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EUROPE MONITOR

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Europe Monitor #27 | Vol. 03 | Issue 12 | December 2023
An initiative of NIAS and KAS-India Office



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Assistant Editor

Padmashree Anandhan

Editorial Team

Sreeja JS

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Europe Monitor

Europe Monitor # 27, Vol. 03, No. 12,
December 2023



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WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES



Source: PAVEL MIRNY FOR LE MONDE, Lehtikuva/Jussi Nukari/Reuters, AP Photo/Michel Euler, AFP, Institute for the Study of War, Council of the European Union

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 644 to Day 615 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



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

War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Sreeja JS, Rishika Yadav and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: PAVEL MIRNY FOR LE MONDE, Lehtikuva/Jussi Nukari/Reuters, AP Photo/Michel Euler, AFP, Institute for the Study of War, Council of the European Union

War in Ukraine: Day 644

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

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rounds to Ukraine has extended the period of supply.

On 26 October, Russia 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 644

War on the Ground:

On 29 November, for the continuous second day, Ukraine reported on the bad weather conditions and how it has slowed Russia's progress in capturing areas in the eastern Ukraine. According to the report from meteorology agency, more rain is expected in the east of Ukraine resulting in blurring of the vision in a town in Donetsk. The harsh weather has forced Russia to adjust and slow down its advance as per the report.

On 29 November, Ukraine's air force reported on countering Russia's 21 drones, and three missiles. According to the report, the drones were targeted towards Khmelnytskyi region in western Ukraine. Oleksandr Shtupun, a spokesman for Ukraine's army said: "The enemy has doubled its artillery fire and airstrikes. It has also intensified ground infantry attacks and is using armored vehicles." On the same, Russia's defence military claimed on improved positions along the front line with support from aviation and artillery fire.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 29 November, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President signed the 2024 federal budget which will continue till 2026 with a higher spending towards defence. According to the report, RUB 36.6 trillion in state expense and RUB 1.6 trillion as deficit. State of Duma spokesperson stated that the budget was modeled to fund military and cope with fallouts from the sanctions imposed by the West.

On 29 November, Russia's air defence forces reported on destroying Ukraine's drone launched towards Moscow. According to Sergei Sobyenin, Moscow's governor the drone was taken down in the Podolsk

district. There were no casualties nor damage reported.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 29 November, Anne-Claire Legendre, France's foreign ministry Spokesperson and Director of Communication and Press announced France's decision to sign a bilateral security guarantee accord with Ukraine by 2024. According to Legendre: "On the security guarantees and the work we have been doing with our Ukrainian partners ... we are working towards a conclusion of this accord with the Ukrainian authorities by the end of the year, start of next year." In Europe, France is one among the many which has continued its aid to Ukraine and through this accord it aims for "long-term humanitarian and military support" to Ukraine.

On 29 November, Slovakia's government announced the extension of the ban on Ukraine's import of grain especially agricultural products such as wheat, maize, rapeseed, and sunflower seeds. The latest rule will bring 10 more products, honey, cane, and beet sugar under regulation. This move follows Poland and Hungary's imposing of restrictions. According to Slovakia's Agricultural Minister, loss of EUR 110 million was incurred due to import of Ukraine's grain.

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War in Ukraine: Day 642

War on the Ground:

On 27 November, a strong storm was reported in the Black Sea killing three. This led to the evacuation of hundreds and many million people without power. A state of emergency has been declared across Crimea and 1.9 million are expected to experience power shortage. According to Russia's meteorologists, severe storms have been recorded in Crimea and claimed the sinking of 30 ships.

On 27 November, Ukraine ground forces claimed Russia's attack using 24 drones in the south, west, and Azov Sea areas of Ukraine. According to the report, one was injured in Tula (South of Moscow) and a destroyed drone hit an apartment. They also claimed that Russia's soldiers attempted to "reoccupy" Kupiansk in the Kharkiv area. On the same day, Ukraine's air force claimed getting hit by kamikaze drones by Russia affecting 17,000 people in Kyiv without electricity.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 27 November, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister announced his plans to visit North Macedonia for a meeting with the foreign ministers for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Lavrov who requires permission from Bulgaria and Greece airspace claimed to get a permit from Bulgaria to travel to the conference.

Russia's armed forces claimed to block an attack by Ukraine's army assault in the south Donetsk area. According to the group, Russia's battlegroup East continues to succeed in South Donetsk through an "active defence."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 27 November, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General stated that its member states foreign ministers plan to assure long-term support to Ukraine. During the press conference, Stoltenberg urged Turkey to

approve Sweden's membership. He added: "Sweden has delivered on what they promised and now the time has come for Turkiye to finalize the accession process."

On 27 November, Petteri Orpo, Finland's Prime Minister announced the decision to close the last border crossing which is yet to be closed with Russia. The move followed the criticism of Russia for sending migrants to its border. The last crossing point remains in the northern, Murmansk region and is expected to be closed. Orpo said: "Finland is protecting the European Union's external border and NATO's border. We will not let this phenomenon continue."

On 27 November, Orpo, and Ulf Kristersson, Sweden's Prime Minister in a meeting discussed bilateral relations, security of both, EU issues, and most importantly the Finland border issue with Russia. The talk focused on improving cooperation with NATO, reiterated joint support for Ukraine, and initiatives needed for Finland and Sweden for the EU Packaging Directive.

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War in Ukraine: Days 640 & 641 **War on the Ground:**

On 26 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President urged for more air power support to protect the shipping of its grains. He was speaking at the International Summit on Food Security in Kyiv. He added that there are numerous agreements with other countries to protect Ukrainian vessels carrying grains. Russia has intensified attacks on Ukraine's seaports and River Danube ports following its pull-out from the Black Sea Grain Initiative. In a separate statement, Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission President said that the Commission would make EUR 50 million available for quick repairs and upgrades in Ukraine ports.

On 25 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Ukraine observed Holodomor Remembrance Day. It was the 90th anniversary of Soviet-era Holodomor or the Great Ukrainian Famine.). Zelenskyy said that it is "extremely important" to remember it as a genocide that killed millions of Ukrainians between 1932 and 1933. He also linked the ongoing Russia's invasion of Ukraine to that of the Great Famine that happened during the period of Joseph Stalin.

On 25 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Russia's drone attacks in Kyiv. According to Vitali Klitschko, Kyiv's Mayor, five people were injured and several buildings were damaged in the attacks. Mykola Oleschuk, Ukraine's Air Force Chief, 71 of the total 75 drones launched were destroyed. Ukraine's Energy Ministry said in a statement that the power supply was cut off in the central part of Kyiv due to the attacks.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 25 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Russia's Justice Ministry included Mikhail Kasyanov, Russia's former Prime Minister in its register of "foreign agents. He was elected in 2000 and was dismissed in 2004. Russia expanded its "foreign agents" law in February 2022, following the invasion of Ukraine. The Ministry stated that Kasyanov participated in the "creation and dissemination of messages and materials of foreign agents to an unlimited circle of people," disseminated disinformation

regarding the decisions taken and policies pursued by the public authorities. He also "opposed the special military operation in Ukraine."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 26 November, the UK Ministry of Intelligence's latest update on Russia-Ukraine suggested that Russia has likely transferred its strategic air defence systems from Kaliningrad. This follows its loss of 21 air defence systems in Ukraine suggesting diminish in Russia's arsenal.

On 25 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Alain Berset, Switzerland's President pledged long-term support and solidarity for Ukraine during his visit to Kyiv. He announced new aid consisting of ten ambulances and six fire engines to replace the damaged ones. He also visited Bucha and laid flowers at a memorial for the Soviet-era famine known as the Holodomor. He was visiting Ukraine to attend the International Summit on Food Security. Meanwhile, Finland's Foreign Ministry announced an additional EUR 3 million to improve food security in Ukraine. Ukraine first hosted the summit in November 2022 to draw the world's attention to the impact caused by Russia's invasion on its agricultural exports.

On 25 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Canada and the European Union pledged to "stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes," at a summit. Justin Trudeau, Canada's Prime Minister, Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission President and Charles Michel, European Council President participated in the summit. Trudeau said that Canada would donate 11,000 assault rifles and nine million rounds of ammunition to Ukraine. Von der Leyen said the EU has trained about 30,000 of Ukraine's troops out of its goal of training 40,000. Since the invasion began, Canada pledged around CAD 2.4 billion in military aid to Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 639

War on the Ground:

On 24 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Russia's forces had launched the third wave of assaults on Avdiivka, attacking it from all directions. Avdiivka is part of Donetsk and has been on the front line since 2014. According to Vitaly Barbash, head of Avdiivka, 1,350 residents remain in the city which had a pre-war population of around 30,000 people. Around 102 people were evacuated last week.

On 24 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Ukraine's top truckers' union, the Ukrainian Association of International Careers, has expressed losing hopes for a quick end to protests by truck drivers from Poland at the border. The protesters have blocked roads to four crossings on the border, a key route for Ukraine's trade during Russia's invasion. Two Ukrainian drivers have died and thousands of trucks have been stuck for days in the winter cold. The protesters are allowing traffic and humanitarian and military aid except for commercial cargo.

On 24 November, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President said that Kyiv required three diplomatic victories abroad to help in its war with Russia. The first victory is with the US Congress where billions of aid are in limbo due to the dispute between the Democrats and the Republicans. The second victory is the EUR 50 billion package from the EU and the third victory is Ukraine's accession to the EU.

On 24 November, Olha Stefanishyna, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister warned that European countries are showing increased war-weariness due to the ongoing conflict. According to *Deutsche Welle*, she also added that the public opinion was suggesting that the war has been dragging on for too long. She was speaking at an event for the German Council on Foreign Relations

(DGAP). She said: "We should not count the days; we should see how things develop." Additionally, she stated that Ukraine has made progress in converting to NATO standards as it is preparing for possible membership. She also highlighted the importance of the European Union leaders summit in mid-December, where accession talks with Ukraine could begin.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 24 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Russia's Defence Ministry said that Russia's forces shot down 16 drones launched by Ukraine in Volgograd and the Crimean Peninsula. Meanwhile, Ukraine's military said that its defence systems destroyed three Iran-made drones launched by Russia's forces overnight.

On 24 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Russia views Moldova's decision to join EU sanctions as a hostile move aimed at destroying ties with Moscow. According to Russia's Defence Ministry, "Its aim is the destruction of Russian-Moldovan relations, which, through the fault of official Chisinau, are already in a very deplorable state." Moldova has backed four of six packages of sanctions against Moscow so far. Moldova, along with Ukraine, is a EU membership candidate and Brussels mandates that future members coordinate their foreign policy, including adhering to the EU's sanctions policy.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 24 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported Germany would extend protection status for the refugees who fled from Ukraine due to war for another 15 months. The Interior Ministry said in a statement that the Bundersat, the upper house of the German Parliament, approved the extension until 04 March 2025 by a decree. Germany is hosting 1.09 million Ukrainian refugees as of September, with less than a fifth employed. Furthermore, only a fifth of them are employed and the government is attempting to improve integration by easing language requirements for firms.

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War in Ukraine: Day 638

War on the Ground:

On 23 November, in a virtual meeting, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President appreciated the West's move to form a "air defense development coalition." Previously, Germany's defence ministry announced its decision to form a coalition led by Germany and France aimed at boosting Ukraine's air defence. Zelenskyy added: "Not everything can be disclosed publicly at this time, but the Ukrainian air shield is becoming stronger every month." On the same day, Zelenskyy also remarked on the Ukraine's difficulty in carrying out defence operations on the Lyman, Bakhmut, Donetsk, Avdiivka front. Although the offensive continues in the south it experiences a harsh weather as the temperature is expect to drop from minus five degrees Celsius.

On 23 November, Ukraine's Ukrenergo raised concerns over its reduced capacity to produce electricity to meet the energy demand for heating. It reported increase in the electricity consumption and the existing deficit in the energy system. Operators in the Romania, Slovakia, and Poland have been requested for "emergency assistance." According to Ukrenergo, 409 settlements run without electricity due to Russia's attacks.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 23 November, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President visited Belarus for the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) summit. Leaders from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan are expected to take part except Armenia. The session focused on improving collective security system, strengthening cooperation between the intelligence agencies and expanding military-technical cooperation.

On 23 November, Russian government claimed on Russia's success in selling its oil above the price cap fixed by the West at USD 60 per barrel. According to Vladimir Furgalsky, a Russian energy ministry: "Even

unfriendly countries note that the so-called price cap has not worked. More than 99% of oil traded well above the \$60 a barrel ceiling." When the cap was introduced, Russia was pressured to cutdown its exports of oil and oil products and faced challenges in finding ships to transport its output.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 23 November, the UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update reported on recognition of the Wagner personnel by Russia as veterans. It observed that the veterans had received identification documents indicating the incorporation to give bonus under a new system.

On 23 November, EU's border and coastguard agency, Frontex announced to send 50 border guard officers to Finland. The move comes as Finland decided to close down four border crossing point out of nine with Russia as migrants from Yemen, Afghanistan, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, Somalia and Syria began to surge. Frontex confirmed to help in surveillance, support in registering the refugees, to uphold the fundamental rights "of all the people."

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War in Ukraine: Day 637

War on the Ground:

On 22 November, Ukraine's air force reported on Russia's attack through drones and cruise missile. According to the report, the barrage was launched from southeast Russia with a combination of air defence units in central regions. It claimed on destroying all 14 Shahed-131/136 drones targeted. In a statement: "The X-22 cruise missile failed to reach its target and landed in Zaporizhzhia region in an open area, and the blast wave damaged private homes. There were no casualties." On the same Ukraine authorities from Odesa claimed shooting down an Iran designed attack through Mohajer-6, a reconnaissance drone, which has a range of 200 kilometers.

On 22 November, Ukraine's custom authorities reported on long queues near Hungary's border due to diversion of trucks from Poland and Slovakia. The Zagony front experienced long queues as Polish truck drivers had blocked the roads and are observed to restrict the number of Ukrainian trucks to enter the EU. Slovakia's haulers union similar to Ukraine has blocked its border for Ukraine. According to Ukraine officials close to 3000 trucks are stuck in the border.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 22 November, *RT* reported on Russia's budget deficit to be lower due to its recovery in energy revenue and economic recovery. The estimate of the gap is expected to be one per cent of the GDP.

On 22 November, in the virtual G20 summit, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President denied the accusation on war in Ukraine and stressed that Russia had never cancelled peace talks. Putin highlighted the change in leadership in Kyiv in 2014 after the Euromaidan protests and called it "bloody coup" acting as trigger for conflict.

On 22 November, Russia's defence ministry claimed on destroying four naval drones of Ukraine that was targeted towards Crimea in

the Black Sea. It also claimed on bringing down three aerial unmanned vehicles that were found near the region.

On 22 November, Russia's defence ministry reported on an injury of a reporter from the Rossiya 24 state channel due to Ukraine's drone attack. In response the reporter was given medical assistance and accused Kyiv for targeting the reporters. According to the report close to 15 media workers have been killed due to assault in Ukraine.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 22 November, presidents of Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia reiterated their support to Ukraine. During the annual meeting of the Visegrad Group, the presidents discussed on opening border to Ukrainian refugees and donating other aid. On the same, Hungary's prime minister refused to provide military aid to Ukraine and warned on vetoing from EU's financial aid package to Ukraine.

On 22 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Russia's State of Duma federal budget that aims to increase 25 per cent in defence. The budget was adopted by the Federation Council through a unanimous vote and will be sent to Putin to turn it into law. This budget will help Russia's military and waiver the sanction impact on Russia. According to the report, Russia's defence expenditure is expected to supersede social spending in 2024 for the first time.

On 22 November, Poland's intelligence office announced charging 16 individuals for spying for Russia. This resulted in preparing for sabotage, gathering information on military aid to Ukraine. In a statement: "Charges have been filed against 16 foreigners accused of conducting espionage activities on behalf of Russian intelligence services on Polish territory and participating in an organised criminal group." According to the investigation, the charged individuals were found to be monitoring, documenting the train transport of military, humanitarian aid. The office disclosed the acceptance of the charged for committing and in engaging in propaganda. Zbigniew Ziobro, Justice Minister stated on 10 years of prison for the charged.

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War in Ukraine: Day 636

War on the Ground:

On 21 November, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President gave an address marking the “Day of Dignity and Freedom,” remembering the two pro-democracy protest movements. The Orange Revolution 2004 and Revolution of Dignity began with protests on November 2013 in Kyiv’s Maidan square against former Ukraine president Viktor Yanukovich. Protestors marched for revoking the agreement which was aimed to bring Ukraine close to the EU. In a statement he said: “Ten years ago, we started a new page in the struggle. 10 years ago, Ukrainians launched their first counteroffensive.” During the address, Zelenskyy highlighted the Maidan protests and the ongoing war, added: “..the defense of democratic values turns into the defense of sovereignty and territorial integrity.” European Council President Charles Michel visited Kyiv on the occasion to show support of the EU.

On 21 November, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned over risk pertaining on shut down of Black Sea export routes due to continued attacks. Due to damage to food infrastructure, the WFP warned that Ukraine might fail in meeting the wheat demand as the grain production and export facilities were subject to attacks since July 2023. According to WFP director,

28 attacks were reported in Odesa Oblast and warned that the agricultural production will impact in the long-term.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 21 November, Sergei Shoigu, Russia’s Defence Minister claimed that Ukraine had failed to succeed in its land operations in Kherson. According to the report, both Ukraine and Russia’s forces have been stationed in the opposite sides of the waterway of southern Kherson. A further step of Ukraine forces in the east bank of the Dnipro River can result in deeper offensive in the south and give more protection to Ukraine’s towns.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 21 November, the US State Department announced its ban on two Russians, Russian Colonel Azatbek Omurbekov and Russian Guard Corporal Daniil Frolkin, who were involved in human rights violation in Ukraine. The Russians are accused for extrajudicial killings of unarmed civilians in Ukraine, and one of them had led a troop that burned civilians in Bucha. According to the reports, Omurbekov and Frolkin had violated human rights as per the independent investigation.

On 21 November, Boris Pistorius, Germany’s Defence Minister during his visit to Kyiv expressed solidarity and appreciated Ukraine’s efforts in the war. Pistorius announced EUR 1.3 billion in military gear to Ukraine. This package includes IRIS T-SLM air defence systems and artillery ammunition. Germany being the second largest supported of military aid to Ukraine, the IRIS-T systems are in high demand by Ukraine to counter Russia. Till now three of the systems have been delivered and the second set is expected to be delivered in 2024.

On 21 November, UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update observed that during 18 and 19 November Russia had launched 50 Iran made Shahed drones. According to the report, Russia is likely targeting Ukraine’s air defences to balance the battlefield in the winter. In a statement:

“Russia has now refrained from launching its premier air launched cruise missiles from its heavy bomber fleet for nearly two months, likely allowing it to build up a substantial stock of these weapons.”

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War in Ukraine: Day 635

War on the Ground:

On 20 November, Ukraine’s Armed Forces General Staff reported on multiple attacks by Russia along the 621-mile eastern Ukraine. According to the UAF, 46 combat clashes with major attacks recorded in Maryinka, and Avdiivka.

On 20 November, Ukraine Cabinet chief disclosed the dismissal of the head and deputy of the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine (SSSCIP). The move comes as both were accused of embezzlement which has become frequent since Ukraine’s attempting for EU membership.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 20 November, Dmitry Peskov, Deputy Chairman of Russia’s Security Council issued a statement expressing Russia’s “regret”

over Finland’s border closure. Peskov said that it create “deep regret” due to the long-standing relations with Finland. He added: “And of course, we regret that these relations were replaced by such an exclusively Russophobic position, which the leaders of this country began to espouse.” The response comes as Finland announced closing four out of nine crossing points in the eastern border with Russia. On the same Russia’s foreign ministry lodged “a formal protest” with Finland’s ambassador in Moscow. According to the ministry, Finland’s decision was rushed and violated the rights and interest of those inside the border.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 20 November, Lloyd Austin, US Secretary of Defence visited Kyiv to showcase US stance in continuing its support to Ukraine. He announced USD 100 million military aid to Ukraine. The visit comes as the US and Ukraine will meet in December for a military industry conference, where Ukraine expects to fasten efforts to boost its weapon production.

On 20 November, UK’s Ministry of Defence reported that close to 11,000 children were observed to be detained in the “re-education camps” in Russia. It stated that children between aged from four months were found to be deported to camps across Russia for “pro-Russia patriotic and military related education.”

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War in Ukraine: Days 633 and 634

War on the Ground:

On 19 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President appointed Anatoliy Kazmirchuk as the new head of the Medical Forces Command of Ukraine's military previously held by Tetiana Ostashchenko. He added that "a fundamentally new level of medical support is needed" and there had been a call for change and demands for high-quality tourniquets, better training and transparency among the combat medics.

On 19 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that according to Ihor Klymenko, Ukraine's Interior Minister, five people were injured in an artillery shelling by Russia's forces in Kherson. Meanwhile, Natalia Gumenyuk, the Ukrainian journalist added that the army pushed Russia's forces backwards by three to eight kilometres from the banks of the Dnipro River. It is reportedly the first measurable advance by Ukraine's forces in the slow-paced ongoing counter-offensive.

On 19 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that according to Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's Deputy Minister, about 3000 trucks to Ukraine have been blocked at Ukraine's border with Poland forcing thousands of people to live with limited food, water and fuel. Truckers in Poland blocked roads to three border crossings with Ukraine in early November to protest against the government's inaction over the loss of business to foreign competitors since the beginning of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022.

On 19 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Zelenskyy sanctioned 37 Russia-affiliated groups and 108 people in an attempt to fight the wartime abduction of children from Ukraine and other forms of "Russian terror." The decrees outline a range of ten-year penalties against individuals and five-year penalties against groups that supposedly indicated their work with children.

On 18 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Russia's forces launched another wave of drone attacks overnight in northern and southern Ukraine. Ukraine's military

said that it was the biggest attack in six weeks, and it had shot down 29 of 38 kamikaze drones. An energy infrastructure facility and an administrative building were hit near Odesa and two buildings were damaged in Chernihiv.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 19 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Vladimir Putin, Russia's President would participate in the virtual talks with the other G20 leaders to be held on 22 November. Putin has missed the last two G20 summits held in Indonesia and India. Narendra Modi, India's Prime Minister is organising the talks to "take forward key, select outcomes/actions points from the New Delhi Summit."

On 19 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Igor Girkin, who is in custody awaiting trial for inciting extremism wishes to run for President in the upcoming elections scheduled in March 2024. He added that the election would be a "sham" with the winner already known. He is a former officer in FSB who helped Russia's forces to annex Crimea in 2014 and organised pro-Russian militias in eastern Ukraine. He is vocal about his support for the ongoing conflict and repeatedly said that Russia faces revolution and civil war unless Putin and his high military officials fight the war effectively.

On 18 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Russia's Justice Ministry has designated *The Moscow Times* as a "foreign agent" by accusing it of spreading disinformation about the decisions taken and policies pursued by the public authorities. The English and Russian websites and the social media pages are also put under strict restrictions.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 18 November, in its daily intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence remarked that neither Ukraine nor Russia is making substantial progress as winter approaches. The intense combat is underway in three areas: Kupyansk, Luhansk, and Avdiivka in Donetsk. On the left bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson,

Ukraine's forces have established a bridgehead. Meanwhile, Russia continues to suffer heavy casualties in Avdiivka. In eastern Ukraine, the chances of changes in frontlines are few.

On 18 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor said that he would talk to Putin and insisted that he "must withdraw troops" from Ukraine. He was speaking with voters in Brandenburg in northeastern Germany. He reassured Germany's unwavering support to Ukraine as long as necessary while insisting that Putin must not succeed in annexing Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 632

War on the Ground:

On 17 November, *Deutsche Welle*, 4,300 Ukrainian citizens, including 3500 soldiers and 760 civilians were confirmed as prisoners of war in Russia. According to Moscow, 500 soldiers belonging to Russia are being held as prisoners of war in Ukraine. Dmytro Lubinets, Ukraine's Human Rights Commissioner, stated that Moscow handed over almost 2600 prisoners of war and civilians since the beginning of the invasion in February 2022.

On 17 November, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President said that the situation in the Black Sea has become favourable to Ukraine in recent months. He said: "Russia is unable to use the Black Sea as a springboard to destabilize other regions of the world." Furthermore, Russia's forces have vacated the western part of the Black Sea and shifted to the eastern part. He was speaking at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) meeting.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 17 November, Kaja Ollongren, the Netherlands's Defence Minister said that the country would provide an additional EUR 2.2 million in military aid to Ukraine in 2024. She added that the support would be provided according to the needs of Kyiv and might include drone capabilities. It is part of a wider package the Netherlands government promised Kyiv in 2024 which also includes an initial sum of EUR 102 million for reconstruction and humanitarian aid that could be increased if necessary. According to Ollongren, the total Dutch aid to Kyiv would be around EUR 7,5 billion including the latest package. She said: "This will safeguard our support for Ukraine and ensure continuity, which is critical for Ukraine," referring to the elections held on 22 November, that could change the composition of the ruling coalition.

On 17 November, *Deutsche Welle* quoting a study conducted by Yale University wrote that more than 2,400 children from Ukraine between 1 and 17 years were transferred to 13 locations across Belarus. The research was carried out by the Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health and is one of the most extensive research on the relocation of Ukrainian children. The US Department of State stated: "These revelations of Belarusian involvement are part of a broader campaign directed by Russia." The research also notes that children were transported from at least 17 cities including the ones from Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

On 17 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the UK Ministry of Defence in its daily intelligence update wrote that Russia might be employing its A-50 MAINSTAY D aircraft to identify targets over Ukraine for its SA-21 long-range ground-based air defence missile system. This integration is likely caused by the concerns regarding Ukraine's deployment of Western-provided combat aircraft. In August 2023, the US approved sending F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine from the Netherlands and Denmark to counter Russian air superiority.

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War in Ukraine: Day 630

War on the Ground:

On 15 November, on the intense fight in Avdiivka, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President claimed that it was Ukraine’s plan to defend as it forms part of its war agenda. He stated that Russia’s losses in the area will affect its larger operations in the conflict. Avdiivka has been the target since October as part Russia’s larger eastern Ukraine offensive. Zelenskyy added: “Withstanding their pressure is extremely difficult ... The more Russian forces that are destroyed near Avdiivka, the worse the overall situation will be for the enemy and the overall course of this war.”

On 15 November, Spike Brokers who keep track of Ukraine’s exports and publish stats reported on decrease in Ukraine’s food shipments. According to the report, the shipment fell by 2.7 per cent since November 2023 due to the border strikes by Poland drivers. It reported on increased traffic in the Romania, Hungary, and Moldova border crossing. The reason behind the Poland truckers to block is due to the loss of their businesses due to foreign competition. They have called for imposing of restrictions on the number of trucks that can enter Poland.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 15 November, Vladimir Saldo, Russia’s installed governor for Kherson area issued a statement confirming Ukraine’s advanced in the area between bridge and Krynki, left bank of Dnipro River, earlier occupied by Russia. According to Saldo: “The enemy has crossed the river by sending more personnel for some time than our firepower could destroy.” On the same Ukraine military stated that its forces had attempted to push Russia’s forces in the Dnipro River across the Southern Kherson under the operation “silence,” and succeeded in advancing from three to eight kilometres.

On 15 November, during the visit to North

Korea, Russia’s natural resources minister announced progress in ballistic missile programme. According to one of the state media agencies of North Korea, the discussion focused on economy, science and technology and in developing a “substantial cooperation” in line with the earlier meeting held between leaders of Russia and North Korea.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 15 November, the European Commission proposed a new set of sanctions banning import of Russian diamonds and LPG. The latest sanction package is yet to get approval from all member states, but it aims to deter Russia from circumventing from “oil price cap.” On passing of the sanctions, Russia may face further cut in its diamond exports which now accounts for USD four billion. The sanctions target natural, synthetic diamonds and jewellery from 2024.

On 15 November, following Germany’s defence minister comments on the EU falling short of meeting its pledge to provide one million artillery shells to Ukraine, Baltic states raised a similar argument. Hanno Pevkur, Estonia’s Defence Minister highlighted the need for the EU to ensure more ammunition is given to Ukraine through help from third countries. Baltic states argue that the EU due to existing contracts sends ammunition to other countries rather than Ukraine, instead they recommend negotiating with those ammunition trading countries to redirect the supply to Ukraine.

On 15 November, during the talks with EU leaders, Hungary’s European Affairs Minister Janos Boka, raised concern over Ukraine’s EU membership process. The minister called for a review of the EU’s policy and put forward its differed stance against Germany, Lithuania, Finland, and Ireland in Ukraine’s accession into the EU. Boka said: “We need a period of reflection and a strategic discussion on the policy of the European Union towards Ukraine.”

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War in Ukraine: Day 629

War on the Ground:

On 14 November, Volodymyr Zelenskyy Ukraine's President reported on increasing attacks by Russia in the front line especially in Donetsk, Kupyansk, and Avdiivka. He warned over increased air strikes by Russia on Ukraine's energy network like 2022 winter.

On 14 November, Ukraine's military reported on the intensifying air and ground troop movements in eastern Ukraine. According to the report, Russia's forces had increased "air bombardments," in Avdiika while the Ukraine forces continue to counter Russia in front line (600 mile). Oleksandr Shtupun, Ukraine military spokesperson said: "Fighting is still going on. Over the last two days, the occupiers have increased the number of air strikes using guided bombs from Su-35 aircraft."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 14 November, Russia's defence ministry claimed on countering four Ukraine's UAVs which were found near Bryansk and Oryol in the west and Tambov central Russia. According to the report the drones had carried explosives and "targeted chemical factory."

On 14 November, the TASS reported on the decreased shelling by Ukraine in the "line of engagement," due to reduced munition. According to the report, the Ukraine troops

were observed to be attacking by uninterrupted fire whereas it has slowed to fewer shells. On the same day, Russia's forces claimed on advancing 500-600 meters near Zaporizhzhia region.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 14 November, Boris Pistorius, Germany's Defence Minister stated that there was higher possibility for the EU miss the deadline in delivering one million rounds of ammunition to Ukraine. According to Pistorius, the pledge to deliver the ammunition by March was "unrealistic" since only 300,000 has been sent so far. Till now, 155 mm artillery rounds play a key role in the war with daily usage coming to 6000 to 7000 shells. On the same EU's industry minister remarked the increase in the production by European arms manufacturer from 20 to 30 per cent and assured that target will be met. In the upcoming EU meeting in the Brussels, long-term support to Ukraine will be the key agenda and Josep Borell, EU foreign policy chief is expected to present a security and military package for EUR 20 billion. This requires unanimous vote from the EU member states.

On 14 November, *The Guardian* reported on the upcoming Turkey's step to ratify the bill approving Sweden's accession to NATO. According to the report, Sweden's case will be up for debate in Turkey's parliament. The bill will be approved by parliament's foreign affairs committee ahead of the vote in assembly, followed by Turkey's president signing it into law.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 14 November, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) released a report in Geneva on the increase in casualties due to landmine. According to the report, Russia's landmines were 11 in number across 27 districts of Ukraine. This has to increase in deaths and injuries ten times and 608 Ukraine casualties recorded. Ukraine is part of the 1997 Ottawa Treaty which bans the use of landmines, whereas Russia, China and the US are not parties to the treaty. According to ICBL, Ukraine will be investigating the conditions of the its forces

using antipersonnel mines and of those casualties 85 per cent were civilians.

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War in Ukraine: Day 628

War on the Ground:

On 13 November, The Washington Post reported on involvement of Ukraine military officer in the attacks on Russia's Nord Stream pipelines. Since the report of damage on September 2022 on blasts, no one claimed responsibility. Dmitry Peskov, Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council accused Ukraine for the sabotage and called it as terrorist act. He said: "If the Kyiv regime is no longer in control of the situation in its own country, then this is alarming and should also be taken into account."

On 13 November, intense exchange of shelling was reported in the eastern area of Bakhmut. According to Ukraine's Armed Forces general, Russia's is attempting to recaptured the lost position in the district and has countered five attacks by the

Ukraine forces.

On 13 November, delegation from Ukraine headed by Andriy Yermak spokesperson of Ukraine's presidential office held meeting in the White House. The discussion and outcome of the meeting is yet to be revealed.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 13 November, the TASS reported on Russia's claim on destroying Ukraine's "self-propelled howitzer" and its forces gathered in Kherson area. According to the report, Russia's Dnepr battle group units had caused damage using firepower, resulting in killing 27 and injuring two Ukrainian soldiers.

Through this it achieved eliminating Ukraine's deployment site of army as per the report.

On 13 November, Russia's defence ministry claimed on the decrease in the number of attacks targeted to damage the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. The same was confirmed by chief of the Russian Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) Protection Troops, on decreased attempts to cause infrastructural damage. The report also warned on the consequences of such attacks which may lead to radiation leaks and contamination of atmosphere and continued monitoring of Russia to share data to IAEA.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 13 November, in its intelligence update, UK Ministry of Defence reported on integration of Russia's mercenary group, the Wagner into Russia's Rosgvardiya national guard. This group is predicted to be led by the former Wagner head Yevgeny Prigozhin's son Pavel Prigozhin. According to the report, Russia is observed to be having a direct control of the Wagner group activities.

On 13 November, the *Associated Press* reported on France's decision to train 7,000 Ukrainian soldiers under the EU's military assistance to Ukraine framework. During the training the forces will also be trained in Poland in the France's military base. The latest addition in EU military aid agenda to Ukraine is to train 35,000 soldiers by 2023, this includes, basic training,

battlefield first aid and military know-how by Norway, the US (18,000), and Germany (1,000 more) providing training courses to Ukrainians.

On 13 November, Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's Foreign Minister highlighted Hungary's decision to continue the block on sending military aid to Ukraine under the European Peace Facility (EPF). According to the minister, it will maintain the stance until Ukraine gives guarantee of not blacklisting Hungary's firms terming as "international sponsors of war." The EPF was formed in 2021 with an aim to deter conflicts and build peace through finance, but Hungary has blocked over guarantees.

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War in Ukraine: Days 626 & 627

War on the Ground:

On 12 November, Iryna Vereshchuk, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister claimed that 4.9 million people have been recorded to be internally displaced due to the war. She said that 3.6 million had left their homes and due to continued fighting in Donbas totalling with Crimean annexation more than one million are expected to be internally displaced since 2014. Southern and eastern Ukraine remained to be unchanged.

On 11 November, Kyiv Mayor reported on two explosions in the city centre. According to the report the explosions were recorded in the left bank of the Dnipro River and confirmed to be countered by Ukraine's air defences. In response air alert was issued asking the residents to take shelter.

On 11 November, Ukraine's air defence reported on successfully countering of 19 drone attacks out of 31 that were targeted in the front-line. In a statement released by the air force: "Nineteen enemy Shahed-136/131 attack unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were destroyed. The Russian occupants sent most of the attack UAVs to the front-line areas." On the same day, Ukraine claimed on downing two landing boats of Russia which belonged to its Black Sea Fleet. According to the report from Ukraine intelligence, two "small amphibious boats, an Akula class, and Serna class" were attacked.

On 11 November, Volodymyr Zelenskyy Ukraine's President released a video marking the anniversary of the liberation of Kherson. He called it a "city of hope" as Ukraine forces recaptured Kherson after eight months of war.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 12 November, Russia criticised Ukraine for conducting attacks in the border areas of Belgorod and Bryansk. According to Belgorod governor, the strikes had damaged train carriages and injured a civilian in the border zone due to multiple drone attacks. In result of the attack, electricity supplies were cut and power lines were damaged. Russia's defence ministry claimed on destroying two Ukraine's drones.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 12 November, in an interview with the Associated Press Edgars Rinkevics, Latvia's President warned that Russia's strategy was to prolong the war as a message for the European countries that hesitate to support Ukraine. Rinkevics stressed on continuing the support to Ukraine and vouch for international peace, and peace in Europe. He highlighted the need to stop Russia and forbid the chances of challenge spreading to other European countries.

On 12 November, Boris Pistorius, Germany's Defence Minister announced Germany's decision to double its military aid to Ukraine in 2024. He said: "This is a strong signal to Ukraine, showing we are not giving up on it." He added that there would be more support

in 2024 in response to the 2023 experience and Bundestag's budget committee would be approving additional expenditure soon. According to the report in *Deutsche Welle*, as Germany announced to increase military aid, it has reportedly been having trouble to speed up "recruitment and procurement." Since February 2022, Germany has given EUR 22 billion as total aid to Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 623

War on the Ground:

On 08 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Russia struck a civilian ship entering a Black Sea port in Odesa. According to Ukraine's army, the missile strike injured the ship's crew and killed a harbour pilot. The vessel was flagged Liberia and the three crew members were Philippines citizens. Moscow is yet to comment on the incident.

On 08 November, Ukraine's intelligence agency claimed the responsibility for the death of Mikhail Filipenko, a Russia-backed lawmaker who was part of the pro-Russian separatist movement in Luhansk since 2014. According to *Deutsche Welle*, the agency accused him of organising dungeons

for civilians and prisoners of war in Luhansk and allegedly torturing people.

On 08 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President has welcomed EU's decision to begin talks on Ukraine's accession to the EU and hailed it as a "strong and historic step." He wrote on Telegram: "Ukrainians deserve this both for their protection of European values, and for the fact that even at times of a full-scale war, we keep our word by developing state institutions." Meanwhile, he also hailed G7's unwavering support to Ukraine following his talks with Fumio Kishida, Japan's Prime Minister. He added that the leaders discussed matters including expanding cooperation including on security guarantees and further macroeconomic financial support to Ukraine.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 08 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Russia's military courts have sentenced two soldiers from Ukraine accusing them of shooting civilians in Mariupol in 2022. Anton Cherednik, the defendant pleaded guilty to the murder but rejected other charges such as violently seized power, used "prohibited means of warfare" and committed a "terrorist act." He was sentenced to 19 years, three in prison and the rest in a penal colony in Russia. In a separate trial at a court in Russia-controlled Donesk another soldier was sentenced to 20 years in prison for shooting three civilians while in a car. Russia's forces took thousands of soldiers from Ukraine as captives once Mariupol fell after the heavy assaults it launched on the city in 2022.

On 08 November, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President met General Zhang Youxia, China's second-ranking military official and the Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission in Moscow. According to *Deutsche Welle*, Putin hailed Moscow's stronger military ties with China and said that cooperation on military satellites and other defence technologies must be expanded. He also emphasized that even though "Russia and China aren't building any military alliances based on Cold war patterns," their cooperation is a "serious

factor in stabilizing the international situation.”

On 08 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of Russia’s Security Council, said that the “destructive” policies of the US and its allies have increased the risks that chemical, biological or nuclear weapons would be used. He added that the international arms control regime has been undermined while alleging that Ukraine attempted to target Russia’s three nuclear power stations.

On 08 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Russia has placed another judge of the ICC, Sergio Gerardo Ugaldó Godínez (Costa Rica) on its wanted list as per a notice in the database of the Interior Ministry. The notice did not disclose further details. Earlier, the ICC issued an arrest warrant against Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova (Moscow’s presidential commissioner for children’s rights) in March 2022 accusing them of unlawfully deporting children from Ukraine. Russia is not a member of ICC and it insists that the warrant against Putin is void, but it has restricted his travels abroad as the member states are obliged to carry out the warrants issued by the court. Previously Russia has issued arrest warrants against Piotr Hofmanski, ICC President Karim Khan, ICC Prosecutor and several other judges.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 08 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Slovakia’s new government dismissed the caretaker government’s plans to donate rockets and ammunition to Ukraine. The EUR 40.3 million aid package was based on a deal passed by the caretaker government in October 2023 before handing the power over to the Robert Fico, the new Prime Minister and his government. Fico vehemently criticized the western military support to Ukraine and sanctions on Russia during his campaign.

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War in Ukraine: Day 622

War on the Ground:

On 07 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President is unwilling to hold elections as the war continues. He said: “I believe that now is not the right time for elections.” He also added that this “is the time of defense, the time of the battle that determines the fate of the state and people, not the time of manipulations, which only Russia expects from Ukraine.” The parliamentary elections were scheduled in October 2023 followed by the Presidential elections in March 2024, before Russia’s invasion. Currently, elections are suspended under the martial law. Earlier, in September, Zelenskyy mentioned that he was open to conducting elections and inviting international observers.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that NATO suspended the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) after Russia formally withdrew the agreement. CFE was brought out to prevent the building up of armies near the mutual borders of Cold War rivals. NATO stated, “A situation whereby Allied State Parties abide by the Treaty, while Russia does not, would be unsustainable.” It also added that the allies are committed to “reduce the military risk, and prevent misperceptions and conflicts.”

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 07 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Yoko Kamikawa, Japan’s Foreign Minister, said that even though the conflict between Israel and Hamas is expected to be at the centre stage of discussions during the G7 talks scheduled on 07 and 08 November, their “support for Ukraine has not wavered at all.” He added that G7 members would hold a virtual call with Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine’s Foreign Minister, during the meeting.

On 07 November, in its daily intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence confirmed that a newly built naval corvette of Russia, KARAKURST-class Askold was damaged at Zaliv shipyard in Kerch in the

Crimean Peninsula on 04 November. Askold was not yet commissioned into Russia's navy. According to the Ministry, Ukraine's capability to strike shipbuilding infrastructure in Crimea could make Russia relocate farther from the frontline, possibly delaying the delivery of new vessels.

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["Ukraine updates: Zelenskyy says time not right for elections," Deutsche Welle, 07 November 2023](#)

["Latest Defence Intelligence update on the situation in Ukraine – 07 November 2023," X, 07 November 2023](#)

War in Ukraine: Day 621

War on the Ground:

On 06 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Volodymyr Zelesnky, Ukraine's President is not in favour of elections during wartime. He added that holding elections during the war would create political divisions when the country needs to be united and the state's resources should be focused on "victory" over Russia.

On 06 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that eight people were wounded and Odesa Fine Arts Museum was heavily damaged in a series of airstrikes launched by Russia. According to Oleg Kiper, Odesa Governor, most of the collections were removed during the war. Furthermore, soldiers (19 according to *The Guardian*) of the 128th Mountain Assault Brigade in Ukraine's army were killed in missile strikes during a military "awards ceremony" in Southern Zaporizhzhia. Zelenskyy said: "This is a tragedy that could have been avoided. A criminal investigation has been registered into the tragedy."

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 06 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Poland's Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers blockaded three border crossings to Ukraine. They were protesting against the loss of business to foreign competitors and Warsaw's inaction in addressing them. The truckers are concerned about the exemption of permits for Ukrainian truckers since the invasion in February 2022 and the establishment of entities by companies from

Russia and Belarus in Poland. Therefore, the Polish truckers are demanding a reintroduction of restrictions on Ukrainian HGVs entering Poland and a ban on foreign companies. Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's Minister for the Restoration of Ukraine said that Kyiv is working with Warsaw and the European Commission to resolve the situation.

References

["Ukraine updates: Kyiv decries awards ceremony deaths," Deutsche Welle, 06 November 2023](#)

["Russian attack on Ukrainian military ceremony 'tragedy that could've been avoided', says Zelenskiy," The Guardian, 06 November 2023](#)

War in Ukraine: Days 619 & 620

War on the Ground:

On 05 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Ukraine's armed forces said it hit a shipyard in Crimea with 15 cruise missiles. Russia's Defence Ministry claimed that its air defence systems destroyed 13 of those missiles. Sergei Akynov, Russian-installed governor of Crimea, said that the destroyed missile fragments landed in Kerch and no casualties were reported.

On 04 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President said that it is "Russia's goal" to draw attention away from Ukraine as the war between Israel and Hamas rages on in the Middle East. Ukraine has gone through similar situations when there was no focus on Ukraine and this challenge would also pass. He also added that Ukraine's fight against Russia has not reached a stalemate. He was speaking at a joint press conference with Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission's President who was on an unannounced visit to Kyiv. She also discussed Ukraine's integration with the EU with Zelenskyy.

On 04 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Ukraine has filed charges against Vladimir Gundyayev (Patriarch Kirill), a supporter of Putin, for "justifying" Russia's invasion of Ukraine. According to the Security Service of Ukraine, Patriarch Kirill is part of the inner circle of Russia's top

military and political leadership who publicly supported Russia's invasion and comprehensive measures are being taken to bring him to justice for crimes against Ukraine.

On 04 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Ukraine is aiming to become a weapons manufacturing hub for the West. According to Oleksander Kamysyhin, Ukraine's new Minister for Strategic Industries, Ukraine is focusing on making itself an "arsenal of the free world," and producing all types of weapons and ammunition for battlefield. Kamysyhin gained a reputation as the head of Ukrzaliznytsia, the national railway company for ensuring that trains continued running on time despite the war. He was appointed as the Minister for Strategic Industries in early 2023.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 05 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Russia successfully test-launched a "Bulava" ballistic missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads. According to Russia's Defence Ministry, the missile was launched from underwater in the White Sea off the northern coast and it hit the target on the Kamchatka peninsula in Russia's Far East. The Kremlin argued that it is necessary to maintain its nuclear deterrence to counter security threats. The West has repeatedly accused Moscow of reckless rhetoric since February 2022, the beginning of the conflict. Russia has formally, withdrawn from CTBT on 02 November.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 04 November, *NBC* reported that officials from the US and EU are engaged in talks with Ukraine's government on potential conditions for peace negotiations with Russia, including what Ukraine might have to give up for such a peace deal. They have also expressed concerns about a potential "stalemate," Ukraine's running out of forces and limitations to conscription. Later, Zelenskyy denied the reports when asked during a press conference.

References

"Ukraine updates: Zelenskyy denies stalemate claims," *Deutsche Welle*, 04 November 2023

Courtney Kube, Carol E Lee and Kristen Welker, "U.S., European officials broach topic of peace negotiations with Ukraine, sources say," *NBC News*, 04 November 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 618

War on the Ground:

On 03 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President is weighing the possibility to conduct presidential elections in 2024. Elections are technically banned under martial law. According to Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister, the decision is yet to be made whether to conduct elections and warned that it would be difficult to conduct elections since soldiers are fighting and many Ukrainians left the country as refugees. Parliamentary elections scheduled in December 2023 were also cancelled.

On 03 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Kuleba met with the CEO of German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall and discussed ways to bolster Kyiv's defence industry. Earlier, Kuleba spoke to ZDF, the German broadcaster and requested that Berlin send Taurus missiles to Ukraine. In October 2023, Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor decided not to send Taurus missiles to Ukraine to avoid the perceived risk of being drawn directly to war. Taurus missiles have a range of 500 kilometres and would allow Ukraine to strike deep into Russia's territory.

On 03 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Russia had launched another wave of drone attacks on Ukraine overnight hitting several cities. Ukraine's air forces said that it shot down 24 Shahed drones out of 40 launched from Russia. In Lviv, an infrastructure facility was hit and in western Ivano-Frankivsk, a military facility was struck. According to Ihor Klymenko, Ukraine's Interior Minister, the attacks were "massive" and eight private houses, a three-story building, several cars and a car repair shop were damaged in Kharkiv.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 03 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President again defended his decision to invade Ukraine by saying that Russia was already attacked and Moscow had no choice but to launch war. He also claimed that Kyiv did not want to resolve the situation diplomatically.

On 03 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that according to Konstantin Basyuk, Russia-installed Senator in Kherson, Ukraine's forces attacked civilian infrastructure in Chaplynskiy district which killed seven people and wounded seven others. Ukraine's forces did not comment yet on the incident. Even though Ukraine's forces took control of Kherson from Russia's forces in 2022, Russia controls a large portion of the region.

On 03 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Leonid Mikhelson, Head of Novatek, a Russian natural gas producer said that US sanctions against one of its projects are an "estimate of our professionalism." Novatek holds a 60 per cent stake in the Arctic LNG-2 project which would establish an LNG export facility in northern Russia. The US sanctions were announced on 02 November.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 03 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the US would provide USD 425 million worth of additional arms and equipment to Ukraine. A portion of the package would be drawn from the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), the USD 18 billion fund which allows the US government to buy weapons from the arms industry. USD 125 million worth of air defence, artillery munitions and anti-tank weapons would be drawn from existing US stocks. Furthermore, the US Department of Defence said that providing aid for Ukraine was "a smart investment in our national security."

References

["Ukraine updates: Russia launches 'massive' drone attack," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 November 2023](#)

War in Ukraine: Day 617

War on the Ground:

On 02 November, Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister said that Kyiv is optimistic

about fulfilling its obligations for accession to the EU. According to *Deutsche Welle*, he also said: "EU reform should not take the enlargement process as a hostage and we have to find the right balance between the process of reforming the European Union and continuing with enlargement." Kyiv applied for the EU membership on 28 February 2022, shortly after Russia launched its invasion and received candidacy status in June 2022.

On 02 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that according to Oleksandr Shtupun, spokesperson for Ukraine's Tavria military command, Russia's forces are regrouping around Avdiivka to prepare for encircling the city. Avdiivka is in eastern Donetsk, part of Donbas. Russia renewed its offensive in eastern Ukraine in mid-October 2023.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 02 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Vladimir Putin, Russia's President has formally lifted Russia's ban on nuclear testing by withdrawing from CTBT. Russia officially launched the process to withdraw from the treaty in October 2023. Putin said that Russia's withdrawal would "mirror" the US position of not ratifying the treaty. The CTBT was adopted in 1996 to limit the further development of nuclear weapons. The US, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel, Iran and Egypt refrained from ratifying the treaty.

On 02 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Dmitry Peskov, Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council commented that Russia is achieving its military goals in Ukraine. He was responding to Valery Zaluzhny, Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief's remarks that the conflict had come to a "stalemate." Peskov also said that the Kremlin expects further sanctions on Russia from the US and the EU and remarked that those sanctions would only hurt the interests of those who imposed them and Russia has very well adapted to sanctions.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 03 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Washington is expected to provide USD

425 million in new military aid to Ukraine. This aid would include USD 300 million in long-term funding to purchase laser-guided munitions to counter drones, USD 125 million worth of weapons and equipment consisting of HIMARS (High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems), NASAMS (National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems), anti-tank missiles, demolition equipment and cold weather gear.

On 02 November, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the US imposed more sanctions on Russia's future energy capabilities and sanctions evasion. The new sanctions are against an entity based in Siberia engaged in the development, operation, and ownership of a liquefied natural gas project. It also includes a network accused of procuring items for the production of KUB-BLA and Lancet suicide drones and the designer and creator of UAVs.

On 02 November, Annalena Baerbock, Germany's Foreign Minister said that the EU would advance Ukraine's bid to join the block in December 2023. According to *Deutsche Welle*, she said: "The European Union has to be enlarged. That is the geopolitical consequence of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

Reference

"Ukraine updates: Putin lifts nuclear weapons testing ban," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 November 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 616

War on the Ground:

On 01 November, *The Economist* reported on Valery Zaluzhny, Ukraine's commander-in-chief's comments that Ukraine must expand the categories of citizens who can be mobilized or trained as the war enters the "attritional phase." He mentioned the gaps in legislation are allowing people to evade service and said that the government is introducing a unified register of draftees.

On 01 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the largest drone and artillery attacks by Russia against Ukraine. According to Igor Klymenko, Ukraine's Interior Minister, Russia's forces attacked 118 settlements in ten regions over the last 24 hours.

Furthermore, 275 children were evacuated from ten locations in and around Kupyansk, less than eight kilometers from the frontline. Additionally, the attacks hit Kremenshuk oil refinery in Poltava, said Filip Pronin, Head of the region's military administration. The fire has been extinguished, and no casualties were reported.

On 01 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Ukraine is imposing mandatory registration for food export companies to prevent issues such as tax avoidance. According to the new procedure the new companies registered in the State Agrarian register must pay value-added tax and have no text debts or delays in return for foreign currency proceeds. Only these companies can engage in exporting food products.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 01 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported that according to the Federal Council, Switzerland would extend the special protection status granted to Ukrainian citizens who fled the war until 04 March 2025. The government had also set targets for labor market integration to bring about 40 per cent of employable people within "protection status S" to employment by the end of 2024.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war

On 01 November, the *Associated Press* reported that according to lawmaker Yoo Sang-bum, South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS) believes that North Korea has given more than a million artillery shells to Russia since August 2023 to fuel Moscow's war efforts in Ukraine. NIS also believes that North Korea has been operating its munition factories at full capacity to manufacture weapons for Russia and mobilizing residents to increase production. Both Pyongyang and Moscow denied Sang-bum's claims.

References

"The commander-in-chief of Ukraine's armed forces on how to win the war," *The Economist*, 01 November 2023

[“Ukraine updates: Russia hits scores of villages and cities,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 01 November 2023

Kim Tong-Hyung, [“South Korea’s spy agency says North Korea shipped more than a million artillery shells to Russia,”](#) *Associated Press*, 01 November 2023

War in Ukraine: Day 615

War on the ground:

On 31 October, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine’s Foreign Minister expressed his confidence that the US House of Representatives, would support a request for additional funds for Ukraine’s military. Republican Mike Johnson, the new speaker said earlier that funding to Ukraine and Israel should be managed separately and he would not back Biden’s USD 106 billion package for both countries.

On 31 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had found “reasonable grounds” to conclude that Russia’s forces launched a missile attack on 05 October that killed 59 people in a café in the Ukrainian village of Hroza. Liz Throssell, the Media and Communications Officer of the UN Agency said: “...there was no indication of military personnel or any other legitimate military targets at or adjacent to the café at the time of the attack.”

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 31 October, according to *Deutsche Welle*, FSB, Russia’s Security Service said that it had arrested a 46-year-old Russian citizen who coordinated the assassination attempt on Oleg Tsaryov, a former Ukrainian lawmaker and Moscow-backed separatist in Crimea. According to FSB, the accused was operating “on the instructions of the Ukrainian Security Service.”

On 31 October, Dmitry Peskov, Deputy Chairman of Russia’s Security Council, said that there would be no “free exit” for the Western companies selling their Russian assets and they must abide by the strict rules dictated by Moscow. *Deutsche Welle* reported that a special government commission must approve all large-scale deals involving companies from countries

that hit Moscow with sanctions. Furthermore, Putin must approve deals in the energy and finance sectors himself and departing companies must sell at a mandatory discount of 50 per cent and pay an exit tax worth 15 per cent of the company’s market value.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 31 October, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Lloyd Austin, the US Defence Secretary, said that Russia would be successful in seizing Ukraine’s territory if the US did not continue aid for Kyiv. He said, “I can guarantee that without our support, Putin will succeed.” Austin was speaking at a Senate hearing on Joe Biden, the US President’s request for USD 106 billion for Ukraine, Israel, and US border security. Meanwhile, Anthony Blinken, Secretary of State, alleged that Vladimir Putin, Russia’s President, is trying to take advantage of the Hamas attack on Israel to decrease the US support for Kyiv.

On 31 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the Rotterdam District Court convicted a Russian businessman for exporting dual-use products (computer chips and other electronic products) to Russia’s arms and defence industries, evading European sanctions for seven months. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison, and his company was fined EUR 200,000. The court said in a statement that he made sanctions evasion into a “revenue model” and called him an “essential link” who “knowingly and deliberately circumvented” the EU sanctions.

On 31 October, *Deutsche Welle* quoting the intelligence update released by the UK Ministry of Defence reported that Russia’s forces in Ukraine have come under increased pressure in the southern Kherson on the Dnipro River. Furthermore, Colonel Mikhail Teplinsky has taken command of the Dnipro River military group. Currently, repelling Ukraine’s attacks across the Dnipro River and holding the occupied territory remains a high priority for Russia’s forces.

Reference

[“Ukraine updates: Putin will succeed if we halt aid, US says,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 31 October 2023

EM Short Notes*

By Rishika Yadav, and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Christophe Ena/AP Photo/picture alliance, Picture alliance/ASSOCIATED PRESS, Brynjar Gunnarsson/AP/picture alliance, Jorid Nordmelan/MPE, Noah Berger/AP/picture alliance, AFP Photo

AUSTRIA**Sky Shield initiative to strengthens security**

On 15 November, *Bundeskanzleramt Germany's Federal Chancellery* reported on Austria's top diplomats' comments on the European Sky Shield initiative. This initiative supported by Germany aims to boost Austria's security structure through missiles protection and air space security. Karl Nehammer, Austria's Chancellor hailed it as pivotal for Austria's security, emphasizing its innovation and role in defending. The initiative, aims to address short- and long-range missile threats including drones. Nehammer clarified the defensive nature, highlighting the country's autonomy in deciding targets. Vice Chancellor Werner Kogler stressed how Austria who add value to the European cooperation's in creating a common defence field with cost-effectiveness. Defence Minister Klaudia Tanner emphasized Sky Shield's historic significance as fortifying Austria's airspace security against aerial threats. (["Chancellor Nehammer: Sky Shield](#)

[is a milestone for Austrian security policy."](#) *Bundeskanzleramt*, 15 November 2023)

CZECH REPUBLIC**Unions protest over austerity measures**

On 27 November, labour unions organised widespread strikes opposing the austerity measures. They demanded higher funding for education and healthcare while denouncing pension system changes. The measures included citizens facing increased taxes on alcohol, medicine, and corporate profits as part of the government's plan to curb a growing deficit. Petr Fiala, the Prime Minister, defended the measures, emphasizing their necessity to control state indebtedness. Massive demonstrations in Prague attracted thousands, with unions vowing more protests if negotiations are not considered. Schools and companies participated in strikes, marking the largest protests since the country's inception in 1993. The economic package, facing opposition from Andrej Babis, former Prime Minister, is aimed to slash the deficit by

* 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.

billions in 2024. ([“Czech Republic sees 'biggest protest in its history' over austerity measures,” Euronews](#) 27 November 2023)

FRANCE

EU urges fiscal adjustment after spending warnings

On 21 November, *Politico* reported on the European Commission request to France, Belgium, Finland, and Croatia to align their 2024 spending plans with the EU debt and deficit regulations. This move comes as the four-year suspension of these rules concludes in January. Valdis Dombrovskis, EU's Commission Vice President, cited concerns over rising public expenditure and inadequate cuts in energy support in France's budget proposal. Ignoring warnings could trigger an “Excess Deficit Procedure,” pressuring governments to curb spending. Amidst economic fragility and global tensions, France's breach of the three per cent GDP deficit limit and expected debt rise to 110 per cent in 2024 could prompt the EU intervention, despite claims of minimal adjustment needed. (Bjarke Smith-Meyer, Gregorio Sorgi and Giorgio Leali, [“EU gives France an ‘F’ grade on spending plans,” Politico](#), 21 November 2023)

Judges' issues warrant for Syria President over war crimes

On 15 November, *The New York Times* reported on issue of international arrest warrant by investigative judges of France for Bashar al-Assad, Syria's President. They accused him of “complicity in war crimes and crimes against humanity” for using of chemical weapon on civilians. The warrant was issued to Assad's brother and two other Syrian senior officials. Earlier, efforts to bring Assad to the International Criminal Court have been obstructed. This move marked a significant step by a national court against a sitting president for suspected war crimes. (Marlise Simons, [“French Judges Issue Warrant for Assad in Syria War Crimes Case,” The New York Times](#), 15 November 2023; [“France issues arrest warrant for Syria's Assad — reports,” Deutsche Welle](#), 15 November 2023)

Protests emerged against rising antisemitism in Paris

On 12 November, thousands of people gathered in Paris joined by right wing party leader Marine Le Pen against rising antisemitism. Since 07 October, when Hamas attacked Israel killing close to 1200 people, the protests began in France. In response the government has deployed 3,000 police in line with approval from Senate, lower house of parliament and the National Assembly. Elisabeth Borne, France's Prime Minister called it “This is a vital battle for national cohesion.” According to the report, more than 40 French have been killed in the Hamas attack. Emmanuel Macron, France's President expressed support for the rally but did not take part, whereas far-left party leader Jean-Luc Melenchon denied to be part of the protest. In Europe, France houses close to 500,000, the largest Jewish Community. ([“Tens of thousands march in Paris against antisemitism,” Deutsche Welle](#), 12 November 2023)

FINLAND

Ministry of Finance proposed 2024 budget amendment

On 23 November, the Ministry of Finance submitted a proposal to Parliament, to amend the 2024 budget. Changes involved backing Ukraine with EUR 95.7 million for Defence Forces' material procurement and increasing Finnfund's capital by EUR 25 million for Ukraine's investments. Funding adjustments are aimed to aid Finland's businesses in Ukraine's reconstruction. A restructuring plan was proposed to ease the burden on local governments by delaying central government transfer reductions. Additionally, appropriations were recommended for adjusting housing allowance, social assistance, and family grants. Other allocations included investments in railways, language services, and culture. Revenue is estimated to increase by EUR 76 million, while net government borrowing to decrease by EUR 124 million. ([“Government proposes amendments to 2024 budget proposal,” Finnish Government](#), 23 November 2023)

Launches offshore wind auction

On 23 November, ministries of agriculture, economic affairs and employment and the environment passed a resolution to initiate auctions for offshore wind power sites in public water regions. These areas, managed by Metsähallitus, will undergo leasing and project rights sale for renewable energy development, with lease terms up to 50 years. Sari Essayah, Member of Finland's Parliament highlighted the move's impact on clean energy transition and its economic benefits, expecting a third increase in Finland's electricity production. The 860 square kilometer sites could generate 7,500 MW, involving about 500 turbines, potentially attracting EUR three to four billion investment. The state and municipalities will benefit financially, and the move aligns with Metsähallitus's statutory duties. ("[Metsähallitus launches auctions concerning large-scale offshore wind power projects](#)," *Finnish Government*, 23 November 2023)

Frontex reinforces border amidst Russia's accusations

On 23 November, Frontex, the EU border agency, intends to send 50 officers and equipment to aid Finland's border control amid allegations of Russia fueling an immigrant surge. With most eastern border crossings closing until 23 December, Frontex's bolstering is aimed to address escalating tensions. Hans Leijtens, Frontex's Executive Director, emphasized the EU's unified stance against hybrid threats, extending beyond logistics. Russia criticized Finland's abrupt closure of checkpoints, calling it provocative and lacking prior consultation. Finland's border guard reported 415 individuals seeking asylum with insufficient documents, suspecting a foreign state's involvement in illegal border crossings. (Pierre Emmanuel Ngendakumana, "[EU to deploy more guards to bolster Finland's border control efforts](#)," *Politico*, 23 November 2023; "[EU deploys agents to help Finland bolster Russian border](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 November 2023)

Closes border points amid migrant influx from Russia

On 22 November, the Ministry of the

Interior announced Finland's decision to shut down the Kuusamo, Salla, and Vartius border crossings. In August, around 700 individuals entered Finland applying for asylum from the Middle East and Africa tried to enter from Russia. Concrete barriers now reinforce the border to manage undocumented migration. The Kremlin denied the claims, emphasizing readiness for mutual resolution. ("[Finland to close more border crossing points](#)," *Finnish Government*, 22 November 2023; "[Finland closes all but one of its borders with Russia](#)," *Euronews*, 22 November 2023)

Interior ministry to propose border closure over entry of asylum seeker without documents

On 14 November, Finland's government criticised Russia was allowing asylum seekers to enter Finland without required travel documents. Calling it a "international crime," Finland's border service recorded 91 undocumented migrants without visas since August. According to the authorities, the individuals belonged to third countries were transiting through Russia had increased in number in past months. Petteri Orpo, Finland's Prime Minister highlighted the unfamiliarity of the government over information about the migrants. He said: "The Russian border guard has clearly changed its practice. They allow people to cross the border without valid travel documents." In response to this, Finland's interior minister proposed to prepare a draft for border closure to restrict the border crossings and cross-border traffic. (Pierre Emmanuel Ngendakumana, "[Finland considers closing border with Russia amid spike in asylum seekers](#)," *Politico*, 14 November 2023)

GERMANY

Deal over gas export and renewable investment with Nigeria

On 21 November, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Nigeria's President, announced a bilateral agreement between Nigeria and Germany. According to the deal, Nigeria is set to supply 850,000 tons of liquified natural gas (LNG) annually, eventually reaching 1.2 million tons. Johannes Schuetze, head of

Germany's gas importer, lauded the deal diversifying Germany's gas sources. This historic pact, signed at the G20 Compact with Africa conference, included Germany's USD 500 million investment in Nigeria's renewable energy projects, aiming to integrate more people into the formal economy. Discussions are underway for Siemens' involvement in Nigeria's electricity infrastructure overhaul and railway expansion, initiatives spearheaded by Tinubu to attract foreign investment. ("[Nigeria and Germany agree deal on gas and renewables](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 November 2023)

Rail union announces 20-hour strike

On 14 November, *Deutsche Welle* reported on train strike announced by Germany's rail union. According to the report, Germany's GDL train drivers union announced a 20-hour warning strike between 15 to 16 November, which is expected to disrupt train services. The main demand of the protestors is salary raise of EUR 555 per month apart of the one-time payment of EUR 3000 to handle inflation. The union also aims to reduce working hours from 38 to 35 hours. Talks between the union and Deutsche Bahn (DB) state owned rail operator began last week and is expected to continue till 16 November. The DB has agreed to increase by 11 per cent and stressed its unwillingness to discuss union's core demands. Earlier in 2023, the union and the rail operator signed an agreement to increase pay of EUR 410 per month. ("[German rail union announces 20-hour train strike](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 14 November 2023)

Federal Statistics Office report increase in insolvency applications

On 14 November, Germany's Federal Statistics Office (Destatis) published an annual report on increasing insolvency among businesses and individuals in Germany. According to the report, insolvency application rose by 22.4 per cent as of October 2023 which was 19.5 per cent in September 2023. This insolvency application includes, companies under framework of orderly insolvency process and not those which are forced into

bankruptcy. Experts stated that despite a weak overall economy, they predict this to be a wave and not a tsunami of bankruptcies. According to chairman of the German Registered Association of Insolvency Administrators (VID), Germany's state assistance and relaxation of rules on forced insolvency during COVID-19 combined with energy crisis has helped the company afloat, implying normal insolvencies to occur. ("[Germany: Number of bankruptcies continues to grow](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 14 November 2023)

GREECE

Sunak calls off meeting over statement on Elgin Marbles

On 27 November, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Greece's Prime Minister, criticized Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister, for cancelling their meeting two hours ahead of the schedule. It was seen as a reaction to Mitsotakis' demand for the return of the Parthenon Marbles which is claimed to have originally from Greece. Talks, including recent discussions with Keir Starmer, Party leader of the Labour Party, sought a potential loan arrangement for the sculptures. Despite UK's resistance in permanently returning the Marbles, Mitsotakis lamented the lack of progress. Greece officials affirmed efforts to address the issue with the British Museum. (Nektaria Stamouli, "[Greek PM slams Sunak as row over Elgin Marbles escalates](#)," *Politico*, 27 November 2023)

ICELAND

Reykjavik Global Forum fosters gender equality discussion

On 15 November, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported on the Reykjavik Global Forum drew 500 and more participants from 80 countries held during 13-14 November. The forum serves as a crucial platform for gender equality discussions. Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir emphasized sustained efforts for gender parity, citing recent women's strikes as evidence of ongoing challenges in pay equity and addressing gender-based violence. Bjarni Benediktsson, foreign minister stressed on men's pivotal role in advancing equality. ("[Reykjavik Global](#)

[Forum](#),” *Government of Iceland*, 15 November 2023)

Iceland government prepared for evacuation ahead of seismic activity

On 13 November, Iceland’s meteorological office reported on the higher chances of a volcanic eruption in its southern peninsula. Seismic activity seems to be reduced, but the office still issued warning in Grindavik town which has experienced minor earthquakes resulting in damaged public infrastructure. Ahead of this, the emergency response team asked the people residing in the town to evacuate on 11 November. The Reykjanes Peninsula is observed to the hotspot of seismic activity of Iceland. In 2021, the lava erupted from fissure in the ground spreading to 500-750 meters in Fagradalsfjall volcanic system. Similarly there were two more eruptions in August 2022 and July 2023. (“[Iceland braces for eruption as fissures emerge in Grindavik](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 14 November 2023)

IRELAND

Paschal Donohoe launches 2023-2027 Open Data Strategy

On 23 November, Paschal Donohoe, the Minister for Public Expenditure, introduced the 2023-2027 Open Data Strategy. The strategy is aimed to distribute and facilitate access to public body data for the next five years freely. The framework outlined goals for data publishers, platform development, and users, with over 15,000 datasets and nearly 150 publishers on the Open Data Portal (data.gov.ie), the strategy envisioned easy access to high-quality government data, emphasizing trust and innovation. During the COVID-19 crisis, Open Covid data played a crucial role in disseminating essential information, aiding public adherence to safety measures. Donohoe highlighted Open Data’s significance in enhancing public services, transparency, and fostering trust in governance. Ireland’s leadership in Open Data management continues to evolve, aiming for optimal data utilization. (“[Minister Donohoe Launches New Open Data Strategy](#),” *gov.ie*, 23 November 2023)

Dublin knife attack triggers far-right fueled violence

On 23 November, Dublin witnessed violent protests following a knife attack injuring five, including three children at Parnell Square East. A police car and tram were set ablaze as officers were assaulted in the city center. Reports suggested anti-immigrant slogans were chanted during the chaos. Drew Harris, Police Commissioner attributed the unrest to a “hooligan faction driven by far-right ideology.” Helen McEntee, Minister of Justice urged calm, condemning assaults on law enforcement. The stabbings occurred near a school, leaving three seriously injured and two with lesser wounds. Authorities have arrested a man in connection with the incident, initially ruled non-terror-related but now under comprehensive scrutiny for motives. (Paul Dallison, “[Violent Dublin protests blamed on ‘far-right ideology’ after 5 injured in knife attack](#),” *Politico*, 23 November 2023; “[Five people wounded, including three children, in Dublin knife attack](#),” *Euronews*, 23 November 2023)

ITALY

Ambiguity persists over EU law in Asylum Protocol with Albania

On 15 November, Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner, mentioned that the deal between Italy and Albania for handling asylum requests was not under the EU law. Under the deal, Italy plans to process up to 36,000 asylum applications annually in Albania for migrants rescued at sea. This has raised concerns about whether the EU laws will apply in these centres outside Italy, and if any legal actions can be taken if rules are violated there. There were also questions about transferring migrants from Italy’s waters and if the deal aligns with EU regulations. Amnesty International warned over prolonged detention and issues for asylum seekers outside Italy’s legal oversight. (Jorge Liboreiro, “[Italy-Albania migration deal falls ‘outside’ EU law, says Commissioner Ylva Johansson](#),” *Euronews*, 15 November 2023)

NORWAY

Hydrogen chain feasibility study published to connect with Germany

On 23 November, the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy released the joint feasibility study on a hydrogen value chain connecting Norway and Germany. The report confirmed the technical feasibility of transporting substantial hydrogen quantities between the countries, given specific conditions. Terje Aasland, Minister of Petroleum and Energy commended state-owned company, Gassco, and Deutsche Energie Agentur (DENA), Germany's Energy Agency for leading the study. Commissioned by both governments, the industry-driven study evaluated the potential of the hydrogen chain's viability between both countries, focusing on market readiness, regulatory aspects, and technology. (["Feasibility study on a hydrogen value chain between Norway and Germany,"](#) *Government.no*, 23 November 2023)

POLAND

New government led by Tusk to form government

On 13 November, Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland's Prime Minister resigned as the new government led by Donal Tusk is about to take the post. Andrzej Duda opened the parliamentary session where the members of the parliament took oath and selected the speaker. The Law and Justice Party failed to win without enough votes to gain majority from the coalition partners, whereas the opposition pro-EU alliance comprising of three coalition parties seem united to form government. This means Civic Coalition head Tusk will be selected as candidate for prime minister. (["Poland: PiS government steps down as parliament meets,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 13 November 2023)

RUSSIA

Putin accuses US at BRICS summit

On 21 November, BRICS leaders convened an urgent virtual summit addressing the Middle East turmoil, where President Vladimir Putin accused the US of monopolizing peace efforts. Amid US-Israel opposition to a Gaza ceasefire, Putin highlighted Washington's hindrance of international mediators like Russia, the UN, and the EU. The BRICS meeting indicated a shift, signifying the group's interest in

resolving global political issues beyond economic matters, observed Dr. Hesham Alghannam, a Saudi Arabia's political scientist. Despite Saudi-led efforts backed by Russia and China for a Gaza ceasefire, they faced US opposition. Arab-Muslim countries lauded Putin's stance, aligning with Arab objectives. The Gaza crisis has affected the US image negatively, highlighting growing divisions in Washington over the conflict. The US's differing stance from Muslim-Arab visions has tainted its image amidst worsening Gaza conditions. The contention over a Gaza ceasefire persists, with the US at odds with the Muslim-Arab world's advocacy. (Ekaterina Blinova, ["Putin's Address at BRICS Summit on Gaza Aligned With Arab-Muslim Vision – Mideast Experts,"](#) *SPUTNIK*, 21 November 2023)

SLOVAKIA

New Government faces policy and legal controversies

On 14 November, Robert Fico, Slovakia's Prime Minister proposed a tax plan aimed at aiding pensioners and low-income groups while nominations to the government hinted a different agenda. It raised concerns about shielding allies from legal issues. Fico's cabinet include politicians who were previously charged, sparked debates about political motivations and revenge. Ongoing court cases from the past government's term involved alleged ties to organised crime. Fico's return after being ousted in 2018 due to protests over a journalist's murder prompts scrutiny, the cabinet reshuffle, legal battles against oligarchs, and swift personnel changes indicate possibilities for clashes within the ruling coalition. (Tom Nicholson and Ketrin Johecova, ["New Slovak coalition embraces revenge, radicalism,"](#) *Politico*, 15 November 2023)

SLOVENIA

Government announces to refund the COVID-19 fines

On 27 November, those who were subject to COVID-19 restrictions close to 60,000 faced penalties. The government announced a legislation which will refund nearly EUR six million which was collected as fines from

Slovenians. The move comes after former prime minister Robert Golob pledged to refund. Critics stated the penalty as unconstitutional. (Guy Delauney, "[Slovenia Covid: Thousands to get lockdown fine refunds](#)," *BBC*, 27 November 2023)

SPAIN

Member of European Parliament threatens to withdraw support to Sanchez

On 29 November, Carles Puigdemont, Member of European Parliament warned to withdraw his party support from Pedro Sanchez government, if negotiations with Catalan independence lack progress. Instead, Junts Party would collaborate with the Popular Party (PP). This implies Sanchez would the support to hold the coalition government. Puigdemont stated considering a no-confidence vote if an agreement with PP on a pro-independence Prime Minister is reached. However, Alberto Nunez Feijoo, leader of PP, the opposition rejected the alliance, citing illegality and constitutional issues. (Jakob Hanke Vela, "[Puigdemont warns he's willing to topple Spanish PM Sánchez](#)," *Politico*, 29 November 2023)

Government commits EUR 1.4 billion to protect Donana National Park

On 27 November, Spain allocated a EUR 1.4 billion investment to safeguard the Donana national park from drying up. Teresa Ribera, Ecological Transition Minister, said that it was aimed to halt water-intensive crop cultivation by incentivizing farmers around the park. Overexploited aquifers have harmed the wetlands, prompting efforts to alleviate pressure on this unique ecosystem. Financial incentives will encourage farmers to halt cultivation or switch to dry, ecological farming. Plans to expand irrigation near Donana were cancelled to relieve aquifer stress. Donana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, hosts vital migratory bird habitats threatened by agricultural impacts, climate change, and drought. ("[Spain announces a €1.4 billion deal to help protect Doñana wetlands from drought](#)," *Euronews* 27 November 2023)

Prime Minister defends Amnesty for Catalan separatists

On 15 November, Pedro Sanchez, Spain's acting prime minister defended the amnesty deal for Catalonia's separatists in parliament. Street protests emerged in Madrid and Barcelona against the move. This move comes ahead of seeking endorsement for a new government. Sanchez secured smaller parties' support to reestablish his minority coalition. The amnesty is aimed to pardon Catalan separatists involved in the region's 2017 illegal secession bid, triggering controversy. Sanchez emphasized unity while facing criticism from the opposition, was accused of betraying the country followed by concerns raised by the judges and the EU on the legality of the amnesty. The separatists are expected to demand for an authorized independence referendum for Catalonia, signalling a challenge ahead. ("[Spain's leader defends amnesty deal for Catalan separatists ahead of vote on new government](#)," *Euronews*, 15 November 2023)

SWITZERLAND

Strengthen ties with France

On 15 November, during the state visit, Emmanuel Macron, France's President affirming France's commitment to deepen bilateral relations with Switzerland. Signing two memorandums of understanding, both leaders discussed on European policy, cooperation agreements, and energy supply collaboration. Both sides addressed global challenges, highlighting Russia's aggression in Ukraine and promoting dialogue through the European Political Community forum. Plans for the visit's second day included engagements in Lausanne and Geneva, focusing on European unification archives. They emphasized on the agenda to visit the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), highlighting robust research cooperation. ("[Switzerland and France reaffirm and deepen relations during President Emmanuel Macron's state visit](#)," *The Federal Council*, 15 November 2023)

SWEDEN

Parliament approves new nuclear power legislation

On 29 November, the Riksdag endorsed the government's proposal for additional nuclear power in Sweden. The new legislative changes allowed the construction of reactors in locations beyond Forsmark, Ringhals, and Oskarshamn. Furthermore, the law permitted more than ten reactors to operate simultaneously. The Riksdag agreed with the government's assessment that nuclear energy, offering fossil-free electricity, remains pivotal in Sweden's energy mix. The move comes in response to an increasing electricity demand and the imperative to phase out fossil fuels, especially for climate reasons. These amendments will take effect on 01 January 2024. ("[New nuclear power in Sweden](#)," *SVERIGES RIKSDAG*, 29 November 2023)

Turkey pledges swift NATO ratification

On 29 November, Tobias Billstrom, Foreign Minister of Sweden assured Turkey's decision to ratify its bid to Sweden's membership to NATO sooner. It was followed by discussions with Hakan Fidan, Turkey's Foreign Minister. Billstrom emphasized the expectation for the process to conclude, expressing eagerness for its completion without presumptions. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey postponed voting on Sweden's accession bid. This delay occurred without any new conditions being presented, as confirmed by Billstrom, who reiterated Sweden's completion of the necessary requirements for NATO membership. Hungary is also expected to ratify Sweden's alliance membership. (Stuart Lau, "[Sweden says Turkey pledges to ratify its NATO bid 'within weeks'](#)," *Politico*, 29 November 2023)

Tesla wins lawsuit against Swedish transport agency over licence plate delivery dispute

On 27 November, the court ruled in favour of Tesla, mandating licence plate delivery within seven days or facing a fine. The Transport Agency is accused of impeding access due to a postal worker strike, an

allegation denied by the agency. Tesla filed a lawsuit against the state over the strike hindering licence plate deliveries. Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla Motors, criticized the situation as 'insane,' considering the impact on new car use in Sweden. The legal battle unfolded amidst Tesla's resistance to collective wage agreements for its mechanics in Sweden, reflecting similar union concerns in Germany's Brandenburg plant. (Pierre Emmanuel Ngendakumana, "[Tesla sues Sweden over postal strike](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 27 November 2023)

THE NETHERLANDS

Geert Wilders' party dominates polls; coalition talks await

On 23 November, Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV) secured 37 of 150 parliamentary seats in the general elections. Wilders, known for anti-immigration and anti-EU views, is aimed to form a government with the centre and left parties, the opposition labour and green parties have denied joining with PVV. Coalition negotiations among multiple parties is expected to last for many months. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister remains caretaker until a new government is formed. Far-right party leaders from Hungary, France, and Italy congratulated Wilders. ("[Geert Wilders: Far-right populist wins big in Dutch election](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 November 2023)

Elections on high-stakes as polls begin

On 22 November, *Politico* reported on the opening for the Dutch election where four leaders, Geert Wilders, Frans Timmermans, Pieter Omtzigt, and Dilan Yeşilgöz compete against each other. Polls show Wilders' far-right party is gaining momentum, potentially rivalling the ruling People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). However, 63 per cent of voters remained undecided on 21 November, intensifying the unpredictable outcome. Wilders' anti-Islam stance persists, though he shifted focus to healthcare and security. Yeşilgöz opened to working with Wilders, while Omtzigt refuses collaboration due to anti-Islam policies. Timmermans aims to rally progressive voters against the far right, while the potential of a Wilders-led party,

the Party for Freedom (PVV), worries the Green-Left alliance supporters. Their alliances may determine the next government. (Eline Schaart, "[Dutch election is wide open as voting begins](#)," *Politico*, 22 November 2023)

Largest climate action protests staged in Amsterdam

On 12 November, thousands of protestors gathered across Amsterdam demanding for climate action. The protest came 10 days ahead of general elections and as per police report close to 70,000 were part of the rally. Greta Thunberg and the EU climate chief Frans Timmermans, were part of the protest, consisting of mostly young. The protests were mainly headed by Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for Future, Oxfam and Greenpeace environmental groups and was seen as the largest ever. Thunberg said: "As a climate justice movement, we have to listen to the voices of those who are being oppressed and those who are fighting for freedom and for justice." ("[Amsterdam hosts large climate protest as elections near](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 November 2023)

THE UK

Ursula von der Leyen urges young Britons to reverse Brexit

On 29 November, Ursula von der Leyen, EU President, urged for a return of the UK back to the EU, highlighting that young people must rectify the Brexit error. She appreciated the Windsor Agreement's positive impact on Northern Ireland, a deal between the UK and the EU, addressing post-Brexit trade and border issues, especially concerning Northern Ireland. The agreement sought to facilitate trade while preventing a hard border with Ireland. A spokesperson for Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister, rejected the notion of Brexit needing fixing, emphasizing Sunak's commitment to its benefits. Although polling revealed public support for rejoining the EU, Westminster (Parliament) remains cautious. The Labour Party, in the lead for the next government, has sought close EU ties but firmly opposes rejoining the single market or restoring freedom of movement. (Jamil Anderlini and Jon Stone, "[EU's von der Leyen urges youth to reverse](#)

[Brexit](#)," *Politico*, 29 November 2023)

Joint Expeditionary Force reacts to rising tensions in Baltic Sea

On 29 November, *Euronews* reported on ten Northern European countries' decision to form the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) on adopting of a "defence clause." The countries include, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. This enables reinforcement of maritime and air capabilities to safeguard vital underwater infrastructure in the Baltic Sea. The move comes due to several attacks observed lately. They seeked to bolster security in response to escalating incidents, including recent disruptions to crucial infrastructure. According to Pal Jonson, Sweden's defence minister: "Around twenty warships will be deployed in the Baltic Sea but also in areas of the North Atlantic to take into account the security situation and better protect crucial underwater infrastructure." ("[Ten European countries bolster military presence in Baltic Sea](#)," *Euronews*, 29 November 2023)

Strengthen defence ties with Turkey

On 23 November, the UK and Turkey, reinforced their commitment to bolster stability, security, and prosperity through closer collaboration. Grant Shapps, Defence Secretary and Yasar Guler, Turkey's Minister of National Defence, signed a Statement of Intent, emphasizing increased cooperation in defence. The agreement paves way for joint activities, including enhanced engagement in defence industries, potential joint training exercises in the Mediterranean, and security support in North Africa and the Middle East. Both countries reiterated support for Ukraine. Discussions also included on Turkey's role in facilitating the export of Ukraine's grain and the need for de-escalation in the Middle East. ("[UK and Türkiye to boost stability, security and prosperity](#)," *GOV.UK*, 23 November 2023)

Strengthens digital government collaboration with South Korea

On 22 November, the UK and South Korea signed a Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) to bolster government digital services, focusing on AI and sharing best practices. Minister for Implementation Alex Burghart met with Sang-min Lee, South Korea's Minister of the Interior, advancing the digital partnership. The Government Digital Service (GDS) is aimed to leverage AI in public services, ensuring mutual advancements. The collaboration is aimed for responsible technological use, equal access, and a skilled digital workforce. Amidst the state visit by Yoon Suk Yeol, agreements on security, tech, trade, and condemnations of North Korea's ballistic missile launch were highlighted. Both countries aimed for stronger economic ties and aligned global stances. (["UK and Republic of Korea join forces to step up cooperation on digital services and AI," GOV.UK](#), 22 November 2023; ["PM meeting with President Yoon Suk Yeol of the Republic of Korea: 22 November 2023," GOV.UK](#), 22 November 2023)

Supreme Court rules government Rwanda plan as unlawful

On 15 November, highlighting the "poor human rights record," Rwanda's 100 per cent rejection of asylum claims, and concerns over reliability of Rwanda, Reed ruled the scheme as unlawful. In April 2022, the government announced its plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda. In June 2022, the first flight with the asylum seekers scheduled to reach Rwanda was cancelled on the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) intervention. During December 2022 and October 2023, the High Court along with the Supreme Court investigation the case. The High Court ruled the deportation scheme as lawful whereas Court of Appeal ruled it as unlawful resulting to the case proceeding to Supreme Court hearing. In the final ruling of the Supreme Court, Lord Reed stated that unless a country qualifies as a safe country for refoulement and no risk present for those send to Rwanda only then it can be considered safe. (["Rwanda asylum plan unlawful, UK Supreme Court rules," BBC](#), 15 November 2023)

Cameron appointed back as foreign secretary

On 14 November, David Cameron was appointed back as foreign secretary after seven years. On 13 November, Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister met his new cabinet after James Cleverly was switched as home secretary and Suella Braverman was fired after her criticism against the metropolitan police. In his address to the cabinet, Sunak called it "an important week" with latest inflation figures out and court ruling on UK's Rwanda policy ahead. They also discussed on the war in Ukraine, conflict in Middle East and the need for humanitarian pauses. On the appointment of Cameron, not all in the Conservative Party is satisfied and the opposition called it as a desperate move. (George Wright and Kate Whannel, ["David Cameron returns to cabinet table after seven years," BBC](#), 14 November 2023)

REGIONAL

European Parliament faces far-right risk amid migration crisis

On 29 November, Manfred Weber, head of the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), cautioned for a shift in Europe to far-right if the present government fail to manage migration influx. He stressed the need to reduce irregular arrivals, with over 331,000 incidents in 2023, predominantly in the Central Mediterranean route. The Dutch elections reflected a shift towards far-right views, raising concerns for the upcoming European polls. Weber urged swift conclusion of the new pact on Migration and Asylum, emphasizing its critical role in appeasing skeptical voters. The pact, striving for a balanced the EU-wide policy, has sought to undergo final negotiations. Weber also highlighted tensions within the EPP concerning its hardened stance on migration's "external dimension," especially its cooperation with countries like Tunisia, while affirming its necessity in curbing illegal migration. (Jorge Liboreiro, ["EU countries need to curb irregular migration to prevent far-right surge, says Manfred Weber," Euronews](#), 29 November 2023)

Europe's inflation decline: Impact on consumers and businesses

On 29 November, *Euronews* reported that after enduring high inflation for two years,

Europe observed a potential downward trajectory in consumer price pressures. Despite this, the economic growth appeared sluggish, as noted in the European Commission's Autumn Forecast, signaling growth rates below three per cent. In Belgium, while energy prices stabilized, food costs continued rising, affecting customers and businesses adversely. Paolo Gentiloni, the European Commissioner, predicted that increased wages will offset inflation, fostering consumption and potentially boosting growth in 2024. However, concerns have persisted about energy costs for companies like Etex, spurring investments in efficient technologies amid rising expenses and decreased construction demand. The evolving energy situation remained uncertain due to geopolitical conflicts and inflation's intricate balance, risking stagflation. (Fanny Gauret, "[Eurozone inflation drops to two-year low, but Europeans are still feeling the pinch](#)," *Euronews*, 29 November 2023)

EU approves unified disability card for cross-border ease

On 27 November, the EU Council agreed on a directive for a unified European disability card and parking permit, simplifying travel for persons with disabilities across member states. This card ensures equal access to privileges like reduced fees, priority access, and reserved parking during short stays. National authorities will issue physical and digital cards, recognized the EU-wide as proof of disability. The directive emphasized on multilingual cards and QR codes for fraud prevention. Additionally, the parking card will replace existing permits for cross-border mobility within five years. Efforts focus on awareness, data protection, and aligning with the EU's disability rights strategy for 2021-2030. Negotiations with the European Parliament are anticipated in early 2024. ("[European disability card: travelling across the EU to become easier for persons with disabilities](#)," *European Council*, 27 November 2023)

EU Council passes Data Act for fair data access

On 27 November, the EU Council approved

the Data Act, ensuring equitable access and usage of data. Jose Luis Escriva, Spain's Minister of Digital Transformation, highlighted its potential in advancing the digital age, boosting economic growth and a unified data market across Europe. The act mandated manufacturers and service providers to grant users access to data generated by their products or services, promoting sharing with third parties. It is aimed to stimulate competition, foster innovation, and facilitate data portability for individuals and businesses. The law introduced trade secret protections, measures against unfair data-sharing contracts, and provisions for emergency data access. ("[Data Act: Council adopts new law on fair access to and use of data](#)," *European Council*, 27 November 2023)

European Commission reports stagnation in reducing the gender pay gap

On 14 November, the European Commission reported on the persisting gender pay gap in Europe. According to the report, women earn 13 per cent less than men on an average, similar to 2022, in 2023 for every EUR one earned by a man, a woman earns only 87 cents. Currently the gender pay gap decreased by 2.8 per cent and the commission reiterated: "Equal pay for the same work or work of equal value is one of the founding principles of the EU. It was laid down in the Treaty of Rome in 1957." Still the progress on eradicating the pay gap has been on slow trail. Earlier to address this, the Commission adopted the Pay Transparency Directive in June 2023 to ensure the employers applied principles of equal pay and allotted the EUR 6.1 million to member states to implement the directive. Yet the progress is yet to utilise. ("[EU: Gender pay gap still at 13%, commission says](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 14 November 2023)

INTERNATIONAL

EU approves free trade deal with New Zealand

On 27 November, the European Council approved the EU-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement. It paved the way for its

enactment once New Zealand completes its procedures, potentially in early 2024. Valued at nearly EUR 9.1 billion in 2022, bilateral trade is expected to surge by 30 per cent, with the EU exports potentially increasing by EUR 4.5 billion annually. This deal is aimed to eliminate tariffs on key exports, broadening market access for services, and bolster investment. Additionally, it protects renowned EU products and encourages digital trade, sustainability, and gender equality. The agreement also ensures sanctions for severe violations of core labour principles of the Paris Agreement. ([“EU-New Zealand: Council gives final green light to free trade agreement,” European Council, 27 November 2023](#))

EU condemns North Korea’s satellite launch

On 23 November, the EU condemned North Korea’s military satellite launch on 21 November using ballistic missile technology and called it a direct threat to global peace. The EU urged the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to halt such provocative actions, urging UN members to encourage meaningful dialogue for denuclearization. It called on the DPRK and Russia to comply with UN sanctions, refrain from military exchanges, and condemned any arms transfers linked to Russia’s war in Ukraine. Emphasizing the need for DPRK’s adherence to UNSC resolutions, it advocated for returning to Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) compliance and peaceful initiatives for stability in the Korean peninsula, supporting South Korea and Japan. ([“DPRK/North Korea: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the satellite launch,” European Council, 23 November 2023](#))

Parliament approves landmark trade deal with New Zealand

On 22 November, the European Parliament endorsed a groundbreaking Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with New Zealand. The

agreement eliminated 100 per cent of New Zealand’s tariffs upon entry into force and lifted 98.5 per cent of the EU tariffs in seven years. The deal protects the EU geographical indications, sensitive agricultural goods, and upholds Paris Agreement and labor standards. Bilateral trade is expected to surge by 30 per cent, with the EU investments in New Zealand likely rising by 80 per cent. Formal approval from member states is anticipated, paving the way for the agreement’s ratification by New Zealand, possibly in mid-2024. The FTA reflects the EU’s strategy of strengthening ties with like-minded countries. (Antonia Zimmermann and Camille Gijs, [“European lawmakers give green light to ‘model’ NZ trade deal,” Politico, 22 November 2023](#); [“Parliament approves EU-New Zealand free trade agreement,” European Parliament, 22 November 2023](#))

G7 condemns North Korea’s ballistic missile launch

On 22 November, G7 foreign ministers strongly condemned North Korea’s recent ballistic missile launch, deeming it a severe threat to regional and global peace. They emphasized the breach of UNSC resolutions by any missile technology use, urging complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the abandonment of North Korea’s weapons programs. The G7 demanded a united international response via the UNSC and stressed compliance with resolutions. Concerns mounted over arms transfers between North Korea and Russia, urging immediate cessation. The statement highlighted grave concerns over technology transfers potentially exacerbating global instability. The G7 reiterated the call for diplomacy and meaningful dialogue while denouncing North Korea’s human rights violations. ([“North Korea missile launch: G7 foreign ministers’ statement,” GOV.UK, 22 November 2023](#))

About the authors



Padmashree Anandhan

Ms Anandhan is a Project Associate at the National Institute of Advanced Studies. As part of the NIAS Europe Studies, her research focuses on issues relating to politics, protests, Brexit, economy, maritime and NATO' operations. Her larger research interest includes studying peace, conflict and global initiatives taken towards the ocean in Europe.



Rishika Yadav

Rishika Yadav is a Research Intern in NIAS Europe Studies at NIAS, Bangalore. Her area of interest includes the impact of Europe's Foreign Policy and domestic politics. She is currently working on an issue brief on elections in Turkey 2023. Her other areas of interests include South East Asia and East Asia.



Sreeja JS

Ms Sreeja is a Research Intern at NIAS, Bangalore. She is currently a postgraduate scholar at Madras Christian College, Chennai. Her areas of interest include EU-China relations, challenges in EU integration and emerging technologies. She is currently working on an issue brief on Germany and China's bilateral equation and the challenges to EU integration.

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