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POLAND ELECTIONS 2023



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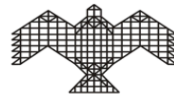
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EM COMMENTS

Poland elections 2023: Reasons behind the shift

By Padmashree Anandhan

Europe Monitor

Europe Monitor # 24, Vol. 03, No. 09, September 2023



Former prime minister Donald Tusk addresses his supporters in Warsaw. Image Source: Janef Skarzynski, AFP/France24

WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES



Source: Tyler Hicks/The New York Times; Reuters/DailySabah; Kremlin.ru; Anton Novoderezhkin/TASS; mil.in.ua; EPA-EFE/OLEG PETRASYUK

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 610 to Day 584 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 Sreeja JS, Rishika Yadav and Padmashree Anandhan

EM SHORT NOTES



Source: Filip Singer/EPA; Harren&Partner Group/dpa/picture alliance; Kacper Pempel/Reuters; urotopics/dpa/Picturealliance; Kremlin.ru; AP Photo/Jon Super

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

By Rishika Yadav and Padmashree Anandhan

COMMENT

Poland elections 2023: Reasons behind the shift

By Padmashree Anandhan

The 2023 election result indicates a further polarised Poland with more votes splitting

On 15 October, Poland's National Electoral Commission released the final vote of the completed general elections. In the published results, the governing Law and Justice (PiS) party won 200 seats whereas the opposition party, Civic Coalition (KO) won 163 seats. The coalition parties of the opposition, Third Way and Lewica (Left) won 55 and 30 seats as leverage. The Confederation, a potential partner for PiS secured only 12 seats.

On 15 October, KO leader Donald Tusk said: "...Poland has won, democracy has won, this is the end of the PiS government." PiS' leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski said: "The question before us is whether this success will be able to be turned into another term of office of our government and we don't know that yet."

On 16 October, one of the EU diplomat (given anonymity) said: "The result should lead to better functioning of the EU where the EU truly reflects its values and principles, particularly solidarity and responsibility."

When comparing the 2023 election results with 2019, the PiS party's vote share has reduced by 8.2 per cent and Civic Platform has increased by 3.3 per cent. Although the opposition share increase is not massive, the performance of Third Way (14.4 per cent) and Lewica's vote share increase by four per cent from the 2019 election combined with a reduction in support for the PiS party has resulted in an advantage for the Civic Platform.

Background to the political parties

The PiS is a "national-conservative and Christian democratic political party," formed in 2001 by Lech and Jaroslaw Kaczynski. The party's prime focus is on socio-economic issues, Polish identity, Christian values, culture and has been more independent

from the EU especially in migration. These have redeemed the party to stay in power since 2015 and continue to win a major share of votes in 2023. KO was formed in 2001 by Maciej Płazyński and Andrzej Olechowski and Donald Tusk who were known as "Three Tenors." After the leadership switch in 2014, the party lost six elections against PiS so far due to a lack of party strategy and leadership. For instance, during the pandemic instead of proposing alternatives or standing by government policies criticising the ruling government has been a key agenda rather than portraying the party's vision. Third Way, formed in 2019 emphasised keeping the state and church separate, climate neutrality, education and a comprehensive healthcare system. It received a good start with 14.4 per cent beating Lewica (the left) and Confederation. The Lewica, an alliance of the New Left and Left Together, failed to secure enough seats in the 2015 elections and since then has won between eight to ten per cent. It faces more competition from new found parties such as Third Way.

Reasons behind the shift

First, issues focused on the elections. The PiS vowed to continue the anti-migration policy and an anti-EU stance over migration. Initially portrayed as a supporter of Ukraine, has strained its relations over grain transit. Increased cash benefits and retiree programs are the strength which has sustained the party. Tusk promised to end Poland's rift with the EU over the rule of law and bring back liberal laws on abortion and media freedom. Similarly, the Third Way and the left also focused on abortion and education, promising increased spending on healthcare and a "simpler tax system" for small businesses. The Confederation proposed a strong anti-migration, anti-LGBTQ+ stance and protection of borders. Differing from the PiS, it vouched for lesser support for Ukraine and a reduction in taxes.

Second, decline in the support for the Law and Justice party. In 2007, Tusk as a prime minister undertook “moderate social and economic” policies and strengthened the equation with the EU. Due to limited reach beyond major cities and in western Poland led to the victory of the Law and Justice party in 2015. Led by Jarosław, key institutions came under control (media and culture) and became vigorous which was viewed as a similar approach to Hungary. Reforms after the 2019 elections, on Poland’s judicial system and a new retirement law sparked concerns. This continued into stricter anti-abortion and LGBTQ+ restrictions leading to a reduction in support. EU’s freezing of pandemic recovery funds over the rule of law diminished its support. Its coalition partner the Confederation emerged from “libertarian and far-right,” whose central push was the economy on lowering taxes. This did help in gaining support from young males but its rhetoric stance on “ethnic and religious minorities” was seen more harsher than PiS which overpowers its economic argument.

Third, leadership is a key to the Rise of the KO party. Tusk’s failure to win support across Poland in the 2015 election and subsequent position as president of the European Council did not provide an opportunity for the KO to fight strongly against PiS. This resulted in another failure in the 2019 elections and in 2021 the support decreased to 16 per cent according to the polls by *Politico*. The party members began to vouch for Tusk’s return to put the party back on track. In 2021, Tusk returned to lead KO which led to the recovery. Slowly the support rose to 26 per cent. Along with his return, the failure of the Confederation to appeal to the voters and the PiS clash with the EU over pandemic recovery funds favoured votes for the opposition group.

What does this mean?

First, dissatisfaction with the Polish. The 2023 election result indicates a further polarised Poland with more votes splitting into Third Way, KO and Confederation. This is mainly due to division in Poland’s society

over culture, LGBTQ and economic issues. PiS corruption scandals, altering of the judicial system, the negation of EU recovery funds and Polish becoming open-minded to LGBTQ became the barricades to the Party as it pursued its rhetorical agenda. For those dissatisfied with the current government, the alternative liberal policies proposed by Third Way and KO seem to have attracted different groups of youth and the working class.

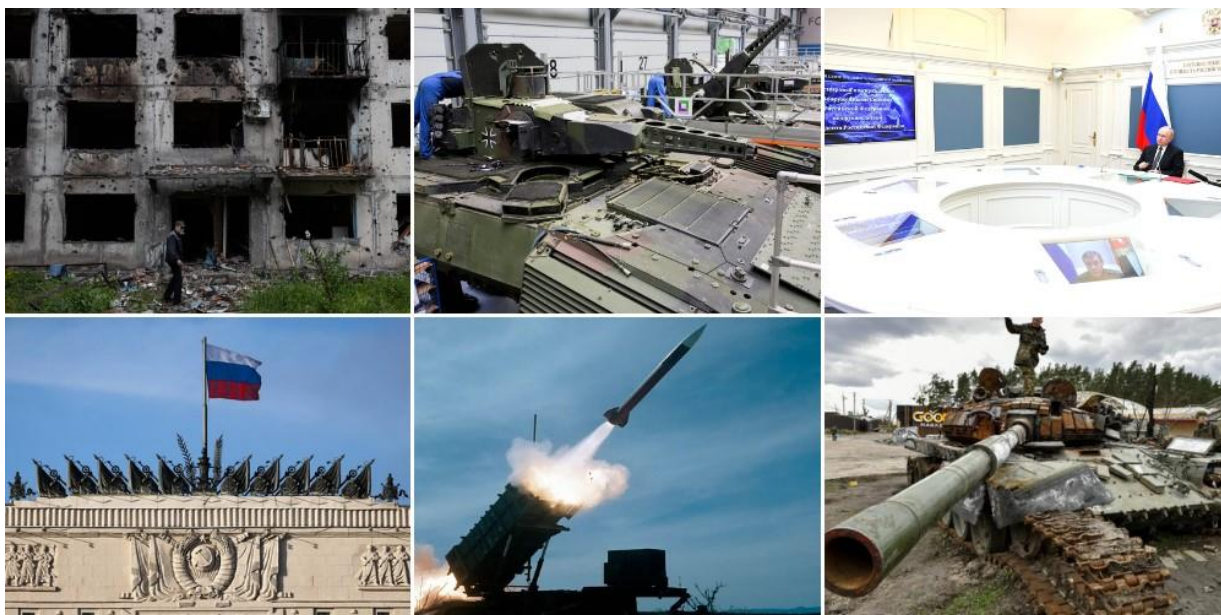
Second, the task ahead for the opposition. KO does have the votes in favour and common interests to lead to the coalition with the Third Way and the left. Looking at the party’s history, it lacks a well-defined strategy for Poland. Therefore, combining its pro-EU values, it must include its coalition parties in drafting an agenda that will balance both domestic demands, especially including economic benefits. and re-work relations with the EU.

Third, the equation with the EU. The war in Ukraine is the only exception, Poland’s domestic situation and its relations with the EU have always been conflicting. Starting from the concerns over the rule of law, the political interference with Poland’s judicial system, migration management to the recent abortion law, have always contradicted the EU’s norms. This resulted in the freezing of the pandemic recovery funds. This election results seem to provide a chance to reverse the broken relation with the EU. Since the democratic backsliding began in Poland after PiS won in 2015, concerns grew at the EU level. Poland was perceived as an addition to Hungary and Turkey due to Jaroslaw's closeness and the party’s radical laws. The dilemma was broken with the elections giving confidence to bring Poland back on track with democratic values and more EU-integrated policies.

Padmashree Anandhan is a Research Associate at NIAS. She is currently working on an issue brief on NATO’s expansion in the phase of war in Ukraine

War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Rishika Yadav and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Tyler Hicks/The New York Times; Reuters/Daily Sabah; Kremlin.ru; Anton Novoderezhkin/TASS; mil.in.ua; EPA-EFE/OLEG PETRASUYUK

War in Ukraine: Day 610

War on Ground

On 26 October, Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister denied the claims of the suspension of activities in the Black Sea Corridor. Earlier "Kyiv-based Barva Invest consultancy and a British security firm" reported on the temporary suspension of the corridor. According to Kubrakov: "All available routes established by the Ukrainian Navy are valid and being used by civilian vessels." The corridor was launched by Ukraine in August 2023 to divert from the blockade placed by Russia in the Black Sea after withdrawing from the grain deal.

On 26 October, Ukraine's military reported on advances made by Russia in Avdiivka city located in eastern Ukraine. According to a report from Deutsche Welle the corridor managed by Ukraine in the area was reduced to six to eight kilometres. The city which was home to 30,000 people is reported to be left with only 1000 since the shelling began. The army claimed on countered 15 attacks

launched by Russia and a new offensive has been reported to be underway for two weeks.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 26 October, the TASS reported on Anton Siluanov, Russia's Finance Minister's statement on Russia's defence budget for 2024. According to him, Russia is expected to spend USD 117 billion on defence and aims to allocate resources in 2024 to address the special military operation objectives. This includes the supply of weapons, military equipment and material support for military personnel.

On 26 October, the TASS reported on EU's delay in weapon delivery schedule to support Ukraine. Citing report from Bloomberg, it stated that EU which was expected to provide one million artillery rounds to Ukraine has extended the period of supply.

* 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.

On 26 October, Russia's spokesperson claimed that Russian forces advancing in Vremevka Bulge which is considered a key point in Zaporizhzhia area. According to the report in the *TASS*, Russia had advanced 150 meters and confirmed Ukrainian forces failed attempts to counter Russia's offensive.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 26 October, *Ukrainska Pravda* reported on John Kirby, US National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications comment on Russia's latest offensive. According to him, there is a renewed offensive near Russia in Avdiivka, Lyman and Kupiansk and noted that the US was aware of the military build-up. Kirby warned that Russia might achieve tactical gains but at the cost of thousands of casualties, citing poor morale and reports of executions for disobedience. He characterized Russia's troops as undertrained, underequipped and unprepared for combat. Kirby called for the quick passage of the proposed Ukraine aid package in Congress, by Joe Biden, US President, citing the urgency of the situation.

On 26 October, the US Department of Defence announced additional air defence equipment, artillery rounds and antitank weapons to Ukraine worth USD 150 million. This marks the 49th assistance round since August 2021. Biden emphasised the importance of US leadership in countering Russia's aggression in Ukraine and commitment to seek Congressional approval for further support. This request includes funds for weaponry, humanitarian aid and bolstering security in the Indo-Pacific.

On 26 October, *The New York Times* reported on Slovakia's government's decision to halt military aid to Ukraine. Following the new appointment of Robert Fico, Slovakia's Prime Minister, the decision to stop military aid to Ukraine has been announced. Fico, who had campaigned on "not sending a single cartridge" to Ukraine, emphasised support for non-military aid instead. While Slovakia's commercial defence contracts with Ukraine are expected to continue, this decision delivers a symbolic blow to Kyiv. It also raises concerns among pro-Ukraine EU

members who urge Slovakia not to obstruct the transit of weapons to Ukraine.

On 26 October, in a meeting held in Brussels, EU leaders proposed to send financial support of EUR 50 billion to Ukraine. They discussed the possibility of using frozen Russia's assets to finance Ukraine's recovery. At present Hungary's opposition to the financial support presents a challenge.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 26 October, *The Mainichi* reported on the united condemnation from Japan, the US, and South Korea towards North Korea's weapons transfer to Russia. They warned that the completed weapons deliveries would intensify the impact of Russia's aggression. They called on North Korea and Russia to immediately cease such activities, as they undermine global security and nonproliferation. They also expressed concern about potential technology transfers to North Korea. Earlier the US had reported shipping of 1,000 containers of military supplies by North Korea to Russia.

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War in Ukraine: Day 609

War on Ground

On 25 October, The Kyiv Independent reported on the expansion in Ukraine's drone production. Oleksandr Kamyshin, Ukraine's Minister for Strategic Industries confirmed the same on increased defence capabilities of Ukraine along with the domestic drone industry. According to the report the "Army of Drones" initiative, launched in July 2022 by Ukraine government, has contributed to this surge, achieving notable success in military operations.

On 25 October, Ukrainska Pravda reported on Ukraine's Ministry for Development of Economy and Trade statement on the rebound in the economy. According to the report, the economy jumped back by 9.1 per cent in September 2023. The GDP growth rate for January-September 2023 is estimated at 5.3 per cent compared to 2022. Positive results were observed across sectors, driven by business adaptability, government support and international assistance. Key contributors include manufacturing, the service sector, food processing, machine building and construction materials industries. However, security concerns over production facility damage and logistical constraints remain a barrier to economic growth.

On 25 October, Ukrainska Pravda reported on a drone attack on the Khmelnytskyi Nuclear Power Plant. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, confirmed a drone attack on the Khmelnytskyi Nuclear Power Plant and launch of a damage assessment. According to the report, the strike damaged local buildings and an alert was raised for air defence.

On 25 October, Anthony Albanese, Australia's Prime Minister announced a military support package to Ukraine worth

USD 12.8 million. This will include the 3D metal printer and anti-drone systems.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 25 October, The Moscow Times and Kremlin reported on remote observation of Vladimir Putin, Russia's President of Russia's "training with the forces and means of the land, sea and air components of the nuclear deterrence forces" and ballistic missile drills. The exercises included launches of ballistic and cruise missiles from ground, sea and air components of nuclear deterrent forces such as long-range Tu-96MS planes. Shoigu mentioned the practice of a "massive" retaliatory nuclear strike. This comes amid ongoing concerns about the Ukraine conflict and Russia's withdrawal from a key nuclear arms control treaty. In a statement released by the Kremlin: "Under the leadership of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Russia's armed forces, Vladimir Putin, a training exercise was conducted with the forces and equipment of ground, sea and air components of nuclear deterrent forces."

On 25 October, The Moscow Times reported on the recruitment of 385,000 troops by Russia amid the Ukrainian offensive. According to the report, the reason behind the recruitment was to address a manpower shortage. This has been carried out through attractive salaries and welfare offers. Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's Security Council's Deputy Chair, reported a notable increase in contracted military service sign-ups.

On 25 October, The Moscow Times reported that Sergei Shoigu, Russia's Defence Minister visited to frontline in eastern Ukraine. During his visit, he met the senior officers at the "Vostok" command post to assess the frontline situation, drone operator training and winter combat preparations. The visit follows the increased Russia's attacks on Avdiivka in eastern Ukraine.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 25 October, Moldova's Intelligence and Security Services published a decree blocking 22 news sources in Russia. The list includes Russia Today, NTV, Ren TV and state media VGTRK. On the same Russia's

~~foreign ministry~~ [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) called it as “hostile move” to block Moldovans from viewing alternative news.

On 25 October, Svenja Schulze, Germany’s Development Minister announced the allocation of EUR 195 million to bolster Ukraine’s energy infrastructure. The [German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development](#) ~~Ministry of Development of Germany~~ announced that half of the funds will be utilized to safeguard the energy sector, repair war damage and promote energy-efficient technologies and renewables. It further assured support to Ukraine’s companies through enhanced access to financial services, including a microfinance fund for MSMEs.

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War in Ukraine: Day 608

War on Ground:

On 24 October, The Kyiv Independent reported on Iryna Vereshchuk, Ukraine’s Deputy Prime Minister requesting to evacuate 1,000 residents left in Avdiivka located in the Donetsk Oblast. The move

comes after Russia’s continued shelling. According to her Russian forces had escalated its attacks to encircle. The Ukrainian forces continue to defend resulting in heavy losses for Russia’s troops and equipment.

On 24 October, Ukrinform reported on Germany’s Rheinmetall and Ukraine’s Defence Industry joint venture to help Ukraine repair military equipment. The partnership was registered on 18 October, which signifies an enhanced level of cooperation between Ukraine and Germany. The joint venture aims to offer maintenance and repair for equipment supplied by the partners and localize the production of leading Rheinmetall AG equipment.

On 24 October, the office of the President of Ukraine reported on Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s address at the Crimea Platform Summit. He emphasised the importance of unity in combating Russia’s aggression in the Black Sea region. He pointed out the gradual weakening of Russia’s military fleet in the Black Sea and the disruption of safe bases for Russia’s soldiers in Crimea. He also called for support to maintain pressure on the occupier, stop Russia’s propaganda and motivate Ukrainians in their fight against the aggressor.

On 24 October, Zelenskyy in a meeting with Troels Lund Poulsen, Denmark’s Defence Minister, discussed reinforcing Ukraine with modern fighters and air defence systems, along with training Ukraine’s pilots on F-16 aircraft. They also noted the adoption of the Joint Declaration on Support for Ukraine by the Group of Seven and readiness to commence negotiations on security guarantees between Ukraine and northern European countries.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 24 October, Lenta.ru reported on Mikhail Razvozhaev, Russia-appointed Sevastopol Governor, confirmation on the interception of electronic warfare equipment of a Ukraine drone. According to him, it caused it to land and detonate harmlessly in a field in the Kara-Koba area. He dispelled reports of “explosions” and “missiles” in Sevastopol,

attributing them to routine military activities. Additionally, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation reported intercepting a US Air Force RQ-4B Global Hawk UAV over the Black Sea without border violations.

On 23 October, *Sputnik* reported on the growth in trade relations between India's Ministry of Commerce and Russia. According to the report, the trade had exceeded the 2022 figures. The trade turnover between the two countries doubled from January to August 2023, totaling USD 43.8 billion. This represented a 20 per cent increase compared to the entirety of 2022. However, there is a trade deficit of USD 38.6 billion, with India importing USD 41.2 billion of Russia's goods in the first eight months of 2023.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 23 October, the US' Justice Department sought to confiscate a USD 300 million superyacht from Russia's billionaire Suleiman Kerimov. The department accused him of violating sanctions by using US banks. The 348-foot yacht *Amadea* was seized in Fiji in 2022 at the request of the US government, which now seeks to formally transfer ownership. However, another Russian citizen, Eduard Khudainatov, who is not under sanctions, claimed to be the owner of the yacht and is attempting to reclaim it.

On 24 October, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General and Ulf Kristersson, Sweden's Prime Minister held a meeting. Stoltenberg called for a swift ratification by Turkey and highlighted Sweden's fulfillment of commitments. He emphasised that the fight against terrorism is reinforced, with an updated action plan and a new Special Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism. Stoltenberg also addressed Baltic Sea undersea infrastructure damage. He said: "Allies and Sweden are working together to establish the facts and NATO is strengthening our presence in the region."

On 24 October, *Politico* reported on the challenges faced by the EU in projecting its global influence due to its fragmented foreign policy. While it has built institutions

to bolster its foreign policy, effective coordination remains elusive, as member states guard their sovereignty. Additionally, the EU's limited external affairs budget and lack of a military force for power projection further hinder its international impact.

On 24 October, the *BBC* reported on the rescue of a lioness from a zoo in Ukraine to a new home in the UK. The lioness, Aysa, was abandoned in the Donetsk region at the beginning of Russia's invasion. The Yorkshire Wildlife Park is reported to be working to secure permission to move the lions to the UK. Currently housed at Poznan Zoo in Poland, they are set to be relocated to provide them with a better life. This move comes after the recent death of another lion at the park.

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War in Ukraine: Day 607

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 22 October, Russia's [Foreign Ministry](#) [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) accused the west of "hoarding" Russia's fertilizer. In a statement, it reported that more than 96,000 tons of fertilizer were blocked at the ports of Latvia, Estonia, Belgium and the Netherlands. According to Russia, the fertilizers were scheduled to be delivered to poor countries in Africa.

On 23 October, Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister visited Tehran for discussions with regional foreign ministers, including those from Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia. These talks occurred amidst Middle East tensions and unresolved conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russia has increasingly turned to Iran for military and economic support in response to western sanctions. western countries have accused Iran of supporting Russia's military actions in Ukraine by supplying drones and weaponry.

On 23 October, Alsu Kurmasheva, a Russian-American journalist working for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, was ordered to remain in pre-trial detention until December. She faces charges of failing to register as a foreign agent in Russia, which could lead to a five-year prison sentence if found guilty. Kurmasheva's case is the first instance of someone facing criminal punishment for this offense in Russia.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 23 October, Turkey submitted Sweden's NATO accession bid to its parliament for ratification, potentially marking progress in a lengthy deliberation process. The protocol was signed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's President and Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson expressing optimism about NATO membership. Turkey had previously blocked Sweden's bid due to concerns about harboring Turkey's opposition groups deemed "terrorists." While Turkey had agreed to send the bid to parliament in July, there have been recent calls for anti-terrorism measures in Sweden. The timeline for Turkey's parliamentary approval

remains uncertain, with Sweden's NATO aspirations delayed for months. The deal comes following the deal with the US to acquire 40 F-16s and the revival of Turkey's accession into the EU.

On 23 October, in a meeting held by the Foreign Ministers Council, EU ministers discussed concrete steps to boost the security of Ukraine. Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief, suggested an annual commitment of up to EUR five billion from 2024 to 2027. It included funds for fighter jets and missiles.

On 23 October, in its intelligence update, the UK's Ministry of Defence reported on the increase in Russia's defence spending in the 2024 budget. According to the report, it reached six per cent of GDP, due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Conversely, education and healthcare budgets remained frozen at 2023 levels, causing real-term cuts. It further reported that the increasing numbers of wounded soldiers and their families' healthcare needs will strain finances. Sustained military spending may lead to inflation and financial burdens on businesses while reducing military expenditure risks economic challenges amid sanctions.

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War in Ukraine: Days 605 & 606

War on Ground:

On 22 October, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President during his meeting with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Turkey's President discussed the Ukrainian Peace Formula and the importance of Turkey's role. Both leaders highlighted the significance of defence and recovery efforts.

On 22 October, the National Police of Ukraine reported on persisting attacks by Russia in the Kherson region. According to the report, civil infrastructures were targeted using rocket launchers, mortars, artillery, aviation and UAVs. Civilian casualties have been reported in Berislavsky and Kakhovsky districts. The police have initiated 13 criminal proceedings for war crimes.

On 22 October, a Russia missile struck a post office in Kharkiv Oblast. It killed six and injured 14. Oleh Syniehubov, Kharkiv's Governor, said: "This is an exclusively civilian object, the Russians committed yet another terror against the civilian population of Kharkiv region!"

On 21 October, Serhiy Nikiforov, Press Secretary of Zelenskyy announced the upcoming schedule for the third meeting of security and policy advisers with Zelenskyy on the "peace formula." Norway, France and the UK are expected to participate to endorse Ukraine's peace formula.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 22 October, *RT* reported on Russia's track to become China's largest trading partner after the US. Igor Sechin, Rosneft CEO stated that the trade between both had increased by 30 per cent to USD 176 billion in 2023. He highlighted that China's economic model is currently resistant to external shocks which will help in long-term development. He added: "There is every reason to believe that trade turnover between our countries will exceed the target of \$200 billion this year."

On 21 October, the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of the Russian Federation summoned a Czech Embassy representative in Moscow. The move took place to address the Czech Republic's stance on the recent Ukraine village bombing. Russia denied responsibility for the airstrike and expressed disapproval of the Czech Republic's support and weapon provision to Ukraine. It claimed that it fuels regional instability.

On 21 October, Viktor Afzalov, Russia's Colonel General, was named the new commander-in-chief of Russia's Aerospace Forces. He succeeded Sergey Surovikin, Russia's Army General. Afzalov, who previously served as the acting commander, has an extensive military background and experience in air defence. This appointment marked a significant change in leadership within the aerospace forces.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 21 October, the UK's Ministry of Defence gave its intelligence update on Ukraine. It reported that Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, announced that Russia will initiate fighter patrols in the eastern Black Sea. It will be initiated by using MiG-311 interceptor aircraft armed with Kh-47M2 KINZHAL air-launched ballistic missiles. The move is linked to increased US maritime presence in the eastern Mediterranean. He emphasised Russia's weapon capabilities despite issues observed during the Ukraine conflict.

On 20 October, the Federal Government of Germany announced it would provide extensive military assistance to Ukraine, with a focus on enhancing security capacity. Funding for this initiative in 2023 amounts to EUR 5.4 billion, with additional authorizations for the following years reaching EUR 10.5 billion. Military support included armoured vehicles, air defence systems, artillery, engineering capabilities, protective equipment, logistics and combat readiness materials. These contributions are aimed to bolster Ukraine's defence capabilities. This support demonstrated a commitment to strengthening Ukraine's security amidst regional challenges.

On 20 October, Lloyd J Austin III, US

Secretary of Defence, held a phone conversation with Rustem Umerov, Ukraine's Minister of Defence. They emphasised the US' ongoing support for Ukraine in light of Russia's aggression. Austin reiterated the administration's commitment to seeking congressional resources to enable Ukraine to safeguard its people.

On 20 October, Joe Biden, US President and EU leaders emphasised the importance of unity in addressing the Israel-Hamas and Ukraine conflicts. Despite concerns about political challenges in Washington affecting US aid to its allies, the leaders expressed a united front. They reinforced their "strategic partnership." Biden linked the conflicts and called for a USD 106 billion aid package supporting Ukraine and Israel. They underlined their commitment to Ukraine's defence, with the US being a major military aid supplier.

On 22 October, the UK's Ministry of Defence gave its intelligence update on Ukraine. According to the update, Ministerstvo Oborony Ukrayiny (Ukraine's Ministry of Defence) reported that recent Russia's attacks in Avdiivka have led to a 90 per cent increase in Russia's casualties. Since February 2022, Russia has expanded its force presence in Ukraine through intensified recruitment and partial mobilization in Autumn 2022. The increased personnel is a key factor in Russia's ability to defend its territory and conduct costly offensives. An estimated 150,000-190,000 permanent casualties (killed and permanently wounded) and a total of 240,000-290,000 casualties (including temporarily wounded) have been recorded since the conflict began. This figure excludes the Wagner Group and their prisoner battalions who fought in Bakhmut.

The Global Fallouts: Implication of the War

On 21 October, *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)* reported that North Korea has criticised the US for supplying Ukraine with ATACMS long-range ballistic missiles. It warned that any strike on Russia with these weapons would hinder peace efforts. Ukraine recently announced its use of the

US-supplied Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), causing substantial damage to Russia's occupied airfields. Sin Hong-Chol, North Korea's ambassador to Russia, expressed deep concern and opposition from the international community regarding this delivery. He emphasised that targeting Russia, a nuclear power, could escalate the conflict in Ukraine and lead to prolonged warfare across Europe. This development came after the White House accused North Korea of supplying weapons to Russia, raising concerns about their military collaboration.

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War in Ukraine: Days 604

War on Ground:

On 20 October, Steffi Lemke, Germany's Federal Minister for the Environment arrived in Kyiv. He held discussions on Ukraine's environmental recovery following Russia's aggression. Germany's government has offered support in addressing the environmental challenges caused by the conflict. The ongoing war has resulted in extensive environmental damage, including war crimes against nature and ecocide. It posed long-term threats to Ukrainians, particularly in terms of access to clean drinking water.

On 20 October, *Kyiv Post* reported that Russia had escalated its assault on the town of Avdiivka in Ukraine. Ukrainian forces successfully defended the area. Following a lull in attacks, Russia resumed offensive actions and attempted to encircle the town. Ukraine's troops held their defence, inflicting heavy losses on Russia.

On 20 October, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine issued a new UN report. The report detailed ongoing war crimes and human rights abuses by Russia's authorities in Ukraine. It documented indiscriminate attacks with explosive weapons causing civilian casualties and damage to civilian structures. Torture, rape and the deportation of children were confirmed. Russia's authorities have employed a pattern of torture in areas they control. New evidence shows that rape and sexual violence are often accompanied by other acts of violence. Child deportations to Russia are deemed unlawful deportations, and considered war crimes. The report emphasised the need for accountability with respect for victims' rights.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 20 October, the *TASS* reported on Russia's military claim on destroying 500 combat aircraft in Kupyansk area. A statement was issued by [Russia's defence ministry](#) [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#) where additional 250 helicopters were reported to be destroyed since the war began. It stated a successful

operation in the past week for Russia's air defence force on destroying 10 MiG-29s fighter jets, two Mi-8 helicopters of Ukraine and seven MiG-29 fighters. The intense fight was also recorded in south Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia direction, Krasny-Lyman direction and Kherson.

On 20 October, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, visited the headquarters of the southern military district in Rostov-on-Don. He received a report from General Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of the General Staff of Rostov, regarding the special military operation's progress. The President engaged in discussions with senior ministry of defence officials.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 20 October, David Pressman, US Ambassador to Hungary, expressed concerns regarding Hungary's relationship with Russia. He pointed particularly to the visit by Viktor Orbán, Hungary's Prime Minister, with Putin. Pressman criticised Orban for "choosing to stand with a man whose forces are responsible for crimes against humanity in Ukraine." Orban's government has faced criticism for opposing EU initiatives to support Ukraine against Russia, as it maintains closer relations with Moscow. Ukraine has accused Hungary of funding Russia's war crimes through energy deals, potentially prolonging the conflict in Ukraine.

On 20 October, Edgars Rinkevics, Latvia's President, suggested that if Russia is found responsible for recent damage to the Balticconnector gas pipeline, NATO should close the Baltic Sea to shipping. He mentioned that although it is a complex issue involving maritime rights, protecting critical infrastructure would require a conversation on closing the Baltic Sea. The Balticconnector pipeline and communication cables have been damaged in recent incidents, which are being investigated as sabotage. The investigation results will guide further action and discussions within NATO regarding the Baltic Sea's security.

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War in Ukraine: Day 603

War on Ground:

On 19 October, Ukraine's parliament members passed legislation that aims to ban the Moscow-linked Ukraine's Orthodox Church (UOC). The proposed ban is supposed to go through a second reading before becoming law. It has sparked controversy, with some Ukrainians supporting it, while others oppose it, citing violations of religious freedom. The move comes amid escalating tensions over Moscow's ties to the Church.

On 19 October, in a series of missile attacks, Russia's missile struck a warehouse in Mykolaiv. It led to a fire in an unused warehouse building, damaging nearby apartment buildings. In another attack, pieces of a Shahed-136/131 attack UAV caused a fire on a warehouse roof in the Stepove hromada located in Donetsk Oblast.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 19 October, Aleksey Miller Gazprom CEO revealed that Russia's pipeline gas supplies to China were poised to reach volumes similar to those sold to the EU before energy sanctions. This signified that only exports to China can replace EU-rejected volumes due to Ukraine-related sanctions. In January 2023, Russia became China's primary

natural gas supplier. Through the Power of Siberia pipeline, exports surged by 50 per cent in 2023 and it anticipated a 43 per cent increase, totaling 22 billion cubic mete. Russia has planned to expand gas exports to Asian markets, including through the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline via Mongolia.

On 19 October, *RT* reported that during a significant two-day visit to Pyongyang Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister stated that Russia's relations with North Korea have reached a new, strategic level. North Korea's Foreign Minister, Choe Son-hui, echoed these sentiments, referring to the partnership as "invincible relations of comrades-in-arms." Lavrov expressed concerns about the US, Japan and South Korea's military build-up on the Korean Peninsula and their strategic deployments in the region.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 19 October, *Reuters* reported that Biden will ask Congress for USD 60 billion in aid for Ukraine, with half allocated to modernize US weapons stocks. Additionally, USD 14 billion will be earmarked for Israel following an attack by Hamas militants. A USD 10 billion humanitarian aid package, USD 14 billion for border security and USD seven billion for the Indo-Pacific region are included in the request. Biden has aimed to swiftly pass a supplemental spending bill as Congress controls spending.

On 19 October, Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor reiterated the importance of European financial aid for Ukraine but stressed it is not a long-term solution. He criticised Putin for condemning civilian casualties in Gaza while overseeing Ukraine's invasion, calling it "cynical."

On 19 October, the *Associated Press* reported that Alsu Kurmasheva US journalist has been detained in Russia and charged with failing to register as a "foreign agent." She was working for *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)*. She is the second US journalist detained in Russia in 2023. The charges against Kurmasheva are deemed "spurious" by media rights organisations, demanding her release. Kurmasheva, living in Prague

with her family, was stopped at Kazan International Airport after travelling to Russia for a family emergency.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 19 October, Kairat Torebaev, Kazakhstan's Vice Minister of Trade and Integration announced the suspension of exports involving 106 military goods to Russia. The move is aimed to align with western sanctions against Moscow's actions in Ukraine. Kazakhstan has faced criticism for allegedly aiding Russia in obtaining sanctioned goods that could bolster its military efforts. The products include drones, electronics and specialized components. Despite historical ties with Russia, Kazakhstan seeks to comply with sanctions. The country has also refrained from recognizing Ukraine's occupied regions as part of Russia.

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War in Ukraine: Day 602

War on Ground:

On 18 October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine strongly denounced Russia's revocation of its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It called upon the global community to respond to Russia's provocations. The ministry expressed concerns that this decision has created an imbalance in global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. These concerns come along with previous actions like suspending participation in the New START Treaty and deploying nuclear weapons in Belarus. Ukraine reaffirmed its support for the CTBT and urged international partners to counter Moscow's actions that threaten global security and stability.

On 18 October, according to *RBC Ukraine*, the ongoing military operations in Ukraine were marked by intense battles in various directions. Experts have characterized them as a strategic routine, in which the Ukraine's military appears to hold the initiative. Avdiivka (Bakhmut) remained a focal point, with Russian forces seeking to encircle the city. Military analysts believed the Russians have bitten off more than they can chew in Avdiivka, suffering significant personnel and equipment losses. Meanwhile, the situation in Bakhmut is challenging, but Ukrainian forces are making steady progress in a "creeping counteroffensive." The south front sees Ukraine's units pushing against Russia's defences and the Surovikin Line, with control over vital railway links at stake.

On 18 October, Oleksandr Prokudin, Governor of Kherson Oblast reported that aerial bombings by Russian forces had struck Kherson Oblast in Ukraine. In one incident, six guided aerial bombs were dropped on the village of Blahovishchenske by three Sukhoi Su-35 jets. It killed one person and injured another. Additionally, Russian forces used guided aerial bombs in unspecified locations in Kherson Oblast, targeting civilian populations. The region remained partially occupied by Russian forces, posing an ongoing threat to civilians on Ukraine's side of the Dnipro River, which runs through the area.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 18 October, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, criticised the US for supplying ATACMS missiles to Ukraine, calling it a "mistake." He emphasised that it would not significantly change the battlefield situation. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, acknowledged the use of these missiles. Putin questioned why the US would provide such weapons if Russia had "lost" the war. Putin viewed the missile supply as a deeper US involvement in the conflict and deemed the notion of Russia having "lost" the war as "laughable."

On 18 October, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, expressed appreciation for North Korea's support of Russia's actions in Ukraine. It was during his visit to Pyongyang, raised concerns about the deepening military ties between the two countries. Kim Jong Un, North Korea's leader, visited Russia recently, leading to western fears that North Korea might provide military aid to Russia's war in Ukraine. Russia has increased its shell production, but experts suggest it may still need more.

On 18 October, Sergei Shoigu, Russia's Defence Minister, announced the reinforcement of Russia's western border in response to concerns over the supply of US-made F-16 fighter aircraft to Ukraine in 2024. Russia bolstered the western border over fears of Ukraine's F-16 fighter jets.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 18 October, Hubertus Heil, Germany's Labor Minister said that the German government has initiated a drive to integrate Ukraine and other refugees into the labor market. The move will leverage their proficiency in Germany's language. It is aimed to address both labor shortages and concerns about heightened migration. Since Russia's invasion, Germany has welcomed over a million Ukrainians, along with a significant influx of refugees and migrants. Unlike other arrivals, Ukrainians receive immediate residency status in Germany and the EU. Heil noted that 132,000 Ukrainians have already secured jobs but emphasised the need for further integration. The

government has planned to engage job centers, involve businesses and expedite foreign job qualification recognition in this endeavor.

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War in Ukraine: Days 601

War on Ground:

On 17 October, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, expressed gratitude to the US and praised the efficiency of ATACMS missiles on the battlefield. In his video address, he stated that the US secretly delivered "a small number of missiles" to Ukraine. Ukrainian forces utilized long-range ATACMS missiles for strikes on two air bases in the occupied cities of Berdiansk and Luhansk.

On 17 October, Ukraine's Special Operations Forces (SOF) collaborated with the Defence Forces of Ukraine. This collaboration took place in an operation targeting air bases in the occupied cities of Berdiansk and Luhansk. The SOF received intelligence indicating Russia's use of these air bases for storing substantial ammunition, aircraft and specialized equipment. The operation resulted in significant Russian losses, with the destruction of nine helicopters of various models, air defence launchers, ammunition storage and damage to the air bases' runways.

On 17 October, the UNDP and Ukrhydroenergo, Ukraine's primary hydropower generation company, signed a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). It is to evaluate and restore the extensive damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure caused by Russia's invasion. A recent report by the Government of Ukraine and the UN revealed that the destruction of the Kakhovka dam resulted in nearly USD 14 billion in losses. The MoU outlined a comprehensive approach, including damage assessment, recovery strategies, public and private sector involvement and regular data collection. Christophoros Politis, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, emphasised the importance of understanding the full scope of challenges to "build back better." However, Ihor Syrota, Ukrhydroenergo's Director General, aimed to ensure a more reliable and sustainable energy future for Ukraine through this partnership.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 17 October, the Kremlin refuted claims of North Korea sending weapons to Russia. It stated there was "no proof" to support such allegations. This follows the release of images by the US purportedly showing arms shipments from Pyongyang. Speculation about potential arms deals arose after Kim Jong Un, North Korea's leader, visited Russia last month to meet with Vladimir Putin, Russia's President.

On 17 October, Putin arrived in Beijing for a summit with Xi Jinping, China's President. China recently hosted a Belt and Road

Initiative forum with representatives from 130 countries. Despite Putin's international isolation, he is set to hold talks with Xi on the forum's sidelines. The meeting aims to bolster their relationship while addressing international and regional issues.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 17 October, according to *Politico*, Biden is set to request a USD 100 billion package for Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan and the US-Mexico border crisis. This move aims to unite Democrats and Republicans in support of these causes, to bypass congressional gridlock. While Biden reassured key allies of continued military aid for Ukraine, there is a warning that funds may dry up if Congress does not act. The request is expected to be submitted to Congress after Biden's return from Israel.

On 17 October, Germany's KfW development bank, inked a deal with Ukraine's state-owned power company, Ukrenerho, for a EUR 76 million grant. The bank represents the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. This funding is designated to restore Ukraine's power grid and substations while enhancing overall energy efficiency. Measures include using reinforced concrete to safeguard facilities from further attacks and integrating energy-efficient technologies. There are widespread grid disruptions and blackouts due to 41 out of 94 high-voltage transformers damaged or destroyed.

On 17 October, the European Parliament voted to endorse a EUR 50 billion facility for Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernization starting in 2024. It is aimed to enhance the Facility's democratic accountability while promoting multiparty democracy and aligning Ukraine with EU accession requirements. The facility will be included in the annual budget for 2024. The use of Russia's assets for reconstruction, anti-corruption measures and transparency will be key components. Negotiations with member states are expected once the Council reaches a common position.

On 17 October, the UK's Ministry of Defence gave its intelligence update on Ukraine.

According to the update, Russian forces have initiated a highly probable coordinated offensive in eastern Ukraine. It is focused on the heavily defended town of Bakhmut, a major obstacle to Russia's objective of controlling Donetsk Oblast. Ukrainian forces have, thus far, managed to repel the advance, resulting in substantial losses for Russia's side. These challenges have likely led to a shift in Russia's messaging, moving from an offensive to an "active-defence" stance.

On 17 October, Annalena Baerbock, Germany's Foreign Affairs Minister, emphasised the strength of the solidarity bridge formed by the platform. It was during the fourth meeting of the Moldova Support Platform in Chisinau. Baerbock proposed making ministerial conferences an annual event. She highlighted the platform's role in assisting Moldova, addressing energy price challenges and countering disinformation campaigns by Russia. Baerbock stressed that Moldova will receive continued support from Germany, including EUR 95 million in 2024.

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War in Ukraine: Day 600

War on Ground:

On 16 October, Elon Musk announced that SpaceX will continue to provide free Starlink satellite internet services in Ukraine despite funding difficulties. Musk expressed his commitment on Twitter: "Even though Starlink is still losing money & other companies are getting billions of taxpayer \$, we'll just keep funding Ukraine govt for free." This comes after discussions with the US military regarding funding for the network. Till now SpaceX has donated 25,000 ground terminals to Ukraine.

On 16 October, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, called for unity and conflict resolution with Russia as the war entered its 600th day. He urged Ukraine and its allies not to succumb to doubts, but to maintain their will and unity in the face of adversity. Zelenskyy expressed gratitude to those fighting for Ukraine's freedom and remembered those who sacrificed their lives. He emphasised the need to continue efforts to defeat the occupier and ensure that Ukraine's future remains in its hands.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 16 October, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, stated that the Ukraine conflict predates Moscow's military campaign in 2014. He blamed the West for supporting a coup against Viktor Yanukovich, former President of Ukraine. Putin accused the West of starting the conflict in Donbas "by proxy of the Kyiv regime." He suggested Russia's military operation aimed to end the war. He expressed disappointment with the US's unreliability and criticised the concept of a "rules-based order" as colonialism. Putin highlighted the inevitability of a multipolar world and the trustworthiness of China as a partner. He also emphasised Russia's readiness for peace negotiations with

Ukraine while safeguarding its security interests.

On 16 October, Anna Kuznetsova, Russia's Deputy Chairwoman of the State Duma and Co-Chair of a Commission proposed the adoption of an international convention to prevent terrorism against children. She stressed the need for international human rights organisations to respond urgently to situations where regimes exhibit characteristics of state-level "terrorist" groups. Kuznetsova recommended the involvement of other country parliaments in countering information aggression by western countries and the Kyiv regime.

On 16 October, Sergey Shoigu, Russia's Defence Minister reported on losses incurred by Ukraine in the ongoing counteroffensive. According to him, over 1,500 armored combat vehicles and "hundreds" of tanks were destroyed. Despite Ukraine's efforts to attack Russia's positions along the frontline, it was countered with "active defence" and counter attacks from Russia, deterring Ukraine from making substantial gains. While exact figures for personnel casualties were not provided, Putin previously estimated that Ukraine had lost "over 90,000 people" during the counteroffensive.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 16 October, in its intelligence update, the UK's Ministry of Defence reported on the active recruitment by one of the mercenary units under the Private Military Company (PMC), Redut by masking as "volunteers," including ex-Wagner personnel. This group's activities, including recruitment, are likely supervised and financed by Russia's General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU). Redut has participated in combat operations across multiple Ukraine oblasts, involving Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv and Luhansk. Redut is one of several PMCs and Volunteer Corps units integrated by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation to reinforce regular Russian forces.

On 16 October, according to Russia's Offensive Campaign Assessment by Institute for the Study of War, Russian forces are

reported to have deployed two Central Military District (CMD) brigades. The aim was to support Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) operations near Avdiivka (Bakhmut). Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's Children's Rights Commissioner confirmed the same on the deportation of millions of people and children (estimated to be 700,000) from Ukraine into Russia.

On 16 October, Valery Revenko, Belarus's Chief of the International Military Cooperation Department reported an inflow of up to 9,000 Russia's troops and hundreds of armored vehicles to boost Belarus's forces present in the Belarus-Ukraine border. Along with the ground troops, air support is also reported to have entered Belarus. The move comes after Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus's President and Putin agreed to deploy a joint regional force due to the situation on their western borders.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 16 October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China urged citizens to leave Ukraine and register for evacuation through the Chinese embassy. Following Russia's retaliation over Crimea's bridge attack, over 200 Chinese are expected to be evacuated from Ukraine due to the worsening security situation. Till now 186 individuals signed up for organized evacuation with embassy assistance and 40 have registered independently.

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War in Ukraine: Day 597

War on Ground:

On 13 October, Ukraine's Armed Forces reported on continued assault by Russia in Bakhmut. According to the report, Russia's attacks were dual ground and air combined with intense clashes and artillery. The fierce fight is reportedly to be lasting for four days with non-stop attacks.

On 13 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Ukraine's attack on Russia's Buyan missile carrier and "Pavel Derzhavin" ship using sea-borne drones in the Sevastopol Sea route. The operation was carried out by Ukraine's Security Service along with its naval force. According to Reuters: "After the first detonation, Russian minesweepers and divers were unable to discover our know-how."

On 13 October, Ukraine's government reported on the destruction of close to 300,000 tons of grain due to Russia's missile attacks on its ports. Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister: "This is an attempt by Russia to exacerbate the food crisis in those countries which are reliant on Ukrainian products." He added on the fall in Ukraine's grain exports by 40 per cent due to port damage.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 13 October, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President denied Russia's involvement in the pipeline leak between Finland and Estonia.

He called it "nonsense," and said: "I didn't even know this pipeline existed because it's small in volume." Putin suggested that the leak was caused by a snag by an anchor or earthquake and asked for Finland to investigate.

On 13 October, the TASS reported on Ukraine's armed forces transfer of reserves from Artyomovsk to strengthen the Avdeyevka area. According to a military analyst in Donetsk, a self-proclaimed area of Russia, stated that Avdeyevka will not become a hotspot but an area of exhaustion of resources.

On 13 October, the TASS reported on the Kremlin's statement on the launch of "active combat operations" in the front line by Russia to combat Ukraine's counter-offensive. According to the report, Ukraine's counter offensive is seen as finished.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 13 October, Mark Rutte Netherlands' Prime Minister visited the Black Sea port in Odesa. During his visit, he promised air defense and increased security support in the Black Sea corridor for Ukraine's grain exports. Rutte predicted that Russia through airstrikes will attack Ukraine at maximum level and to counter Ukraine will be supported with new patriot missiles. On the same Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President stated how Ukraine is working partners to strengthen its position in the Black Sea and to safeguard its corridors.

On 13 October, the UK government proposed to boost its military in northern Europe through the deployment of 20,000 troops by 2024. Rishi Sunak, UK Prime Minister is expected to meet leaders from the Nordic and Baltic under the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) defence cooperation summit. In a statement released by Sunak, apart from soldiers, military helicopters, fast jets, and eight Royal Navy Ships will be given. It will also take part in large-scale, joint military exercises and air-policing.

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War in Ukraine: Day 596

War on Ground:

On 12 October, an assault occurred reported in the "Sveske Forestry" which is under the "Forests of Ukraine" government enterprise. The attack resulted in broken windows, along with damage to the administrative building and garage. Russia's troops were reported to have fired on border areas and settlements in the Sumy region multiple times recently.

On 12 October, according to the command of the Special Operations Forces (SOF), Ukraine's special forces repelled Russia's attacks in Bakhmut, in the Donetsk region. SOF destroyed eight units of Russia's heavy equipment and numerous Russia's combatants. Over three days, these Ukrainian forces successfully thwarted multiple offensive actions by Russia's invaders. The SOF led the battle, eliminating five tanks, an infantry fighting vehicle and an armoured personnel carrier. They also eliminated a military vehicle and dozens of Russia's troops in ambushes, raids and successful operations by the third regiment of the SOF.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 12 October, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President and Sadyr Japarov, Kyrgyzstan's President met in Kyrgyzstan. They held talks in Bishkek to strengthen bilateral relations and discuss key issues. Putin thanked Kyrgyzstan for its CIS chairmanship and emphasized the expanding ties between both countries. Economic cooperation,

including trade and investment, is a significant part of the agenda, with Russia being a leading partner for Kyrgyzstan. The two leaders also discussed region-to-region relations and celebrated the 20th anniversary of Russia's military base in Kant. Kant is situated in the Ysyk-Ata district of the Chuy region. Their discussions focused on various areas of collaboration between Russia and Kyrgyzstan.

On 12 October, according to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Russian forces eliminated Ukraine's targets in Kherson. They destroyed Ukraine's electronic warfare station and an ammunition depot in the Kherson area. It resulted in the elimination of approximately 50 Ukraine's troops. This development comes as Russian forces repelled three Ukraine's army attacks in the Donetsk region. It inflicted casualties on around 340 Ukraine's troops.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 12 October, the Finland's Security and Intelligence Service (SUPO) stated that Russia now views Finland as a hostile country. Finland's relationship with Russia has deteriorated significantly since joining NATO and due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Moscow's negative stance is evident in Russia's media coverage of Finland and its recent decision to close Finland's consulate general in St. Petersburg. While Russia remains focused on Ukraine, the threat of Russia's intelligence and influence operations in Finland persists. It is especially with Finland's NATO membership. Antti Peltari, SUPO Director, stated that Russia's countermeasures against Finland could intensify.

On 12 October, the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic announced its decision to collaborate with Denmark in sending armoured vehicles, tanks and firearms to Ukraine till 2024. These weapons, funded by Denmark's government and provided by private Czech companies, will boost Ukraine's military capabilities. In the initial phase, Ukraine will receive nearly 50 armoured vehicles and tanks, 2,500 handguns, 7,000 rifles and other

equipment. The next phase will include heavy machine guns, anti-tank weapons and grenades as support to Ukraine.

On 12 October, the Ministry of National Defence of Romania, said that it found a crater believed to result from a drone explosion near its border with Ukraine. It raised concerns about spillover from the war into NATO territory. The ministry detected drones heading toward Ukraine's river ports before discovering the crater. The incident, along with previous drone fragments resembling Russia's army drones, has heightened concerns. Russia's closure of Romania's consulate general in St. Petersburg has further strained relations. NATO is found increasing aircraft monitoring Romania's skies due to these developments.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of War

On 12 October, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) suspended Russia's Olympic Committee (ROC). It was due to its acceptance of sports councils in four regions of eastern Ukraine, breaching the Olympic Charter. The IOC cited the unilateral decision made by the ROC, which violates the territorial integrity of the Ukraine's National Olympic Committee (NOC). This suspension means the ROC is no longer recognized as a National Olympic Committee and cannot receive funding from the Olympic Movement. The IOC retains the right to decide on the participation of individual neutral athletes with Russia's passports in the 2024 Paris and 2026 Milano Cortina Olympics

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War in Ukraine: Day 594

War on the Ground:

On 11 October, during the visit to NATO headquarters, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President stressed the need for air defence systems for the upcoming winter. He called for support on ammunition, and long-range missiles and highlighted Ukraine's need to "survive" the coming winter. On the same Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General stated Russia's comeback targets on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and stressed the need to prevent such attacks through "increased air defence capabilities." He added: "Air defense is critical to protect the cities, the economy, the critical infrastructure of Ukraine and that helps them to help themselves, because then their economy can function, then things can work in Ukraine."

On 11 October, in the meeting hosted by the US in Brussels to discuss gathering more weapons and ammunition for Ukraine, Zelenskyy is expected to place the demand for the most needed weaponry. Post the meeting, the 31 NATO allies along with Ukraine are scheduled to conduct the first NATO-Ukraine Council meeting to discuss matters of common interest.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 11 October, [Russia's Defence Ministry](#) the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#) reported on the position of its forces in Bakhmut. According to the report, the front-line position was observed to be strengthened despite Ukraine forces

continued defence. In a statement, Russia's southern group of forces with the help of aviation, artillery, and flamethrower systems progress was recorded in the front line.

On 11 October, *RT* reported on improvement in Russia's economy compared to the US and the EU. The report was based on The New York Times report, which highlighted how Russia's economy had adapted in "astonishing speed" despite supply chains and freezing of Russia's assets. According to the report, the restrictions imposed by the west had helped in restructuring of economy through inflow of more money by more employment and salary raise.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 11 October, Belgium's [defence ministry](#) [Ministry of Defence](#) announced its decision to send F-16 fighter jets from 2025 to Ukraine. The move comes after the government considers an upgrade of its F-16 to F-35 and could be of use to Ukraine for training. This will also depend on the next government as Belgium faces general elections in June 2024. Alexander De Croo, Belgium's Prime Minister announced its decision to allocate EUR 1.7 billion in form of taxes accumulated from frozen assets of Russia for Ukraine's reconstruction. De Croo said: "The taxes on the interest of these assets should go 100% to the Ukrainian people." Initially Ukraine was denied of such allocation by the G7 group due to legal complexities.

On 11 October, UK's Ministry of Defence announced a coalition of GBP 100 million as a package to support Ukraine's Armed Forces. This aid will include equipment to help in clearing the land mines. Since the counteroffensive, the dense nature of the mines have become an obstacle for Ukraine. This coalition will use funds from "International Fund for Ukraine" consisting the UK, Norway, Netherlands', Denmark and Sweden as funding countries.

On 11 October, Lloyd Austing, US Defence Secretary announced military aid of USD 200 million to Ukraine. The package includes air defences, rocket ammunition, anti-tank weapons and equipment. In the US-Ukraine

Defence Contact Group meeting, he stated Ukraine's progress in developing "combat capabilities" to counter Russia.

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War in Ukraine: Day 594

War on Ground:

On 10 October, Ukraine's Air Force reported on the destruction of 27 Shahed-136 drones in southern Kherson, Mykolaiv and Odesa. On the same day, Ukraine's military claimed destroying 27 of 36 Russia's drones in southern Ukraine.

On 10 October, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President arriving in Bucharest to talk with Klaus Iohannis, Romania's President. According to Zelenskyy, the discussion is expected to revolve around security cooperation, aviation, coalition, boosting air defence and Black Sea security. Romania which has supported Ukraine since the war began has allowed its cargo ships to pass through Romania's Black Sea to reach Bosphorus Strait.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 10 October, Russia's court announced the extension of "pre-trial detention" of the US reported Evan Gershkovich once again till November after being arrested for spying. Gershkovich, a US journalist who was arrested on 29 March was charged under espionage. He will be the first to be arrested since the Cold War and the charges can result in 20 years of prison.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 10 October, Germany's government announced EUR one billion of new defence aid to Ukraine to counter Russia's attacks in winter. The package includes air defence weapons, Patriot air defence missile system, three Gepard armoured anti-aircraft tanks and long, short IRIS-T guided missile systems. Announcing the package, Germany's Defence Minister assured continuity of Germany's support to Ukraine along with additional declaration of body armour, weapons of EUR 20 million support to Ukraine.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 10 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Russia's losing of vote to join back UNHCR. Against the voting held in 2022 by UNGA to suspend Russia, it was competing for one of the seats give for eastern Europe. In the voting, Russia received only 83 votes against Bulgaria and Albania, thereby losing to rejoin. According to Louis Charbonneau of international NGO Human Rights Watch: "UN member states sent a strong signal to Russia's leadership that a government responsible for countless war crimes."

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War in Ukraine: Day 593

War on the Ground:

On 09 October, two Ukrainians were killed due to Russia's attacks in the Kherson and Kharkiv regions. Another 18 people were injured in the part of Kherson, including two children. Ukraine's military authorities reported that Kherson was subjected to 53 attacks by Russian forces on 08 October. It resulted in the launch of approximately 300 shells from artillery, grenade launchers, mortars, aircraft and drones.

On 09 October, Nada Al-Nashif, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, addressed the 54th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. He emphasised the ongoing human rights violations in Ukraine. Al-Nashif reported that within six months, 4,621 civilians became victims of the conflict, with 1,028 killed and 3,593 injured. The count is mostly in territory controlled by Ukraine. She highlighted widespread torture, arbitrary detention, conflict-related sexual violence and denial of adequate living conditions. Accountability for violations remains elusive, with Russia's authorities passing laws effectively granting amnesty to servicepersons. However, Ukraine's authorities investigate allegations against their forces.

On 09 October, OHCHR expressed concern about the absence of a system to repatriate Ukraine's children taken to Russia during the conflict. Nearly 20,000 children have been identified by Ukraine's authorities as having been taken to Russia during the war, with over 400 repatriated so far. The lack of access to Russia and occupied territories hinders a precise count. Al-Nashif highlighted concerns about children experiencing or witnessing mistreatment by educational staff in Russia. The International Criminal Court has accused Vladimir Putin, Russia's President and others of illegally deporting Ukraine's children, prompting calls for international pressure on Moscow for their return.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 09 October, the State Duma's Council tasked the Committee on International Affairs with examining the issue of de-ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It comes following the suggestion made by Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation. This review will occur in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and other relevant entities. Volodin emphasised that this decision aligns with Russia's national interests and serves as a reciprocal response to the US, which has not yet ratified the treaty. The Council expects the Committee's findings within ten days, prior to the 18 October State Duma meeting.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 09 October, Mette Frederiksen, Denmark's Prime Minister, revealed plans to expand and strengthen a coalition of countries committed to providing F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine. This initiative, led by Denmark and the Netherlands, involves training Ukraine's pilots to operate the F-16s and delivering the fighter jets to counter Russia's air superiority. Norway has also pledged to supply F-16s to Ukraine, while 11 other countries, including the US, will assist in pilot training. Additionally, Frederiksen called for improved coordination between NATO and the EU in the procurement of weapons and ammunition. He emphasised the need for collective security efforts in Europe.

On 09 October, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Ulkoministerio, announced that the country is providing approximately EUR 92 million in support to Ukraine and Moldova. It is through the World Bank Group's International Development Association (IDA) Crisis Facility. Of this amount, EUR 62 million will be directed to the Support Programme for Ukraine and Moldova's recovery. EUR 12 million will be provided as a grant and EUR 50 million as a long-term loan. Finland will also extend EUR 30 million in loans to help countries affected by Russia's aggression combat infectious diseases and address

various needs. It includes healthcare, transportation, energy, agriculture, housing and social security.

On 09 October, Institute for the Study of War (ISW) in its Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. It reported that the Kremlin's focus is on showcasing the legitimacy of Russia's internal politics for the 2024 presidential election. However, it contrasts with its intent to prevent any real challenges to Putin's re-election. While efforts to control information spaces persist, it underscores Russia's functional image amid the ongoing conflict, projecting Putin as a capable wartime leader with broad societal support. Ukrainian forces advanced despite adverse weather conditions, while Russian forces launched localized offensives in southern Ukraine. Russian forces possibly restructured the southern grouping of forces.

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War in Ukraine: Days 591 & 592

War on the Ground:

On 08 October, Ukraine's Defence Forces conducted an offensive operation in the Melitopol sector and offensive actions in the Bakhmut sector. It is reported by the General

Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The report says it is gradually liberating occupied territories and consolidating their positions. There were 68 combat clashes, eight missile attacks and 34 airstrikes by Russia's army. Ukrainian forces successfully inflicted losses on occupying troops, with partial success in the Donetsk region. Ukraine's aircraft launched strikes on Russian forces and anti-aircraft missile systems. However, missile forces targeted Russia's artillery and manpower.

On 07 October, according to Oleh Kiper, Head of the Odesa Regional Military Administration, a missile attack by Russia's troops targeted Odesa. The victims sustained injuries from glass fragments but have received necessary medical assistance. The attack focused on civilian and port infrastructure, hitting a guest house and granary near a port in Odesa district. The attack involved Oniks supersonic anti-ship missiles launched from the Bastion coastal missile system in Crimea.

On 08 October, in the Donetsk region, Russian forces launched an Iskander cruise missile at the town of Kostyantynivka. It resulted in four injured residents, including a nine year old child. A pre-trial investigation has been initiated into the violation of laws and customs of war. On 07 October, Russia's military also killed a resident of Donetsk region.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 October, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, along with Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan's President and Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kazakhstan's President, initiated the supply of Russia's produced gas to Uzbekistan through Kazakhstan. This marks the first time Russia's gas is being sent to Central Asia. The project aims to enhance regional energy security and provides Uzbekistan with an additional energy source for heating and electricity. Kazakhstan will also benefit from increased gasification in its northern and eastern regions. Putin emphasised Russia's commitment to being a reliable gas supplier and expressed readiness for further cooperation with its partners in the region.

On 07 October, Anatoly Antonov, Russia's Ambassador to the US, criticised Washington's decision to expel two Russia's diplomats. She called the move "banal revenge" in response to Moscow's expulsion of two Americans last month. He claimed the expelled US diplomats were interfering in Russia's internal affairs and undermining its national security.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 06 October, satellite imagery revealed a significant increase in rail traffic along the North Korea-Russia border. It comes following a recent meeting between Putin and Kim Jong-un, North Korea's leader. The Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies' project, Beyond Parallel, reported this unprecedented surge. The report says 73 freight railcars spotted at North Korea's Tumangang Rail Facility. This activity is believed to indicate North Korea's supply of arms and ammunition to Russia.

On 07 October, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary-General, praised Germany's decision to provide another Patriot air defence system to Ukraine. However, he stressed the importance of stopping Putin in his invasion of Ukraine. He warned that if Putin succeeds in Ukraine, he may resort to the use of force in the future. Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor, expressed similar concerns about escalation. He emphasised the need for Germany not to become directly involved in the conflict, explaining his decision not to deliver Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine.

On 07 October, Institute for the Study of War (ISW) gave its Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. It reported that the Kremlin is strategically leveraging the recent Hamas attacks in Israel to divert attention away from the conflict in Ukraine. It explained how Russia is employing narratives that blame the West for neglecting the Middle East in favor of Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russia's information sources have shifted their focus to Israel, potentially impacting Ukraine-related news coverage.

On 08 October, the UK's Ministry of Defence gave its intelligence report on the Ukraine

war. It reported that the Velyka Novosilka sector, near Vuhledar in Donetsk Oblast, has seen reduced fighting over the past month. It is seen compared to the intense clashes in June to July 2023. Ukraine likely reclaimed approximately 125 square kilometers of territory in this area during the summer. Ukraine's operations here have constrained Russia's 36th and fifth combined arms armies from the eastern military district.

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War in Ukraine: Day 589

War on the Ground:

On 05 October, Volodymyr Zelenskyy Ukraine's President reported on a missile strike by Russia in Kharkiv which resulted in

the death of 48 people. Zelenskyy added: "The brutal Russian crime of hitting an ordinary grocery store with a rocket is a completely deliberate terrorist attack." He also announced his visit to Spain to take part in the European Political Community summit. He said that ensuring the security and stability of Europe will be the joint mission and the special focus will be on the Black Sea with a joint attempt to boost global food security.

On 05 October, Ukraine's southern group of armed forces claimed progress in their "southward campaign." According to the spokesperson, the forces had "partial success in the west of Robotyne" and they continue to reinforce the held positions. Till now, the counteroffensive in the south has been slow and has been advancing only 100 to 600 meters.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 05 October, in his Valdai Discussion Club speech, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President said: "Ukrainian The crisis is not a territorial conflict, I want to stress this. Russia is the most It is the largest, largest country in the world in terms of territory. We don't have any interest From the point of view of reconquering some additional territories. We still have to explore and develop Siberia, eastern Siberia and the far-east. This is not a territorial conflict or even the establishment of a regional geopolitical conflict. Balance. The issue is much broader and more fundamental: it is about the principles on which the new world order will be based."

He criticised the West for being the cause of the war in Ukraine. He said: Woman: It is always three dots. "...we did not start the so-called war in Ukraine...we are trying to end it." Putin claimed Russia's willingness to cooperate and confidence in establishing a "multi-polar" world. He highlighted that Russia being the world's largest country, did not need to occupy the territory of Ukraine and the West had lost its "sense of reality." He stressed the West ignoring its security proposals including joining NATO. Putin called the US outlook "arrogance," and colonial thinking." In his speech, he also stated that Europe will help Ukraine at the

cost of its economy and people whereas the companies make a move into the US. In the case of Russia, it is experiencing “structural changes, economic problems and labor shortages,” which has been dealt by the government and central bank with measures. Putin also confirmed Russia’s successful testing of “The nuclear-power Burevestnik cruise missile and the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).”

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 05 October, the US government claimed on transfer of one million rounds of ammunition to Ukraine which were earlier sized from Iran in 2022. In December 2022, in the Gulf of Oman, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) along with the US Justice Department seized the ammunition from a ship that was destined for Yemen’s Houthi rebels by Iran. In a statement, CENTCOM assured the US commitment to work with its partners to combat the “lethal aid” sent by Iran. According to the Justice Department: “We will continue to use every legal authority at our disposal to support Ukraine in their fight for freedom, democracy and the rule of law.”

On 05 October, in its intelligence update, the UK’s Ministry of Defence reported on Russia’s civil defence exercises. According to the report, the exercises were held in preparation for “large-scale international armed conflict,” which have been carried out since 2012 and expanded in the recent years.

On 05 October, in the ongoing debate over Germany providing Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine. *Deutsche Welle* reported on Olaf Scholz’s meeting with Parliament’s foreign affairs. In the meeting concerns relating to the increased attacks in Crimea was raised and how Taurus missiles can be used to target the Kerch Bridge. Apart from sending cruise missiles, sharing of geodata on targets were also seen to be problematic by Germany’s foreign affairs. Apart from the debate, Scholz pledged to provide US-made Patriot air-defence systems to Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 587

War on the Ground:

On 03 October, Ukraine’s air force claimed to destroy two dozen drones made by Iran and Russia’s cruise missile that flew in from the Crimean direction into Mykolaiv and Dnipropetrovsk. It also confirmed the comeback of aerial attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure.

On 03 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President visit to the northeastern zone (Kupiansk-Lyman sector) to meet the troops, and commanders to discuss battlefield information. He said: “We met with brigade and battalion commanders to discuss the battlefield situation, pressing issues and needs.” During the visit he also examined the German supplied Leopard 2 tanks and other weapons supported by the West.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 03 October, Russia’s Kommersant newspaper reported on the expected announcement from Vladimir Putin, Russia’s

President on competing for the 2024 presidential election. This means he will stay in power till 2030. After Boris Yeltsin, the presidency was given to Putin making him the longest leader since Josef Stalin.

On 03 October, Sergei Shoigu Russia's Defence Minister claimed that Russian forces had "significantly weakened" Ukraine's "combat potential." Especially Ukraine's attacks in the Bakhmut and Soledar had been countered by Russian forces along with Ukraine's efforts to break through in Rabotyne and Verkhovoe. He also confirmed the signing up of volunteers and contractors for war in Ukraine to be 335,000 till now without giving a need for fresh recruitment.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 03 October, in its intelligence update, the UK's Ministry of Defence reported on Russia's success in utilizing "foreign agent" designation to shift public opinion against the west. This was found in the polls held which indicated 61 per cent of those polled to be considered individuals and organisations named as "foreign agents" as those spreading lies about Russia.

On 03 October, *Deutsch Welle* reported on General Carten Breuer, Germany's military head warning over an escalation in the war in Ukraine. Breuer criticised Germany for being stagnant in supporting frontier countries such as Ukraine and Lithuania despite an early warning of the 2014 and 2022 invasions by Russia. He added: "Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine underlines the relevance of combat-ready armed forces."

On 03 October, Joe Biden, US President held a call with leaders from "Germany, the UK, Canada, Italy, Japan, Poland, Romania, the EU and NATO" post a move by a Republican member of parliament to block funding to Ukraine. In the call he reassured commitment of the US towards funding Ukraine. In response to the block, Russia stated that a "western fatigue" was setting over.

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War in Ukraine: Day 586

War on the Ground:

On 02 October, the Kherson regional governor reported the death of one person and injury of six persons after shelling by Russia. According to the governor, 71 attacks were recorded in the region targeting shops, medical facilities and residential areas.

On 02 October, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President and Hanno Pevkur, Estonia's Minister of Defence in a meeting discussed the battlefield scenario and defence assistance. They also discussed establishing an IT coalition and how cooperation can be boosted through Euro-Atlantic integration.

On 02 October, during the meeting, Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister called to fasten the transfer of Russia's assets to Ukraine. He asked for clarity on how the transfer would impact both EU and Ukraine in terms of reconstruction. Earlier, the US Treasury Secretary mentioned existence of "significant legal obstacles" in transferring the seized Russian assets. In 2022, the EU proposed to transfer accrued interest payments to Kyiv.

The Moscow View:**Claims by Russia**

On 02 October, the TASS reported on Russia's airstrike on Ukraine's ammunition depot in Kharkiv. According to the report, the depot in the Kupyansk was attacked and the intense fight is predicted to be concentrated in Sinkovka and Petropavlovka areas, but no significant changes in the engagement line.

On 02 October, [Russia's defence ministry](#) [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#) claimed attacks on manpower and material of Ukrainian forces in the Kupyansk area. In a statement: "...Up to twenty five Ukrainian servicemen and two vehicles were destroyed." The attack includes 14th and 32nd mechanized and 25th airborne brigades in Kupyansk area that was subject to attacks. Msta-B and D-30 howitzers and MLRS combat vehicles were observed to be damaged in the counter-battery fire.

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

On 02 October, in a meeting held during the defence industries forum in Kyiv, EU foreign policy head, Josep Borell along with EU foreign ministers discussed on Ukraine's membership process. He indicated that the meeting was to showcase support and solidarity for people in Ukraine. Borell suggested to provide EUR five billion aid to Ukraine's military in 2024. Similarly, France and Netherlands' foreign ministers affirmed their solidarity for Ukraine. Annalena Baerbock, Germany's Foreign Affairs Minister supported EU's move to hold meeting in Kyiv and vouched for boosting Ukraine's air defences to prevent the infrastructure targeted attacks. She said: "Ukraine needs a protective shield for winter — a protective shield for winter that consists of air defense but also generators and strengthening energy supply."

On 02 October, in its daily intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence stated that Russia's Black Sea fleet was gaining momentum in the naval aviation operations. According to the report, the air patrol operations were turning to be important as Russia continues to face threats in southern

Ukraine. The ministry observed that the prime target of Russia is to identify unmanned surface vessels and its Be-12 MAIL amphibious aircraft, Su-24 FENCER and FLANKER are used in such maritime operations.

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["EU proposes €5bn military aid package for Ukraine after 'historic' meeting,"](#) *The Guardian*, 02 October 2023

War in Ukraine: Days 584 & 585**War on the Ground:**

On 01 October, Deutsche Welle reported on the exit of three cargo ships with agricultural products of 127,000 tones from Ukraine's port. According to the report, the products were for China, Spain and Egypt through the established humanitarian corridor in Black Sea.

On 01 October, IMF announced to hold meeting in Kyiv to discuss on a new finance programme for Ukraine. The programme is aimed to resolve the issues relating to balance of payment, debt sustainability and reforms to help Ukraine's economic recovery. According to Ukraine's economic minister, after a fall of 29.1 per cent in GDP in 2022, 19.5 per cent increase was observed in the GDP in 2023.

On 30 September, in an address Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President highlighted the priority of Ukraine to win the war and provide peace through cooperation. The forum held by Ukraine was attended by 250 defence companies and 30 countries. He said: "We are interested in localizing the production of equipment necessary for our

defense... and advanced defense systems used by our soldiers that give Ukraine the best results at the front today.”

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 01 October, *RT* reported on the accumulating shipping containers from China in Russia due to increased trade. According to the report, close to 150,000 excess containers are present, but in terms of export into China from Russia was less. This has resulted in an impact on container logistic businesses due to varied demand and supply. On the same, Russia’s largest shipping company Fesco announced its new contract with one of Asia’s railway group which plans to monitor “China-Russia-China” shippers to expand its partnership. Since 2022, the trade between both has increased by 37 per cent.

On 30 September, Vladimir Putin, Russia’s President claimed that the people in four annexed districts, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia had confirmed to be part of Russia. He argued that the war saved people from the “nationalist leaders of Kyiv.”

On 30 September, [Russia’s defence ministry](#) [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#) claimed to destroy missiles launched in the Belgorod area. According to the report, nine missiles were shot down in Belgorod.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 01 October, Joe Biden, US President maintains a strong stance of support to Ukraine uninterrupted. The statement comes after a deal was passed quickly on 30 September and it excluded the assistance package to Ukraine. It was due to negotiation between the Republicans and Democrats as resistance from the Republicans for military assistance to Ukraine increased.

On 30 September, Switzerland’s foreign minister announced the plan to help Ukraine in mine clearance operations with USD 100 million. According to the minister, only military aid remains out due to its neutrality

policy, but it is “generous” in humanitarian aid. The plan is yet to be approved by the parliament and can be implemented only upon cease of hostilities.

On 01 October, NATO announced the deployment of surveillance aircraft in Lithuania. The agenda will be to monitor Russia’s military activity in the border zone and the aircraft is expected to detect missiles 100 kilometers away, to help in early warning. On 30 September, during the forum held in Ukraine, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO’s Secretary General stressed the need for support for Ukraine and discussed the steps to improve NATO’s support.

On 30 September, Romania’s [defence ministry](#) [Ministry of National Defence](#) claimed its findings on breach of airspace in a Russian drone attack towards Ukraine. According to the report, the army’s surveillance radar detected an unauthorized signal in its national airspace.

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EM Short Notes*

By Rishika Yadav, and Padmashree Anandhan



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AUSTRALIA

Urges EU trade deal at G7 meeting

On 26 October, *Politico* reported on Australia's push for a trade deal with the EU. In a meeting between Don Farrell, Australia's Trade Minister and Valdis Dombrovskis, the European Commissioner for Trade and Internal Market, agreed to resolve remaining differences during the G7 trade ministers' gathering in Osaka. Australia seeks European concessions on agriculture, warning that failure to secure a deal could result in years of delay due to upcoming European elections. A deal is crucial for Australia's agricultural sector since it offers a counterbalance to China's influence in the Indo-Pacific. For the EU, it means diversifying trade partners and securing access to Australia's critical minerals. Key hurdles include the pricing of raw materials and geographical indications protection. (Camille Gijs and Sarah Anne Aarup, "[Australia pushes for EU deal at upcoming trade meeting](#)," *Politico*, 26 October 2023)

AUSTRIA

Federal Minister addresses Internet Governance Forum

On 10 October, Karoline Edtstadler, Austria's Federal Minister attended the 18th Internet Governance Forum meeting in Kyoto, Japan. It aims to establish global regulations for internet security and rights. The focus of the meeting was on addressing online hate, AI, cybersecurity and global internet access. Edtstadler emphasised the need for the enforcement of human rights in the digital space and called for common international understanding to combat online hate. She also highlighted the importance of women globally working together to push for effective regulations on major internet platforms. Edtstadler was appointed to a leadership panel by António Guterres, UN Secretary-General. ("[Federal Minister Edtstadler: Human rights that apply offline must also be enforceable online](#)," *Bundeskanzleramt*, 10 October 2023)

* 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.

BELARUS

Aims for sustainable economic growth

On 09 October, Aleksandr Yegorov, the Chairman of the Development Bank of Belarus, expressed confidence in Belarus' trajectory towards long-term economic growth. This follows President Aleksandr Lukashenko's approval of key development parameters for 2024. It includes a projected GDP growth of 3.8 per cent, driven by investments, expanded foreign market presence and domestic demand. Exports are expected to increase by 7.6 per cent, focusing on growing foreign trade and capital expenditure. Yegorov highlighted the One District-One Project initiative and import-substitution projects as essential contributors to export growth. It particularly targets Asian, African and Latin American markets. ("Belarus on track towards stable long-term economic growth," *Belta*, 09 October 2023)

Russia-appointed governor of Novosibirsk Oblast seeks closer ties with Belarus

On 09 October, Andrei Travnikov, Governor of Russia's Novosibirsk Oblast, highlighted priority areas of cooperation with Belarus. It was during a meeting with Roman Golovchenko, Belarus's Prime Minister. The region aims to collaborate in agriculture, particularly joint agricultural machinery production and biotechnology. It focuses on bio-additives, premixes and plant protection products. Additionally, Novosibirsk is exploring new ties in the medical field, with plans for joint research and development of medical devices. It includes high-power pulse generators and catheters for complex heart rhythm disorders. A delegation comprising government and business representatives will visit Belarus's enterprises to strengthen cooperation. ("Priority areas of cooperation between Russia's Novosibirsk Oblast, Belarus outlined," *Belta*, 09 October 2023)

BELGIUM

Tunisia's man linked to Brussels attack arrested

On 26 October, Belgium authorities detained a 44-year-old Tunisian man in

connection with the shooting of two Sweden's soccer fans during a football match in Brussels. The arrest seeks to establish a potential link to the weapon used in the terrorist attack. The suspect faces charges of terrorist murder, attempted terrorist murder and involvement in a terrorist organisation. The shooter, who identified with the Islamic State, was killed by the police. Vincent Van Quickenborne, Belgium's Justice Minister, resigned after revealing authorities failed to deport the suspect despite Tunisia's extradition request in August 2022. ("Belgium charges suspect in connection with Brussels attack," *Deutsche Welle*, 26 October 2023)

Implements new security measures and appoints new Justice Chief after Brussels attack

On 22 October, Alexander De Croo, Belgium's Prime Minister announced that Belgium is introducing five short-term security measures to enhance its response to potential threats. The move is followed by the recent attack in Brussels. Justice Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne resigned. He took responsibility for the failure to act on Tunisia's extradition request for Abdesalam Lassoued, the attacker. Lassoued is a Tunisian national and was rejected for asylum, and identified as an "Islamic State" group member. He shot two Swedish soccer fans and wounded another before being killed by police. The failure to deport him despite a deportation order and his illegal residence raised questions about Belgium's handling of radicalized individuals and administrative errors. Paul Van Tigchelt, the former head of the threat analysis coordinating body, has been appointed as the new justice minister. The measures include additional magistrates in Brussels, resolving a Dutch-speaking public prosecutor appointment issue, reinforcing the federal judicial police and bolstering railway police. Committees will review security procedures and information exchange among immigration, police and the judiciary will be improved. (Bartosz Brezezinski, "Belgium unveils new security measures, justice chief after Brussels attack," *Politico*, 22 October 2023)

Justice minister resigns upon pressure on mishandling the extradition of a Tunisian

On 20 October, Vincent van Quickenborne, Belgium's Justice Minister announced his resignation following the attacks in Brussels. The resignation comes after pressure on his management of the Tunisian gunman case. On 16 October, two Swedish were shot by a Tunisian who was already subject to be extradited in 2022. The failure of the Belgian justice authorities to extradite and allowing the Tunisians to live illegally resulted in the pressure on Vincent to resign. ("Belgium justice minister resigns after deadly Brussels attack," *France24*, 20 October 2023)

DENMARK

The meteorological institute issued a warning on the rise in water level due Babet storm

On 21 October, a storm was reported across the UK, northern Germany and southern Scandinavia with powerful winds, rain and storm surges. This has led to power outages, floods in coastal areas and the cancellation of flights ferry and rail services. Till now four have reported to be dead in the UK and three in England and Scotland. Due to the storm, the water levels were reportedly rose by two meters which is the highest in a century according to German news, dpa. In response, Denmark's meteorological institute has issued a warning on strong winds and high levels of water till 22 October. ("Storm Babet batters northern Europe, killing at least 4 people," *Le Monde*, 21 October 2023)

FINLAND

China's ship under scrutiny in Baltic Sea cable damage investigation

On 23 October, *Euronews* reported that China has been cautioned by Finland and Estonia as an investigation into sabotage of undersea cables in the Baltic Sea is ongoing. A Hong Kong-registered vessel, the Newnew Polar Bear, was in the vicinity of damaged pipelines and cables. Authorities have described the damage as caused by "external mechanical force," not an

explosion. China has called for an "objective, fair and professional" investigation, while Moscow denies involvement. Sweden also reported damage to an undersea telecommunications cable in the same area. ("China cautions Finland and Estonia over pipeline 'sabotage' investigation," *Euronews*, 23 October 2023)

Balticconnector gas pipeline leak: Cause under investigation

On 10 October, an external cause was suspected in the leak of the Balticconnector gas pipeline between Finland and Estonia. While the exact reason is yet to be determined, Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland indicated that it could be due to external activity. The National Bureau of Investigation is leading the inquiry with support from various authorities. Estonia's navy has been dispatched to the location of the leak. Both Finland and Estonia have alternative gas supplies, so the incident is not expected to affect energy security. Repair work may take several months. It is notable as concerns arise over critical infrastructure security. ("Location of leak in Balticconnector gas pipeline identified in Finland's economic zone," *Finnish Government*, 10 October 2023; Victor Jack, "Finnish pipeline leak points to 'external activity,' president says," *Politico*, 10 October 2023; "Baltic gas pipeline leak 'likely caused by external activity' says Finland's president," *Euronews*, 10 October 2023)

Government faces protests over welfare cuts

On 02 October, *Euronews* reported on the increasing pressure on Finland's right-wing government (National Coalition Party) from trade unions and students. The move comes due to government regulations to cut down on "social welfare, employment rights, job security and restrictions on international students." Trade unions criticised the government's actions for favoring the rich with tax cuts while cutting benefits for the poor. It dubbed it a "reverse Robin Hood administration." Student protests have spread across universities, with demands to remove cuts which increase their financial burdens. Additionally, the government is

proposing labor market reforms, which experts argue are overdue but face reluctance from the public. They believe these measures will stimulate economic growth and competitiveness. Despite protests and opposition, the government appears determined to proceed with its policy agenda. Some politicians from the ruling National Coalition Party have framed the student protests as unreasonable demands for more grants and allowances from the state. Sandra Bergqvist, Finland's Minister for Youth, acknowledges the concerns of the students but emphasised that the government provides students with various forms of support. It includes education grants, housing benefits, subsidized meals and a student loan guarantee scheme. Trade unions have announced targeted strike actions in response. (David Mac Dougall, "[Finland faces autumn of discontent with strikes and protests over government's austerity budget](#)," *Euronews*, 02 October 2023)

FRANCE

Government sends weapons to Armenia amid concerns of Azerbaijan conflict

On 23 October, France provided military equipment, including air defence systems to Armenia. The move came amid fears that Azerbaijan might launch further attacks after its victory in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia is looking to reduce its reliance on Russia for protection. Sebastien Lecornu, the Armed Forces Minister expressed France's commitment to Armenia's defence. Armenia has also signed contracts with Thales and Safran for defence equipment and expressed its gratitude for France's support. Tensions persist, as Azerbaijan conducts military exercises near Iran's border. Russia, Turkey and Iran held talks with Armenia and Azerbaijan to prevent outside interference in the region. (Laura Kayali and Gabriel Gavin, "[France sends weapons to Armenia amid fears of new conflict with Azerbaijan](#)," *Politico*, 23 October 2023)

Marine Le Pen convicted of defamation against migrant NGO Cimade

On 13 October, according to *Euronews*,

Marine Le Pen, former leader of France's far-right National Rally party, was convicted of defamation. She was convicted against the NGO Cimade, which supports migrants and refugees. She accused Cimade of being "accomplices of smugglers" involved in illegal immigration from the Comoros to Mayotte, a French overseas department. The court found her guilty and ordered her to pay a suspended fine of EUR 500 to Cimade, along with EUR 2,000 in court costs and EUR one in damages. Le Pen's remarks were deemed to have exceeded the limits of free speech, marking a legal victory for the NGO. ("[Marine Le Pen found guilty of defamation after accusing French NGO of smuggling migrants in Mayotte](#)," *Euronews*, 13 October 2023)

Attack at school triggers heightened security alert

On 13 October, France elevated its security alert to the highest level after a knife-wielding attacker fatally stabbed a teacher outside a school in Arras, northeastern France. The assailant, Mohammed Mogouchkov, identified as 20-year-old Russia's national, shouted "Allahu Akbar" during the attack. Two others were seriously injured. The raised alert level permits increased police and military deployments. Emmanuel Macron, President of France condemned the act of "Islamic terrorism" and urged unity. The attack occurred nearly three years after the beheading of teacher Samuel Paty, raising concerns in the context of heightened Middle East tensions and France's diverse population. ("[France raises alert level after teacher stabbing](#)," *Euronews*, 13 October 2023)

Government announces ban against pro-Palestinian protests

On 12 October, important cities in France, Paris, Lille, Bordeaux and other cities witnessed protests in support of Palestine. In response, Gerald Darmanin, France's Interior Minister announced a ban on demonstrations and those resisting to be arrested. On the same Emmanuel Macron, France's President asked people to not cause divide and said: "The shield of unity will protect us from hatred and excesses."

The ban on protests comes after concerns among the Europeans arose due to “antisemitism” triggered from the war in Israel. After the ban, the Pro-Palestinian groups said the ban endangered their “freedom of expression,” and stressed to continue the protests. (Ido Vock and Laurence Peter, [“French police break up pro-Palestinian demo after ban,” BBC](#), 13 October 2023)

Court rejects class action alleging police racial profiling

On 11 October, the highest administrative court (Conseil d'État) rejected a class action lawsuit against the state. It asserted that it is not within the judiciary's purview to redefine public policy. While recognizing the issue of discrimination in policing, particularly against young Arab and Black men, the court did not label it as “systemic.” This case, brought by six human rights organisations, is seen as a missed opportunity by advocates for concrete reforms. The lawsuit's scope and political nature may not align with the French judicial approach, according to legal experts. It is the first ruling on a class action lawsuit against the state in France. It could influence future legal actions in the country. ([“Top French court rejects lawsuit contending 'systemic' racial profiling by police,” France24](#), 11 October 2023)

Accused of giving weapons to Armenia

On 08 October, *Politico* reported on Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's President criticism of France for being the reason for conflict with Armenia. Aliyev accused France of providing weapons to Armenia was not useful in establishing peace but served as an escalation of conflict. France and Armenia have strong diplomatic relations and have been the host to many Armenians. Although Josep Michel, EU's High Representative assured EU's commitment to normalizing relations, the criticism has come from Azerbaijan. [The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs](#) France's ministry of foreign affairs is yet to respond. (Sarah Anne Aarup, [“Azerbaijan leader: 'France would be responsible' for any new conflict with Armenia,” Politico](#), 08 October 2023)

EU leaders reiterate support for Armenia's sovereignty and peace in the region

On 05 October, Emmanuel Macron, President of France, Charles Michel, President of the European Council and Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor, reaffirmed their strong backing for Armenia's independence, territorial integrity and border inviolability. They emphasised the need to enhance the EU-Armenia relations and provide humanitarian aid following the displacement of Karabakh Armenians. The leaders stressed the refugees' right to return home with international monitoring and respect for their culture. They remain committed to normalizing Armenia-Azerbaijan relations based on mutual recognition, territorial integrity and non-use of force. They called for border delimitation, reopening of borders, regional cooperation, detainee release, addressing missing persons and demining efforts. ([“Statement by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of Armenia, President Michel of the European Council, President Macron of France and Chancellor Scholz of Germany,” Elysee](#), 05 October 2023)

Southern EU states address regional and global challenges in a summit

On 02 October, leaders from nine southern EU countries convened in Valletta for the tenth southern EU summit. They expressed solidarity with regions affected by recent natural disasters and committed to supporting affected areas. The summit focused on strengthening EU relations with southern Mediterranean partners and addressing Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Leaders called for the renewal of EU partnerships in the southern neighbourhood, emphasising cooperation, diversity acknowledgment and governance enhancement. The leaders are prioritizing a comprehensive approach to migration by advocating for rapid responses to Mediterranean arrivals. They are negotiating on the pact on migration and asylum and for stronger external migration efforts. They aim to bolster Euro-Africa cooperation on peace and security, adopting a broader approach encompassing the entire Africa continent. On climate change,

the group emphasises the urgent need for climate action, focusing on analyzing climate impacts on various sectors and strengthening adaptation efforts, disaster management and a just transition to address climate challenges and leverage them as growth opportunities. They also condemned Russia's war in Ukraine and called for its withdrawal. Discussions also included security, irregular migration, climate change, economic governance, single market completion and trade policy. (["Declaration of the 10th Summit of the southern countries of the European Union," Elysee.fr](#), 02 October 2023)

GEORGIA

President surpasses impeachment vote

On 18 October, Salome Zurbishvili Georgia's President was saved from an impeachment vote. In a voting held in the parliament 86 out of 150 voted in favour of impeachment where a two-third majority was required and the opposition abstained from voting. It was targeted against Zurbishvili's attempt to secure membership support for Georgia with the EU leader through a meeting. Georgia's constitutional court declared it as a violation of the constitution. In response, she said: "No-one could impede me on the road leading to the sole goal I have today: to get EU candidate status for Georgia by the end of the year." Previously Georgia's EU membership status was held under conditions of implementing "judicial, electoral, press freedom and cutdown in the power of oligarchs." Zurbishvili has been subject to criticism for failure to implement those conditions. (["Georgia: Pro-EU president survives impeachment vote," Deutsche Welle](#), 18 October 2023)

GERMANY

Terry Reintke announces candidacy for Greens' EU election campaign

On 25 October, Member of European Parliament (MEP), Terry Reintke, announced her candidacy for leading the Greens European election campaign. She said her focus is on climate justice, fair wages and democracy in Europe. Reintke, already a co-president of the Greens group

in the Parliament, aims to bring Europeans together for these goals. The European Greens will choose two Spitzenkandidaten, at least one being a woman, in Lyon, France, in February. They argue that this process democratizes EU elections, ensuring greater transparency in selecting top positions, like the European Commission presidency. Polls suggest the Greens may not replicate their 2019 success in the upcoming elections. (Eddy Wax, ["German MEP in running to lead Greens' EU election campaign," Politico](#), 25 October 2023)

Cabinet aims to ease deportations of unsuccessful asylum-seekers

On 25 October, the German cabinet approved legislation aimed at streamlining the deportation process for unsuccessful asylum-seekers. If endorsed by parliament, this legislation will extend pre-deportation detention from ten to 28 days; and expedite the deportation of individuals linked to criminal organisations. It will also grant authorities the power to conduct residential searches for identity verification and, in some cases, remove the obligation for advance notice of deportations. The move comes as Germany grapples with a significant influx of refugees and asylum-seekers due to the Ukraine war and ongoing migration challenges. Chancellor Olaf Scholz emphasised the need to carry out deportations on a larger scale. (["New German legislation aims to make it easier to deport asylum seekers," Euronews](#), 25 October 2023)

Cargo ships collide off the coast

On 24 October, a collision between two cargo ships off the North Sea coast left one dead and four missing. The UK-flagged Verity, carrying steel from Germany to the UK, collided with the Bahamian Polesie. Two of Verity's crew members were rescued, but the ship sank. Search efforts, including divers, are ongoing. The cause of the collision is unclear. None of the 22 crew members on Polesie were injured. Rescue crews are working under challenging conditions with limited visibility and strong currents. A cruise ship also assisted in the search. (["One dead after ships collide in North Sea," BBC](#), 24 October 2023;

Christopher F. Schuetze, "[British Freighter Sinks in Fatal North Sea Collision](#)," *The New York Times*, 24 October 2023)

Sahra Wagenknecht launches new left-wing party

On 23 October, Sahra Wagenknecht, a prominent leftist politician, announced plans to establish a new political party. The move came to potentially draw votes away from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). The "Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance - for Reason and Fairness" combines left-wing economic policies. It also maintains a restrictive stance on migration and opposes current climate change measures, sanctions against Russia and German arms supplies to Ukraine. The new party aims to be launched by January, with Wagenknecht's positions appealing to voters disillusioned with mainstream parties. Her move could endanger the existing Left Party, with which she has severed ties. ("[New left-wing German political party headed by Sahra Wagenknecht could draw votes from far-right AfD](#)," *Euronews*, 23 October 2023)

New spaceport to be launched from North Sea in April 2024

On 21 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the growing significance of satellite data in economic sectors, industries and self-driven vehicles. This nuanced demand has provoked new space ventures amongst countries, especially among private actors like SpaceX. Similarly, Germany has planned to construct its own "spaceport" which is expected to be launched in its first rockets by April 2024. This new facility will not be like the US Cape Canaveral or Kazakhstan's Baikonur (land-based) rather will be launched from the North Sea. For the launch, the Netherlands' company T-minus will first launch a rocket from the German-Offshore Spaceport Alliance (GOSA) mobile platform. This platform will be 350 kilometers from the coast of Germany's EEZ in Berlin. The North Sea platform is expected to become the future place to launch Europe's micro launchers and rockets. According to the Federation of German Industries (BDI) the market activities are intertwined with space technology and are predicted to boost by

7.4 per cent annually on the success of space technologies by 2040. (Alexander Freund, "[Taking on SpaceX: Why Germany is building its own spaceport](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 October 2023)

Defence minister announced a military contribution to NATO

On 12 October, Boris Pistorius, Germany's Defence Minister announced its decision to provide 35,000 troops to NATO as of 2025. The move comes after NATO proposed its plan to protect a few critical locations in Europe. Till now 300,000 NATO troops have been allotted for quick deployment in any other NATO country. Along with the troops, Germany will also produce 200 aircraft and key assets for faster deployment. According to Pistorius, close to 4,000 will be deployed standardly in Lithuania. ("[Germany to provide NATO with 35,000 troops from 2025](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 October 2023)

New migration bill proposed to allow more authority for deportation

On 11 October, Nancy Faeser, Germany's Interior Minister revealed a migration bill to restructure deportation. The bill would grant more powers to German authorities to carry out the deportation of migrants of dangerous nature such as criminals and smugglers. The measures include an extension in the "period of detention" from 10 to 28 days as a preparation time for the authorities to deport. A spokesperson from the Social Democratic Party stated that the discussion on the proposal was underway with the local and state authorities. The next step will be to reach a consensus among the coalition parties to make possible adjustments to avoid repatriations. On the same, Olaf Scholz German Chancellor called the opposition party lead Fridrich Merz from the Christian Democratic Union for a meeting on 13 October to gather consensus for the migration policy. ("[Germany moves to streamline migrant deportations](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 11 October 2023)

CDU and CSU win elections in Bavaria

On 08 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the win of the Christian Social Union (CSU) party and Christian Democratic Union

(CDU) in the elections held in Bavaria and Hesse. According to the report, the win of CSU and CDU showcased the gains of AfD party (far-right). The CDU led by Boris Rhein won 34.6 per cent followed by AfD far-right with 18.4 per cent and lastly, Social Democrats placed in third place with 15.1 per cent. In the case of the Greens and SPD which received 14.4 per cent and 8.4 per cent failed to meet the threshold to enter Bavaria's parliament. ("Germany: CSU and CDU victorious in Bavaria and Hesse," *Deutsche Welle*, 08 October 2023)

European Parliament approves Claudia Buch as EU's chief banking supervisor

On 03 October, the European Parliament voted in favour of Claudia Buch of Germany to become the next chief banking supervisor of the EU. It resulted in overcoming a standoff with the European Central Bank (ECB). The vote, with 357 in favour, 195 against and 42 abstentions, paves the way for Nadia Calvino, Spain's Finance Minister, to lead the European Investment Bank (EIB). Buch had faced competition from Margarita Delgado Tejero, Deputy Governor of the Bank of Spain, but was ultimately chosen to avoid two of Spain's leaders in top finance roles. Now approval from EU governments to formally assume her position is awaited, succeeding Italy's Andrea Enria. (Hannah Brenton, "Parliament votes through Buch as EU banking cop," *Politico*, 03 October 2023)

GREENLAND

Indigenous women seek compensation for forced intrauterine device insertions

On 02 October, dozens of indigenous women and girls in Greenland complained to Denmark's government. They alleged that they had intrauterine devices (IUDs) implanted without their consent during the 1960s and 1970s. They claimed that it was part of a government campaign to control the indigenous population's growth. They have termed the procedure a violation of their human rights, causing lasting physical and psychological harm. The women are demanding DKK 300,000 each in compensation. The complaint cites an investigation estimating that around 4,500 IUDs were inserted without consent during

that period. Denmark and Greenland have committed to investigating the matter. (Isabella Kwai, "They Were Given IUDs as Children Without Their Consent. Now, They Want Compensation," *The New York Times*, 03 September 2023)

HUNGARY

Government signs agreement with Georgia on cooperation in advanced technologies

Between 11-12 October, Marton Nagy, Hungary's Minister of Economic Development held a meeting with Levan Davitashvili, Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia in the Georgian-Hungarian government meeting. The discussion focused on cooperation in future technologies, AI and industry 4.0 solution. In the outcome, the ministers signed an agreement to promote industrial cooperation in digital transformation, advanced technologies, skilled workforce, and production of transport vehicles and medical equipment. Till now the trade between the two countries has come to USD 90 million. ("Agreement to Deepen Industrial Cooperation with Georgia," *Hungary Today*, 13 October 2023)

Mission in Chad to prevent humanitarian disaster

On 05 October, Azbej Tristan, Secretary of State joined a humanitarian mission to Chad as part of the "Hungary Helps program." The mission seeks to provide aid and stability to Chad, the last stable country in the Central African region, where many people are seeking refuge. Chad faces healthcare challenges, with infant mortality rates 22 times higher than in Europe. Approximately one-third of the population requires immediate humanitarian assistance. By preventing a humanitarian disaster in Chad, Hungary aims to avoid a potential refugee crisis in Europe and contribute to regional stability and development. ("Humanitarian Disaster in Chad Could Result in a Flood of Refugees," *Hungary Today*, 05 October 2023)

ICELAND

Women stage protest for gender pay gap

On 23 October, the *BBC* reported that Iceland's women, including Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir, are staging a women's day off in protest of the gender pay gap and gender-based violence on 24 October. The strike will impact fields where women constitute the majority, such as healthcare and education. It is Iceland's first full-day women's strike since 1975 when around 90 per cent of the female workforce participated, leading to the passage of equal pay legislation. While Iceland is recognized as one of the world's most gender-equal countries, this strike highlights ongoing issues. Jakobsdottir's government is exploring how to value female-dominated professions compared to male-dominated ones. (Ido Vock, "[Iceland's PM strikes over gender pay gap](#)," *BBC*, 23 October 2023)

Foreign Minister meets NATO Military Committee Chair

On 21 October, Bjarni Benediktsson, Minister of Foreign Affairs met with Admiral Rob Bauer, NATO Military Committee Chair. They discussed NATO's deterrence and defence, the Ukraine war and North Atlantic and Arctic security. It was Admiral Bauer's third visit to Iceland in this capacity, where he also addressed the Arctic Circle Assembly. ("[Foreign Minister meets with the Chair of the NATO Military Committee](#)," *Government of Iceland*, 21 October 2023)

IRELAND

Heritage Ireland 2030 Summit focuses on expertise and skills for safeguarding heritage

On 25 October, the Heritage Ireland 2030 Summit was held. The importance of enhancing expertise and skills in Ireland's heritage sector was a central theme. Over 250 attendees, including heritage leaders, community groups and government representatives, discussed the preservation of Ireland's built, archaeological and natural heritage. Malcolm Noonan TD, Minister of State for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform, emphasised the significance of capacity building through the Heritage

Department's grant schemes. He further added that these schemes play a crucial role in strengthening the expertise and skills of heritage and conservation practitioners, along with safeguarding historic buildings and monuments. The event also highlighted successful initiatives and recent developments in the heritage sector. ("[Renewed focus on expertise and skills to safeguard Ireland's heritage at Heritage Ireland 2030 summit](#)," *Government of Ireland*, 25 October 2023)

2023 Global Ireland summit to strengthen global presence

On 23 October, the Department of Foreign Affairs reported that the 2023 Global Ireland Summit will be hosted in Dublin Castle on 24 October. The annual event will bring together leaders from various sectors, focusing on Ireland's Global Ireland strategy to enhance its global impact by 2025. Micheal Martin, the Ireland Minister of Foreign Affairs, will host and present the keynote address. Diverse speakers include Eamon Ryan, Ireland's Environment Minister and Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman. The Summit will span for four days, featuring discussions on topics such as climate, technology and Ireland's global voice. It aims to bolster Ireland's presence, engage in economic, political and environmental issues and strengthen connections with its diaspora. ("[2023 Global Ireland Summit](#)," *Government of Ireland*, 23 October 2023)

ITALY

EU sues former MEP over EUR 250,000 debt from fraud probe

On 25 October, *Politico* reported that Crescenzo Rivellini, a former European Parliament member from Italy, is refusing to repay over EUR 250,000. It is public money and he is accused of being misappropriated. An investigation by the EU's anti-fraud office found that Rivellini funneled funds from his office budget. He sent the funds to a company owned by his former parliamentary assistant and romantic partner, which was not declared to Parliament, violating conflict-of-interest rules. Rivellini has launched a lawsuit against the Parliament to avoid repaying the

money. Despite previous appeals, senior MEPs unanimously dismissed his case earlier in 2022. The Parliament has also started withholding part of his pension. (Eddy Wax and Gregorio Sorgi, "[Former European parliamentarian fights to avoid paying back €250K after fraud probe](#)," *Politico*, 25 October 2023)

Tremors in volcanic area near Naples trigger mass evacuation plans

On 02 October, a series of small tremors rattled the Campi Flegrei (Phlegraean Fields) region west of Naples, Italy. It prompted the government to revise mass evacuation plans. The area, home to a large caldera, last erupted in 1538. A new eruption could endanger around half a million residents. While experts have noted that seismic activity may intensify, they do not see an imminent eruption risk. Naples, surrounded by volcanoes, faces the challenge of emergency evacuations. Drafting exodus plans for the most dangerous areas is underway, but updating these plans and improving infrastructure remain complex tasks. (Giada Zampano, "[A string of volcanic tremors raises fears of mass evacuations in Italy](#)," *Associated Press*, 03 September 2023)

LITHUANIA

Government moves to revise controversial "Gay Propaganda" law amid EU pressure

On 26 October, *Euronews* reported that Lithuania's government has taken steps to amend a contentious law known as the "gay propaganda" law. Critics argue that it restricts information about same-sex marriage and LGBTQI issues, particularly for minors. The law, established in 2009, has sparked debates over its impact on freedom and equality. While it does not explicitly mention the LGBTQ+ community, it has been criticised as homophobic and limiting free expression. The move to amend the law comes after a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) found that it violated the right to free expression. The law was previously used to censor a children's book featuring same-sex relationships. Despite legal and social

discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community in Lithuania, this proposed change has the potential to impact the country's political landscape. (Joshua Askew, "[Lithuania moves to ditch controversial Russian-style 'anti-gay propaganda' law](#)," *Euronews*, 26 October 2023)

LUXEMBOURG

Christian Social People's Party wins general elections

On 08 October, in Luxembourg general elections, centre-right Christian Social People's Party (CSV) won the elections with 21 seats of 60. The outgoing coalition consisting of the Greens, the Socialists and the liberal Democratic Party led by Xavier Bettel, Deputy Prime Minister of Luxembourg failed to secure a majority. The election result indicates a stronghold of CSV which will initiate the formation of a coalition on 09 October. According to CSV leader Luc Frieden: "...voters voted massively for a different government and a different policy...They put the CSV in a position to play a key role in the formation of that government." In the case of the right-wing Alternative Democratic Reform party (ARD), it made gains with extra seats securing fourth place in the election. (Nicolas Camut, "[Luxembourg PM Bettel faces exit after election defeat](#)," *Politico*, 09 October 2023)

NORWAY

Ghana's Genebank joins Svalbard Global Seed Vault as 100th depositor

On 25 October, Ghana's Plant Genetic Resources Research Institute contributed seeds to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, becoming the 100th depositor. The deposit included crucial food crops like maize, rice, eggplant and cowpea, securing the country's agricultural diversity. This initiative aids global food security, with over 1.2 million seed samples preserved in the world's largest crop diversity collection. ("[Ghana genebank becomes the 100th depositor to Svalbard Global Seed Vault](#)," *Government.no*, 25 October 2023)

Foreign Minister urges urgent aid and peace in Gaza, at Cairo Summit

On 21 October, Espen Barth Eide, Norway's Foreign Minister stressed the urgency of delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza at the Cairo summit. He also stressed preventing further escalation of the Israel-Hamas conflict. He emphasised compliance with international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians and infrastructure. Eide called for a humanitarian pause in the fighting to allow aid delivery and urged the release of Israel's hostages. About 200 Norway's nationals, including children, remain in Gaza, raising concerns for their safety. Norway reiterated support for a two-state solution and announced a NOK 60 million contribution to UNRWA, bringing their total humanitarian support to NOK 200 million. ("Foreign Minister at Gaza summit in Cairo: 'Urgent help needed in Gaza'," *Government.no*, 21 October 2023)

Sami activists protest demanding removal of wind farms Fosen district

On 11 October, Sami activists held protests outside Norway's parliament to voice concerns over a wind farm they argue threatens their way of life. Protesters blocked a major Oslo Road, demanding the dismantling of the turbines and the restoration of the land. The dispute centers on Europe's largest onshore wind farm with 151 turbines in central Norway's Fosen district. The protests were held in Oslo on the second anniversary of a court ruling that deemed wind farms in western Norway illegal on land traditionally used by Sami reindeer herders. Activists assert that the transition to green energy should not infringe on the rights of Indigenous people. They have been protesting the wind farm's continued operation despite a 2021 Supreme Court ruling that found the turbines' construction violated the Sami's rights. The 151 turbines in question remain operational despite the court's verdict. While the ruling invalidated permits for turbine construction, it did not provide guidance on their fate. Jonas Gahr Store, Norway's Prime Minister admitted "ongoing human rights violations," and activists demand the removal of windmills from Sami land. ("Norway activists renew protest

against wind farm on land used by herders," *Associated Press*, 11 October 2023; "Sami Activists Protest Illegal Wind Turbines In Norway," *Barron's*, 11 October 2023)

POLAND

Donald Tusk aims to revive European ties and unlock COVID-19 funds

On 25 October, Donald Tusk, the opposition leader from Civic Platform (KO) party, expressed his commitment to restoring Poland's place on the European stage. He made further commitments to access EUR 35 billion in COVID-19 recovery funds during his visit to Brussels. Tusk's Civic Platform and opposition parties secured a majority in the recent elections, potentially making him Poland's next prime minister. This change is expected to improve EU-Warsaw relations strained during the previous government's rule. Tusk and Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission President, discussed various issues, including the Ukraine-Russia conflict, recovery funds and democratic values. The ongoing dispute over the rule of law has hindered fund disbursement. (Jorge Liboreiro, "Donald Tusk vows to bring Poland back to the 'European stage' and unlock COVID-19 recovery funds," *Euronews*, 25 October 2023)

Opposition seeks to form new government

On 24 October, Poland's three major opposition parties united to create a coalition and replace the current Law and Justice (PiS) government. The names of these three opposition parties are: Third Way, The Left and Civic Coalition. They have requested Andrzej Duda, Poland's President permission to form a new government. The coalition, led by Donald Tusk, former Prime Minister holds 248 seats in the 460-member lower house. Despite PiS winning the largest share of seats in the October election, it may struggle to secure the needed majority. The opposition urged Duda to expedite the process and highlighted their readiness to govern. Duda will start meetings with political parties, potentially affecting the government

formation timeline. (Wojciech Kosci, [“Poland’s opposition proposes forming new government,” Politico](#), 24 October 2023)

Civic Coalition party in leverage to forming the coalition government

On 17 October, the *BBC* reported on Poland’s opposition party Civic Coalition gaining enough votes to win the governing Law and Justice party (PiS). In the election results, PiS won 35.38 per cent whereas the Civic Coalition secured 30.7 per cent. To form a majority government, a party requires 231 seats and PiS’s drawback is its possible coalition partner seats winning only 12 seats will not help in securing the majority. Therefore, the opposition is in favour of forming a government with support from the Third Way and the New Left parties. Till 14 November, the PiS party will be given time to form a coalition and on failure, the opposition will be asked. ([“Poland election: Tusk’s opposition eyes power after pivotal vote,” BBC](#), 17 October 2023)

Poles abroad register to vote in election

On 11 October, *Euronews* reported that over half a million members of Poland’s diaspora have registered for the upcoming parliamentary election. It comes with their votes potentially influencing the outcome. The ruling Law and Justice party (PiS) seeks a third term, but the opposition led by Donald Tusk’s Civic Coalition party (KO) is a strong contender. Polls indicate a possible coalition government as neither PiS nor KO appears likely to secure a majority. Concerns exist about the handling of overseas votes due to new electoral rules. (Giulia Carbonaro & Magdalena Chodownik, [“More than half a million Poles abroad register to vote in Sunday’s close-call election,” Euronews](#), 11 October 2023)

Top military officers resign ahead of election

On 10 October, Gen Rajmund Andrzejczak, Chief of General Staff and Gen Tomasz Piotrowski, Operational Commander, resigned just before a crucial election. While they gave no official reasons for their resignations, reports suggest concerns about the government’s attempts to

politicize the military played a role. This comes amid accusations of the government’s politicization of the judiciary and curbing media freedoms. The right-wing government, seeking a third term in office, denies these allegations. The election is seen as a significant moment in Poland’s political landscape, with a narrower gap between the right and centre parties. Relations with Ukraine have also been strained due to a ban on Ukraine’s grain imports. (Jaroslav Lukiv, [“Poland’s top army generals quit ahead of key elections,” BBC](#), 10 October 2023)

EU official calls to clarify visa allegations

On 03 October, Margaritis Schinas, European Commission Vice-President, called on Poland to clarify allegations. The allegations are that its consulates in Africa and Asia sold temporary work visas to migrants at high prices. This scheme could undermine the Schengen area’s free travel zone, which relies on trust between its member states. Schinas expressed concern about the alleged cases of fraud and corruption in Poland’s visa system, which could violate EU law and urged full clarity to restore trust. Poland’s ruling party, facing elections, has denied any scandal but has faced criticism for allegedly admitting large numbers of foreign workers while maintaining anti-migrant rhetoric. (Lorne Cook, [“EU demands answers from Poland about visa fraud allegations,” Associated Press](#), 03 October 2023)

Opposition holds massive rally ahead of election

On 01 October, Poland’s opposition, Civic Coalition led by Donald Tusk, a former prime minister, organized a massive rally in Warsaw. The rally called “Million Hearts march” claimed over a million participants. Despite the show of support, the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party maintains a significant lead in polls, with PiS at 38 per cent and Civic Coalition at 30 per cent. Tusk aimed to boost opposition morale, but many attendees expressed skepticism about changing the election’s outcome. PiS leaders, meanwhile, warned of dire consequences if the opposition wins. The election on 15 October could see PiS

continue its rule or require coalition-building for a third term. (Jan Cienski, ["Huge but glum: Poland's opposition puts a million people on the streets," Politico](#), 02 September 2023)

RUSSIA

Expands railroads to China as trade grows

On 24 October, *RT* reported that Russia is investing in railway corridors from Kemerovo and Krasnoyarsk to strengthen economic ties with China. The North-Siberian railway will link Europe and Asia, while a second route through the Republic of Tyva will provide direct access to Beijing and Tianjin. Feasibility studies and investment assessments are expected by 2025. The move comes as Russia and China see surging trade flows, deepening economic ties and growing cargo flows between the two countries. (["Russia planning two new railroads to China," RT](#), 24 October 2023)

Lavrov visit to North Korea aims to boost military cooperation

On 19 October, Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister visited North Korea to discuss bilateral cooperation with Kim Jong Un, North Korea's leader. During his visit, military cooperation remains the key part of the discussion. He also pledged "complete support" for North Korea. Earlier, the US released its intelligence update on confirming the shipment from North Korea to Russia's military warehouse near Tikhoretsk near Ukraine's border. According to the report in the *BBC*, North Korea is reported to have "stockpile of arms" whereas its economy's performance remains low. This led to a shortage of food and medicine, and Lavrov's visit came in favour of an exchange. (Derek Cai & Jean Mackenzie, ["Russia's Lavrov hails deeper ties in N Korea visit," BBC](#), 19 October 2023)

State of Duma adopts bill withdrawing from ratifying of CTBT

On 18 October, Russia's State of Duma adopted a bill declaring the withdrawal of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of the State of Duma,

criticised the US for ratifying and showcasing itself as hegemon of a unipolar world. Therefore, in interest of Russia's security, justice and stability the bill was adopted. In the statement by Leonid Slutsky, the Chairman of the International Affairs Committee: "We will monitor the US activity, as its every action on the world stage, unfortunately, undermines the nuclear non-proliferation regime, the strategic balance of nuclear forces and global security." (The State of Duma, ["The State Duma adopted the bill de-ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty," Duma.gov.ru](#), 18 October 2023)

Euractiv reports on continuing oil exports of Russia above sanction cap

On 13 October, *Euractiv* reported that loopholes have enabled Russia's crude oil producers to continue selling to China and India at higher prices. The loopholes in sanctions are meant to cap the price of Russia's oil at USD 60 per barrel. The US has imposed sanctions on owners of tankers transporting Russia's oil above the cap. However, the arrival of new shippers beyond the reach of western sanctions has allowed Russia to earn more revenue. Freight rates have dropped significantly, offering Russia's producers even higher revenues. This situation comes as Russia exported nearly five million barrels per day of crude oil in 2023. Its oil and fuel exports increased to 7.6 million barrels per day in September. (["Growing tanker fleet, cheaper freight challenge Russian oil price cap," Euractiv](#), 13 October 2023)

SLOVAKIA

President appoints new coalition government led by Robert Fico

On 25 October, Zuzana Caputova, Slovakia's President, appointed a new coalition government led by populist Robert Fico, former prime minister. The coalition has a slim majority of 79 seats in the 150-member parliament and includes the far-right Slovak National Party. Fico has promised to end military aid for Ukraine, but some analysts believe he would not change course immediately. Fico will attend an EU leaders' summit in Brussels, with Ukraine aid likely on the agenda. The

largest opposition party, Progressive Slovakia, has 32 seats and is led by Caputova. ([“Slovakia forms coalition government with pro-Russia party,” Deutsche Welle](#), 25 October 2023)

Smer, Hlas and SNS form new coalition government

On 11 October, the Hlas party, finishing third in the 30 September election, chose to enter a coalition with the Smer party, which won the election and the Slovak National Party (SNS). Together, these parties have 79 seats in Slovakia’s parliament. The incoming government faces fiscal and geopolitical challenges but claims prior experience makes them well-prepared. The coalition agreement allocates ministries with Smer taking six, Hlas receiving seven and SNS three. The new government’s campaign pledges include ending military support for Ukraine and resisting sanctions on Russia, sparking concerns in Brussels. (Tom Nicholson and Laura Hulsemann, [“New government emerges in Slovakia, with Robert Fico as prime minister,” Politico](#), 11 October 2023)

Post-election coalition shifts toward the left

On 10 October, *Politico* reported that following the recent election on 30 September, a new ruling coalition is emerging. It is causing concern within Ukraine and among the EU supporters. Peter Pellegrini, leader of the social democratic Hlas party, which secured third place in the election, announced that Hlas will exclusively negotiate with the leftist-populist Smer party. The Smer party is led by Robert Fico, former prime minister and the nationalist Slovenska narodna strana (Slovak National Party, SNS). These three parties together hold 79 seats in the 150-seat parliament. Their alignment is shifting towards a more red-brown coalition, raising questions about their stance on Ukraine and the EU solidarity. (Tom Nicholson, [“Slovakia’s kingmaker party only wants coalition with populist Fico,” Politico](#), 10 October 2023)

Pressure mounts from European socialists to expel Robert Fico

On 03 October, according to *Politico*, the

Europe’s Socialists faced calls to expel Robert Fico, leader of the Smer party. He won recent elections on an anti-Ukraine platform. Fico, in line to form a coalition government, advocates ending military support to Ukraine and criticised the EU sanctions on Russia. Manfred Weber, leader of the European People’s Party, linked Fico to Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary and urged the Socialists to clarify their stance. Fico, however, accused the Party of European Socialists (PES) of blackmail. While some Socialist MEPs criticised Smer’s campaign rhetoric, others argue for patience and calm, emphasising the party’s pro-European stance. (Eddy Wax, [“EU Socialists urged to kick out Slovakia’s pro-Russian election winner Robert Fico,” Politico](#), 03 October 2023)

Pro-Russian populist wins parliamentary elections

On 01 October, former Prime Minister Robert Fico and his leftist Smer party emerged victorious in early parliamentary elections in Slovakia. With 22.9 per cent of the votes, Smer secured 42 seats in the 150-seat Parliament. Fico campaigned on a pro-Russian and anti-American platform and may become prime minister again. He has vowed to withdraw Slovakia’s military support for Ukraine in Russia’s war, a move that could strain EU and NATO unity. The election was seen as a test of Slovakia’s support for Ukraine in its conflict with Russia. Fico’s critics fear his return to power could align Slovakia with Hungary and Poland in their sceptical stance towards the EU and NATO. (Daniel Bellamy, [“Pro-Russian party wins Slovakia’s election, but not outright,” Euronews](#), 01 September 2023)

SLOVENIA

Reinstates border checks amid security concerns

On 21 October, several European countries, including Slovenia, Italy, Croatia and Hungary, reintroduced border checks within the Schengen Area. The move comes due to rising security concerns, public safety and the impact on the EU from the Israel-Hamas conflict. The EU is considering

the challenges posed by internal border controls and their impact on free movement within the Schengen Area. Italy, Denmark, Sweden and France are among the countries implementing such measures to address migration and security threats. ("Slovenia introduces border checks with Hungary and Croatia," Euronews, 22 October 2023)

SPAIN

Socialists and the far-left Sumar coalition the forms government pact

On 24 October, the Socialist Party, led by Pedro Sanchez, signed an agreement with the far-left Sumar coalition to establish a coalition government. The pact outlined social measures, such as job cut regulations, minimum wage increases and reduced working hours without salary reductions. Sanchez still needs the support of smaller regional parties for a parliamentary majority, particularly the Catalan separatist Junts group and the Republican Left of Catalonia. Failure to secure this by 27 November could trigger new elections on 14 January 2024. (Nicolas Camut, "Spanish socialists strike coalition deal with far-left Sumar alliance," Politico, 24 October 2023)

Protest against giving amnesty to Catalan leaders

On 08 October, many thousands of people staged protests in Barcelona against the proposal of giving amnesty to Catalan Separatists. According to the state's police, more than 50,000 took part in the protest whereas according to Societat Civil Catalana (SCC), a civil society group which organized recorded 300,000 protestors. The protests have emerged to the continuing political impasse in Spain's government. After the failure of People's Party leader Alberto Feijoo to form a coalition government, Socialist group leader Pedro Sanchez will now attempt to form government. To form the coalition, support of Junts, along with Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya party is required. Giving of amnesty would mean the elimination of charges on Catalan leaders who tried for the 2017 independence bid. This has sparked protests among people. ("Spain: Protest against Catalan amnesty

deal draws huge crowd," Deutsche Welle, 08 October 2023)

PLD Space firm succeeds in launching Miura-1 private rocket

On 07 October, Spain's firm PLD Space launched its first private rocket. This will be Europe's full private rocket to step its space agenda. The rocket called Miura-1 was launched from a military base in Andalusia. According to Raul Torres, Chief Executive of PDL Space, the systems in the rocket worked "perfectly" after two failed attempts. In recent years, Europe has been under scrutiny due to its failure to send small satellites. Along with Spain, firms from Scotland, Sweden and Germany are in line to join the race in sending small payloads. ("Spain's first private rocket launch deemed 'successful'," Deutsch Welle, 07 October 2023)

King Felipe VI asks Pedro Sanchez to form the government

On 03 October, according to the *BBC*, King Felipe VI tasked caretaker Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez with forming a government. It comes after his conservative rival, Alberto Nunez Feijoo, failed to do so. Sanchez, the Socialist leader, aims to create a progressive coalition government, which would require support from Catalan nationalist parties. Without their backing, he would fall short of the majority needed, leading to a repeat election. Feijoo's conservative Popular Party could not secure enough votes in parliament. Sanchez's potential coalition faces demands for amnesty from Catalan pro-independence groups, a contentious issue with constitutional implications. If unsuccessful, Spain may hold elections in January. (Guy Hedgecoe and Paul Kirby, "Spain's Sánchez pins hopes of becoming PM on Catalan amnesty," BBC, 03 October 2023)

Minister meet ahead of COP28

On 02 October, Energy Minister Teresa Ribera cautioned that COP28 talks would pose challenges. She emphasised the need for a global response to climate issues at a conference in Madrid. The conference was attended by climate and energy ministers ahead of the Dubai conference. Spain,

holding the EU Council's rotating presidency, advocates for an international coalition to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The COP28, is scheduled for 30 November to 12 December in Dubai. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), it faces demands for tripling global investments in renewables, doubling energy efficiency improvements and supporting clean energy financing in emerging countries. Meanwhile, the EU is striving to devise a plan for phasing out fossil fuels by mid-month. Sultan al-Jaber, COP28's President-Designate, defended hosting the talks in Abu Dhabi and called for a phasedown of fossil fuels as part of a comprehensive energy transition. ("COP28: Climate leaders meet in Madrid ahead of summit," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 September 2023)

Sanchez next in line after Feijoo's shortfall to form government

On 02 October, political party leaders met with King Felipe VI ahead of new government formation attempts. It is following July's election, which resulted in a fragmented parliament. Alberto Nunez Feijoo of the conservative People's Party narrowly led in the election, but his coalition bid was rejected. His bid was unsuccessful as he could not garner enough support in the Spanish parliament, needing 176 out of 350 lawmakers' votes for an absolute majority. Despite the backing of the far-right Vox party and some smaller parties, Feijoo fell short with only 172 votes, leaving the Spanish Socialist Workers' party (PSOE), led by Pedro Sanchez, in a better position to potentially form a government. Caretaker Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whose PSOE party won 122 seats, was asked by the king to form a government. Sanchez needs support from Catalan parties, including the left-wing ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia) and conservative Junts. They have demanded a referendum on self-determination and amnesty for 2017 secession push participants. He faces a 27 November deadline to form a coalition or hold fresh elections. ("Spain: Pedro Sanchez next in line to try to form government," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 September 2023)

SWITZERLAND

Right-wing populists gain ground in election

On 22 October, right-wing populist party, the Swiss People's Party (SVP), appeared to have increased its share to 29 per cent of the vote in the general election. Concerns about immigration, climate change and health insurance fees drove voters' decisions. The SVP faced criticism for its "xenophobic" ad campaign highlighting crimes by foreigners. The Social Democrats (SP) are projected to secure around 18 per cent of the vote. The Greens and Green Liberals, who saw substantial gains four years ago, are expected to lose support. New parliament members will appoint the federal government in December. ("Populist right grows as counting underway for Swiss election," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 October 2023)

SWEDEN

Oil spill threatens Baltic Sea after ferry runs aground

On 22 October, a passenger ferry, the Marco Polo, ran aground south of Karlshamn, causing a large oil spill in the Baltic Sea. The vessel had deviated from its usual route before grounding, leading to a slick of fuel in the sea. Sweden's coast guard is launching a criminal investigation into the incident. The accident released a slick of fuel into the Baltic Sea and the oil reached the coast. A preliminary investigation has been opened for violations of maritime legislation. Authorities and the ferry's operator, TT-Line, are assessing the damage, with no risk of the ship sinking. (Rebecca Ann Hughes, ("Two cubic metres of oil': Swedish coastguard rushing to clean up ferry fuel leak," *Euronews*, 25 October 2023)

Thunberg arrested in protest held in London

On 17 October, Sweden's young climate activist Greta Thunberg was arrested by the UK police on gathering protestors outside an oil and gas conference. In the protest, Thunberg along with hundreds of people from Fossil Free London and Greenpeace groups demonstrated saying "Oily Money Out." She said: "Behind these closed doors,

spineless politicians are making deals and compromises with lobbyists from [the] destructive fossil fuel industry." The protests were targeted against the fossil fuel companies which seem to drag in the energy transition and shift into renewables to make profits. According to the Thunberg, the consequence of using of fossil fuels is clear and argues that despite the awareness the industries continue to do "nothing." ([Greta Thunberg detained at London climate protest](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 17 October 2023)

Government announces damage in Estonia-Sweden telecom cable

On 17 October, Sweden's government announced the telecom cable connecting Estonia and Sweden to be damaged. According to Carl-Oskar, Sweden's Civil Defence Minister the damage had occurred at the same time when gas pipeline of Finland and Estonia were damaged. In response to the incident, authorities from Sweden, Finland and Estonia will jointly investigate. Countries located in the Baltic Sea have triggered alert on surveillance of undersea infrastructure since September 2022. Russia which has denied the allegations of the attack to the pipeline, the responsible actor remain unknown. (Ido Vock, "[Sweden investigating damage to Baltic undersea cable](#)," *BBC*, 17 October 2023)

THE NETHERLANDS

Wopke Hoekstra faces MEP scrutiny for EU climate role

On 02 September, Dutch Commissioner-designate for Climate Action, Wopke Hoekstra, pledged to slash EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 90 per cent by 2040. During his confirmation hearing before the European Parliament, he vowed to introduce measures to curb climate change. It includes a tax on aviation fuel. Hoekstra faced criticism from environmental groups and some MEPs who questioned his track record and environmental credentials. This criticism stemmed from his past associations with the oil industry and his handling of state aid to the airline KLM, which lacked environmental conditions. Fifty climate

action groups expressed their concerns in a letter to the European Parliament, contending that Hoekstra was ill-suited for the role due to his perceived lack of expertise in climate issues and his close alignment with fossil fuel interests. During his confirmation hearing in front of the European Parliament, Hoekstra faced rigorous questioning about his previous employment with energy giant Shell and his economic policies as the former Dutch finance minister. The left-wing Socialists and Democrats group within the EU parliament pledged to subject Hoekstra to a challenging confirmation process. However, he insisted he was committed to the EU's climate targets and promised to conclude pending climate legislation before the 2024 European elections. ([Hearing of Commissioner-designate Wopke Hoekstra](#), *European Parliament*, 02 September 2023; Mared Gwyn Jones, "[EU climate chief nominee Wopke Hoekstra vows more ambition in European Parliament hearing](#)," *Euronews*, 02 September 2023)

THE UK

Trevelyan addresses affirms commitment to security at South China Sea conference

On 25 October, Minister of State for Indo-Pacific, Anne-Marie Trevelyan delivered a keynote speech at the South China Sea conference in Vietnam. She emphasised the global significance of the region. She marked the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the UK and Vietnam and reaffirmed their commitment to maritime security. The speech highlighted the need for a free and open Indo-Pacific, stability, climate change collaboration and open communication to prevent escalation. The UK supports the UNCLOS and opposes actions undermining it. The UK pledged to work with ASEAN and offered assistance in areas such as environmental preservation, energy transition and maritime cooperation. ([Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan gave a keynote speech to South China Sea conference in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam](#)," *GOV.UK*, 26 October 2023)

Defence Secretary in Middle East to

bolster regional security

On 26 October, in an effort to maintain regional stability and protect civilians, Grant Shapps, UK Defence Secretary, embarked on a diplomatic mission to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Shapps met with leaders in both countries, collaborating with over 40 countries to ease tensions and prevent a wider conflict in the Middle East. He stressed the importance of working together to prevent suffering and protect innocent families. Discussions in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi centered on deterring escalation and promoting mediation. The UK also delivered 21 tonnes of aid to Palestine's civilians in Gaza, part of a GBP 30 million humanitarian support package. (["Defence Secretary travels to Middle East on regional security mission," GOV.UK, 26 October 2023](#))

Pro-Palestinian protesters block UK arms factory linked to Israel

On 26 October, amid the ongoing Gaza conflict, over 100 protesters, including teachers, academics and doctors, blockaded an arms factory in the UK. The factory is connected to Israel's weaponry supply. The protesters denounced the alleged use of the UK's arms by Israel. The factory, owned by Inthro Precision, a subsidiary of Israel's Elbit Systems, specializes in military-grade electro-optical equipment. The demonstrators called for an end to complicity in Israel's actions, highlighting the UK's significant role as a weapons supplier. Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) estimated these sales at GBP 336 million since 2016, expressing concerns about transparency. Meanwhile, vocal support to Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister, for Israel in its conflict with Hamas faced criticism from the protesters. (Joshua Askew, ["Pro-Palestinian protesters blockade Israel-linked arms factory in UK," Deutsche Welle, 26 October 2023](#))

Spy agencies warns of political threats posed by AI Systems

On 25 October, The UK's intelligence agencies warned that generative artificial intelligence (AI) systems could pose a significant threat to political systems, warning of manipulation and deception of

populations by AI-generated content. A government paper examined the near-term risks of AI until 2025, pointing to digital risks such as cybercrime and hacking, particularly concerning AI's potential negative impact. However, he emphasised the need to address associated risks and ensure safety while benefiting from AI's economic growth and problem-solving capabilities. (Andrew McDonald, ["British spy agencies warn of AI threat to democracy," Politico, 25 October 2023](#))

Defence Secretary visits US for urgent talks

On 22 October, Defence Secretary Grant Shapps traveled to Washington D.C. for urgent discussions with Austin III and Congressional members. The discussions focused on global stability during the Gaza-Israel crisis. The UK has deployed military assets to the eastern Mediterranean to prevent escalation and provided humanitarian aid. This visit followed the recent meeting between UK and US defence secretaries at NATO HQ in Brussels. The UK and US are committed to upholding international law and protecting civilian lives. (["Defence Secretary Grant Shapps visits US for urgent talks in support of global stability amid Gaza-Israel crisis," GOV.UK, 22 October 2023](#))

Celebrates 200 years of relations in trade dialogue with Peru

On 13 October, Nigel Huddleston Minister for International Trade and HE Juan Carlos Mathews, Peru's Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism, convened in Lima. It was for the second UK-Peru Trade Dialogue. Celebrating two centuries of diplomatic relations, they lauded the strengthening of bilateral trade and cooperation. It was facilitated by the existing trade agreement and the UK's recent accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (CPTPP). Both ministers affirmed their commitment to enhancing public and business understanding of these agreements and nurturing growth, particularly among small and medium enterprises. They also discussed key sectors, double taxation agreements and measures to improve

market access. ([“UK-Peru trade dialogue: Building for the future,” GOV.UK, 13 October 2023](#))

Government to deploy surveillance ships to trace regional threats

On 13 October, the *BBC* reported on UK’s decision to send two Royal Navy ships and surveillance aircraft to boost security in the eastern Mediterranean. The move comes after violence lasting six days in Israel. Sent aircraft will patrol from 13 October to trace weapon transfers or threats that might hamper regional stability. Along with this, three Merlin helicopters and Royal Marines will also be sent in support. The government assured that it will “stand side by side with Israel in fighting terror.” UK’s Defence Secretary stated that the sent ships will help hospital facilities and deter external influence. (Aoife Walsh, [“UK to deploy Royal Navy ships to Middle East to ‘bolster security’,” BBC, 13 October 2023](#))

Attorneys General from British Overseas Territories meets to strengthen cooperation

On 10 October, Attorneys General from British Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and UK officials convened in Montserrat. It was for the 2023 Overseas Territories Attorneys General Conference, marking the first in-person gathering since the pandemic. Discussions included constitutional processes, same-sex partnerships, safeguarding, maritime issues, criminal justice and law enforcement. The delegates welcomed the vital role of Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in implementing UK sanctions. The conference reinforced commitment to upholding the rule of law and cooperation on various priority issues. ([“Overseas Territories Attorneys General Conference: September 2023,” GOV.UK, 10 October 2023](#))

Dogger Bank wind farm powers up, sets records

On 10 October, *Euronews* reported that the Dogger Bank wind farm, the world’s largest offshore wind project, is now connected to the UK national grid. It marks a significant milestone in renewable energy. Located in

the North Sea, it recently installed its first of 277 turbines, each with 107-metre-long blades capable of powering a home for two days with a single rotation. At full capacity, it will supply five per cent of the UK’s electricity, boasting a record 3.6 gigawatt capacity. The wind farm, spanning an area similar to Greater London, will contribute to the reduction of 1.5 million cars’ worth of CO2 emissions annually and operate for 35 years. (Angela Symons, [“Exactly how we should be responding to the energy crisis’: UK mega wind farm produces first power,” Euronews, 10 October 2023](#))

Supreme Court reviews asylum deportation

On 09 October, the Supreme Court of UK reviewed the government’s appeal to overturn a law deeming the deportation of asylum seekers to Rwanda, unlawfully. It is a policy championed by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to curb asylum-seeking numbers. This hearing comes as the UK prepares for upcoming elections. Government lawyers will contest the ruling over three days, while migrants from various countries will challenge the deportation scheme. The June ruling in London’s Court of Appeal stated Rwanda was not a safe third country. It highlighted the deficiencies in its asylum system and the risk of deportees facing persecution or inhumane treatment upon return to their home countries. The Conservative Party, which has made migration policy a top priority, is closely watching the outcome. Over 100,000 migrants have crossed the English Channel since 2018, a pressing concern for the public and a key factor in the Brexit vote. PM Rishi Sunak’s government seeks to block asylum applications from those arriving in the UK by small boats. ([“UK court to hear government appeal on Rwanda migrant plan,” Deutsche Welle, 09 October 2023](#))

Aims for “foundational” trade deal before 2024 elections with US

On 03 October, according to *Politico*, Joe Biden, US President and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak are planning a “foundational” trade agreement. It is aimed to be concluded before both face re-election in

2024. Negotiations are set to commence this month, with initial chapters to be completed by spring 2024. It is not viewed as a formal free trade agreement by the WTO. However, the proposed deal would address a range of issues including agriculture, labor rights, the environment, supply chains, regulation of services and digital trade. Concessions on agriculture are a sticking point, with the US seeking changes in farming practices such as chlorine-washed chicken and hormone-injected beef. (Graham Lanktree and Gavin Bade, "[Revealed: Joe Biden and Rishi Sunak seek UK/US trade pact before 2024 elections](#)," *Politico*, 03 October 2023)

Suella Braverman advocates hard-line immigration policies

On 03 October, Home Secretary Suella Braverman used her keynote speech at the Conservative Party's annual conference to promote tough immigration policies. She referred to migration as a "hurricane" that could bring "millions more immigrants to these shores, uncontrolled and unmanageable." Braverman also criticised human rights laws and "woke" critics, vowing to strengthen borders. Her speech focused on immigration and law and order issues as she attempts to position herself as a leader within the party's authoritarian wing. Some fear her stance could harm the party's image, but she contends she tells the "blunt unvarnished truth." (Jill Lawless, "[UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman vows some Conservatives and alarms others with hard-line stance](#)," *Associated Press*, 03 October 2023)

Enhances strategic partnership with Kazakhstan

On 02 October, the Minister for Central Asia, Leo Docherty and Roman Vassilenko, Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister met in Astana. The meet was for the Seventh UK-Kazakhstan Strategic Dialogue. Discussions centered on bolstering bilateral ties, with a focus on trade diversification in critical minerals, hydrogen technology and beef. The UK expressed support for Kazakhstan's domestic reforms and highlighted its role in tackling economic and security challenges. Both are set to sign a bilateral Agreement

on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation, further elevating their partnership. Kazakhstan is a significant partner for the UK in regional dialogue and energy cooperation with Europe. (Madina Usmanova, "[Kazakhstan, UK to sign agreement on strategic partnership, cooperation](#)," *Trend News Agency*, 02 October 2023; "[7th UK-Kazakhstan Strategic Dialogue](#)," *GOV.UK*, 02 October 2023)

Defence minister signs GBP four billion contract for AUKUS submarine

On 01 October, Defence Minister Grant Shapps announced a GBP four billion contract with BAE Systems for a nuclear-powered AUKUS attack submarine. The AUKUS partnership, involving Australia, the UK and the US, aims to counter China's military expansion. BAE Systems will begin work on the submarine, which will be produced in the UK before shifting to Australia, late this decade. The contract ensures funding until 2028, bolstering the UK's national security efforts in the Indo-Pacific region. ("[UK: €4.6 billion AUKUS nuclear sub contract to counter China](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 September 2023)

TURKEY

US F-16 shoots Turkey's drone in Syria

On 05 October, the US F-16 fighter jet shot down a Turkey's drone that approached The US' forces in northeast Syria. The incident escalated tensions between the two NATO allies, who have been at odds over various security issues. US officials clarified they had no reason to believe the Turkey's drone targeted The US' forces but noted it was armed and disregarded warnings. The US aims to maintain cooperation with Turkey for matters like Sweden's NATO entry and addressing security threats. Turkey has voiced concerns about US support for Syrian Kurds, viewing them as a threat. The dispute intensified following a recent bombing attack in Ankara. (Lara Seligman, "[U.S. F-16 shoots down Turkish drone flying over American troops in Syria](#)," *Politico*, 05 October 2023; Michael R. Gordon, Nancy A. Youssef and Jared Malsin, "[U.S. Jet Shoots](#)

Down Turkish Drone Over Syria,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 05 October 2023)

Arrests of 55 suspected members of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party

On 03 October, according to *Politico*, Turkey’s authorities arrested 55 individuals. It comes in response to a suicide bombing outside Ankara’s interior ministry Turkey’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, by a member, Hasan Oguz, of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). He was suspected of having links to the group after carrying out raids in 16 provinces. Turkey’s air strikes were also conducted in northern Iraq, targeting 20 PKK sites. It led to condemnation from Abdul Latif Rashid, Iraq’s President, who expressed concern over civilian casualties. He called for a joint security agreement with Turkey. (Laura Hulsemann, “Turkey arrests dozens of suspected Kurdish militants after Ankara suicide bombing,” *Politico*, 03 October 2023)

Airstrikes target Kurdish rebels

On 01 October, Turkey conducted airstrikes on Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq after a suicide blast hit Ankara’s interior ministry Turkey’s Ministry of Internal Affairs. The government claimed to have destroyed 20 targets and “neutralized” many militants from the banned Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) rebel group. However, the PKK said the bombing in Ankara was carried out by one of its affiliated groups. Air strikes targeted PKK positions in Mount Qandil near Iran’s border. The explosion in Ankara occurred just hours before parliament was due to reconvene after a summer break. The attack was described by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as “the final flutters of terrorism.” The PKK has been engaged in a long-running conflict with Turkey, with over 40,000 deaths since 1984. (Alex Binley, “Turkey strikes Kurdish rebels after Ankara blast,” *BBC*, 02 October 2023)

REGIONAL

Amazon introduces European Sovereign Cloud for enhanced data privacy

On 25 October, Amazon Web Services

(AWS) announced that it is launching the AWS European Sovereign Cloud in Europe to adhere to stringent EU regulations. This separate cloud, based in Europe, ensures data sovereignty, security and compliance with 143 standards. AWS is collaborating with European authorities to meet data residency and operational autonomy requirements. Germany will host the first AWS Region within this cloud, managed solely by EU-resident AWS employees. The move comes as companies seek to address concerns over data privacy and security in the wake of the EU’s invalidated Privacy Shield agreement. (“Amazon rolls out new independent cloud for Europe,” *Euronews*, 25 October 2023))

EU council signs agreement to limit Baltic Sea catch for 2024

On 24 October, the fisheries minister from the EU reached a political agreement on catch limits (TACs) and quotas for the most commercially significant Baltic Sea fish stocks in 2024. The agreement aligned with scientific advice and Common Fisheries Policy objectives. It reduced TACs for western herring, eastern cod and western cod due to low biomass. It decreased TACs for herring in the Gulf of Bothnia and Central herring to support stock recovery and increased TAC for salmon in the Gulf of Finland. It has continued to have fishing opportunities for plaice while accounting for cod by-catch and it lowered TACs for Riga herring, main basin salmon and sprat due to stock conditions. The decision will be formally adopted soon. (“Baltic Sea: Council agrees catch limits for 2024,” *European Council*, 24 October 2023))

EU urged to accelerate emission reductions in agriculture

On 24 October, Wopke Hoekstra, the EU’s climate commissioner, called for increased efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in agriculture. The EU made a three per cent reduction in emissions in 2022, totaling a 32.5 per cent reduction from 1990 levels. The 2030 target is 55 per cent. Hoekstra emphasised the need for substantial progress in cutting agricultural emissions, acknowledging its sensitivity but stating it is essential for achieving climate

targets. He also highlighted the slow progress in the building and transport sectors and urged the expansion of natural carbon sinks like forests. Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies was recommended for a cleaner energy transition. (Zia Weise, "[Step up emissions cuts in agriculture, says EU climate chief](#)," *Politico*, 24 October 2023)

EU at Cairo Peace Summit: Strong support for peace

On 21 October, addressing the Cairo Peace Summit, President Charles Michel expressed the EU's commitment to peace, citing the Treaty establishing the EU's principles. He condemned Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel and called for the release of hostages. The EU emphasised civilian protection and Israel's right to self-defence within international law. Key points included humanitarian access, preventing regional escalation and pursuing a lasting solution based on the two-state principle. Michel highlighted the 'Peace Day Effort' process and support for the Palestinian Authority. ("[Address of President Charles Michel at the Cairo Peace Summit](#)," *European Council*, 21 October 2023)

EU and US envoys push for Kosovo-Serbia dialogue amid escalating tensions

On 21 October, EU and US envoys along with diplomats from Germany, France and Italy, called on Kosovo and Serbia to restart talks to de-escalate the rising tensions. It involved Miroslav Lajcak, EU's Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and Gabriel Escobar, US' Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. Their visit followed a recent violent incident between Serb gunmen and Kosovo police. The envoys emphasised the urgency of de-escalation and normalization. They highlighted the need to implement a 10 point plan for resolving political crises. The creation of the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities is a key point of contention, with the EU and US urging Kosovo to establish it. Kosovo wants Europe to sanction Serbia for the September attack. ("[Serbia and Kosovo leaders urged to resume dialogue to diffuse escalating tension](#)," *Euronews*, 21 October 2023)

Commission calls for a check on social media giants over the spread of false information

On 19 October, the European Commission demanded details from Meta and TikTok on the steps taken to counter disinformation in the Israel-Hamas conflict. The move comes after the Commission gave a week for the media companies to report the measures taken in combatting the spread of violent content and hate speech on their platforms. According to Thierry Breton, the EU's internal market commissioner the widespread "illegal content and disinformation" poses a risk of stigmatizing specific communities and weakening of "democratic structures." This points to the EU's latest Digital Services Act which has been challenged to be implemented due to the war in Israel, which has resulted in numerous social media posts containing false information and misrepresentative videos. ("[EU probes Meta and TikTok over Hamas-Israel online content](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 19 October 2023)

ECB announces preparatory phase to switch Euro to digital currency

On 18 October, Europe's Central Bank (ECB) announced the launch of a digital version of the Euro. According to the governing council, a two-year "preparation phase" will begin on 01 November to set the rules and select private-sector partners. This phase will also assess the benefits and risks related to common digital currency. The final decision to launch it remains to be finalised but it would ease the use of Euro in digital format from central bank money. According to Christine Lagarde ECB President: "We need to prepare our currency for the future... coexist alongside physical cash, while leaving no one behind." In its statement, the central bank highlighted that the move would boost the monetary sovereignty and invoke competition in the "European payment sector." At the global level, China and Japan are equally in the experimental mode on digital currencies whereas the US, England and Canada still opt for a cautious approach. ("[European Central Bank moves 'digital euro' to next phase](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 18 October 2023)

European Parliament awarded Mahsa Amini the prize of Freedom of thought

On 19 October, Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament awarded Jina Mahsa Amini and the Women, Life and Freedom Movement in Iran European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. She highlighted the brutal murder of Amini as a spark point to provoke the women-led movement. The prize is given as a tribute to brave women, men and young people of Iran for leading the movement despite pressure. The award is one of the highest tributes to human rights fighters and provides an award of EUR 50,000. ("Mahsa Amini and Woman, Life and Freedom Movement in Iran awarded top EU human rights prize," Euronews, 19 October 2023)

The Council of Europe stresses the need to phase out from fossil fuels by 2030

On 16 October, after the EU environment ministers meeting, the European Council released a statement indicating the EU's position for the upcoming COP28 summit. The united stand is to completely phase out from use of fossil fuels by 2030. According to the statement, the burning of oil, coal, and gas results in greenhouse gases serving as a causal factor for climate change. During the meeting, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and other EU member states enforced the EU to place the demand. Another group of 10 EU member states, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Slovakia and Poland vouched only for the phase-out of "unabated" types of fossil fuels. The meeting laid importance on four key factors. One, increasing "global ambition towards climate neutrality" especially in the advanced economies through strengthened Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Two, through diverting from fossil fuels and increased usage of renewable energy. Third and fourth on enhancing climate mitigation efforts and boosting climate finance to counter the damage and bring adaptation strategies. (European Council, "COP28: Council sets out EU position for UN climate summit in Dubai," European Council, 16 October; "EU to push for phasing out fossil fuels at COP28," Deutsche Welle, 17 October

2023)

France and Germany resist agreeing on the EU's reform of government spending

On 17 October, in a meeting held between the EU finance ministers disagreement continued between France and Germany on the EU's plan to rework rules on government spending. According to the European Commission reforming the Stability and Growth Pact is a priority to prevent debt accumulation. Therefore, reaching a consensus among the 27 member states was necessary to reapply the rules that were earlier suspended due to the pandemic. The reform is to maintain the government debt at 60 per cent or reduce it to 60 per cent of GDP and keep the annual deficit at three per cent of the GDP. Germany argues for keeping a benchmark or "safeguard" by individual countries as a way to speed down debt reduction or keep a check on deficits. Whereas France is opposing the reduction of annual spending. In the case of Poland and Italy, seek an exemption for defence spending and those investments sponsored by the EU loans under COVID-19 fund recovery. Being a year since the Commission proposed the reform, many EU member states continue to support it. (Paola Tamma, "Franco-German disagreement stalls EU fiscal rules reform," Politico, 17 October 2023)

Council of Europe recognizes Ukraine's Holodomor as genocide

On 12 October, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted to recognize the Holodomor, a 1930s famine in Soviet Ukraine, as a "genocide." The famine, caused by the forced collectivization of farmers under Stalin, resulted in millions of deaths. Kyiv has labelled it a deliberate act of genocide since 2006, while Moscow disputes this characterization. The Council's decision aligns with similar recognition by the European Parliament and countries like Germany. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, welcomed the decision, emphasising the importance of acknowledging historical injustices. ("Council of Europe votes to recognize Holodomor as 'genocide'," Deutsche Welle, 13 October 2023)

Gaia Space Mission unveils hidden stars in Milky Way clusters

On 11 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the Gaia mission discovered half a million new stars within the Omega Centauri globular cluster. It unveiled the most densely packed region observed. Gaia is a mission by the European Space Agency (ESA), aimed at creating a 3D map of the galaxy. These globular clusters, some of the universe's oldest objects, helped determine the sun's position in the Milky Way. Gaia's advanced observations allowed scientists to overcome the challenges of studying these clusters, which can distort light through gravitational lensing. The mission's findings provide crucial insights into the distribution of stars in the Milky Way. Further, it aims to confirm the galaxy's age and the universe itself in future data releases. (Sushmitha Ramakrishnan, "[Gaia space observatory finds half a million new stars](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 11 October 2023)

EU faces confusion over Palestine's aid suspension

On 10 October, the European Commission grappled with confusion over the suspension of aid to Palestine's territories following the Israel-Hamas conflict. Oliver Varhelyi, EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, announced a suspension of "all payments" and "new budget proposals" on social media. It prompted backlash from some EU member states. Janez Lenarčič, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, later clarified that humanitarian aid would continue, revealing internal disagreements. The Commission eventually issued an official press release, explaining that an "urgent review" would ensure EU funding does not indirectly support terrorist organisations. The review would not impact the EUR 27.9 million allocated for humanitarian aid in 2023. (Jorge Liboreiro, "[Commissioner Várhelyi went solo with suspension of EU funds for Palestinians, prompting U-turn](#)," *Euronews*, 10 October 2023)

EU divided over Palestine's aid cuts

On 09 October, Olivér Várhelyi, EU Enlargement Commissioner, announced a

review of EUR 691 million in aid payments, but this move sparked concerns across the bloc. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, later clarified that payments would not be suspended to avoid punishing all Palestinians and emboldening terrorists. The EU's united stance on Israel's conflict with Hamas is fracturing, with internal divisions over whether to freeze aid to the Palestine's Authority. Disagreements on the issue are expected at the EU foreign affairs ministers' meeting, where member states are set to discuss the matter. The situation highlights long-standing divisions within the EU on the Israel-Palestine conflict. (Barbara Moens and Suzanne Lynch, "[EU U-turns after halting Palestinian funding following Hamas attack](#)," *Politico*, 09 October 2023)

Bulgaria, Greece and Romania discusses oil pipeline project

On 09 October, according to *Euractiv*, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania are considering the oil pipeline project. It connects the Greek port of Alexandroupolis to Bulgaria's port of Burgas. It is seen as part of their efforts to enhance energy, transport and digital connectivity in Southeast Europe. The project, initiated in 1994 and revived by Bulgaria, is gaining traction due to concerns over Russia's oil supplies and the impact on traffic in the Bosphorus. This development also interests Russia's company Lukoil, which manages the Burgas refinery. The pipeline could help Lukoil export its production more easily and reduce Russia's dependence on Turkey for oil transport. (Emiliya Milcheva and Krassen Nikolov, "[Three countries support construction of Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline](#)," *Euractiv*, 09 October 2023)

NATO contemplates expanding security relations amid growing concerns

On 09 October, *Euractiv* reported that NATO is considering enhancing security ties with countries in Africa and the Middle East. This move comes as China and Russia increased their influence on NATO's southern flank. Concerns about insecurity in these regions have prompted NATO's comprehensive reflection on threats, challenges and

engagement opportunities with partner countries and international organisations. While NATO members advocate for a broader focus beyond the eastern flank to counter Russia's and China's influence, building new relationships would not be straightforward. Dialogue and tangible support are suggested as initial steps, with countries like Brazil, South Africa, India and Indonesia also seen as potential future partners. (Aurélie Pugnet, "[NATO eyes firmer foothold in its Southern neighbourhood](#)," *Euractiv*, 09 October 2023)

Baltic gas pipeline shutdown; Repairs may take months

On 09 October, Finland's gas system operator Gasgrid and Estonia's partner Elering, said that the Balticconnector subsea gas pipeline could take several months or more to repair. It is in case a puncture is confirmed. The pipeline connects Finland and Estonia, which was shut down due to a suspected leak. The pipeline suffered a significant pressure drop and investigations are ongoing to pinpoint the location and cause of the outage. Repair duration depends on the extent of damage. Gasgrid has closed the pipeline valves to prevent further gas loss. Unlike the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines in 2022, there were no immediate signs of seismic activity near the Baltic connector. ("[Repairing Finland-Estonia gas pipeline may take months, operator says](#)," *Reuters*, 09 October 2023; "[Operators to inspect Finland-Estonia gas pipeline for possible leak](#)," *Reuters*, 09 October 2023)

EU reaches agreement to phase down fluorinated gases and ozone-depleting substances

On 05 October, negotiators from the Council and the Parliament of the EU reached a provisional political agreement. It aimed at phasing down substances responsible for global warming and ozone layer depletion. The agreement finalised negotiations on fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases) and it followed an informal agreement in June regarding ozone-depleting substances (ODSs). It strengthened existing EU legislation. F-gases, used in products like

fridges and air conditioning systems, have a much stronger warming impact than CO₂. The new rules will further reduce their emissions into the atmosphere and align with the goals of the Paris Agreement. ("[Fluorinated gases and ozone-depleting substances: Council and Parliament reach agreement](#)," *European Council*, 05 October 2023)

September 2023 records the highest global temperatures

On 05 October, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) reported that September 2023 was the warmest on record globally. It reported that the month was warm with an average surface air temperature of 16.38 degrees Celsius, exceeding the 1991-2020 average by 0.93 degrees Celsius. It marked the most anomalously warm month in the dataset. The month was around 1.75 degrees Celsius warmer than the September average for 1850-1900. Globally, temperatures for January-September 2023 were 0.52 degrees Celsius above average. Europe experienced its warmest September, at 2.51 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average. Sea surface temperatures over 60 degrees South-60 degrees North reached 20.92 degrees Celsius, a September record. Antarctic sea ice remained at a record low, while Arctic Sea ice ranked fifth lowest. Wetter conditions occurred in parts of Europe, with drier regions in the southeastern USA, Mexico and Australia. ("[Copernicus: September 2023 – unprecedented temperature anomalies; 2023 on track to be the warmest year on record](#)," *Copernicus*, 05 October 2023)

Czech Republic and Austria reinstate border checks

On 03 October, the Czech Republic and Austria temporarily reintroduced border checks with Slovakia to combat migrant flows. These measures will last for ten days initially and aim to prevent smugglers from using alternative routes. The move comes after Germany announced increased police patrols on its border with Poland and the Czech Republic to prevent further migration into the country. Many migrants transit through both countries' territory on their

way to western Europe. ([“Austrians and Czechs reintroduce controls on the border with Slovakia to curb migration,”](#) *Associated Press*, 03 October 2023)

INTERNATIONAL

EU and Central Asia affirm partnership in ministerial meeting

On 23 October, the 19th EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting was held in Luxembourg. Ministers from the EU and five Central Asian countries reiterated their commitment to a strategic partnership based on shared values and interests. They emphasised peace, security and sustainable development, supporting the International Atomic Energy Agency and praising regional cooperation efforts. A Joint Roadmap for deeper collaboration was endorsed, spanning political dialogue, trade, energy, security and more. Climate change and biodiversity were key concerns and the ministers expressed worries about the situation in Afghanistan. The first EU-Central Asia Summit is set for 2024, hosted by Uzbekistan. ([“Joint Communiqué of the 19th European Union-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg,”](#) *European Council*, 23 October 2023)

Tunisia returns EU funds amid migrant deal dispute

On 11 October, according to *Politico*, tensions between Tunisia and the EU escalated as Tunisia returned EUR 60 million of EU budget support. It was delivered in September, in response to growing dissatisfaction with the migrant deal signed in July. Tunisia accuses the EU of withholding more promised funds and claims the EUR 60 million was already part of a pre-existing agreement. Nabil Ammar, Tunisia’s Foreign Minister, criticised the EU and officially returned the funds on 09 October. While relations have soured, the EU maintains that the Tunisia deal sets a precedent for future agreements with North African nations, with a similar deal proposed for Egypt. (Gregorio Sorigi, [“Tunisia hands back €60M of EU funding as migrant deal tensions soar,”](#) *Politico*, 11 October 2023)

EU and US plan joint tariff zone on steel and aluminum imports

On 11 October, according to *Politico*, the European Commission put forward a proposal for a joint EU-US tariff zone. It targets steel and aluminum imports from non-market economies, particularly China, with a 25 per cent tariff on steel and 10 per cent on aluminum. This initiative seeks to unite like-minded economies in imposing tariffs on countries accused of subsidizing sectors like steel and clean technology. The proposal is intended to enhance the transatlantic alliance against China, with a focus on sustainable steel and reducing subsidies. EU member states have granted the Commission authority to negotiate with the US, though some feel underrepresented. Steel-producing countries may challenge the concept at the WTO, while negotiations between the EU and the US continue with challenges in reaching a consensus. (Camille Gijs and Sarah Anne Aarup, [“It’s the EU and US against the rest of the world in new steel club,”](#) *Politico*, 11 October, 2023)

27th GCC-EU Joint Council and ministerial meeting held in Muscat

On 10 October, the 27th GCC-EU Joint Council met in Muscat, Oman, emphasising their strategic partnership in addressing global challenges. GCC delegates were led by H.E. Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, Oman’s Foreign Minister and EU representatives were headed by Josep Borrell, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. They noted the importance of this partnership given the threats to peace, security and the global economy. They reviewed the Joint Action Programme (2022-2027), expanding cooperation in various fields. Both sides agreed to create a regional security dialogue and working groups to address common issues. They also expressed concern over Ukraine and the situation in Israel and Gaza. The GCC-EU partnership aims for sustainability, peace and stability in the region. ([“Co-Chairs’ Statement of the 27th GCC-EU Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting,”](#) *European Council*, 10 October 2023)

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Image source: (clockwise) NASA; Intermittent in the UK; AP Photo/Matt Sponholz; (2) July, wildfire in southwestern France; AP; (8) August, dry riverbed of the Isère river; The Guardian; (2) July, The Firm Glacier in Switzerland; REUTERS/Linea Pictures

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Cover Story
Elections in Europe: Sweden and Italy

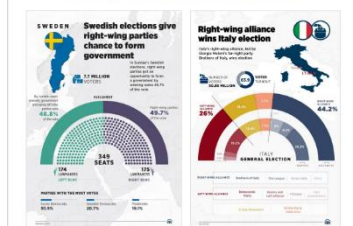


Image source: The 2022 election performance of Sweden and Italy, Anshul Agency

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Cover Story
Europe and China in the 2020s




Image source: EASP, AP/Telephoto, warriorimagery, economist

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Cover Story
Rishi Sunak's 30 days into 10 Downing: Five priorities ahead




Image source: Reuters/Relaxbeats.co.uk

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Continuing Ukraine War ...



Image source: DW/DFP

Comment
The Ukraine War
Russia: Drone attacks escalate the Ukraine war
The UK Conservative party get to test as warler strikes continue

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Battle for Soledar




Image source: RT

Comment
Ukraine: A non-military push, worsening the situation
Europe: An impending energy crisis and its economic fallout

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Image source: CNN, DW/REUTERS/JULIA BERTON; (clockwise) Reuters; AP/WIDEWORLD, AP/WIDEWORLD, JAMES HAMILTON/REUTERS, AP/WIDEWORLD, AP/WIDEWORLD, AP/WIDEWORLD, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Comment
Belarus's realignment in Russia-Ukraine Conflict
Ukraine: Border for Belarus

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Europe Monitor # 19 | Vol. 03, No. 04 | April 2023
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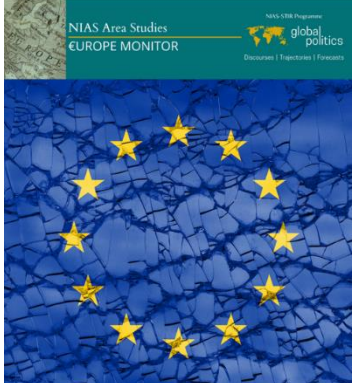
Cover Story
The War in Ukraine



Image source: The National Geographic, CNN, AP/WideWorld Press, Institute for new economic thinking

Comment
Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine
The War in Ukraine: Four lessons to watch in 2023
Russia: Long-term mobilization: Suppressing Ukrainian Culture

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ISSUES IN EU INTEGRATION

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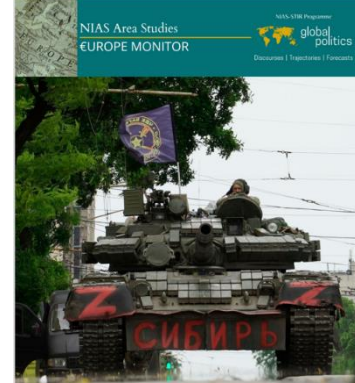
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THE BATTLE FOR BAKHMUT

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RISE AND FALL OF THE WAGNER

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WEATHER ANOMALIES IN EUROPE

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