the pandemic and with a looming energy crisis,

* 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.

the year 2021 saw the net revenue for fisheries at Euros 836 million from 1765 companies. Out of these 1765 companies, 70 per cent are fishing companies, within which a majority are small coastal companies. Fish processing (51 per cent) and wholesales fish trade (26 per cent) accounted for the maximum revenue. However, this still falls short of EUR 20 million compared to the previous year, 2020. ("[Fisheries sector posts decade-lowest revenue](#)," *Daily Finland*, 16 June 2023)

Rise in the number of wolves in Finland

On 14 June, *Yle News* reported on Natural Resources Institute Finland's study on the wolf population. It found an increase in the wolf population in the country compared to last year. This keeps in trend with the annual 10 per cent increase observed since 2017. An increased reproductive rate, decreasing death rates and migration of wolves from Russia explains the growing population. Initially populating the west, wolves are now also seen in southwest Finland. However, the increase in wolf numbers has alarmed sheep and reindeer herders and dog owners as there have been a few reports of the wolves hunting their animals. ("[Finland's wolf population continues to grow](#)," *Yle News*, 14 June 2023)

New Conservation law introduced

On 31 May, the Finnish government announced the implementation of the Nature Conservation Law. The law came into effect on 01 June 2023. The law aims at biodiversity conservation, protection of natural beauty and landscapes, climate change adaptation, sustainable consumption and enhancing awareness. The law protects endangered habitat types. The law also bans ore prospecting in national parks and reserves. National biodiversity strategy and action plans will be established. The law suggests voluntary ecological compensation as a tool to offset the anthropogenic damages to biodiversity. ("[New nature conservation law comes into effect on 01 June](#)," *Helsinki Times*, 31 May 2023)

FRANCE

Around 40,000 police officers were deployed after the violent unrest spread the country

On 29 June, France's president declared an emergency Cabinet meeting, after a 17-year-old was shot by police during a traffic check. Although, there emerged questions on whether the teenager had threatened the police officers, the President stated the incident as: "inexplicable" and "inexcusable." Over 40,000 police officers were deployed across France to maintain stability and the officials were warned to avoid any provocative behaviour. Francois Molins, a former prosecutor of Northern Paris expressed his concern on whether there might be a recurrence of the 2005 incident, which forced the government to declare a state emergency. The incident was followed by immense criticism from the far-left opposition, while the country has continued to stay on a calm state due to greater job access to jobs and wider investments on poorer outskirts under Macron's government. Further, President Macron stated his awareness on the speed of escalation of allegation on police brutality in France. (Clea Caulcutt, "[France deploys 40,000 police as Macron seeks to avoid 2005 riots rerun](#)," *Politico*, 29 June 2023, Robin Richardot and Juliette Benezit, "[Anger and tension as marchers grieve teenager killed by police](#)," *Le Monde*, 29 June 2023)

Unrest after a teen was shot during a traffic check

On 27 June, protests emerged in France, after the police shot a 17-year-old, during a traffic check. Thousands of security forces were alerted after protesters threw stones at the firefighters in Paris. French President Emmanuel Macron stated the incident to be "unforgivable." Although the interior minister claimed the incident to be "unacceptable and abject," later tweeted on the incident, where he cheered the officers and has blamed the teen's parent for not educating their son. A neighbour of the victim, stated that the country has been experiencing police shooting multiple times. Human rights organizations have urged on strengthening 2017 law, which framed on

officers' access to use firearms. The police officers stated that the teen drove the car, with an intention of hurting them. While the CCTV captured showed the police approaching the driver's window voluntarily. President Macron has added: "We have a teenager who has been killed. It's inexplicable, unforgivable." The incident has triggered emotions in the country. The victim's family has charged a complaint against the police officers for lying and investigation will soon be unfolded. (["France shooting: Fresh unrest over police killing of teen," BBC, 29 June 2023](#))

Government outlaws SLT for protesting against agro-industry reservoirs

On 20 June, according to *France 24*, the government issued a decree to outlaw Uprisings of the Earth (SLT). It accused SLT of indulging in violence while protesting against an irrigation reservoir near Sainte-Soline in Western France that witnessed brutal clashes between protesters and the police. SLT condemned the decree and called for protests across various cities in France. It is a part of a new wave of radical climate activist groups including the Extinction Rebellion calling for direction against the insufficient efforts to combat climate change and global warming, says *France 24*. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin commented that SLT under the pretense of defending environment preservation encourages sabotage and property damage, including violence. (["France outlaws climate activist group involved in protest against agro industry reservoirs," France 24, 21 June 2023](#))

Tourism Minister outlines new plan to regulate overflow of tourists

On 18 June, Tourism Minister Olivia Gregorie unveiled a new plan to regulate the overflow of tourists across France's most popular sites and laid out a strategy to combat "over-tourism." She said that France needs to properly manage the peak-season influxes that threaten "the environment, the quality of life for locals and the experiences for its visitors." According to *France 24*, the government will constitute an industry monitoring group to identify at-risk sites and make strategies to encourage off-

season visits. Gregorie said that it is up to the government to work hand-in-hand with the regional offices and tourist sites to implement measures to manage the crowds. She suggested several measures such as enlisting social media influencers to spread the word on the risks of over-tourism. (["France lays out strategy to combat 'overtourism'," France 24, 20 June 2023](#))

Gas explosion triggers devastating fire and building collapse in Paris

On 21 June, an explosion, believed to be caused by a gas leak, tore through a building in central Paris, leaving four people in critical condition and causing extensive damage. Rescue teams are searching for two missing individuals, while 33 others sustained minor injuries. The blast was followed by a massive fire that resulted in the collapse of the building, which housed a fashion school. The cause of the explosion is under investigation. The city of Paris has previously experienced gas-related incidents, including a deadly blast in 2019. (["Paris explosion causes a building in the 5th arrondissement to collapse," Le Monde, 21 June 2023](#))

Protests against the high-speed rail construction

On 17 June, *Euronews* reported a large crowd protesting the construction of a new high-speed train line between France and Italy. The railway project includes a 57.5 kilometres tunnel that crosses the Alps between Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne and Suse, which the protestors say would ruin the sensitive Alpine environment. Police used tear gas at the crowd who gathered against the official ban on gatherings. For the supporters of the project, the traffic would be reduced, while the opponents are worried about the ecological damage. They say the springs have already dried because of the construction activities. (["French police use tear gas during protests in Savoy against Lyon-Turin rail link," Euronews, 17 June 2023](#))

The Canua Floating Island project fails to achieve the permits

On 13 June, the Canua Island project was declared a failure due to various

environmental concerns. The island project consisting of a restaurant, bar and pools, was secured at the port of La Seyne-sur-Mer in southeast France. The organisers declared that the government denied the permit, which states the project to be a “victim of a political vendetta”. The island project has invested over EUR 16 million. The government claimed the project was: “an artificial island” and warned about the negative impact of over-urbanisation and sea-plagued pollution. Further, the government declared the project to be unfit for environmental policy. ([“French Riviera floating island project dropped over environmental concerns,”](#) *Le Monde*, 13 June 2023)

GERMANY

Lithuania to receive troops

On 26 June, Germany’s Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said that 4000 troops will be deployed in Lithuania to guard the eastern borders. During a visit to Lithuania’s capital, Vilnius, he said: “Germany is ready to permanently station a robust brigade in Lithuania.” This comes after repeated requests from Lithuania for permanent combat troops from Germany. However, till recently, Germany had sidestepped. ([“Germany to station 4,000 troops in Lithuania,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 26 June 2023)

The far-right party wins the local election

On 25 June, for the first time, Germany’s far-right party, Alternative for Germany (AfD) won the local election held in Sonnenberg town in Germany. The Spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit stated: “Our country is shaped by values such as fairness, tolerance, decency and respect.” The victory of the AfD was widely criticized by the anti-racism campaigners, as the party falls under the scrutiny over its ties with extremists. The holocaust survivor Charlotte Knobloch, stated that the voters of the Sonnenberg town has made “a dangerous decision.” Further, the report mentioned that the AfD was founded on 2013, and had first entered the parliament along with its anti-migration campaign. The present-day governor Bodo Ramelow of the left party stated the victory of the AfD as threat to Germany due to its

Western populism influence. Further the centre-right Christian Democrats, Friedrich Merz blamed the environmentalist Green Party for alienating voters. Finally, the Green party co-leader Ricarda Lang stated the victory of the AfD as: “a threat to democracy.” ([“German government calls for tolerance after far-right party wins control of a country for first time,”](#) *AP*, 26 June 2023)

Rail union in Germany calls for strikes

On 22 June, Germany’s EVG Rail workers union said that they were planning to hold strikes after the failure of wage talks with German rail operator Deutsche Bahn. On 21 June, the EVG had rejected the rail operator’s proposed offer for a salary hike of up to 12 per cent on the premise that it was too low, too late and its term of 27 months was too long. Deutsche Bahn responded, calling the strikes “absolutely unnecessary” and that the two sides had been “very close to a deal.” ([“Germany’s EVG rail union plans strikes after wage talks collapse,”](#) *Reuters*, 22 June 2023)

Coalition to amend contested heating law

On 14 June, *The Guardian* reported that Germany has settled on amending the contested heating law which faced strong debates for weeks. However, environmental organizations argued that this will delay the country’s goal to achieve net zero targets by years. According to the original bill, the installation of green heating systems was vouched when being replaced. The amendment shifts this responsibility from individual households to municipal officials who are expected to lay a ground plan by 2028. The shift is expected to cause EUR 9.2 billion a year till 2028 which will be subsidized through government funds. ([“Germany coalition staves off implosion with 11th-hour heating law amendment,”](#) *The Guardian*, 14 June 2023)

Luftwaffe pilots trained Chinese pilots: Der Spiegel

On 02 June, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said that he would investigate allegations that former German pilots training Chinese pilots. The report was

released by Der Spiegel, in which it claimed Luftwaffe officers were employed in China as trainers. The report said that shell companies were used for payments. The soldiers are believed to have disclosed NATO's and Bundeswehr's tactics. Pistorius said that former Bundeswehr soldiers were allowed to take up jobs that are under the Soldiers' Act. ("[Germany to probe report of Chinese pilot training](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 June 2023)

GREECE

Syriza party's leader steps down, calls for party elections

On 29 June, Alexis Tsipras, leader of the Syriza party, announced that he was resigning from his post. On 25 June, his party had lost in Greece's general elections, garnering just 18 per cent of the votes against the New Democracy party. Tsipras has been leading the left-wing Syriza party since 2012. He announced his decision through a televised address from Athens, stating: "The time has come to start a new cycle...I have therefore decided to propose the election of a new leadership by the members of the party, as stipulated in the party statutes, with immediate recourse." He also informed that he will not stand as a candidate in the party elections. Alexis Tsipras was the Prime Minister of Greece from 2015 to 2019, heading the country at a time of financial crisis. (Philip Andrew Churm, "[Greece's left-wing opposition leader Alexis Tsipras has stepped down following a crushing election defeat](#)," *Euronews*, 29 June 2023; "[Greece: Syriza leader Tsipras resigns after major defeat](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 29 June 2023)

New Democracy party wins in the second round of elections

On 25 June, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's New Democracy party (ND) won a second victory in the Parliamentary election, with 40.5 per cent. The election consisted of 9.8 million, with 32 political parties represented. After the triumph, Mitsotakis announced: "The people have given us a safe majority. Major reforms will proceed rapidly." Earlier in the May elections, the party missed by five seats in forming a single majority party in

Parliament. Mitsotakis's confidence over the bonus votes available in the second round called for another election. The Syrian party, considered the far-left received only 18 per cent vote, followed by PASOK with 13 per cent, KKE with seven per cent and the Spartans party received five per cent. The Syrian left party leader stated: "We have suffered a heavy electoral defeat." Mitsotakis promised a strong economy and combat unemployment rates under his leadership. Despite the election held during the shipwreck tragedy, the pre-election poll had predicted a victory for the New Democracy Party. Adding to it, Mitsotakis has promised a robust increase in wages. ("[Greece election: Conservatives claim resounding victory](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 26 June 2023)

Greece elections: New Democracy set for a comfortable victory

On 23 June, *Politico* reported that Greece's New Democracy party is heading for a victory in the elections that will be held on 25 June. With this, the party leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis will return as Prime Minister. Mitsotakis has pledged to cut back the public sector and bring reforms in the health and education sectors. Additionally, the pro-investor outlook of his party has raked up support in a country that faced a debt crisis, followed by the negative impact of the pandemic. Wolfango Piccoli, the co-founder of risk analysis company Teneo, raised the question of a weakening opposition, stating: "The opposition is extremely weak, and it will take a very long time to recover. The Prime Minister will have to pay attention to this aspect, because we have seen in other countries that a weak opposition could become a problem for the government, for the quality of policymaking for accountability and transparency." (Nektaria Stamouli, "[Greek election looks set to strengthen Mitsotakis' power](#)," *Politico*, 23 June 2023)

Fallouts of the Mediterranean shipwreck

On 19 June, *Politico* reported on the migrant tragedy that took place in the Mediterranean Sea. The boat disaster off Greece carried over 750 passengers, out of which 100 have survived. According to the

UN's migration and refugee agencies, hundreds are missing and the survivor's testimonies were marked against Greece. Frontex stated that the ship was heavily overcrowded, and the Commissioner of Home Affairs informed the increasing cases of migrants from Libya to Europe. There has been criticism against the Greek authorities on insufficient rescue capacity. The Greek Supreme Court has urged to maintain secrecy in maintaining the investigation over the shipwreck, and the protest against the Greek authorities and their migration policies has increased on large pace. (Nektaria Stamouli, "[Questions mount over latest migrant tragedy in Mediterranean](#)," *Politico*, 19 June 2023)

ICELAND

Undersea Infrastructure Security forum alerts Keflavik Airbase

On 29 June, Government of Iceland has issued a report on the Security Forum on Critical Undersea Infrastructure held at Keflavik Air Base, Iceland. It was hosted by the Defence Directorate of Iceland and UK's Embassy in Reykjavik, along with its deployment of Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ). More than 70 representatives from all the JEP of participant and partnered nations discussed on facilitating a structure to combat the critical undersea infrastructure threats. The JEF Defence Ministry has decided to detect, deter and respond to the action which included ensuring best sharing best practices, cooperation, coordination, alignment with NATO's continued work. The forum provided Iceland with opportunities to attract allies and partners and discuss on the grooming issue. ("[Security Forum on Critical Undersea Infrastructure held in Iceland](#)," *Government of Iceland*, 29 June 2023)

ITALY

State mourns and pays last tribute for Silvio Berlusconi in Milan

On 14 June, the State funeral for the Ex Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi will be led by the Archbishop of Milan in the Cathedral of Milan. The day will be observed as a day of national mourning and all the European

flags on public buildings will be lowered half-staff. The main square is presumed to be filled with thousands of people to pay the last tribute. The questions about the future of his business empire, its successors are looming around. Political instability in Forza Italia, the political party started by him will loom after the national mourning. (Sofia Bettiza, "[Italy mourns and asks who will succeed Berlusconi](#)," *BBC*, 14 June 2023)

KOSOVO

Prime Minister attempts to diffuse tensions along disturbed northern region

On 29 June, Albin Kurti, Kosovo's Prime Minister, proposed to hold new mayoral elections in four Serb-majority municipalities if, the proposal received support from at least 20 per cent of the electorate in the region. The north Kosovo region is primarily dominated by ethnic Serbs. In April, the mayoral elections in these four municipalities had been boycotted by the ethnic Serbs. They also oppose the ethnic Albanians who won the seats in those elections. Furthermore, Kurti also offered to reduce the presence of the special police forces deployed in the region to guard the municipal buildings. The Prime Minister's suggestions are an attempt to ease the simmering tensions with neighboring Serbia which began following violent clashes between ethnic Serbs and Kosovo's police officers in May. Kurti's offer comes after Serbia released three Kosovo police officers on 26 June. While Serbian authorities claimed that the three officers had crossed over to their side, Kosovo has maintained that the officers were kidnapped from and taken to a Serbian prison. (Florent Bajrami, Lllazar Semini, "[Kosovo's prime minister offers to hold new elections in tense Serb-majority municipalities](#)," *AP*, 29 June 2023)

Kosovo may conduct fresh elections in Serb Majority municipalities following the unrest

On 06 June, Kosovo's Foreign Minister Donika Gervalla-Schwarz said that Kosovo might conduct fresh elections in the Serb majority municipalities. This announcement came after the disputes over the placement

of ethnic Albanian mayors in municipalities offices elected with just a 3.5 per cent turnout. She said that there is a need for peace in the region for conducting new elections and called for "a commitment from Serbia that they will no more threaten Serbian citizens of Kosovo not to participate in the election." ("[Kosovo open to new elections in municipalities hit by unrest, minister says](#)" *Reuters*, 07 June 2023)

Diplomatic pressure mounts; Germany and France call for new elections

On 01 June, the US, France, and Germany increased diplomatic pressure on Pristina and Belgrade to resolve the dispute in northern Kosovo. Speaking at the European Political Community summit in Moldova, French President Emmanuel Macron said that he and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz urged the Kosovan and Serbian leaders to organize new elections quickly. The US called Kosovo and Serbia to take "immediate steps" to defuse the situation and warned that the crisis hinders Euro-Atlantic integration. Meanwhile, Prime Minister said that he would not back down from appointing ethnic Albanian mayors in the Serb majority areas of Northern Kosovo. ("[Kosovo crisis: France, Germany call for new elections](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 01 June 2023)

LATVIA

Strengthens eastern border control amidst Russian paramilitary rebellion

On 24 June, Latvia's Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš (New Unity) tweeted that due to the rebellion by the Russian paramilitary Wagner group, stricter control has been implemented along the eastern border. The Latvian government, along with relevant authorities and services, are closely monitoring the situation in Russia. Border control has been reinforced to ensure national security, and citizens are strongly advised against travelling to Russia or Belarus. Foreign Affairs Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs (New Unity) also emphasized the importance of avoiding travel to Russia and urged those already there to leave. Internal Affairs Minister Māris Kučinskis requested increased border controls in coordination with the State Border Guard chief. The State

Border Guard, along with Frontex and other Latvian services, are working intensively to conduct thorough inspections. If necessary, support from the National Armed Forces (NBS) will be sought, as Defence Minister Ināra Mūrniece (National Alliance) stated. ("[Latvia's eastern border under enhanced control](#)," *eng.lsm.lv*, 24 June 2023)

MALTA

New abortion law criticized by pro-choice campaigners

On 28 June, members of the Parliament in Malta voted to ease the abortion laws under a few conditions. The original bill that was introduced earlier had given abortion access to women if the pregnancy negatively impacted the mother's life or health. According to the new amendments, a woman will now be able to access abortion only if there is a risk of death. Furthermore, this has to be attested by three specialists. Another part of the amendment said that a doctor can carry out an abortion without consultations if the mother's life is at immediate risk. Pro-choice campaigners withdrew their support to the legislation as they questioned its effectiveness, terming it "vague, unworkable and even dangerous." ("[Malta to allow abortion but only when woman's life is at risk](#)," *The Guardian*, 28 June 2023; Kevin Schembri Orland, "[Maltese lawmakers vote to legalize abortion, but only where the mother is at risk of death](#)," *AP*, 28 June 2023)

MONTENEGRO

Pro-EU party (PES) dominates the parliamentary election

On 12 June, *Euronews* reported the unofficial result of the nation's Parliamentary election, with Montenegro's Europe Now Movement (PES) has won 25.6 per cent of the vote. The 36 year old leader, Miloško Spajic, stated: "Tomorrow is a new day." He also expressed his willingness to strengthen ties with nations possessing similar ideologies. The pro-European Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) came second, with Milo Đukanović, who has taken a back seat. ("[Montenegro's pro-EU party wins election, initial results show](#)," *Euronews*, 12 June 2023)

Unofficial result puts forth the victory of pro-EU leader Jakov Milatovic

On 11 June, Montenegro witnessed an unofficial result of an early parliamentary election. According to the Centre for Democratic Transition, the party named Europe Now Movement (PES), led by current President Jakov Milatovic won 26 per cent of the vote. He had been projected on top by pre-election polls. The President assured to root out the corruption in the nation. Montenegro is one of the candidates to join the EU, but the contamination of corruption, nepotism and crime has delayed the progress. The further proceedings of the election were closely followed, hoping the small NATO member in the Balkans would move closer to EU membership. Milatovic, a 36-year-old, entered politics in 2020 after the completion of his studies in the United States and the United Kingdom. The victory of first parliamentary victory conducted after 30 years paved the way for hope and a better future. ("[Montenegro: Pollsters put pro-EU party ahead in snap vote](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 June 2023)

NETHERLANDS

Dutch arrested two on suspicion of funding Palestinian militant group Hamas

On 26 June, the prosecutor declared that, a 55-year-old man and his 25-year-old daughter were detained by Dutch authorities from the town of Leidschendam. The arrest was based on the suspicion of violating the sanction regulations, and of sending millions of euros to the Palestinian militant group, Hamas that runs the Gaza Strip. The public prosecution officer stated that the suspected amount was about EUR 5.5 million, and both the suspects are speculated to have participated in various other foundations and criminal organizations, which financially supports the Hamas. The Dutch authorities has seized uncovered cash and bank account holdings of EUR 7,50,000 from Leidschendam and Rotterdam. Their identities were not mentioned and are kept disclosed. Further, the statement mentioned prominent presence of pro-Palestinian and pro-Gaza organizations in Netherlands, which plays key role in the international network

finding linkage for Hamas. ("[Dutch authorities detain father, daughter on suspicion of funding Palestinian militant group Hamas](#)," *AP*, 26 June 2023)

Archaeologists unearth "Stonehenge of Netherlands"

On 21 June, *The Guardian* reported that Dutch archaeologists unearthed an approximately 4000 years old religious site, nicknamed the "Stonehenge of the Netherlands." The scientists located three burial mounds, a few miles from the banks of the Waal River. The main mound is about 20 metres in diameter and its passages serve as a solar calendar. The excavation began in 2017, about 30 kilometres Southeast of Utrecht. Scientists also located two more small burial mounds, besides the main mound. The archaeologists suggested that these mounds were used as burial sites for about 800 years. ("[Archaeologists unearth 4,000-year-old 'Stonehenge of the Netherlands'](#)," *The Guardian*, 21 June 2023)

THE NORTHERN ISLAND

Windsor Framework committee meets to check progress

On 23 June, *BBC* reported that a specialized committee met in Brussels to check the progress made so far in the Windsor Framework. The Framework that was created in February aims to alleviate post-Brexit trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. This committee comprises of senior officials from the UK and EU. They said that adopting a legislation in the areas of agriculture, medicines, tariff rate quotas, and customs by the EU was a welcome move. Under the Windsor Framework, trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland will ease through forming a trusted trader scheme and a system of red and green lanes at Northern Ireland ports. The red and green lane system is slated to begin operations from October. (John Campbell, "[Windsor Framework: NI Brexit deal committee meet in Brussels](#)," *BBC*, 23 June 2023)

June temperature hits highest in five years

On 13 June, the Met Office announced that Northern Ireland is under heatwave

conditions with temperatures exceeding 25 degree Celsius for the last three days. The office said that this happened in Antrim and Londonderry in the north-west. On the same day the temperature marked the highest in five years with 29 degree Celsius in Ballywatticock. Armag measured twenty eight degree Celsius followed by Magilligan with twenty seven degree Celsius marking the day as the hottest of the year. The forecast said that the temperature will be around mid twenties for the rest of the week or possibly even higher. ("[Northern Ireland is officially experiencing a heatwave](#)," *BBC*, 14 June 2023)

NORWAY

19 new oil and gas projects approved by ministry of Petroleum and energy

On 28 June, Norway approved USD 19 billion worth of oil and gas projects in the Norwegian continental shelf. There are a total of 19 projects. Norway's minister for petroleum and energy, Terje Aasland said: "The projects are also an important contribution to Europe's energy security...Norway was the only net exporter of oil and gas in Europe. By carrying out these projects we ensure new production from the latter half of the 2020s, so that we can maintain high Norwegian deliveries." The projects will focus on new developments as well as updating some of the existing fields. Since the Russia-Ukraine war, Norway has been benefitting as European countries began looking for alternative energy suppliers. ("[Norway approves 19 oil and gas projects, saying the resulting investments are worth over \\$19 billion](#)," *AP*, 28 June 2023)

Norway plans to dive into the Arctic waters for minerals

On 13 June, High North news reported that Norway is exploring the possibilities of deep-sea mining from the latitude of Bodo and the Norwegian Sea to Svalbard in the Barents Sea. The goal is the extraction of polymetallic nodules that contain copper, nickel, cobalt and other metals for use in the energy industry. The proposal has run into concerns from environmentalists and fishing communities even as the government assures that ocean life will not

be harmed. However, the scientific community, including the European Academy of Sciences has flagged the harmful impacts of tampering with the sea floors. Further, due to the Svalbard Treaty, apart from Norway, European Union countries, Russia and the US could also stake claim to mining in the Arctic. Advocates for this proposal are of the view that Norway could become the headliner in sustainable deep-sea mining in the world. ("[Norway Aims to Open Arctic Waters to Deep-Sea Mining](#)," *High North News*, 13 June 2023)

One billion for the children's protection

On 06 June, Government.no reported Norway's initiative to invest NOK 01 billion in the Protection of Children in armed conflict over the next three years. Norway organized an international conference, "Protecting Children in Armed Conflict- Our Common Future," along with UNICEF, African Union (AU), ICRS, and Save the Children International. The conference included leaders from the above organizations. It aimed to strengthen and develop multi-year partnerships and mobilise actions for future actions. The meeting also included Norway's Humanitarian Strategy to widen the protection of civilian children in the region. ("[Norway pledges NOK 1 billion for protection of children in armed conflict](#)," *Government.no*, 06 June 2023).

POLAND

Government to conduct referendum over EU's migrants and refugees deal

On 15 June, Poland's ruling party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski said that a referendum has to be conducted over the EU deal on sharing the responsibility over migrants and refugees. Poland expressed its opposition to the deal in the lower house of the parliament. The deal says that countries that are not willing to host refugees and migrants would have to provide funding, equipment and personnel. Poland also opposed the quota system that attempts to relocate migrants referring to security concerns. ("[Poland's Kaczynski says EU migrant deal must be put to referendum](#)," *Reuters*, 15 June 2023)

Appeal to the Court of Justice of EU

On 12 June, *Politico* reported on the Climate Minister of Poland Anna Moskwa's claim on Poland overturning the EU's combustion engine and climate laws. She further declared that the country would take the appeal of many Fit for 55 documents to the Court of Justice of the EU. Poland, along with Germany, sought to block the clean car sales mandate. But Warsaw banned the sales of polluting vehicles. The government stated its discomfort as they witnessed Green Deal chief's inability to engage with Warsaw's opposition. Regarding the issue, the spokesperson for the Commission stated that Europe is awaiting Poland's decision following the release of the judgement by the European Court of Justice. (Zia Weise and Joshua Posaner, "[Poland to challenge EU climate laws before top court](#)," *Politico*, 12 June 2023)

Massive protests marks the anniversary of first postwar democratic election

On 04 June, in Warsaw, hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered to commemorate Poland's first postwar democratic election in 1989. They expressed opposition against the ruling Law and Justice party (PiS), which critics claim is leading the country towards autocracy. Poland's first popularly elected president of Poland, Lech Walesa, addressed the crowd, calling out PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski. The local government estimated that around 500,000 people participated in the protest. ("[Poland opposition stages major anti-government protest](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 04 June 2023)

Unidentified balloon falls near Polish military unit

On 04 June, *Guildhall* reported that a balloon, potentially for reconnaissance or meteorological purposes, landed in Poland's Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship near a military training ground. Experts are examining its intended tasks. The discovery was promptly reported by a local resident to the police and military authorities. Poland's radar systems did not detect the balloon, raising suspicions of possible espionage. The device bore Cyrillic inscriptions, an antenna, and a polystyrene

box. Similar incidents involving Chinese spy balloons in other countries have been documented, emphasizing the need for thorough investigation and heightened security measures. ("[An unknown air object fell near a military unit in Poland](#)," *Guildhall*, 04 June 2023)

President calls for amendments within days of signing a law to curb Russia's influence

On 02 June, Polish President Andrzej Duda announced that amendments will be made to a law that is aimed to curb Russia's influence. Duda was already facing criticisms for signing the law from the West and the opposition. His recent ventures to amend it, have also given rise to criticisms from people who want to either keep the law as it is or for signing the law earlier. The law was signed on 30 May. It will create a committee to investigate officials under Russian influence and oust them from office. Duda's Law and Justice party's spokesman affirmed that the fundamental aims of the bill will remain. One of the opposition parties leader Szymon Holownia commented, "President Duda has applied the right of veto against his own signature." (Monila Scisłowska, "[Poland's president proposes urgent amendments to law on Russian influence](#)," *AP*, 02 June 2023)

ROMANIA

PM resigns as per the rotating premiership deal

On 12 June, Romanian Prime Minister Nicola Ciucu resigned as part of a rotating premiership deal among the ruling coalition parties. The coalition was formed between Ciucu's centre-right liberals, Social Democrats (PSD) and ethnic Hungarian UDMR in late 2021. It is widely expected that Marcel Ciolacu would be the next Prime Minister. Ciucu said : "Our objective is to have a new government sworn in by Thursday, so that we can continue ... to handle the priorities." The new cabinet is expected to face the increase in salaries in the public sector and pressure to implement the delayed EU economic reforms for the recovery funds. The consolidated budget deficit of Romania has to be brought below the three per cent ceiling of the EU before

the elections that are going to happen in 2024. ("[Romanian PM Ciuca resigns in power swap agreed by ruling coalition](#)," *Reuters*, 12 June 2023)

RUSSIA

Friction between military and Wagner chief threatens armed conflict within Russia

On 23 June, Russian government buildings and transport facilities were secured after reports of the Wagner Group head, Yevgeny Prigozhin, calling for an armed attack on the Russian military. This was in response to alleged strikes on Wagner's troops by missiles from the military. The defence ministry has denied the occurrence of any such attacks. The Kremlin reported that Prigozhin is being probed for mutiny and that Putin has been briefed about the situation. Meanwhile, the USA is also monitoring the rapidly developing situation. Russia has launched "Operation Fortress" in the city of Rostov-on-Don for personnel to be in "full readiness." Moscow has also activated the operation, ramping up security measures. The governor of Rostov-on-Don requested residents to stay indoors and exercise calm as reports emerged of armed troops in uniform surrounding a government building. Meanwhile, anti-Kremlin figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky called on Russians to lend their support to the Wagner chief to take down the leadership. ("[Russia tightens security as Wagner chief accused of mutiny](#)," *BBC*, 24 June 2023)

SCOTLAND

No reason to suspend Sturgeon's membership: First Minister of Scotland

On 12 June, *Reuters* reported that Scotland's First Minister Hamza Yousuf said that he saw no reason to suspend the membership of Nicola Sturgeon. The report says that he has been receiving calls from his senior party members and rival politicians to suspend her. She was released on 11 June after being arrested as a part of police investigation to track down EUR 600,000 raised by Scottish independence campaigners. Sturgeon's husband, Peter Murrell, who was the former chief executive, and former treasurer of Scottish National

Party (SNP) also got released without charge but the investigation continues. The Labour Party, which constitutes the largest opposition in the UK Parliament believes that they would be able to make use of this to acquire seats in Scotland in the next year's UK election. ("[Scotland's leader won't suspend Nicola Sturgeon from party after arrest](#)," *Reuters*, 12 June 2023)

Allegations raise against Former Minister Nicola Sturgeon

On 12 June, former Minister Nicola Sturgeon was arrested, stating allegations of mishandling Scottish National Party (SNP) funds. Her Husband, former SNP chief executive Peter Murrell was also arrested after her release. The investigation states that the party money has been misused. More than EUR 1,00,000 was found parked in Murrell's mother's house. The Party's treasurer was questioned regarding the same. There have been several allegations regarding any connection with the sudden resignation of Sturgeon and the current enquiry. (Andrew Naughtie, "[Scotland: Former first minister Nicola Sturgeon arrested then released in police corruption probe](#)," *Euronews*, 12 June 2023)

SLOVAKIA

President Zuzana Caputova to not run for re-election

On 20 June, *The Guardian* reported on President Zuzana Caputova's decision to not run for re-election because of personal reasons. She added that she would complete her term which would expire with elections scheduled in 2024. Although, the office of the President is largely ceremonial in Slovakia the President ratifies international treaties, appoints top judges, has veto powers and is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. According to *The Guardian*, one of the reasons for her decision was the "consideration" for her family as she was constantly receiving death threats. It also said that since she was elected the first female President of Slovakia, Caputova has been continuously facing attacks from former Prime Minister Robert Fico and his Smer-SD party who repeatedly called her "American Agent." ("[Slovakian president Čaputová says she](#)

[will not run for re-election](#)," *The Guardian*, 20 June 2023)

SPAIN

H&M workers strike as the inflation in Europe peaks high

On 26 June, more than 4,000 Spanish employees of various Swedish multinational brands including H&M, has walked off the job forming a mass round of strike. The crowd protested on the immense workloads along with the need for pay rises, to withstand the higher cost of living in the country. It was reported to be a three-day strike, and the employees has closed the H&M stores in Madrid, and has demanded better conditions as the online sales has hindered the retail industry. Due to the pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine, the inflation in Europe has hiked up, which has gradually raised the consumer's price. The series of strike commenced after the UGT, CCOO unions and H&M has broke down. The closure of 100 stores, has impacted heavily on other larger stores, which receives online orders. Further, in the home country of H&M, Sweden, the workers were reportedly pressed into the precarity of zero-hour contracts. (Jennifer O'Mahony, "[H&M workers strike for higher pay across Spain, shutting down stores](#)," *AP*, 26 June 2023)

SWEDEN

Protesters march towards the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad

On 29 June, dozens of crowds gathered around the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad, after Salwan Momika, an Iraqi origin residing in Sweden set fire to an Islamic holy book copy in Stockholm's central mosque a day before. The gathered crowd left the building, after the government deployed a local security force to maintain the unrest. The mob warned that, any intentional damage to the holy book, would be considered extremely offensive. The incident has sparked unrest in various Muslim-majority countries, including Turkey, who further questioned the necessity to provide Sweden with its NATO membership. President Erdogan stated: "We will eventually teach the arrogant

Westerners that insulting Muslims is not freedom of thought." The Middle east nations including Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt has criticised on the action. Iraqi criticised the incident to be "provocative", while around 1.8 million Hajj worshippers stated that the incident cannot be justified. The Sweden court has allowed the protesters action under "freedom of expression ground." (Alys Davies, "[Sweden Quran burning: Protesters storm embassy in Baghdad](#)," *BBC*, 29 June 2023)

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's summer session addresses various agenda

On 19 June, the PACE held a summer session which included the delegation of eight Swedish MPs. The assembly discussed on the political developments in Poland, with two essential rapporteurs. The joint urgent debate discussed on Russia's aggression over Ukraine and about the participation of Belarusian athletes in the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics. The challenges of Belarusian exile were debated along with Migration. The issue of migration reported on the major issues such as integration, social inclusion, internally displaced person's protection through the lens of sports, health and social of undocumented workers. The assembly discussed on the budgets of the Council of Europe, and the expenditure scale of Parliamentary Assembly. Other subjects of discussion include strengthening multilateralism, health care, digital technologies. Further, the President of Slovenia on Wednesday addressed on the questions raised by the members of Assembly. ("[Political developments in Poland debated at the summer session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe \(PACE\)](#)," *Sveriges Riksdag*, 28 June 2023)

Protests in Stockholm challenge Sweden's NATO bid

On 04 June, protests erupted in Stockholm against Sweden's NATO bid and anti-terror legislation despite Turkey's opposition. The demonstration, organized by groups associated with the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), raised concerns as

PKK flags and anti-NATO slogans were displayed. Turkey expressed dissatisfaction with the planned protest and called for its prevention, citing the presence of PKK terrorists operating freely in Sweden. Swedish officials defended the new law, stating that it does not target freedom of speech. The incident follows previous allegations of Russian influence and destabilization efforts in Sweden, including the burning of the Quran near the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm. ("[Sweden staged a rally against Erdogan before the decision on NATO membership](#)," *Guildhall*, 04 June 2023)

SWITZERLAND

Federal Council to support ban on commercial exploitation of international sea bed

On 28 June, the Federal Council announced its support for a moratorium on the commercial exploitation of the international seabed area until its impact on the marine environment was studied scientifically. The decision will be relayed by Switzerland's representatives in the 28th session of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) that will be held in Jamaica in July. The Federal Council's decision is in line with Switzerland's Maritime Strategy for 2023-2027 which was adopted on 02 June. The ISA is the body that regulates marine resource-related activities in the international sea bed. While it has given licenses for exploration operations in the area, certain states and companies have been requesting access to commercially exploit the mineral resources. This has drawn concerns from scientists and environmental activists who are calling for a moratorium before a final decision. ("[Federal Council adopts position on moratorium on commercial exploitation of international seabed area](#)," *The Federal Council*, 28 June 2023)

The Swiss cities experienced a slight slip in their Livability index

On 22 June, *Swissinfo* reported the 2023 Global Livability Index, published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The report stated that the Swiss cities Zurich and Geneva have batched in the top 10 with

third and sixth spots, respectively, but have slightly fallen in the 2023 ranking. Vienna has remained in its top spot, while the Austrian capital has fallen somewhat due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the 2023 index, the country has expanded over 173 cities regarding its stability, healthcare, environment, infrastructure etc. ("[Swiss cities slip down 'most-liveable-cities' ranking](#)," *Swissinfo*, 22 June 2023)

Federal Council adopts a maritime strategy

On 02 June, Switzerland's Federal Council adopted a maritime strategy despite being a landlocked country. Bern's strategy includes looking at five areas. First, international law through which the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda implementation. Second, the maritime economy through which sea-borne imports are managed under a framework. Third, environmental concerns for marine life and society through which it will focus on maritime biodiversity, plastic pollution and climate protection. Fourth, maritime science and research through which the scientific community will be supported. Fifth, Swiss-flagged vessels through which registration of Swiss-flagged commercial vessels will be made easier. ("[Federal Council adopts maritime strategy for Switzerland](#)," *The Federal Council*, 02 June 2023)

THE UK

Court ruling upsets government's deportation plan

On 29 June, a court in London ruled that the government's proposal to deport migrants to Rwanda was unlawful, raising concerns about "deficiencies" in Rwanda's asylum system. Ian Burnett, one of the three judges, stated: "The deficiencies in the asylum system in Rwanda are such that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk that persons sent to Rwanda will be returned to their home countries where they face persecution and other inhumane treatment." This ruling was the result of appeals by human rights organizations and asylum seekers against a December 2022 ruling of the UK High Court. In December 2022, the High Court favoured

the government's Rwanda plan, terming it "lawful." The latest ruling was welcomed by campaign groups while the government announced its decision to appeal against the verdict in the Supreme Court. The deportation of asylum seekers from the UK to Rwanda is one of the top priorities of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. While no deportations have happened yet, the UK has paid GBP 140 million to Rwanda as part of the agreement. ("[UK court rules Rwanda migrant deportations are unlawful](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 29 June 2023; Ben Quinn, Diane Taylor, Pippa Crerar, "[Battle over Rwanda deportations to continue as No 10 gears up for appeal](#)," *The Guardian*, 29 June 2023)

Bank of England expected to raise interest rates amid rising inflation

On 22 June, *BBC* reported that the Bank of England is anticipated to raise interest rates for the 13th consecutive time in its ongoing efforts to address increasing prices. Official data revealed that inflation remained at 8.7 per cent in May, making it more likely for the Bank to announce an increase in its benchmark rate from 4.5 per cent. Domestic reactions include concerns over the impact on mortgages and support for rate hikes to control inflation. Despite debates on its effectiveness, interest rates continue to be the primary tool to combat inflation. Analysts predict a rise to 4.75 per cent, with the possibility of a larger increase to five per cent. The decision is expected to bring challenges for homeowners but potentially benefit savers. (Kevin Peachey, "[Interest rates set to rise for 13th time in a row](#)," *BBC*, 22 June 2023)

Member's of the Parliament vote to sanction Johnson

On 19 June, UK's Member's of the Parliament in the House of Commons approves the report which states that the former prime minister Boris Johnson deceived the parliament about the parties he held during the COVID pandemic. The 'partygate' as it is termed refers to a series of gatherings between 2020 and 2021 that was organized by Johnson during his tenure as PM. This flouted the strict lockdown rules that the UK was under at the time. The

house's Privileges Committee report recommended sanctioning Johnson for misleading the parliament, which equals "contempt" of the house. Member's of the Parliament voted by 354 to 7. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak skipped the vote, as did many Conservative party members. Former prime minister Theresa May welcomed the move as a "small but important step in restoring people's trust" in the parliament. Meanwhile, Johnson responded by accusing the committee for deliberately targetting him, terming it a "witch hunt." ("[Boris Johnson: UK lawmakers approve 'Partygate' report](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 20 June 2023)

Rishi Sunak rejects Boris Johnson's plea to overrule HOLAC committee

On 12 June, *Reuters* reported PM Rishi Sunak rejected Boris Johnson's plea to overrule an HOLAC committee (House of Lords Appointments Commission) and allow some of his nominees to the upper chamber of the parliament. The PM said: "Boris Johnson asked me to do something that I wasn't prepared to do, because I didn't think it was right." The HOLAC committee is an independent body that was constituted in order to screen the list of members to the House of Lords, nominated by the former PM who receives an honorary lifetime seat in the same when he steps down. The final list published on Friday did not include Johnson's nominees. Johnson said : "To honour these peerages it was not necessary to overrule HOLAC - but simply to ask them to renew their vetting, which was a mere formality." (Sachin Ravikumar, "[UK's Sunak faces down critics after Boris Johnson honours row](#)," *Reuters*, 12 June 2023)

UK's Digital Trade Network sets off with investments from the APAC

On June 12, a press release from the UK government reported the Asia Pacific (APAC) investors delegation to London Tech Week planning to pitch in EUR 100 billion into UK tech firms. This is an expansion of the UK's Digital Trade Network (DTN) that would bring firms that work with fintech, clean tech, life sciences and Artificial Intelligence and others.

Minister for Investment Lord Johnson said: “Just weeks after successfully negotiating our biggest post-Brexit trade deal with the CPTPP, we are seeing huge interest from investors in the region, with millions of pounds being invested into world-leading British tech.” Many APAC tech firms are shifting their Headquarters to the UK which includes Japanese startups Datagusto, Qufooit and booking platform Enrolmy in New Zealand. According to the new contract between UK and Oxfordshire-based Intralink to lead the new UK-APAC Tech Growth Programme. DTN will expand to Taiwan and Vietnam to ensure digital tech expertise from the region and market access, digital trading systems for the UK exporters. ([“Asia Pacific investors set to pour millions into UK Tech after biggest post-Brexit trade deal,” Gov.uk](#), 12 June 2023)

NATO Allies conduct joint training exercises in Estonia

On 04 June, the UK’s Ministry of Defence published a press release, on 02 June, that in Estonia, the UK engaged in extensive training exercises with NATO allies, involving over 10,000 personnel from 11 countries. The UK RAF Typhoon fighter jets and Army Air Corps Apache helicopters participated in a joint exercise called Spring Tempest. They practiced firing heavy machine guns and advanced missiles at sea targets, showcasing the ability to conduct precision strikes deep in enemy territory. The mission demonstrated the UK’s commitment to collective defence, regional security, and interoperability with NATO allies. The training was supported by a Forward Air Controller operating from a Wildcat helicopter. The UK’s contribution to European security remains a priority. ([“British fighter jets and helicopters train to attack targets at sea, alongside NATO allies in Estonia,” gov.uk](#), 04 June 2023)

Docherty reinforces support for Central Asia

On 04 June, UK minister Leo Docherty, embarked on a significant visit to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan to reaffirm the UK’s support for the region. This visit marks the highest-ranking UK

official’s trip to Kyrgyzstan in over ten years. As Central Asia grapples with economic uncertainty due to Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine and the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, Docherty aims to strengthen the UK’s partnership with the region. The visit will focus on promoting UKs expertise for sustainable economic development and discussing emerging opportunities for UKs businesses. Additionally, discussions on energy security, climate cooperation, and trade ties will take place, highlighting the strategic importance of the region. The Minister will also engage in activities that showcase UK-supported initiatives, such as promoting inclusive tourism in Kyrgyzstan and exploring cooperation in critical minerals, clean technology, and agriculture in Kazakhstan. In Uzbekistan, discussions will center around defense, trade, counter-terrorism, and support for domestic reforms. ([“Europe Minister to forge closer relations in Central Asia,” gov.uk](#), 04 June 2023)

TURKEY

Set to reverse unorthodox economic policies to tackle inflation

On 22 June, *BBC* reported that Turkey is on the verge of reversing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s unconventional economic measures as the new economic team aims to combat soaring inflation. Within a month of Erdogan’s re-election, interest rates are expected to undergo a significant increase from the current level of 8.5 per cent. With inflation nearing 40 per cent and the population facing a severe cost-of-living crisis, the need for action is evident. Disagreements among economists persist regarding the extent of the interest rate hike, with projections ranging from an 11.5 point increase to 20 per cent to a possible peak of 40 per cent. Erdogan’s challenge lies in the persistent high inflation rate and critically low central bank reserves, which were depleted in efforts to stabilize the lira. The economy’s current crisis and its impact on local elections next year further complicate the decision-making process. (Paul Kirby, [“Turkey’s Erdogan set for](#)

[economic U-turn and steep interest rate hike,](#) *BBC*, 22 June 2023)

Erdogan demands recognition of Northern Cyprus

On 12 June, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan came up with a two-state solution in Cyprus after he visited the northern Mediterranean. He explained the recognition of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus as the primary solution. Northern Cyprus has a majority of Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers. Ankara is the only city which recognises Northern Cyprus, while the EU considers the entire part to itself. Erdogan said: "Turkish Cypriots have never been and never will be a minority." Further, Turkey is a major regional contributor and holds a more significant military force in the Northern Cyprus region. Over 65 per cent approved the UN's referendum to reunite the island, while Southern Cyprus consisting of Greek Cypriots, is against Turkey's plan to divide the Mediterranean. ("[Erdogan demands international recognition of northern Cyprus,](#)" *Euronews*, 13 June 2023)

New economically liberal and socially conservative cabinet

On 05 June, the Turkish cabinet met to discuss the economy, combating terrorism and Sweden's NATO entry as the major agenda. The cabinet has eighteen ministers with all new ones except for the Ministries of Health, Culture and Tourism. *Le Monde* reported that "The new line-up is economically liberal and socially conservative, in keeping with previous governments." Ibrahim Kalin, the president's former diplomatic adviser, has been appointed as the head of Turkish intelligence. Mehmet Simsek is the Treasury and Finance Minister who will be responsible for pulling out Turkey from the economic crisis. (Angele Pierre, ("[Turkey's Erdogan weighs up a more orthodox monetary policy,](#)" *Lemond*, 06 June 2023)

Former intelligence chief appointed as Foreign Minister

On 04 June, *Guildhall* reported that Turkish former intelligence chief Hakan Fidan was

appointed as foreign minister by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Fidan, previously a military officer, served as Erdogan's advisor during his tenure as prime minister. Speculation arose that Fidan could also assume the role of vice president. Notably, only the health and culture ministers retained their positions in the government. On the same lines, the appointment of ex-banker Mehmet Simsek as finance minister raised public interest, signaling a potential shift away from Erdogan's unorthodox policies. ("[Erdogan appoints former Turkish intelligence chief as foreign minister,](#)" *Guildhall*, 04 June 2023)

UKRAINE

Zelenskyy stresses Ukraine's NATO bid at Moldova Summit

On 01 June, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived at Mimi Castle to attend the second European Political Community in southern Moldova. He said: "Our future is in the EU. Ukraine is ready to join NATO," reiterating Ukraine's desire to join NATO. His push comes as NATO foreign ministers are meeting in Oslo to discuss the agenda for the official summit in July 2023. The former deputy Secretary General of NATO said that NATO is likely to continue to provide military aid to Ukraine and strengthen its longer-range capabilities, and it will not go beyond that. He also renewed his appeal for fighter jets in the summit as the US had given permission to its allies to supply F-16 jets to Ukraine, and the highly acclaimed "jet coalition" by the UK and Netherlands made headlines last week. ("[Zelenskyy presses Ukraine NATO bid at Moldova summit,](#)" *Deutsche Welle*, 01 June 2023)

REGIONAL

NATO diplomats want Jens Stoltenberg to continue as Secretary General

On 29 June, NATO diplomats said that the military alliance's member states have arrived at a consensus to extend the tenure of Jens Stoltenberg as NATO chief for another year. An official announcement is expected to be made next week. Meanwhile, a senior diplomat stated: "He is the best person to be secretary general, not least given the difficult security environment we

are in. Hopefully, we will have some good news next week,” when asked about the extension of Stoltenberg’s term. Stoltenberg, a former Norwegian Prime Minister, has been the secretary general of NATO since 2014. His term was renewed earlier after Ukraine’s invasion in February 2022. The collective decision to keep him continuing as the Secretary General is chalked to his experienced, given the troubled atmosphere in Europe. The decision of his tenure extension comes ahead of the next NATO summit in Vilnius from 11-12 July. ([“NATO agrees to extend Stoltenberg mandate, diplomats say,”](#) *Le Monde*, 29 June 2023; Lili Bayer, Alexander Ward, [“Stoltenberg to stay on as NATO chief another year,”](#) *Politico*, 29 June 2023)

Hungary: Sweden’s NATO bid vote postponed

On 28 June, Hungary’s parliament once again postponed the voting for Sweden’s NATO accession which was on the agenda for next week’s last Spring session. The vote will now be held during the autumn legislation session. Hungary and Turkey are the only two members that are yet to ratify Sweden’s accession request to NATO. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s government had previously stated that the reason some of the Members of the Parliament were hesitating on assenting to Sweden’s bid to join NATO was because of Swedish politicians spreading “blatant lies” about Hungary’s democracy. In March, the government had passed Sweden’s bid after many delays when Turkey’s President Erdogan seemed to indicate that they were going to ratify the request. However, with the latest delay, it seems that Sweden will not be a part of the NATO summit next month in Vilnius. (Justin Spike, [“Hungary postpones vote on Sweden’s NATO accession bid ahead of summit,”](#) *AP*, 28 June 2023)

NATO waits for an approval for Sweden’s membership amidst the regional chaos

On 28 June, French President Emmanuel Macron has called Turkey and Hungary to its quick approval of Sweden’s entry into NATO alliance. He said: “It’s now time ... to allow Sweden to attend the Vilnius summit

as an ally,” as he recalled the threat faced by the continent. Hungary’s Members of the Parliament has informed a longer delay until autumn legislative session on ratifying Sweden’s NATO membership. Turkey President Erdogan stated that, although the legislation claimed on its anti-terrorism law, the country still holds the Kurdish diaspora of around 1,00,000 people. NATO explained their requirement of unanimous approval from all the member countries. The fear of Russia’s invasion has steered fear in Sweden and Finland, who currently seeks protection under NATO’s security. The report was followed by a burning of Quran, by an Iraqi origin in the Stockholm’s Great Mosque. Turkey emphasized the incident as Sweden’s Islamophobic attitude. (Daniel Bellamy, [“NATO Secretary- General Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday he has called a meeting of senior officials from Turkey, Sweden and Finland for July 6th,”](#) *Euronews*, 28 June 2023)

Finland's Sato Oyj downgraded amid Swedish real estate crisis and forest fire warnings

On 25 June, *Helsinki Times* reported that a Finnish real estate company, Sato Oyj, has been downgraded to junk status by Moody's Investors Service due to Sweden's real estate crisis. This downgrade is part of a larger trend affecting the Nordic region. Sato Oyj, which owns 25,000 apartments in Finland, is now among several companies facing financing difficulties. Moody's downgraded Sato's rating from investment grade to high-yield status, citing concerns about its interest coverage ratio, financing challenges, and the weakening position of its majority owner, Fastighets AB Balder. Meanwhile, forest fire warnings have been issued across Northern Europe, including Finland, due to dry conditions and rising temperatures. The lack of experience in dealing with droughts makes these countries vulnerable. ([“Finland hit by Sweden real estates woes, wildfire warnings and digital detox island: Finland in the world press,”](#) *Helsinki Times*, 25 June 2023)

EU alert to border countries after the Wagner threat

On 24 June, the EU countries bordering Russia alerted their border security after the Wagner group threatened to enter Moscow. Wagner group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin has accused Kremlin soldiers of the death of 1000 Wagner Group soldiers, while Putin called the move "treason". Estonia and Latvia have stepped up their border security, and Latvia has suspended visa applications and entry from Russia. Despite no direct threat, the EU countries have strengthened border security. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland have declared close cooperation over the incident. Further, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister stated: "The goal, as ever, is victory and justice for Ukraine. The time is now." (Victor Jack, "[EU countries bordering Russia on alert after mutiny against Moscow](#)" *Politico*, 24 June 2023)

Germany passes law to ease migrant entry

On 23 June, *BBC* reported on the passing of a new law in Germany that will enable migrant workers from outside the EU easier access to enter the country. A system to check age, skills, and qualifications will be instituted. Migrants will be given the opportunity to come with their spouses and parents. The move is seen as an effort to tackle the growing labour shortage issues and the risk this poses to the economy in the coming years. The easing of migration rules is one of the major agendas of the ruling SPD-Green-Liberal coalition. (Damien McGuinness, "[Germany passes law to attract skilled migrant workers amid fierce debate](#)," *BBC*, 23 June 2023)

France hosts global financing summit; inequality, climate change and global financing systems discussed

On 22 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the New Global Financing Pact summit that Paris will host for two days, beginning from 22 June. The event will focus on issues of poverty and climate change by restructuring the global financial system. Heads of state, international NGOs, and private sector representatives will be in attendance. French President Emmanuel

Macron remarked in his opening statements: "No country should have to choose between reducing poverty and protecting the planet." He emphasized the need to increase public and private funding to eliminate inequality. The challenges faced by developing countries including climate change were highlighted by various speakers. ("[Paris summit: Macron urges joint action on climate, poverty](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 June 2023)

EU court ruled on Hungary for infringing migrant rights

On 22 June, the EU court ruled on Hungary for flouting the bloc's law by forcing the asylum seekers to travel to the embassies in Ukraine and Serbia. After facing a heavy number of migrants of one million in 2015, the Hungary government, since 2020, has forced asylum seekers to get travel permit from Belgrade or Kyiv and further enter Hungary. The country has failed to fulfil its obligations. The EU blamed Hungary and its law for its disproportionate interference, and the commission will also decide on whether to amend, withdraw the legislation or charge fines against the country. ("[EU's top court rules Hungary broke the law by forcing migrants to go abroad to start asylum process](#)," *Le Monde with AP*, 22 June 2023)

Spanish investigation launched on the Moroccan boat rescue delay

On 23 June, *The Guardian* reported on an inflatable boat bound for the Canary Islands, had waited more than 12 hours for its rescue, which has ultimately lost at least 35 lives including a child. Two of the major migrations NGOs, Walking Borders and Alarm phone has blamed the Spanish and Moroccan authorities for their delay. The boat had carried over 60 people and the Moroccan and Spain had shared a search-and rescue operation. The Moroccan authorities arrived after 12 hours, which has led to more than 35 deaths and several of them mentioned to be missing. (Sam Jones, "[Spanish investigation launched into fatal boat rescue delay](#)," *The Guardian*, 23 June 2023)

The EU has invested over EUR 500 million to support Ukraine

On 23 June, the EU states has agreed to move forward with the proposed regulation in establishing the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP). The Russian war has exposed the European Defence equipment market and the EU member states have stepped forward to defend Ukraine's defence needs. The three-track approach aimed to deliver artillery ammunition, ground-to-ground equipment's for Ukraine. The project was coordinated by the European Defence Agency and has invested over EUR 500 million to the project. The EU has promised to provide re-filling stocks while supporting Ukraine. ("[Boosting ammunition production in the EU defence industry: Council ready to negotiate with the European Parliament](#)," *European Council of the European Union*, 23 June 2023)

EU talks fail to break Kosovo-Serbia tensions

On 22 June, the EU hosted leaders from Serbia and Kosovo for talks to defuse the border tensions that have increased fears of direct conflict. The two leaders held separate talks with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borell but refused to meet each other. There were no results to the meeting as Borell stated that the two sides have "different interpretations of the causes and also the facts, consequences, and solutions." Serbian troops have already been stationed at the border on the highest alert. A series of clashes have been seen between Kosovo Serbs on one side and Kosovo police and NATO peacekeepers on the other. However, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg promised that the peacekeepers "will continue to act impartially." ("[No breakthrough after EU summons Kosovo and Serbia leaders for emergency talks](#)," *AP*, 22 June 2023)

Italy and France resolve disputes and collaborate on migration and Ukraine

On 21 June, *AP* reported that Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and French President Emmanuel Macron resolved their recent dispute during a meeting where they found common ground on various topics,

including military assistance to Ukraine and managing migration in the Mediterranean. The recent tragic migrant shipwreck off Greece has prompted a renewed focus on addressing immigration policies within the EU. Macron praised the collaboration between France and Italy on migration issues, emphasizing the need to work with countries of origin and transit to prevent influxes. Meloni highlighted the importance of dialogue between the two countries and their shared interests. The leaders also discussed their support for Ukraine and prepared for upcoming EU and NATO summits. Additionally, Meloni sought backing for Italy's bid to host the 2030 World Expo. (Sylvie Corbet and Angela Charlton, "[Italy's Meloni and France's Macron express agreement on migration following policy dispute](#)," *AP*, 21 June 2023)

Macron urges to promote development of European airspace

On 19 June, France's President Emmanuel Macron urged European nations to take an active interest in developing their airspace defence. He made the comments in a Paris meeting attended by defence delegations from 20 European countries as well as NATO and EU representatives. Macron stressed reducing reliance on the US and for European defence equipment manufacturers to relocate manufacturing in Europe under European standards. France has also not joined the European Sky Shield project which is a German-led initiative of 17 European member states to improve Europe's air defences. France has said that this initiative undermines Europe's sovereignty as it is largely collaborating with US and Israeli industries. Macron also informed that the Mamba anti-missile system developed along with Italy is now deployed and operational in Ukraine. ("[Macron calls on Europe to develop its own airspace protection strategy](#)," *Le Monde*, 20 June 2023)

EU hesitant to take measures against China in protecting its car industry

On 15 June, *Politico* reported on the increased pressure by France over the EU to probe a tariff on Chinese electric vehicles, while the EU is hesitant about this decision.

EU is concerned about China's turn towards the cheap vehicle market, which can affect the EU's e-car production. The Internal Market Commissioner has urged the dumping investigation on electric cars. The 'Buy China' policies has disrupted the medical market; additionally, Brussels has been working on to the Chinese rail industries. The French Economy Ministry claimed the necessity to impose tariffs on Chinese cars to combat unfair trading practices. The EU has advised the e-car industry to win the car sector against China's development. China has blocked the Baltic-Taiwan trade ties and can damage the EU's heavy investments. Thus, this issue will soon be voiced at an EU leader's summit. (Barbara Moens, Jakob Hanke Vela, Joshua Posaner, Hans Von Der Burchard, Giorgio Leali, and Camille Gijs, "[France presses EU to declare trade war against China](#)," *Politico*, 15 June 2023)

Erdogan opposes Sweden entering the NATO bid

On 14 June, the Turkey's President Erdogan declared that Sweden had not received any support to join the NATO military alliance from Turkey. Officials expressed disappointment as there was not any apparent progress. Both Sweden and Finland were prepared to enter the NATO bid in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine War but were disrupted by Turkey's concern about Stockholm's act of support to the Kurdish groups of Ankara. Despite Sweden's declaration of updated domestic terrorism legislation, Erdogan seem to be unconvinced. Ukraine and Sweden joining NATO will soon be discussed in the Vilnius summit in Lithuania. (Nicolas Camut and Lili Bayer, "[Turkey's Erdogan plays down Sweden's NATO hopes](#)," *Politico.eu*, 14 June 2023)

Anti-competitive practices in Google adtech may attract harshest penalty: says EU

On 14 June, Reuters reported that the European Commission sets out to investigate Google's ad tech business favouring its own advertising services. It may attract fines of up to ten per cent of Google's global turnover. Seventy nine per

cent of the total revenue of Google last year came from advertising businesses using Gmail, Google Play, Google Maps, YouTube adverts, Google Ad Manager, AdMob and AdSense. This comes to around USD 224.5 billion. The European Council has given Google a few months to respond on the issue. EU antitrust chief Margrethe Vestager said: "For instance, Google could divest its sell-side tools, DFP and AdX. By doing so, we would put an end to the conflicts of interest...how they function and also why a behavioural commitment seemed to be out of the question." (Foo Yun Chee, "[Google faces EU break-up order over anti-competitive adtech practices](#)," *Reuters*, 15 June 2023)

European Parliament to vote on AI act

On 14 June, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will vote on the draft negotiation mandate to bring the Artificial Intelligence Act. The act is seen as the first-ever comprehensive rule in the world to manage AI and associated risks. Looking forward to the foundation models and generative AI, several transparency and safety provisions were added to the draft. The draft was formulated by the committees on the Internal Market (IMCO) and Civil Liberties (LIBE). The MEPs proposed expansion of prohibited AI practices such as "real-time" remote biometric identification systems, predictive policing, and emotion recognition to the draft. They also recommended including high-risk issues related to AI like use in recommender systems and voter influencing. ("[Artificial Intelligence Act: press conference 14/6 at 13.30 CEST with President and co-rapporteurs](#)," *European Parliament*, 14 June 2023)

Amnesty International reproaches Finland's healthcare sector

On 13 June, Helsinki Times reported that in an extensively researched report titled "Tiedan etten saa apua" (I know I won't receive help), Amnesty International has spotlighted the healthcare inequality in Finland. Finland has a double layered healthcare system. People who use public healthcare services face problems such as long waiting hours, failed appointments and

quick digitalization due to the COVID pandemic. However, economically well-off individuals have the means to access private healthcare options. This inequitable access to healthcare has led to social distrust in the country. Finland has been reducing funds to the healthcare sector since the 1990s. This coupled with the decrease in resources and healthcare professionals has pushed international human rights organizations to urge the country to take quick remedies. ([“Amnesty International report highlights health inequality and lack of access to healthcare in Finland,” Helsinki Times, 13 June 2023](#))

Scraping veto can cause negative impact on smaller nations

On 13 June, *Euronews* reported on whether the EU would move from unanimity to a qualified majority. Putin’s decision to a full-scale invasion of Ukraine has often united the bloc’s 27 member states causing embarrassment to Brussels. The reason for the malfunction includes the unanimity voting rule policy of the EU granting the nation a unique veto power. Defenders claim that the veto acts as a shield for smaller countries. Strengthen democratic ties and negotiations. In contrast, the critics claim veto power has hindered their decision-making authority. A classic event, the Treaty of Lisbon reinforced the unanimity rule in foreign policy, taxation and budget. Member nations like Hungary deliberately used veto power to protect their national and economic interests. Thus, scraping off the veto power can affect various member nations. (Jorge Liboreiro, [“The EU has the tools to move from unanimity to qualified majority. But it’s a classic Catch-22,” Euronews, 13 June 2023](#))

UK’s Revocation and Reform Bill can revoke EU laws

On 12 June 2023, *Euronews* reported on the UK government’s new law, the Retained EU Law Bill, might enable Members of the Parliament to cancel specific EU laws of the UK statute books. However, thousands of EU laws will automatically expire on 31 December 2023. The government has published around 600 EU laws which could suit the bill. The relationship between

Brussels and London has enhanced after the Northern Ireland Protocol. Brussels has been following the evolution of the newly Retained EU law, alerting the UK of its negative impact on trade as a countereffect. Britain’s Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly, claims the EU-UK relationship as a: “much-valued ally and friend”. He accepts UK’s laws but reminds the government of the added consequences that could impact the relationship. (Alice Tidey, [“UK bill to revoke EU laws could have ‘negative impact on trade’, Brussels warns,” Euronews, 12 June 2023](#))

EU offers loan to Tunisia to help in its development

On 11 June, the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced a loan worth EUR 1 billion during a visit to Tunisia. The EU wanted to help the nation develop its shattered economy and rescue it from the financial crisis. President Kais Saied has rejected the proposal urging that the IMF should review the bailout. The fact lies that the IMF deal could take months to negotiate into action. EU is ready to provide EUR 150 million to reform the Tunisian year agenda. The Tunisian President claims that the partnership with the EU will combat illegal migration. The Prime Minister of Italy recommended expanding opportunities for young Tunisians and working in developing skills to help the economy. ([“EU considering major Tunisia aid package as migration surges,” Reuters, 12 June 2023](#))

EU will discuss on asylum rules on 08 June, says EU migration commissioner

On 06 June, EU migration commissioner, Ylva Johansson said that the EU countries would agree on how to share the responsibility of hosting the refugees and migrants. The meeting with home affairs ministers of the union, which is going to happen on 08 June would take part in the EU asylum rules that got broken in 2015 due to the inflow of Syrian refugees. The overarching question is whether all EU countries host the people as demanded by the southern and western states or the eatery’s states could provide personnel and finance instead. Charity Oxfam criticised the

plan saying: "These proposals will not fix the chronic deficiencies in the EU asylum system. Instead, they signal the EU's desire to barricade Europe from asylum-seekers." ("Gabriela Baczynska, [Breakthrough on stalled EU migration deal coming this week - official](#)," *Reuters*, 07 June 2023)

EU concerned about potential Austrian politician's victory

On 06 June, Guildhall reported the concern of the EU regarding the chances of an Austrian politician's victory in the upcoming election. During his campaign speech, the Austrian Politician Herbert Kickl expresses his interest in turning Austria into a second Hungary. His victory in the forthcoming election, along with the forces in Slovakia and Austria can give the Russia's President a tool to oppress Ukraine by undermining the sanctions. Europe officially declared the issue to be a "disaster" and alerted the Social Democrats in Austria to stop fights among themselves and focus on strengthening the bond between each other. ("[EU worries about growing popularity of pro-Russian populists in Austria and Slovakia](#)," *Guildhall*, 06 June 2023)

EU calls for de-escalation and dialogue in Northern Kosovo

On 03 June, the EU strongly condemned the violent acts against citizens, KFOR troops, law enforcement, and media in northern Kosovo. The EU fully supports NATO's mission KFOR and the EU's mission EULEX in fulfilling their mandates. Kosovo and Serbia must immediately and unconditionally de-escalate, refrain from divisive rhetoric, and halt further uncoordinated actions. Urgent restoration of calm is necessary. Kosovo should suspend police operations near municipal buildings, hold inclusive early elections, and involve Kosovo Serbs. Concern is expressed over the heightened alert status of the Serbian Armed Forces. The EU expects both sides to engage in the EU-facilitated Dialogue to find a sustainable solution, ensuring safety, security, and participatory democracy for all citizens. Immediate work on establishing the Association/Community of Serb Majority Municipalities is urged. ("[Kosovo* - Statement by the High](#)

[Representative on behalf of the EU on the latest developments](#)," *consilium.europa.eu*, 03 June 2023)

Stoltenberg urges Turkey to support Sweden's membership bid

On 04 June, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg called on Turkey to withdraw its opposition to Sweden's bid to join the US-led defence alliance, emphasizing that Sweden's membership would enhance security for both countries. Stoltenberg expressed his eagerness to finalize Sweden's accession promptly during his visit to Istanbul, where he attended Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's inauguration ceremony. He held talks with Turkey's new foreign minister, Hakan Fidan, who replaced Mevlut Cavusoglu in Erdogan's reshuffled Cabinet. Stoltenberg acknowledged that Sweden has taken significant steps to address Turkey's concerns regarding terrorism, such as implementing stricter laws and improving counter-terrorism cooperation. The approval of existing NATO member states, including Turkey and Hungary, is necessary for Sweden's NATO membership. ("[NATO's Stoltenberg again urges Turkey to let Sweden join](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 04 June 2023)

"A ceasefire resulting in a frozen conflict will not bring lasting peace," says Ursula von der Leyen

On 31 May, speaking at the Globsec conference in Bratislava, European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen said that a ceasefire would result in a frozen conflict that would not bring lasting peace and increase regional stability. She further added that: "we want a just peace, one that does not reward the aggressor, but one that upholds the principles of the UN Charter, and the Ukrainian people's right to be masters of their own future." She continued by saying that just and lasting peace can only be realized through "long-term" security guarantees delivered by "like-minded" states to fortify Ukraine against Russian attacks in the future. This process is to be done in parallel with the democratic reforms in Ukraine necessary to advance its EU accession bid. She did not mention which country should form the "like-minded" states or whether the

arrangement should be governed by NATO in her speech. (Jorge Liboreiro, "[A ceasefire in Ukraine would lead to a 'frozen conflict.'](#)" *says Ursula von der Leyen*," *Euronews*, 31 May 2023)

Azerbaijan accuses France of misinterpreting the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace talks

On 02 June, *Politico* reported that Azerbaijan has accused French President Emmanuel Macron of misinterpreting the discussions during high-stakes peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met on 01 June on the sidelines of the summit in Moldova to negotiate a potential peace treaty. Macron along with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and European Council President Charles Michel joined the meeting as mediators. Following the summit, Elysée Palace issued a statement saying that the European leaders called on both countries to respect all their commitments, the release of prisoners and avoidance of hostile rhetoric. Macron's press service added that the leaders also stressed the importance of defining rights and guarantee for the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, the region where Armenia fought a brutal war in 2020. Both statements were refuted by the Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry on 02 June by saying that they distort the position of the parties. (Gabriel Gavin, "[Azerbaijan accuses Macron of 'distorting' Armenia peace talks after EU summit](#)," *Politico.eu*, 02 June 2023)

We make sure that Ukraine wins the war: NATO Secretary General

On 01 June, the NATO foreign ministers took part in the second day of the informal meeting in Oslo. The meeting focused on support for Ukraine and defence spending. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said: "The most important thing for NATO and Ukraine is to assure that they win this war and we are providing an unprecedented level of support." He added that NATO would ensure Russia's President Vladimir Putin would not be aggressive against Ukraine again. The foreign ministers also discussed Sweden and Ukraine's

accession to NATO. ("[ATO working to ensure 'Putin does not do this again'](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 01 June 2023)

European Council approves accession to Istanbul Convention

On 01 June, the European Council approved the accession to Convention on Preventing and combatting violence against Women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). Under the convention, a legal framework comprising data collection and criminalizing of various forms of violence, awareness initiatives and support services will be offered. The convention enhances the EU's aims of establishing equality. ("[Combating violence against women: Council adopts decision about EU's accession to Istanbul Convention](#)," *consillium.europa*, 01 June 2023)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate advisory body calls out UK government

On 28 June, the Climate Change Committee berated the UK government for its slow developments in attaining net zero greenhouse gas emissions, stating that the UK had "lost its clear global leadership position on climate action." The climate watchdog also called out the government for not adhering to the Glasgow Climate Pact signed during the COP26 that the UK hosted in 2021. The Climate Change Committee is the government's climate advisers and monitors their decarbonization efforts. UK authorities have pledged to reduce emissions by 68 per cent by 2023. John Gummer, chairman of the Committee said: "Even in these times of extraordinary fossil fuel prices, government has been too slow to embrace cleaner, cheaper alternatives and too keen to support new production of coal, oil and gas" pointing out that the government is hesitating to commit to their promises. (Sylvia Hui, "[Climate watchdog slams UK government for backtracking on its fossil fuel pledges](#)," *AP*, 28 June 2023)

Climate engineering will soon upgrade their developments

On 28 June, European Commission has reported the risks posed by the usage of climate geo-engineering, and has urged on developing technologies which can curb the heated planet. The commission executive Vice-president mentioned on the considerable future potential Geoengineering, which can bring changes to the climate change issues. Stratospheric aerosol injection, which requires tiny particles that reflects light and Marine cloud brightening technology, which increases the relativity of clouds were the two new developments discussed during the meeting. an expert at Utrecht University along with 450 scientists, expressed their concern stating that the technology can only be understood after its been deployed on a global level. They also mentioned that the small-scale experiments cannot be judged on large scale outcomes. Further, the scientists are worried about the countries deciding on monopolistic markets indicating clear geopolitical risks. (Maria Psara, "[European Commission calls for international discussions on risks of climate engineering](#)," *Euronews*, 28 June 2023)

The world leaders have agreed to uplift the poorer countries from its debt crisis

On 23 June, *The Guardian* reported on the debt crisis affecting the poorer countries, while the global finance summit's measures failed to deliver debt forgiveness plan. The French President had urged for global taxes on aviation, shipping to fund climate action. World Bank has expressed their concern on establishing a planet tackling issues like food insecurity, pandemics, fragility, poverty etc. Over 52 countries are in debt distress rising the interest rates. The World Bank has also declared to pause the debt repayments for countries who are struggling with climate disaster and begin with new loans. Countries like France, Japan and UK has pledged their proportions of SDR for poorer countries which scores to around USD 80 billion. The summit concluded with an agreement to transform the world's approach and to uplift the poorer countries. (Fiona Harvey, "[Paris climate finance summit fails to deliver debt](#)

[forgiveness plan](#)," *The Guardian*, 23 June 2023)

Switzerland moves ahead with climate-sensitive law

On 18 June, 59.1 per cent of voters in Switzerland voted to approve the government's new climate and innovation law. The law has several areas it looks to tackle such as achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The law also aims at increasing energy security by replacing imported fossil fuels with Swiss-made renewables. Businesses will also benefit from incentives if they invest in green technologies. The new law has raked up support from most political parties, business communities and environmental groups. The main opponent has been the right-wing Swiss People's Party which criticized the new law, describing it as an "electricity guzzler." WWF responded to the news by stating that "the result shows that the Swiss people are more than ever willing to take responsibility for improving climate protection." (Simon Bradley, "[Swiss approve net-zero climate law](#)," *Swissinfo.ch*, 18 June 2023)

Impact of climate change manifests as sea surface temperatures increase

On 19 June, *BBC* reported that the European Space Agency (ESA) has alerted about intense marine heat in the seas around the UK and Ireland. Water temperatures are reported to have increased by three to four celcius above average. The Met Office has concluded that human-instigated climate change is one of the causes of this warming. Such marine heat waves can adversely impact sea life. According to data from the Met Office, global sea surface temperatures for April and May were the highest ever recorded. Further, the EU's Copernicus climate and weather monitoring service showed that the first 11 days of June were the hottest ever recorded globally. In June, global air temperatures also breached preindustrial levels by more than 1.5 celcius for the first time. The winds from the Sahara desert blow dust that blocks and helps reflect the sun's energy out of the atmosphere, thereby controlling sea temperatures. However, Atmospheric

scientist Professor Michael Mann said that these winds have been lower than average this year. ([“Climate change: Sudden heat increase in seas around UK and Ireland,” BBC](#), 19 June 2023)

Climate in Europe continues to deteriorate says Copernicus

On 19 June, a report by the World Meteorological Organization and the EU’s Copernicus Climate Change informed that Europe was the fastest-warming continent. Last year, temperatures on the continent were 2.3 degrees Celsius hotter compared to pre-industrial times. Apart from dangerous heatwaves, droughts, increasing sea-surface temperatures, marine heat waves, and unparalleled glacier melts are experienced. Copernicus director Carlo Buontempo warned: “Unfortunately, this cannot be considered a one-off occurrence or an oddity of the climate.” Below-normal rainfall has also negatively impacted the agricultural sector. The hot weather also led to raging fires in France, Spain, Portugal, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic. In a small cheer for Europe, the report stated that for the first time, output from wind and solar power overtook electricity production from fossil gas for EU in 2022. ([“Europe is world’s fastest warming continent, finds climate report,” Le Monde](#), 19 June 2023)

No clear winners for the Nature Restoration Regulation

On 15 June, *Politico* reported on the push and pull factor of the new legislation. The environment committee has contributed their vote agreeing on the Nature Restoration Regulation, which aimed to retain a 20 per cent blocs towards retaining a better natural state. At the same time, the EPP rejected the legislation and failed partially. Socialists blamed the right wing for always opposing the ecological transformation and pointed out the intense political situation. Various MEPs was put under the dilemma of whether to back or reject the bill. Each sides claimed victory, and the final plenary vote is expected to be held on 10 July. The current poll is tied, which indicates the possibility of the failure of the EPP. (Louise Guillot and Eddy Wax, [“EU conservatives fail to kill nature](#)

[restoration bill – for now,” Politico](#), 15 June 2023)

European Commission’s expert body faces backlash from NGOs

On 14 June, Euractiv reported on the Expert Group on Carbon Removals that will aid the EU to research and implement plans to reduce negative carbon emissions. The planned second meeting of the expert body has run into concerns from five NGOs highlighting the issues of less representation of environmental and scientific groups and the low number of female speakers during the first meeting. The letter stated that more business organizations were considered and also given more speaking time during the previous meeting. The Commission has responded by saying that participants are selected through fixed criteria and gender diversity has been ensured for the forthcoming meeting. (Julia Dahm, [“Carbon sinks: NGOs slam ‘unbalanced’ Commission expert body,” Euractiv](#), 14 June 2023)

Europe braces for harsh weather conditions

On 14 June, the European Environment Agency (EEA) reported that Europe is headed for extreme weather. The EEA released an online tool named ‘Extreme summer weather in a changing climate: is Europe prepared?’ to inform users about weather patterns, possible natural disasters and climate-related diseases across Europe. With the summer approaching, European countries are expected to experience increased heat waves, flooding, droughts and wildfires. The EEA highlighted the importance of preparing preventive and mitigation strategies to combat climate-sensitive impacts. It called for the participation of local authorities as well as for a special focus on the agriculture sector. The EEA’s Climate-Adapt portal has listed various measures already in place. ([“What could the summer bring? Is extreme weather the new normal?,” European Environment Agency](#), 14 June 2023)

EU Mission on adaptation to climate change forum concluded successfully

On 14 June, the European Commission

reported that over 600 participants actively took part in the two-day Forum of the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change. The participants were from Europe and outside the continent. The discussions revolved around climate change, management and adaptation practices, and collaboration opportunities between national and regional authorities across Europe and beyond. The event showcased the active response and readiness of various actors to tackle climate-related changes across Europe and the world. ("[Shaping the future of the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change](#)," *European Commission*, 14 June 2023)

ECONOMY

Europe sees varying inflation trend

On 29 June, *AP* reported on official data that inflation within Europe was following different trends. Destatis, a German state statistics office, informed that compared to the previous year, consumer prices in June increased to 6.8 per cent, from 6.3 per cent in May. Meanwhile, Spain's inflation, compared to last year, showed consumer prices at 1.6 per cent in June, which is a drop from the 2.9 per cent reported in May. ("[Inflation is moving in different directions in Europe. It hit 6.8% in Germany and 1.6% in Spain](#)," *AP*, 29 June 2023)

Digital euros can facilitate the economy says European Commission

On 28 June, the European Commission reported on the new proposal, which allowed people to store the digital euros up to EUR 3000. With increasing usage of daily transactions, and with the elevating popularity of crypto currencies, the digital euro would be an electronic cash in Central Bank Digital Currency. The Commission's executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis stated on an ease of digital euros in public money and its access without an internet connection. Based on the report, the Commissioner declared that over 55 per cent has given their preference over cashless payment. Although the initiative received criticism and questions regarding the safety, Valdis reminded that the digital euro can protect and stabilise the outflows from banks. (Efi Koustsokosta,

["Brussels unveils plans for a digital euro promising complete privacy,"](#) *Euronews*, 28 June 2023)

Italy confirms EUR 320 billion in medium to long term bonds

On 27 June, a document from the State Treasury reported that despite increasing state budget deficit, Italy is going to issue medium to long-term sovereign bonds in 2023. EUR 118 billion is estimated between July and December in addition to the EUR 202 billion bonds that was sold in the first half. This year, Italy's deficit-to-GDP ratio is expected to be 4.5 per cent, which is in line with the plan to push it below the EU ceiling of three per cent by 2026. This year's GDP growth is estimated to be over one per cent. (Giuseppe Fonte, Antonella Cinelli, Sara Rossi, "[Italy confirms 2023 debt guidance despite ballooning state budget deficit](#)," *Reuters*, 27 June 2023)

ECB interest hikes and the inflation

On 24 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the Vice President of ECB, Luis de Guindos statement that recent interest rate hikes had impacted the economy and lowered inflation. ECB expects an inflation fall of 5.4 per cent, three per cent and two per cent in the upcoming consecutive years. During an interview, de Guindos stated that the ECB had raised the rates by 400 bases and would hold at around 2 per cent to stabilize. Energy and food prices have risen extensively during Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The banks have decided to prioritize lowering inflation to improve their economy. The Baltic states have experienced massive inflation hikes as the marked regions are exposed to the Ukraine conflict. De Guindos reminded of government spending and borrowings lender's necessity to increase deposit rates instead, not just on loans to alleviate and stabilize the economy. ("[ECB says 'finishing line in sight' on inflation, interest](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 June 2023)

New digital law set to make big tech firms comply to cyber rules

On 22 June, Europe's Digital Commissioner Thierry Breton met Elon Musk and Twitter's new CEO Linda Yaccarino to conduct a "stress test" on Twitter's services

to show how the firm will work under the new Digital Services Act (DSA). Breton is on a two-day visit to the US to remind major tech firms that the EU's DSA will come into effect in late August. Once in effect, the law will require major tech firms to take action against online hate speech, illegal content, cyberbullying and disinformation. On 23 June, Breton is expected to meet Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of ChatGPT's OpenAI Sam Altman and Nvidia's Jensen Huang to pitch a new initiative called the AI Pact which is a part of the proposed EU's Artificial Intelligence Act, an upcoming law that deals with transparency, security and human oversight for AI tools. (Clothilde Goujard, Gian Volpicelli, "[Europe's digital 'enforcer' takes EU tech rulebook to Silicon Valley](#)," *Politico*, 22 June 2023)

Investments in USD reduced but have weightage for some government bonds: says Andrew Balls

On 12 June, chief investment officer Andrew Balls said that the American investment management firm PIMCO is having less than the desirable investment in the US dollar and more weightage in investments in some of the UK government bonds. The dollar index stands virtually unchanged and gained eight per cent last year, along with the sharp rise in interest rates in the US. Unlike what was expected, the slow fall in inflation has been persuading traders to raise their stakes in investments as the Bank of England increases the rates. He said: "We tend to be neutral and in some of our portfolios are a little bit overweight in the UK. It looks like there is value when we compare the UK with the US or with Europe." The former Federal Reserve vice chair and the current economic advisor at PIMCO, Richard Clarida said that the central bank would struggle to bring to the two per cent inflation targets because of supply shocks the country is facing which would in turn reduce the policy support from the central banks. (Harry Robertson, "[PIMCO's bond CIO says underweight dollar, sees value in UK gilts](#)," *Reuters*, 13 June 2023)

ENERGY

Germany to support Georgia's Hydrogen

Project

On 25 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the EU's desire to import green electricity to Georgia and make the country less independent of Russia. Currently, 70 per cent of the country's electricity is nestled between Russia, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Georgian electricity producer has expected to increase the current 4,500 MW to 10,000 MW by 2023. Additional construction projects are new wind farms and photovoltaics etc. The German Engineering Firm has proposed transporting Caucasian green electricity via Turkey, as the electricity prices are triple and can fetch a vast windfall for Georgia. The GES board member Zviad stated: "Without such an open electricity market, no foreign investor will come." Additionally, Germany has decided to support the Georgian hydrogen project with a backup of EUR 1.5 million. (Oliver Ristau, "[Georgia: A source of green energy for Europe?](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 June 2023)

Italy's Eni acquires oil and gas company Neptune

On 23 June, *The Guardian* reported that Italy's Eni is going to take over the oil and gas company Neptune Energy in a USD 5 billion deal. Eni's Norwegian subsidiary Var Energy acquire Neptune's Norwegian business in a USD 2.3 billion deal. Neptune is involved in operating oil and gas fields across Norway, Germany, Algeria, the Netherlands, Indonesia, and the UK. The deal is expected to help Eni achieve its goal of reaching net zero by 2030. (Jillian Ambrose, "[Eni to buy oil and gas company Neptune Energy in \\$5bn deal](#)," *The Guardian*, 23 June 2023)

ENVIRONMENT

Buy-out scheme to tackle pollution creates tensions in the Netherlands

On 25 June, *The Guardian* reported that Netherlands farmers are at a crossroads with the government over a new buyout scheme to reduce nitrogen-based pollution. The scheme was introduced after reports showed that nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions from transports and ammonia from farming exceeded the EU threshold. A 2020 commission report

proposed asking 500-600 livestock farmers to shut down their businesses within a year. 3000 "peak polluter" livestock farmers are offered EUR 975 million for voluntary buy-outs. The scheme, which begins on 3 July, has been received well by environmentalists. (Senay Boztas, "[Farmers on frontline as Dutch divided by war on nitrogen pollution](#)," *The Guardian*, 25 June 2023)

GENDER

Since 2012, gender pension pay has remained the same

On 22 June, the Swiss Life insurance company published the issue of lower pensions received by retired Swiss women. The pension was stated to be less than one-third (CHF 36,000) when compared to men (CHF 55,000). The gender pay gap in Switzerland has affected women, which score around 10-20 per cent less than men. The difference was declared the greatest for the widows. With about 30% of the gender pension gap, the country has tumbled down the lane of global equality ranking. ("[Gender pension gap: Swiss women receive a third less than men](#)," *Swissinfo*, 23 June 2023)

LGBTQ+ community alarmed at the latest bill

On 14 June, Russia approved a bill that bans gender transitioning procedures. Senior lawmaker Pyotr Tolstoy declared that the act was approved to protect Russia's family and culture from being infiltrated into Western anti-family ideologies. The bill also banned medical interventions aimed at changing the sex of a person. Russian transgender community and LGBTQ+ rights advocates expressed their concern and demanded safety in Russia, as they are sure the bill would easily pass 400 members of the parliament. Since 2013, the state has restricted various LGBTQ rights, and Russian authorities fear the steady growth of reported gender transition cases. Speaker of the State Duma stated gender transition as: "pure satanism." Therapists and Medical authorities questioned the future of the marginalized community. (Dasha Litvinova, "[In blow to Russian LGBTQ+ community, lawmakers weigh a bill banning gender transitioning procedures](#)," *AP*, 14 June

2023)

MARITIME

UN adopts first international treaty on high seas after 15 years debate

On 19 June, the UN adopted a historic first international treaty that will afford protection to the high seas. Officially titled the treaty on "Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction," (BBNJ) it will draw up a legal framework that will cover 60 per cent of the world's oceans. The treaty is the result of over 15 years of deliberations, with the UN members finally giving their assent to it in March. The high seas fall outside the purview of the Exclusive Economic Zones of countries, which is the reason any treaty on the matter mandates international cooperation. The treaty also has principles for sharing the benefits of "marine genetic resources" (MGR) collected by scientific research and also has regulations listed for environment studies in international waters. ("[UN adopts treaty to protect high seas](#)," *Le Monde*, 19 June 2023)

MIGRATION

EU summit discusses on different agendas, as migration issue hike in Europe

On 29 June, Politico reported on the ongoing EU's negotiations with other countries, on the grounds of providing billions to fund the deals on migrations. Germany has emphasised on to "revitalise" EU-Turkey ties. EU has offered around EUR 10.5 billion to Turkey, along with Libya and Tunisia to house thousands of Syrian refugees. The migration negotiation builds up with increasing discussion on Russia, China and its economic security. Hungary and Poland have expressed their disagreement to EU's migration deal while Denmark has demanded on making it stricter. The final draft conclusions of the summit had fresh migration funds of around EUR 10.5 billion and EUR 2 billion to manage EU migrations. The Germany has reported that EU leaders are forming wider step to endorse full budget package. Although Turkey-EU relations has resumed after the victory of Erdogan, the country failed to progress on modernizing. (Hans

Von Der Burchard, "[Migration money feud infiltrates EU summit](#)," *Politico*, 29 June 2023)

Frontex has considered a temporary suspension of the Mediterranean tragedy

On 24 June, *Politico* reported that the EU Border and Coast Guard has considered suspending temporarily on Greece's activities. Tensions widened between the EU agency and Athens over the role of dealing with the tragedy. Various critics have blamed the Greek authorities for the delay, which has caused the death of numerous lives. On the contrary, Greek authorities have denied the accusations. Frontex has reportedly initiated the requirement of potential human rights violation recordings. (Varg Folkman, "[Frontex consider suspending activities in Greece: Report](#)," *Politico*, 24 June 2023)

Investigation over Greece boat tragedy finds nine guilty

On 19 June, *BBC* reported that nine Egyptian men who have been accused of the Greek migrant boat tragedy have pled not guilty to charges of human trafficking. The disaster that took place off the Greek coast has led to the opening of investigations including from the UN. Pakistan has also arrested alleged human traffickers and opened up an inquiry to probe human trafficking rings in the country. Meanwhile, the BBC has flagged concerns regarding the testimonies of the Greek coastguards. According to investigations about ship movements in the region, the migrant boat was stationary for several hours. However, Greek authorities continue to maintain that the boat was on course to Italy and refused assistance. ("[Greece boat disaster: Trafficking suspects plead not guilty](#)," *BBC*, 19 June 2023)

Migrant boat capsizes near Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean

On 22 June, *BBC* reported that the sinking of a boat off the Canary Islands may have resulted in the death of more than 30 migrants. *Reuters* cited Spanish state news agency EFE which reported that on 20 June, a Spanish rescue service ship called the Guardamar Caliope had only been an hour

away from the migrant boat. However, they only sent a patrol boat to the area on the morning of 21 June. (Oliver Slow, "[At least 30 migrants feared dead in Canary Islands disaster](#)," *BBC*, 22 June 2023)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Meta to conduct "stress test" of new EU content rules

On 23 June, following a meeting with Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton reported that Meta had agreed to "stress test" the new EU digital rules in July. The EU's Digital Services Act will come into effect from August. Major tech companies will have to comply with the new rules to tackle online hate speech, disinformation, and illegal content. (Varg Folkman, "[Meta agrees to July' stress test' on new EU content rules](#)," *Politico*, 24 June 2023)

Roscosmos announces completion of new engine for Soyuz-5 rockets

On 23 June, *Sputnik* reported on the successful production of the RD-171MV liquid rocket engine by the scientific production association Energomash for Roscosmos, Russia's space firm. The engine will be used for test flights of the new Soyuz-5 carrier rocket which will be used to aid in the launching of unmanned spacecraft into near-earth orbits. Roscosmos has said that the new engine will be "the most powerful in the world." ("[Space Advancement: Russia Wraps Up New Engine for Soyuz-5 Rocket](#)," *Sputnik*, 23 June 2023)

Twitter ready to comply with new EU laws

On 23 June, *The Guardian* reported that the new EU laws on fake news would be followed by Twitter. Twitter's agreement to comply comes after a team from the European Commission conducted a stress test at the company's headquarters on 22 June. Thierry Breton, the enforcement commissioner of the new Digital Services Act praised Twitter for voluntarily agreeing to the mock testing, stating: "Twitter is taking the exercise seriously and has identified the key areas on which it needs to focus to comply with the DSA." The new

laws, set to come into effect on 25 August, are aimed at combating misinformation, cyberbullying, and fake news on the internet. (Lisa O'Carroll, "[Twitter agrees to comply with tough EU disinformation laws](#)," *The Guardian*, 23 June 2023)

Finland introduces world's first phone-free zone

On 22 June, *Euronews* reported on world's first digital detox tourist island, Ulko-Tammio, located off the coast of Hamina town in Finland. Although the island has a functioning mobile network, the travellers are recommended to disconnect from social media during the visit. The island is uninhabited by people, and the visitors can stay in tents and cabins. Ulko-Tammio consists of hiking trails, bird-watching towers, water taxis and a wide range of flora and fauna diversity. The 2022 study report stated that, a week's break from social media had improved well-being and sleep cycle. A 2019 University of East Anglia study also reported that the digital detox can elevate mental health. (Charlotte Elton, "[Phone-free zone: Finland introduces world's first digital detox tourist island](#)," *Euronews*, 22 June 2023)

INTERNATIONAL

EU leaders move to address issue of migrations

On 29 June, *The Guardian* reported that the EU is considering partnering with Egypt to stop irregular migrations and disrupt people-smuggling rings. On 17-19 June, Josep Borrell, EU's high representative on foreign affairs, had visited Egypt where he pledged EUR 20 million to help manage Sudanese refugees. This move is expected to prove itself as a good base for the anticipated partnership. Apart from Egypt, EU also plans to engage with other African nations to address the problems associated with migrations. This includes the EUR one billion deal with Tunisia, which is under negotiations at the European Council summit in Brussels. Sources reported that there were positive responses to the Tunisian deal with Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister, remarking: "Tunisia was an example of what we can do with other countries." (Lisa O'Carroll, "[EU looks to](#)

[Egypt partnership to tackle people-smuggling networks](#)," *The Guardian*, 29 June 2023)

EU seeks agreement with Tunisia to control migration

On 29 June, *Le Monde* reported regarding the "global partnership" deal between EU and Tunisia and its dragging negotiations. The commission had announced investment of around EUR 105 million intended to curb the political, economic crisis, along with its military cooperation. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni welcomed the proposal while Kais Saied disapproved stating that the country does not want to play "boarder guard" for Europe. EU hoped for swift agreement, although the country understands that the issue does not align with their political differences. Brussels reminded that the opposition from Poland and Hungary would not hinder the fostered idea of managing migration internally. Further, Frontex reported that Union borders experience over 1,02,000 irregular crossing, half of them via Mediterranean route from Tunisia and Libya would soon be curbed and managed through the agreement. ("[Philippe Jacque, "EU seeks migration cooperation agreements with North African countries](#)," *Le Monde*, 29 June 2023)

Deporting asylum seekers to cost UK GBP 169,000 per person

On 26 June, an assessment showed that sending asylum seekers to Rwanda will cost Britain GBP 169,000 per individual. The deportation is part of a 2022 deal between Britain and Rwanda. The government also hopes that the plan will stop asylum seekers from arriving in boats to the country. Home Secretary Suella Bracerman said that unless the issue of asylum seekers is addressed, the cost of housing them will rise to GBP 11 billion from the current GBP 3.6 billion. The opposition Labour party has termed the report a "complete joke" and that it does not disclose the actual amount that will be spent on the deportations. Meanwhile, the Scottish National Party has criticised the government for spending an "astronomical" amount of money to deport people while not alleviating the increasing costs of

mortgage and food bills. (Andrew Macaskill, "[UK estimates cost of deporting each asylum seeker to Rwanda will be 169,000 pounds](#)," *Reuters*, 26 June 2023)

Google and Meta blocks Canadian news sector after the demand of payment

On 29 June, Google has blocked Canadian users from availing local news on its platform. The action took place after Ottawa, passed a bill, which required tech companies to pay for the contents. The Online News Act was passed, after the government demanded that the digital giants must maintain a fair deal with the Canadian news sectors, as the sector has been helping in sharing the content through their platforms. Google remarked the law as "unworkable," stated that the Canadians will struggle to obtain online news. Meta has also blocked the Canadian news on Facebook and Instagram, after the Canadian news sector accused the online dominant advertisers of using their content for free. Although, the country will still be able to access news directly linking the web address to Canadian sites. The Australia's News code remains the first to demand payment from Google and Met, meanwhile Canadian parliamentary budget stated that the Online News Act would fetch about CAD 330 million per year. ("[Google to block local news in Canada in response to media law](#)," *Le Monde*, 30 June 2023)

China sides with Russia on Wagner issue

On 26 June, *The Guardian* reported that China called the Wagner rebellion Russia's "internal affairs." On 24 June, a Chinese-state-owned newspaper stated that the reports around the internal divide in Russia were an "illusion" being propagated by Western media to strike at Russia's unity. China added, "As a friendly neighbour and comprehensive strategic partner in the new era, China supports Russia in maintaining national stability and achieving development and prosperity." On 25 June, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko held discussions in Beijing, although the date and purpose of his arrival were unclear. ("[China downplays Wagner rebellion as Russia's 'internal affairs'](#)," *The Guardian*, 26 June 2023)

EAC bothered by member Kenya signing trade deal with EU

On 23 June, *BBC* reported that the East African Community (EAC), a regional trading bloc, is unhappy over the recently concluded EU-Kenya trade agreement. Kenya is one of the seven-member strong EAC. Critics are of the opinion that the EAC should have been negotiating with the EU, rather than just Kenya. Supporters to Kenya's deal have pointed out that Kenya is the only EAC country categorized as "emerging" while the others are "least developed." This means apart from Kenyan products, all others continue to have access to the EU markets without the need for a deal. Therefore, it is vital for Kenya to have agreed to the current deal to safeguard their interests. (Waihiga Mwaura, "[Kenya-EU trade deal: Why the East African Community was left out](#)," *BBC*, 23 June 2023)

Switzerland congratulates Mozambique for its peace process

On 23 June, the Switzerland government congratulated the government and the people of Mozambique for successfully upbrining the disarmament and demobilization process. Switzerland has helped Mozambique achieve long-lasting peace and stability since the 2019 Maputo Peace Accord. Since 2019, over 5,221 ex-combatants have been demobilized, and 16 RENAMO rebel military bases have been closed. The Switzerland declared its continued support of humanitarian and development projects to the East African country. ("[Switzerland welcomes 'milestone' in Mozambique peace process](#)," *Swissinfo*, 23 June 2023)

Western countries compete for mineral independence amid environmental concerns

On 20 June, *Le Monde* reported that western countries, driven by the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and escalating tensions between the US and China, are racing to achieve mineral independence. Europe, the US, Australia, Indonesia, and Chile are all making efforts in this regard. Even France is exploring its subsoil for lithium extraction. However,

challenges arise from opposition to ocean mining due to environmental concerns, particularly in the fragile Arctic region. Furthermore, the refining process for ores, especially rare earths, poses significant pollution risks. China's dominance in the market highlights the question of who will undertake mining activities without facing public outcry as China does. (Philippe Escande, "[Western countries are in a race for mineral independence](#)," *Le Monde*, 20 June 2023)

EU-Kenya sign new trade deal to allow free accessibility of markets

On 19 June, Kenya and the European Union signed a new trade deal. With this, Kenya will have duty-free and quota-free access to the markets of the EU. The EU is Kenya's biggest market to which it exports majorly agricultural products. In return, imports from the EU to Kenya will benefit from an incremental tariff cut over a 25-year period, with a few exceptions. Kenya receives chemicals and machinery from the EU. The trade pact is being viewed as the EU's attempt to strengthen economic ties with Africa and hold off China. The new Economic Partnership Agreement took just 7 months to finalize. ("[Kenya, EU sign trade deal as Brussels bolsters Africa ties](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 19 June 2023)

Taiwan hopes in strengthening EU ties

On 18 June, *Politico* reported on Taiwan's desire to strengthen bilateral relations with EU countries. Taiwanese Foreign Minister Wu has addressed that if the TSMC, based in Taiwan, feels comforted in producing a positive result in EU markets, then the government would certainly agree in future investments. Wu expressed his concern about the status of TSMC in Taiwan and hoped for better bilateral support from other EU countries. Additionally, the minister has urged the German automobile industry to work upon the semiconductor TSMC's input and has alerted issues of necessary sanctions to be made against China. The Foreign minister has requested the media platforms not to disclose the location and meeting details, which might be a threat to Taiwan. Although the EU stays neutral in the event of U.S.- China over

Taiwan, the Minister showed great hope on the upcoming bonding. (Stuart Lau, "[Build better ties instead of only asking for microchips, Taiwan tells Europe](#)," *Politico*, 18 June 2023)

Mali Referendum to decide on constitutional changes

On 13 June, *France 24* reported that Mali is set to vote on a referendum on 18 June that will decide whether the constitution will be subject to reforms. If successful, the country will see the demotion of French as an official language and the granting of voting rights to municipal elections for Malians residing abroad. On 11 June, the military set off the referendum procedure by casting early ballots. ("[Vote on Malian constitution: Soldiers cast ballots during early referendum](#)," *France 24*, 13 June 2023)

France to downsize its military in Africa

On 06 June, *Le Monde* reported that Paris is going to downsize the military in Africa. This decision comes three months after French President Emmanuel Macron's speech on 28 February which outlined the plan and termination of Operation Barkhane in West Africa last December. This will be implemented first at the Abidjan base in Côte d'Ivoire, then Dakar, Senegal, and Libreville, Gabon. Military in Djibouti will not be affected. Withdrawal from some of these places would take place by the end of this year. (Elise Vincent "[France will further cut back military presence in Africa](#)," *Lemond*, 06 June 2023)

The OECD Ministerial meeting held to focus on Securing a Resilient Future

On 06 June, the Federal Council reported about the upcoming Ministerial Meeting 2023, held from 07 June to 08 June in Paris, chaired by the UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly. The Conference will be attended by 38 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), EU and partner nations to discuss the ultimate motto of the meeting, "Securing a Resilient Future: Shared Values and Global Partnerships." Additional topics include economic, political and social challenges, Russia's military aggression over Ukraine and the intention to foster stronger ties and values. The

Ukraine Prime Minister Denys Schmyhal will attend the meeting to discuss the ongoing conflict and to combat corruption. OECD nations have expressed their interest in expanding their partnership with the Indo-Pacific region. The Conference will be followed by two informal WTO ministerial meetings to be held next year in Abu Dhabi. ("[OECD ministerial meeting on economic resilience](#)," *The Federal Council*, 06 June 2023).

Kyrgyz Republic and EU strengthen bilateral cooperation

On 03 June, Kyrgyz Republic's President Sadyr Zhaparov and EU's President Charles Michel held a constructive meeting in Cholpon-Ata. They reaffirmed their strong commitment to deepening bilateral cooperation based on democratic principles, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. The presidents emphasized the importance of economic cooperation, sustainable development goals, and adherence to the UN Charter's principles of sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. They welcomed the achievements of the long-standing Kyrgyz-EU partnership and expressed the need to further strengthen trade, economic, and investment cooperation. The signing of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was anticipated to elevate relations to a new level. The Kyrgyz Republic appreciated the EU's support for democratic reforms, human rights, rule of law, education, and the green agenda. ("[Joint press statement of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Mr Sadyr Zhaparov and the President of the European Council Mr Charles Michel](#)," *consilium.europa.eu*, 03 June 2023)

Germany to send warships to Indo-Pacific in 2024 amid tensions

On 04 June, Germany's Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said: "Germany will deploy two warships to the Indo-Pacific in 2024

amidst rising China and Taiwan tensions and South China Sea disputes." Speaking at Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue, he emphasized the importance of upholding the rules-based international order and safeguarding vital maritime passages. The deployments aim to protect this order and are not targeted at any specific nation. Germany seeks to balance its security and economic interests, considering China as its primary trading partner. In 2021, a German warship reentered the South China Sea after nearly two decades, joining other Western nations in addressing concerns over China's territorial ambitions. ("[Germany to send two warships to Indo-Pacific in 2024 amid South China Sea tensions](#)," *Reuters*, 04 June 2023)

UK ministers take part in Shangri-La Dialogue

On 02 May, UK's Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO) Minister of State Anne-Marie Trevelyan attended the 20th Shangri-La Dialogue. Wallace stressed the importance of "building a stable and balanced Asia-Pacific" along with ministers from Canada and the Philippines. Wallace said: "We understand that Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security is indivisible and that upholding the rules-based order is a collective effort – that is why organizations like ASEAN are so important." Trevelyan said: The UK is committed to playing a full and active role in ensuring a free, safe and open Indo-Pacific, working with partners in ASEAN and beyond to tackle global challenges." ("[UK commitment to Indo-Pacific reaffirmed as global summit takes place in Singapore](#)," *GOV.UK*, 03 May 2023)

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