



NIAS Area Studies EUROPE MONITOR

NIAS-STIR Programme



global
politics

Discourses | Trajectories | Forecasts



Vladimir Putin visits Mongolia | Protests in Serbia | The Meloni-Starmer meeting



Europe Monitor #37 | Vol. 04 | Issue 10 | October 2024
An area studies initiative of NIAS

About NIAS Global Politics

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

About NIAS Europe Studies

NIAS Europe Studies is a part of the Institute's areas studies initiatives. It focuses on the following verticals at NIAS: Contemporary European affairs, domestic politics, migration, climate change, S&T and Europe's external relations. Besides the research focus, NIAS Europe Studies also aims to create a knowledge base in India on contemporary Europe; build capacity among young scholars in India to form a Europe young scholar network in India.

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

Editor

D Suba Chandran

Assistant Editor

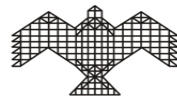
Padmashree Anandhan

Editorial Team

Advik S Mohan

Neha Tresa George

Samruddhi Pathak



National Institute of
Advanced Studies
NIAS

About NIAS

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

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

About Europe Monitor

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

The Monthly is an integral part of NIAS Europe Studies. It includes focused commentaries on Europe, short notes and daily updates on contemporary Europe. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of any institutions or organisations.

Europe Monitor

#37, Vol. 04, No. 10, October 2024



Image Source: Sofya Sandurskaya, TASS

EM COMMENTS

Vladimir Putin visits Mongolia:

Who wants what?

By Neha Tresa George

Serbia: Why are people protesting over lithium mining?

By Samruddhi Pathak

The European Housing Crisis: A Background

By Advik S Mohan

The Meloni-Starmer Meeting: Six Takeaways

By Neha Tresa George

EM DAILY FOCUS



Source: National Police of Ukraine/Telegram, REUTERS/Kacper Pempel, Daniel Vogl/dpa/AP, mofa.pna.ps

THE EU

Europe and the Storm Boris

80 Years of Benelux: A Profile

GERMANY

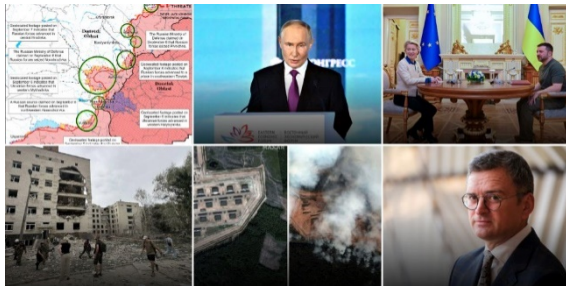
Germany Far-right AfD wins Thuringia and Saxony elections

UKRAINE

Russia's Drone attacks

WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES

By Advik S Mohan, Neha Tresa George and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Institute for the Study of War, RIA Novosti/Kremlin.ru, eunighbourseast.eu, CNN/Thierry Monasse, Maxar Technologies/AP/The Washington Post, AP

The War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 917 to Day 889 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 War in Ukraine.

EM DAILY BRIEF

By Advik S Mohan, Samruddhi Pathak and Neha Tresa George



Source: Alberto Lingria/Xinhua, Agence France-Presse, AP Photo/Bruno Fonseca, Marko Djokovic/AFP, action.wemove.eu, Anadolu Ajansi

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

COMMENT

Vladimir Putin visits Mongolia: Who wants what?

By Neha Tresa George

Engaging two brigades, mechanised and air assault in launching attacks into Russia while maintaining defence on home ground could be viewed as Ukraine's showcasing move,

On 02 September, Vladimir Putin, President of Russia visited Mongolia to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Khalkhin Goel, where the joint alliance of the Soviet Union and Mongolia defeated the Japanese imperial army. Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh, President of Mongolia welcomed him and highlighted the areas of cooperation in trade and economic partnership with Russia. He regarded the comprehensive strategic partnership between the countries as their "foreign policy priority." Both leaders noted the importance of the Mongolian Russian Intergovernmental Commission which promotes their mutual relationship and collaborations. They signed various agreements including the following: energy, health, environment, and the reconstruction of the TPP-3 thermal power plant in Ulaanbaatar. Further, an MoU was signed between the Russian Federal Service for the Oversight of Consumer Protection and Welfare and the Ministry of Health of Mongolia over the protection of Lake Baikal and the Selenga River.

Putin welcomed Khurelsukh to attend the BRICS summit which was scheduled to be held in Kazan, Russia.

Mongolia: Is it Russia's East Asia Pivot? Putin's visit, the first in five years, officially aimed at strengthening the bilateral trade and economic cooperation with Mongolia, and comes as part of Russia's "Pivot to East Asia policy." The second aims to extend Russia's influence over the East Asian countries like China, North Korea, Vietnam and Kazakhstan. Historically, Russia had used Mongolia as a buffer zone from 1921 till the Cold War.

Mongolia found a primary place in Russia's foreign policy back in 2016. In 2020, Moscow promised a "comprehensive strategic partnership" in the areas of defence, energy and railway infrastructure. Russia's primary interest in Mongolia lies in transforming it into a geostrategic and economic zone, and also countering Chinese and American interests. Russia also had pressured Mongolia to align with its regional initiatives like the Eurasian Economic Union and to use its far eastern ports rather than the Chinese ports in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Mongolia is also a part of Russia's strategic project "Power of Siberia 2," the successor of an already existing pipeline, carrying natural gas from Russia to China. Russia claims 50 per cent ownership in the trans-Mongolian railway running through Mongolia, Russia and China. With all these ventures, Russia has some leverage over Mongolia apart from their cultural ties. The visit also comes amidst increasing international isolationism against Russia in light of its war with Ukraine. By upgrading the relationship with Mongolia, Putin intends to have a stronghold over the East Asian economy while countering the western countries.

What is Mongolia's interest in hosting Putin? Although Mongolia adopted the policy of neutrality in the 1990s, its historical ties and close border with Russia has placed it in a difficult position. Mongolia is reliant on Russia for fuel and electricity imports. Around 28 per cent of Mongolia's imports are from Russia with a huge dependency on petroleum products.

Mongolia's involvement in Russia's strategic projects provides them with better connectivity and infrastructure in terms of

gas pipelines and railway lines. Russia also serves as a counterbalancing factor when it comes to Sino-Mongolian relations, thus helping to maintain its ties with China.

Mongolia acknowledges Russia's geopolitical interests by seeking a policy of strategic diversification. It is Russia's key partner from Asia in the Eurasian Economic Union from 2020. Since the agreement on "Comprehensive strategic partnership," Mongolia has increased its economic and strategic ties with Russia. It was also looking forward to being part of the "Power of Siberia 2" strategic project which will further boost its relations with both Russia and China. Putin's visit could also open the door for many such projects and infrastructure developments. It considers Russia as a strategically important neighbour and continues to have a peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship with Russia.

Mongolia is the only former communist regime that has adopted a democratic political system and open economy. This has helped the country to establish cordial relations with other countries like the US, Germany, Japan and South Korea. However, this third neighbour policy could deteriorate with Mongolia's increasing relations with Russia and China. Especially in the context of Russia's conflict with Ukraine, Putin's visit was closely watched by the western countries. It has tried to maintain its neutrality by not taking any particular side in the war. Putin's arrival marks his first visit to an International Criminal Court (ICC) member country since an arrest warrant was issued against him over the illegal

deportation of children in Ukraine. Despite pressure from the western countries and Ukraine, Mongolia's refusal to detain him puts the country in a perilous position in the international arena. This act questions Mongolia's third neighbour policy and membership in the ICC. Nevertheless, Putin's arrival elevates Mongolia's position in Russia's foreign policy, thereby, benefitting its economy and infrastructure.

References

- "What are Russian interests in Mongolia?" , *Mongolian Institute for Innovative Technologies*, 09 September 2024
- "Navigating the Triangular Dynamics: Mongol-Russian Relations in the Context of China," *CEIAS*, 27 February 2024
- "Mongolia in the middle of the Russia-Ukraine war," *East Asia Forum*, 01 April 2023
- "Putin's visit to Mongolia defies ICC warrant and tests neutral nation's 'third neighbor' diplomacy," *UMBC*, 03 September 2024
- "Putin in Mongolia amid ICC arrest warrant: Is the country defying international law?" *Firstpost*, 03 September 2024
- "Russian-Mongolian talks," *Kremlin.ru*, 03 September 2024
- "Putin gets lavish welcome in Mongolia despite ICC warrant," *Reuters*, 03 September 2024

Neha Tresa George is currently a Research Assistant at NIAS, Bangalore. She is a graduate in Political Science from Madras Christian College. Her interests include gender and ethnic issues in Europe.

COMMENT

Serbia: Why are people protesting over lithium mining?

By Samruddhi Pathak

In the upcoming six months, the focus is likely to be on broader political discussions concerning the new EU institutional leadership rather than on advancing specific legislative files.

Lithium was discovered in the western part of Serbia in 2004 by Rio Tinto, the world's second-largest mining company.

In July 2024, the EU and Serbia signed an agreement where the EU can easily procure Serbian lithium. Later, Rio Tinto announced an investment of USD 2.4 billion for extraction of lithium. According to the company estimate, the expected life of the lithium mine would be 40 years, and it will produce 2.3 tonnes of battery-grade lithium carbonate and 1,60,000 tonnes of Boric acid annually. The EU has been eyeing the lithium deposits in Serbia for the EV industry.

“Rio Tinto get out of Serbia”: Why are people protesting against the mining?

During July and August, Serbia witnessed protests against the mining rights benefitted by the European companies for lithium mines. Demonstrators shouted slogans like, “Rio Tinto get out of Serbia” and “We want Rio Tinto out.” According to Serbia’s Interior Ministry, almost 27,000 citizens participated in the protests.

The protests were specifically against Rio Tinto, a mining company headquartered in London. Rio Tinto was given the mining project in 2019. However, the government imposed a ban on lithium mining in 2022 but the Supreme Court overturned the ban in June 2024. Protestors argue that lithium mining has put Serbians’ lives in the Jadar valley at risk and Rio Tinto’s tainted image of operating mines is concerning.

Biljana Djordjevic, leader of the Green-left movement, said that Serbians fear that their lives are being put at risk for European businesses. According to Djordjevic, Serbian lithium would be used by European

companies for EV production, while most of the population in Serbia would not be able to afford those EVs. Thus, ultimately, their resources will be used by other countries for their profits.

Protestors fear that lithium mining will lead to water contamination and scarcity in the region. They also fear the loss of biodiversity. Mining will also require mass deforestation in the area endangering indigenous communities since Jadar Valley has substantial forest and agricultural land.

Jadar Valley is one of the few lithium mines which is inhabited and consists of agricultural areas. This puts the population settled in the Jadar region at an increased risk of soil erosion and land degradation. The waste produced in Jadar valley due to mining is even more hazardous since the valley has high deposits of Boron and Arsenic as well. Apart from these deposits, processing lithium ores requires highly concentrated Sulphuric acid.

What does the government want?

The government of Serbia wants to use its lithium reserves as leverage for its candidature for EU membership. Since the Kosovo war in 1999, Serbia has been trying to become a part of the EU. The Government also looks at the deal as a way to generate jobs, skilled labour, creation of infrastructure and Foreign Direct Investment. The deal will bring industrial actors in the EU closer to those in Serbia facilitating robust cooperation in the energy sector. The summit in Belgrade, where the agreement on lithium mining was signed, was also attended by executives of Mercedes and Stellantis. Serbia can satiate ninety per cent of Europe’s lithium demand. Europe is

also the second largest market for lithium after China.

What are the EU's interests?

According to the European Commission, the demand for lithium will grow 60 times by 2050. The domestic reserves among the EU countries are not adequate to accommodate the demand. Lithium, also referred to as white gold, is crucial for making batteries. Most companies and people today prefer storing energy in batteries and moving away from non-renewable resources. The main drivers of demand will be electric vehicles, an industry that German car, truck and bus manufacturers are eyeing. The EU launched the Green Deal in 2019 with the objective to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Under the Green Deal, the Green Deal Industrial Plan (GDIP) was introduced. GDIP mandates the EU members to build partnerships with potential suppliers and diversify sources, secure new trade agreements with resource rich countries and promote public-private partnerships.

The Russia-Ukraine War has disrupted the energy supply to Europe compelling them to accelerate their search for alternative options. Lithium emerges as the most investor-friendly due to its industrial scope. Serbia presents a logistical advantage as well. Since most lithium, currently, is imported from the Lithium Triangle consisting of South American nations, Chile, Argentina and Bolivia. Moreover, China controls most lithium supply chains since it is the biggest importer of lithium. Import from Serbia will eliminate these logistical issues.

Since Serbia is a part of the European continent, obtaining a mining licence and extracting lithium in Serbia provides sovereignty to Europe as a continent. Even though the Republic of Serbia is not a part of the EU, it is a candidate country and plans to join the Union by 2030. As per the Critical Raw Material Act, at least 10 per cent of the

extracted raw materials should be through local supplies. Thus, the deal serves Europe's protectionist motivations too.

References

- Daniel Boffey, "[Rio Tinto's past casts a shadow over Serbia's hopes of a lithium revolution](#)," *The Guardian*, 19 November 2021
- Elida Moreno, "[Hundreds protest at First Quantum's Panama copper mine](#)," *Reuters*, 10 January 2024
- Enjellushe Morina, "[Finding friends: Europe, Serbia, and the lithium catalyst](#)," *European Council of Foreign Relations*, 26 July 2024
- Fabian Cambero and Daina Beth Solomon, "[BHP removes striking workers at huge Chile copper mine, output at risk](#)," *Reuters*, 14 August 2024
- Lucía Bárcena, "[Serbia's lithium gamble](#)," *Transnational Institute*, 04 September 2024
- Sofia Ferreira Santos, "[Thousands protest against lithium mining in Serbia](#)," *BBC*, 11 August 2024
- "[Thousands protest in Serbia over crackdown on anti-lithium activists](#)," *Business Standard*, 02 September 2024
- Thomas Biesheuel, "[Rio Tinto's Lithium Patience Finally Pays Off in Serbia](#)," *Bloomberg*, 19 July 2024
- Misha Savic, "[Serbia's top court voids ban on Rio Tinto's lithium project](#)," *Bloomberg*, 11 July 2024
- Vera, M.L., Torres, W.R., Galli, C.I. et al, "[Environmental impact of direct lithium extraction from brines](#)" *Nature*, Vol. 4, 149–165, 23 February 2023

Samruddhi Pathak is a Research Assistant at NIAS, Bangalore. She is currently pursuing her doctoral studies at Symbiosis International University. Her areas of interest are European politics and West Asian studies.

COMMENT

The European Housing Crisis: A Background

By Advik S Mohan

Poland which has limited space operability among the EU countries presents a success model to use technical skill and technology resources to advance space exploration.

A key issue across Europe in the past few years has been the growing scarcity of cheap and available housing. Approximately 70 per cent of residents in the EU own their homes, while the remainder of the population rents their homes. A report by Eurostat in 2023 showed property prices across the EU had increased by 47 per cent and rents had risen by an average of 18 per cent between 2010 and 2022. This led to the decline of house ownership across the EU. Eurostat also found that 10.4 per cent of the EU urban population living in a household was affected by housing cost overburden and 6.2 per cent in the case of rural areas. As of 2022, 90 per cent of the population lived in their own houses in eight out of 36 countries.

Where is it happening?

The severity of the crisis differs across the EU. Estonia witnessed a 192 per cent increase in housing prices between 2010 and 2022, while Italy saw a decline in prices. Another example is, Germany and Switzerland; the percentage of individuals living as tenants in their house was 53.5 per cent and 57.5 per cent. While in countries like Austria, Turkiye, France, Denmark, Sweden, and the UK, the rate of residents living in their own houses was below 70 per cent.

In the Balkans, there is a higher rate of ownership. Over 95 per cent of residents own their homes in Albania, Romania, and North Macedonia. However, the percentage of housing is not enough, since the housing quality matters as well. The average number of rooms in the EU was 1.6 in 2022. Malta fared the best by this indicator; with 2.3 rooms per person. Countries like Luxembourg, Norway, Ireland, Belgium, and the UK also fared well; with rates of 2.0 rooms or more per person. On the other hand, the Balkan states had lower rates. The

high homeownership rates in the Balkans do not correspond with the availability of rooms. Montenegro and Albania had a rate of only 0.9 rooms per person. According to Eurostat, 61.6 per cent and 58 per cent of the population in Montenegro and Albania lived in overcrowded homes. Romania, Latvia, North Macedonia and Serbia also had rates of over 40 per cent of their population living in overcrowded houses. Cyprus, Malta and the Netherlands had the lowest overcrowding rates with 2.2, 2.8, and 2.9 per cent respectively. According to Eurostat, over 20 per cent of households in Greece and Denmark spend more than 40 per cent of their disposable income on housing.

In 2023, data from ratings agency Fitch showed housing prices had fallen or remained constant. Prices fell by two per cent in both the UK and France; five per cent in Germany, and rose slightly by two to three per cent in Italy and Spain. The housing crisis is also observed to have a dire social impact across Europe; primarily impacting the youth. For instance, 55 per cent of residents born between 1977 and 1986 in Portugal owned a home by 25 (Age). However, those born after 1997, were 25 per cent only. House prices have increased by 8.7 per cent over the past decade. Similarly, rents in Turkiye increased by 121 per cent between 2022 and 2023. Even Luxembourg with a high per capita income witnessed young residents failing to buy homes (Average house costs EUR 1.5 million). The Federal Statistics Office of Germany estimated one in five German households were spending at least two-fifths of their income on rent. It is also estimated that it is short of over 800,000 apartments. In the Netherlands, the average home costs EUR 452,000. Similarly, the average rent of a flat in London stands at nearly EUR 2,500 per month, while renting a studio apartment in Paris now takes six months.

Why is the crisis happening?

First, the current crisis is the result of decades of flawed policies. Over the past few decades, Europe has witnessed rapid urbanisation. 72 per cent of the EU population now lives in urban areas, with the percentage in countries like Italy and the UK exceeding 80 per cent. The rapid pace has made it difficult for national governments to build enough homes. At the same time, construction costs have also rapidly increased. This made it difficult for the middle class to access housing.

Second, government policies are designed to benefit the prosperous sections of society. An example of this is how in 2010, the Government of the Netherlands abolished the Ministry of Housing and Planning and allowed housing corporation stock to be bought by investors. As a result, a quarter of homes in the big cities of the Netherlands are owned by foreign investors. Similarly, countries like Greece and the UK have rental schemes wherein landlords and private investors benefit more from the housing system. An example of this is the benefits provided by the UK Government for Russian businessmen, who bought up property in London as second homes.

Third, attempts to reform have been challenged by local institutions. An example of this is the refusal of local governments to implement housing price controls in Spain, despite the Government of Spain passing a law decreeing that. This state of affairs means houses are inaccessible for most of the youth and middle classes, while the rich benefit more. Some have blamed large-scale immigration to Europe; such as from the Middle East and Ukraine for the crisis. However, there is no evidence that immigrants are responsible for the shortage of housing in Europe.

Fourth, immigrants and asylum seekers face more difficulty in finding adequate housing. Surveys in France, Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands have found discrimination by landlords against house-seekers of an ethnic background, or with a foreign-sounding name. Despite this, right-wing populist parties like the PVV in the Netherlands, the AfD in Germany, and Reform in the UK have

blamed immigrants for the crisis. However, the real problem lies with the existing housing systems across nations which benefit the elite sections more.

Fifth, the Austrian housing model as a prospective solution. To tackle the crisis social housing can be made more accessible and affordable for the majority of the population. The Austrian capital of Vienna offers a potential model to follow. Vienna provides both public housing owned by the local government, as well as rent-controlled housing run by housing associations. Moreover, the middle class is not excluded from housing, since 75 per cent of the population qualifies for governmental guidelines for owning a house. Additionally, the city has restricted private investment and rentals into housing, keeping rent prices low. The example of Vienna could help European nations in solving their housing crisis.

References

- Servet Yanatma, "Housing in Europe: Where do people rent more than they buy?," *Euro News*, 13 May 2024
- Eric Albert, Sandrine Morel, Marina Rafenberg, Cecile Boutelet, Anne-Francoise Hivert, Jean-Pierre Stroobants and Allan Kaval, "Why Europe's housing crisis is taking hold," *Le Monde*, 14 March 2024
- Jon Henley, "Higher costs and cramped conditions: the impact of Europe's housing crisis," *The Guardian*, 06 May 2024
- Joanna Adhem, "Europe's housing crisis: Portugal, Turkey and Luxembourg struggle to find solutions," *Euro News*, 10 October 2023
- Annabelle Quince and Nick Baker, "Vienna has created an equitable and affordable housing market. Here's how," *ABC News*, 04 August 2023
- Jon Henley, "Everything's just... on hold': the Netherlands' next-level housing crisis," *The Guardian*, 06 May 2024
- Paulo Pena, "Europe's governments inflate housing prices with huge tax privileges for real estate," *Investigate Europe*, 08 December 2022
- Ashifa Kassam, "'Double punishment': the racial discrimination in Europe's rental housing market," *The Guardian*, 08 May 2024

Advik S Mohan is a Research Intern at NIAS, Bangalore. His areas of interest include politics and societal issues in the United Kingdom, region, and conflicts and security in the Middle East.

COMMENT

The Meloni-Starmer Meeting: Six Takeaways

By Neha Tresa George

The explosions and the investigations that followed led to a blame game between the countries.

On 16 September, Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister and Keir Starmer, the UK's Prime Minister met at Villa Doria Pamphilj in Rome. Following their discussion, a joint statement was issued, aiming to bolster their strategic partnership in areas of common interest. The statement read: "We agreed on some practical measures to make the strategic relationship stronger than it has ever been, in full accordance with Italy's membership of the EU and the UK's relationship with the EU." Starmer was accompanied by Martin Hewitt, the newly appointed UK Border Security Commander for closely working with Italy on the issue and prevention of illegal immigration. Under the UK's relationship and Italy's membership with the EU, the countries intend to work for their "security, stability and growth" by upholding the principles of "democracy, justice and rule of law."

Following are the six takeaways.

1. Deepening cooperation in security and defence sectors

Italy and the UK, as NATO allies aim to deepen their security and defence through various military exercises.

The Italian Navy will join the UK carrier operations in 2025 as part of their defence collaborations. Both highlighted the importance of the Global Compact Air Programme (GCAP) in promoting defence industrial capacities. They reiterated the importance of promoting European defence industrial resilience through NATO and EU cooperation. This could be done by showcasing the complex weapons and their capabilities, increasing mutual defence exports and promoting multinational initiatives aimed at enhancing EU-NATO cooperation.

The two leaders also discussed the forthcoming 2+2 dialogue between the

Foreign and Defence ministers of Italy and the UK.

2. Detering illegal immigration and cross-border conflicts

How to deter illegal immigration, is an issue across Europe.

In this context, Starmer appreciated Meloni's "upstream" policies which cut down almost 60 per cent of the illegal and irregular arrivals since 2022. The Italian government had signed agreements with various African countries such as Tunisia to deter the departure of people, restricted work on the improvement of rescue ships and suppressed human trafficking at the borders.

As the Prime Minister of a country, grappled with unrest and riots over immigration policies, Starmer presented himself as a British leader following "pragmatism." He expressed his interest in learning and adopting strategies similar to those of Italy, despite the criticisms faced by humanitarian groups and asylum seekers. The leaders further discussed the Albania scheme, which is set to open in a few weeks. In this scheme, Italy had signed a deal with Albania to accommodate some rescued male migrants till their asylum claims were processed. However, Starmer stressed that he was uncertain of the outcome and was looking forward to it. The countries jointly agreed to enhance migration partnerships with countries of origin and transit and promote humanitarian returns.

To promote cross-border cooperation, the UK's Security Commander pledged to work with the EU countries and combat smuggling and trafficking. The leaders promised to monitor data exchanges, illegal financial flows and trade which impede the safety of border areas. They realised the importance of combining global partners through organisations such as Europol and

INTERPOL to tackle the common problem of 'organised immigration crime.'

3. Boost in economy and trade

With economic growth as the top priority for both Italy and the UK, the leaders vowed to extend their trade and economic relations. Italy is one of the top 10 trading partners of the UK. It is also the sixth largest source of foreign direct investment to the UK. Starmer met with the business leaders of Italy and announced the investment of EUR 485 million by two large Italian companies, Leonardo (defence manufacturer) and Marcegaglia (steel manufacturer) into the UK economy. He believed that it would create new jobs for people and elevate their standard of living. The leaders also looked forward to the conference of British and Italian CEOs to discuss the bilateral trade opportunities and ease of doing business. Further, they intended to work together on defence, Greentech, science and innovation.

4. Resolute support to Ukraine

The leaders condemned Russia's war in Ukraine and its potential threats faced by the EU. They promised to support Ukraine in its reconstruction program and peace resolution. They also joined hands to deliver the loan of EUR 50 billion to Ukraine proposed by the G7 leaders under the presidency of Italy. Further, Starmer expressed his determination to work for Italy's "Ukraine Recovery Conference," set to be conducted in 2025.

5. Call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza

The leaders stood united in their unwavering support for Gaza in the Israel-Palestine war. They called for the release of all the hostages captured during the war and emphasised the need for humanitarian aid in

Gaza. They hoped for de-escalation on both sides and calming of tensions specifically in the West Bank. Starmer pointed out that these steps were "vital and urgent."

6. Tackling the global challenges

The UK and Italy as key allies set out their ambitious goals to tackle the upcoming global challenges. Earlier, they reaffirmed their relationship through various initiatives such as the UK-Italy Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Cooperation and Global Compact Air Programme (GCAP), a joint initiative to develop a sixth-generation fighter jet. Through the joint statement, Starmer and Meloni underline their primary areas of cooperation and collaboration such as defence, security, immigration, trade, economy and cross-border conflicts.

References

- ["Joint statement between UK and Italy," Gov.UK, 16 September 2024](#)
["UK's Starmer heaps praise on 'remarkable' Meloni," Politico, 16 September 2024](#)
["UK PM Starmer to meet Italy's Meloni for illegal immigration talks," Morning Star, 16 September 2024](#)
["President Meloni meets with UK Prime Minister Starmer," Italian Government, 16 September 2024](#)
["UK leader Starmer seeks to learn from Meloni's tough migration policies at meeting in Rome," Associated Press, 16 September 2024](#)

Neha Tresa George is currently a Research Assistant at NIAS, Bangalore. She is a graduate in Political Science from Madras Christian College. Her interests include gender and ethnic issues in Europe.

EM Daily Focus*



Source: National Police of Ukraine/Telegram, REUTERS/Kacper Pempel, Daniel Vogl/dpa/AP, mofa.pna.ps

THE EU

Europe and the Storm Boris

By Samruddhi Pathak

On 13 September, warnings were issued across central Europe in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria and Italy over Storm Boris. Since then, several towns in these countries began to experience heavy rainfall. As a result, the death toll reached 27, due to heavy flooding. The devastation that Storm Boris caused highlights the preparation in central European countries to deal with the forecasted floods.

Storm Boris: The damage across the continent

On 15 September, Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland, declared a state of natural disaster. Almost 40,000 people were evacuated from southern Poland. Tusk also called for an emergency meeting with other ministers to chalk out a plan to deal with the floods. Rescue volunteers and helicopters were provided by NATO to Poland. The Oder River, the second-longest river in Poland, had reached alarming water levels. Cities

like Wroclaw and Stronie Slaskie were hit badly, requiring urgent rescue operations. Apart from thousands evacuated, almost 70,000 households were left without access to water and electricity. The towns on the Poland-Czech border were the worst hit. According to the initial estimates of the government, almost 18,000 buildings have been destroyed.

On 15 September close to 15,000 people were evacuated from the Moravia-Silesian in the Czech Republic. Almost 60,000 households were left without electricity, drinking water and transport facilities due to floods.

In Hungary, Budapest was impacted the most due to the rise in water levels of the Danube River. The river was rising by one metre every 24 hours. The water level was 5.89 metres by 16 September. By 19 September, the water from the banks of the Danube River reached the steps of the Parliamentary building in Budapest.

In Austria, around 26 communities were cut off from electricity and water facilities. Austria received more rainfall in four days

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

than what it used to receive throughout the Autumn season. One firefighter was also reported to be dead while rescuing stranded citizens. Similarly, in Italy, almost 1,000 people were evacuated. The National Fire Department of Italy carried out more than 500 rescue operations in Italy. Slovakia, Germany and Romania also dealt with the devastating impact of the floods.

Weather Conditions and Weak Infrastructure

First; extreme weather conditions. This problem is not just limited to Europe. However, Europe is the fastest-warming continent. In 2022, record-breaking temperatures resulted in at least 60,000 premature deaths. Climate scientists believe that the warming of Atlantic and Mediterranean waters has led to an increased number of storms and hurricanes in the region. These floods required huge numbers of army personnel, rescue helicopters and firefighters to deal with the floods. Most climate scientists cite increased Earth temperature as a reason behind such catastrophic events. The Earth's temperature is increasing due to fossil-fuelled induced climate change, according to several reports. Despite such deployment, most European countries do not look at climate change as a security issue. Most governments, across the world, have been lethargic in implementing climate policies and reducing carbon emissions.

Second; Europe's weak infrastructure. Apart from the scale of the floods, this damage also reflects the unpreparedness of European countries towards disasters like flooding. Climate scientists said that these damages suggest that Europe has a weak infrastructure to deal with climate change. Floods also occurred when Portugal was already dealing with wildfires. On 11 March 2024, the European Environmental Agency published a report that concluded that Europe's infrastructural development is not keeping up with the pace of climate change. The report said that Europe might face problems ranging from coastal flood risks, increased insurance premiums to food insecurity due to climate change. The report called for urgent changes in Europe's climate policy and infrastructure budget to manage the impact of climate change. The report

said, "For most major climate risks, EU policies are not specific enough to ensure resilience against rapidly increasing risk levels."

The Economic Fallouts

According to early estimates from Morningstar DBRS, the losses could range from EUR 700 million to EUR one billion, among all the European countries, the Czech Republic is predicted to have suffered the most insured losses. This is going to put immense pressure on insurance companies. JBA Risk Management, a UK-based environmental consultant, said that around EUR 7.8 billion are spent on repairing damages caused due to flooding. The Czech Republic's expenditure on repairing damages due to floods and providing relief to the victims is estimated to be around 0.2 to 0.5 per cent of the GDP. The EU also released a relief fund to countries affected by the floods. Andrzej Domański, the Finance Minister of Poland, said that the amount of EUR 5.6 billion will not be enough to cover the damages. Thus, even the budget forecasts made by firms like Moody's are predicting government debt. However, the immediate repairing requirement will give the construction industry a short term boost. Before European economies could revive from the damages caused by COVID-19, they were already dealing with devastating floods. Europe had dealt with such floods in 2023 as well.

The expenditure is expected to only increase in the future. Governments of Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and Italy released millions of Euros as relief packages for flood victims.

Grzegorz Drózdź, a market analyst at Conotoxia Invest, said that damages to buildings, infrastructure and public property also leads to decrease in production and economic activity. This further leads to decrease in exports and imports causing an economic deficit to economies that are strained. Data published by Ipopema brokerage showed that the recent floods cost PZU, Poland's biggest insurance company, 10 per cent of its profits. Many industrial plants and production lines were also shut down due to floods.

The Netherlands Exception

The Netherlands is a low country, meaning it lies below sea level. The country has regional water boards with their own tax systems. Harold van Waveren, an expert on water management, said that the Netherlands has adapted climate change into urban planning with amphibious houses and “Room for the River” policy. Under the policy, stronger embankments, flood barriers and higher dams were constructed. It also led to the creation of Delta Works, a series of construction for flood management throughout south Holland. Delta Works is referred to as the world’s largest flood management system. Thus, there are lessons that the Netherlands can offer after the devastating floods in Europe.

References

“[Europe is not prepared for rapidly growing climate risks](#),” *European Environmental Agency*, 11 March 2024

“[EU pledges billions in aid for flood-stricken areas as northern Italy hit](#),” *Al Jazeera*, 19 September 2024

Adam Easton, Malu Cursino and Ruth Comerford, “[‘Catastrophe’ as deadly floods hit Central and Eastern Europe](#),” 16 September 2024

David W Cerny, Radovan Stoklasa and Janis Laizans, “[Central Europe braces for further flooding ‘apocalypse’ as death toll rises](#),” *Reuters*, 17 September 2024

Grace Dean, “[Storm Boris batters Italy after wreaking havoc in central Europe](#),” 20 September 2024

Doloresz Katanich and Angela Barnes, “[Deadly floods in Europe: How much is it going to cost economies?](#),” *Euronews*, 18 September 2024

Jan Lopatka, Karl Badohal and Gergely Szakacs, “[Deadly floods add to fiscal strains in central Europe](#),” *Reuters*, 20 September 2024

Michael Kimmelman, “[Going With the Flow](#),” *The New York Times*, 13 February 2013

80 years of Benelux: A Profile

By Samruddhi Pathak

Formation of Benelux

During World War II, all three countries were occupied by Germany and functioned in exile, from London. Belgium, the

Netherlands and Luxembourg were economically smaller than other European players like France, Italy and Spain. Meanwhile, their geographical advantages were also less. Thus, the formation of Benelux and the complete economic integration of the three countries strengthened their position on international platforms. Even if foreign trade had certain problems, Benelux provided barrier-free trade to the three members.

Their political stance was also amplified as Benelux in international organisations. Even though the Netherlands and Belgium had differences in approach towards European integration and the Marshall Plan, Benelux emerged as a common political voice for all three members. According to historians, forming blocs is a coping strategy that countries have during or after a war to deal with trade imbalances.

Benelux since the 1940s

On 21 October 1943, the monetary agreement was signed between the three countries. The monetary agreement fixed the exchange rates between Belgian–Luxembourg franc and the Dutch guilder. Since 1921, Belgium and Luxembourg already had an economic union called the Belgo-Luxembourg Economic Union. In 1944, the Benelux countries laid the foundation for fixed exchange rates. They realised that in post-war years, most countries faced the problem of parity in economies; due to volatile exchange rates, countries would face trade imbalances. This issue was solved by the Benelux monetary agreement in 1943. During the following year, three countries had meticulous discussions on a common external tariff and the Customs Union Convention was signed in 1944. However, the agreement was not ratified by the three members until 1947 and the agreement was fully effective only in 1949. Despite signing the agreement, there were differences between Belgium and the Netherlands over the trade deficit and employment provision. Under the Convention, a tariff community was formed to eliminate customs duties on trade among Benelux countries. However, Benelux countries maintained their protectionist laws like deciding quotas and levies. In 1953,

Benelux countries decided to adopt common export and import policies. This led to the three countries taking a common stand on global trade issues. Later, on 03 February 1958, Benelux countries signed the Benelux Economic Union Treaty in The Hague. The Treaty declared free movement of people and goods among the Benelux. It was fully effective from 1960.

Benelux and the EU

Apart from dealing with European countries in one voice, Benelux assimilated into the EU. Benelux signed a Schengen Agreement with the Republic of France and the Federation of Germany in 1985. The Agreement eliminated border controls and other formalities at common borders. This set an example for European countries on restriction-free borders. Benelux was the first Union in which free movement of people and goods was allowed. It also fixed the currency exchange rates, laying the foundation for the European Economic Union and further, for common currency in the EU. Benelux also signed the Convention for Cross-Border Policing for carrying out joint patrols and observations. Thus, Benelux has set an example for how small states can survive. Today, Benelux focuses on three areas; economic union, sustainable development and interior affairs. In 2024, Belgium is the President of the Union. Luxembourg will be holding the presidency in 2025, as it is on a rotation basis. Benelux countries also have right-wing governments. New areas of cooperation have emerged in Benelux, such as data exchange, sustainability, policing and cybercrime. The Government of Luxembourg describes Benelux as a “testing ground for cooperation within the European Union.”

References

Lorene Paul, “[Benelux countries were blueprint for Europe](#),” Luxembourg Times, 07 September 2024

“[Benelux Union](#),” accessed on 18 September 2024

James Boughton, “[Financial Relations between the Netherlands and Belgium 1943 to 1993](#),” IMF eLibrary, 13 December 2004

GERMANY

Far-right AfD wins Thuringia and

Saxony elections

By Samruddhi Pathak

On 01 September, two out of the 16 states in Germany, Thuringia and Saxony, casted their votes for the Landtag, the state parliament.

On 02 September, the results were clear. Alternative for Germany (AfD), a far-right wing party, emerged as the largest one in Thuringia winning 32 per cent of the votes. CDU won the highest share of votes in Saxony with 31.9 per cent of the votes while AfD came second to CDU with a close margin, winning 30.6 per cent. Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW), a relatively new party, emerged as the third largest party in both the states.

Olaf Scholz said, “Our country cannot and must not get used to this. The AfD is damaging Germany. It is weakening the economy, dividing society and ruining our country’s reputation.” Björn Höcke, a prominent leader of AfD in Thuringia, said, “We are the number one people’s party in Thuringia. You don’t want to classify one-third of Thuringian voters as right-wing extremists, do you?” Sahra Wagenknecht, the leader and founder of the BSW party, “We want the war in Ukraine to end and we don’t see that happening with more and more arms deliveries.” Friedrich Merz, a leader of CDU in Thuringia, said, “We will not start any cooperation with the AfD.” Meanwhile, media houses like Politico and Deutsche Welle have summarised the elections as a big win for AfD and BSW, simultaneously a huge loss for the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

What is the background?

First, voting trends in Thuringia and Saxony. Saxony is a state in eastern Germany. It is the most populous state of Germany. It suffered a drastic decline in employment rates since the unification. Saxony also had uranium mines, a source of income for the state. However, the mining stopped over environmental concerns after unification. Thuringia is another state in eastern Germany. The state mostly consists of forests. Thus, the state’s main income source is forestry and agriculture. Even though it has a manufacturing industry, it is not as prosperous as most states in Germany. It has

44 constituencies, out of which AfD won 29 in the first vote. A report published by the Government of Germany in 2022 suggests that almost 20 per cent of the population in eastern Germany feels that they have been left behind in the economic progress compared to western states. The University of Leipzig carried out a survey in eastern Germany just before the elections and found that more than half the population wanted authoritarian leadership.

Second, electoral history in Thuringia and Saxony. The top three parties in both the states are AfD, CDU and BSW. Most experts perceive BSW as the winner of the elections. Despite being a new party, it managed to procure 15 seats in both states; 15.8 per cent of votes in Thuringia and 11.8 per cent in Saxony. Meanwhile, AfD won 40 seats in Saxony and 32 seats in Thuringia, which was ten more than the last elections in both states which were held in 2019. The CDU won 40 seats in Saxony which is two less than the last elections.

Third, the rise of the AfD. The emergence of AfD is not a sudden event in Saxony and Thuringia. As the above statistics suggest, AfD had won substantial votes in the 2019 Landtag as well. It suggests the space that the far-right narrative is gaining in the national discourse. However, this is not the case in western Germany. As per the exit polls published ARD, AfD does not pose a challenge to centre-left or centre-right as much as it does in Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg. Evaluating the results of Landtag elections, most national media reports have suggested declining hold of left-leaning parties and the ruling coalition of SPD, FDP and the Greens party.

Fourth, campaign issues. AfD is a far-right party which has advocated for the termination of military aid to Ukraine. Meanwhile, BSW also advocates ending aid for Ukraine. Thus, providing German support to Ukraine emerged as a polarising issue among voters. The BSW has campaigned for left-leaning economic policies like wealth redistribution, and at the same time, it proposed right-leaning deportation laws and strict immigration control. The AfD had also

taken an extreme right stance on immigration. The sentiment is said to be fuelled by the Solingen stabbing incident that took place in August, for which the Islamic State took the responsibility and Germany's immigration procedure came under scrutiny by the voters. Similarly, CDU which emerged as the largest party in Saxony will also hold talks with the ruling coalition in Bundestag on controlling immigration.

What does it mean?

First, the rise of AfD and BSW. AfD becoming the main opposition party in state parliament will certainly bring a far-right narrative in the national discourse of Germany. Similarly, BSW, which holds conservative views on migration, also has significant representation. This also reflects the declining hold of SPD, FDP and Greens, the ruling parties in Bundestag, on the voters.

Second, the rise of debate on migration and Islamophobia. The role of liberal deportation laws and Islamophobia in the elections indicates polarisation of voters. The upcoming Landtag elections in Brandenburg on 22 September 2024 will also paint a clearer picture of regional politics in Germany. Brandenburg elections will be important because it consists of Berlin, the capital city.

UKRAINE

Russia's Drone attacks

By Padmashree Anandhan

In the news

On 2 September, the Russian Ministry of Defence reported on targeting Ukraine's defence industry enterprises using long-range and attack unmanned aerial vehicles in Kharkiv. The ministry stated: "The Sever Group of Forces in Volchansk and Lipty directions hit formations of 71st Jaeger Brigade, 3rd Assault Brigade of the AFU, and 36th Marine Brigade near Kharkov and Volchansk (Kharkov region)."

On 01 September, Ukraine's military claimed Russia's ballistic missiles and power-guided bomb attack on Kharkiv city resulting in the

death of 40. The attack comes as a counter to Ukraine's drone attack on energy facilities including an oil refinery in Moscow.

According to the report in The New York Times, nearly ten explosions were observed across Kharkiv city. Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy said: "Every such strike on Kharkiv and our other cities and towns proves the correctness of our tactics, particularly in the Kursk region — we must push the war back to where it came from, into Russia."

On 21 August, Russia's Ministry of Defence claimed to have deterred the largest drone attack by Ukraine against its two energy facilities, Konakovo Power Station and an oil refinery in Moscow. The ministry stated: "Last night, while the Kiev regime was trying to carry out a terrorist attack using unmanned aerial vehicles on the territory of the Russian Federation, on duty air defence systems shot down and intercepted 158 fixed-wing UAVs."

Issues at large

First, Russia's retaliatory attacks using drones. Since the delivery of the West's advanced air defence systems, the frequency of attacks in Russia has multiplied. This ranges from targeting the airfields, energy infrastructure and military brigades. The Kursk operation provided an additional advantage for the Ukrainian forces to launch deeper attacks into the Russian territory. This shows how Russian defence has lowered to prevent damage and how Ukrainian air defences have strengthened from Western support. Since 2023, the intensity of drone attacks in airfields (Ryazan and Saratov) and Belgorod has increased and has slowly expanded further into Russia.

Second, targeting the Kharkiv city. Kharkiv located 40 kilometres south of the Russian border is strategically important as it is home to the largest Ukrainian military brigades and functions as an intersection between Russia's Rostov-on Don to Crimea. Earlier in 2023, Russian troops advanced from one settlement to another in the north of Kharkiv due to its strategic advantage to target. Since 2024, southern Ukraine has been the focus due to geographical proximity. It has also been easier for Russia

to maintain its position in southern and eastern Ukraine due to its location and use it for quick retaliation against Ukraine's incursive attacks.

Third, the West's air-defence support. Compared to Ukraine's November 2022 counteroffensive and the 2024 cross-border offensive into Kursk, the West's support has upgraded from advanced military equipment and defence systems to advanced air defences. This includes "12 National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) and munitions, more than 2,000 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, Patriot air defense batteries, HAWK air defense systems, AIM-7, RIM-7, and AIM-9M missiles for air defense" and relevant equipment to integrate west's launchers, missiles and existing air defence systems. The challenge faced by the Ukrainian military over the delayed US aid package no longer exists. It helped the Ukrainian military to defend its ground and expand its strikes into Russia.

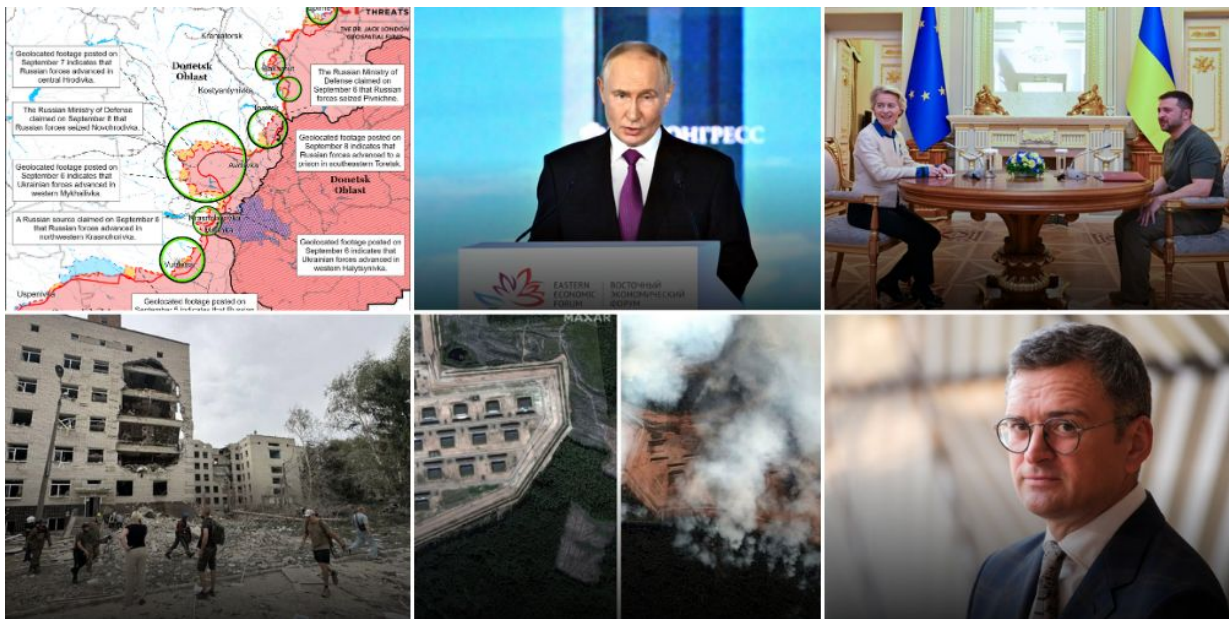
In perspective

First, Ukraine's cry to showcase its capability. Taking the ongoing Kursk operation and the recent drone attacks across Russia is rather political than strategic. Russia which was selectively attacking Ukrainian military brigades and energy infrastructure is now provoked by Ukraine to rethink its internal security. However, Russia has been projected among the West to have downplayed the Kursk incursion, it has been able to defend and counter the missile attacks targeted inside. From the overall war point, this can be seen as Ukraine's act to showcase its improved aerial attacking capabilities and to deceive its previous territorial losses.

Second, the tacit West. Since the start of the war, the debate over the supply and usage of Western defence systems has transcended. From sending defence equipment and ground defence systems to advanced air defences the debates have always circled to prevent the escalation of the war. Continuing into the third year, the barricades to supply F-16s and usage of west-supplied defence systems into Russian territory no longer stand restricted. Militarily and politically the West has announced its support to Ukraine for the Kursk invasion and the missile launched into Russia. The implicitness of the West has given larger ground for Ukraine to further its attacks.

War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Advik S Mohan, Neha Tresa George and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Institute for the Study of War, RIA Novosti/Kremlin.ru, euneighbourseast.eu, CNN/Thierry Monasse, Maxar Technologies/AP/The Washington Post, AP

War in Ukraine Days 949 & 950: **Massive attack recorded in Zaporizhzhya and Sumy**

War on the Ground:

On 29 September, *Firstpost* reported on an attack using guided bombs by Russian forces on the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia. Ivan Fedorov, the Governor of Zaporizhzhia informed three city districts were attacked with 13 guided bombs in the early morning. Fedorov informed 16 individuals, including two children aged 8 and 17 years old, were injured by the bombs. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine informed that the bombs damaged city infrastructure, residential buildings, and railways in Zaporizhzhia. The guided bomb strikes came amidst warnings by the Armed Forces of Ukraine that Russian forces were likely about to launch offensive operations in the wider Zaporizhzhia region. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian Air Force informed 15 of the 22 Russian drones launched overnight were shot down, and five others were destroyed

through electronic defences. The fate of the other two drones remained unknown.

On 28 September, *South China Morning Post* reported that the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil had pushed ahead with their prospective peace plan for Ukraine at the UN General Assembly. Wang Yi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China informed the international community needed to work towards convening a peace conference with a fair discussion of all proposals. Wang also informed the peace plan that proponents wanted to be partners with both Russia and Ukraine. Celso Amorim, the Chief Advisor on Foreign Policy to the President of Brazil stated the meeting at the UN was the first step towards a broad discussion. Amorim also stated the meeting showed how Global South countries could play a constructive role in advocating for peace and expressing wider global support

* War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from four dimensions. First, The War on the Ground: Second, The Moscow View: Third, Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read them every day.

for a political solution to end the conflict. The Brazilian Advisor also informed this was the first meeting of the newly formed “Friends for Peace” group. Algeria, Bolivia, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, and Zambia joined discussions over the peace plan. France, Hungary, and Switzerland sent observers for the meeting. Anthony Blinken, the US Secretary of State informed any peace plan needed to balance the interests of both sides and not just cater to the needs of Russia, China’s close ally. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine criticised the peace plan and stated Russia could only be forced into peace. However, Wang attempted to reassure doubts over the plan and informed China had no vested interests in the Ukraine war.

On 28 September, *ABC News* reported on the two consecutive Russian strikes on a medical centre in the Ukrainian city of Sumy, 20 kilometres from Russia’s Kursk region. The attack had led to the death of nine people and injured 21 others. According to Ihor Klymenko, Ukraine’s Interior Minister, the second attack happened while patients and staff in the hospital were evacuating after the first one. Local officials in the city claim the usage of Shahed drones in the attack.

On 30 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the drone attack over Kyiv. According to the Kyiv City Military Administration, there were explosions in Kyiv as air defence systems were activated to target Shahed drones. Serhii Popko, Chief of the city said: “Air raid alert continues! Air defense is operating in the capital. Stay in shelters until the air raid alert is lifted!” According to earlier reports, Russian troops had launched the drones from the south and north of the country.

On 29 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the overnight attack of Ukrainian forces near the village of Kotluban in Russia’s Volgograd region. The attack destroyed a missile and artillery ammunition arsenal. According to some sources, a train delivering Iranian missiles had arrived at the arsenal during the evening of the attack. Ukraine’s Unmanned Systems Forces carried out the operation in cooperation with units of the

Special Operations Forces, the Defence Ministry’s Main Intelligence Directorate, and the Security Service of Ukraine. The military facility was protected by electronic warfare and air defence systems. However, the Ukrainian troops claims to be successful in completing the mission.

On 29 September, in his official video address to the Ukrainians, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine condemned Russia’s attack in various parts of Ukraine. He said that the attack in Zaporizhzhia injured 14 people. He also informed on the attacks in the cities of Kharkiv, Donetsk and Sumy. He said: “Russia uses about a hundred guided aerial bombs against Ukraine.” He noted this to be a constant reminder for western countries to permit the usage of long-range weapons inside Russian territory. He assured the citizens that the requests made in the US were being considered by the partner countries. He also informed on the preparations for the “Ramstein” meeting, to discuss the Russia-Ukraine war and Ukraine’s defence capabilities.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 28 September, *RT* reported on the impact of the changing nuclear doctrine of the Government of the Russian Federation. The op-ed informed how Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia had planned the changes in the Russian nuclear doctrine for months in advance. According to the op-ed, Ukraine expanding its weapons usage and military operations against Russia were the reason for the changes in the Russian nuclear doctrine, with Russia being more assertive now. The op-ed also informed that the changes in Russian nuclear policy would not lead to significant negative consequences. The op-ed informed how the West had a defined model of responding to Russian nuclear threats; by making an official declaration it would not be affected while taking actions to the contrary. According to the op-ed, the Russian government could reduce restrictions on the storage of tactical nuclear weapons, and their concentration in central storage bases. The op-ed also informed that greater escalation by the US Government would render self-restraints by Russia on the nuclear issue irrelevant. The

op-ed stated the dual US policy of planning a strategic defeat for Russia while wanting to discuss arms control would not work anymore since the Russian government had made it clear dialogue was not possible without a change in the nature of US-Russia relations. According to the op-ed, the US policy of restricting Russian nuclear weapons was now outdated.

On 29 September, *RT* reported on the statements made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President on the upgraded Russian nuclear doctrine. According to him, the doctrine was finalized and required changes were made to make it into law. He said: "The changes are ready. Now they are being formalized." He stressed that updated doctrine aimed to counter the increasing Western involvement in the war with Ukraine. He urged Russia to make decisions and implement them to counter the Western involvement. However, the question of direct application of the doctrine was left with the Russian military.

On 29 September, *RT* reported on the liberation of the Makeevka settlement in Donbass of the Donetsk People's Republic. The Ukrainian army continuously shelled the city of Makeevka. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the settlement was taken by the "West tactical group." According to the ministry's report, the Ukrainian military has lost up to 450 troops over a day. The Russian forces have also destroyed several pieces of military hardware including a Polish-made Krab self-propelled artillery gun, a US-made M198 howitzer, and a British-made FH-70 howitzer. Further, the ministry claimed that the Russian Air Force, drones, missiles and artillery targeted two oil infrastructure facilities, a radio-technical intelligence centre, among other targets.

On 28 September, *TASS* reported that the Ukrainian army had lost over 370 troops in the Kursk region. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation said: "Over the past day, the Ukrainian armed forces lost over 370 troops, eight armoured vehicles, including a tank, two US-made M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles and five armoured combat vehicles, as well as two artillery

systems and eight motor vehicles." The Ministry also claimed that the Russian forces were intercepting Ukrainian counterattacks and attempts to break into the Kursk region.

The Global Fallout: Implications of the War

On 28 September, *the Associated Press* reported that Wang Yi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China had warned about an expansion of the battlefield in Ukraine. Wang informed the Government that the People's Republic of China was committed to ensuring peace. He also warned about other countries "exploiting the situation for selfish gains." The remarks came amidst a joint peace plan proposed by the Chinese government and the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil. Several countries supported the plan and agreed to form a "Friends for Peace" group. However, the Government of Ukraine criticised the peace plan.

References

- [Russia strikes on Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia with guided bombs, injures 16,](#) *Firstpost*, 29 September 2024
- Vasily Kashin, "[Here's what Putin meant by updating Russia's nuclear doctrine,](#)" *RT*, 28 September 2024
- Ted Anthony, "[China, at UN, warns against 'expansion of the battlefield' in the Ukraine war,](#)" *AP News*, 28 September 2024
- Mark Magnier and Igor Patrick, "[China, Brazil hold Ukraine peace plan meeting at UN, aim to be 'partners' to Moscow, Kyiv,](#)" *South China Morning Post*, 28 September 2024
- "[Ukraine loses over 370 troops, eight armored vehicles in Kursk area in past day,](#)" *TASS*, 28 September 2024
- "[Russian strikes on a medical center kill 9 people in the Ukrainian city of Sumy,](#)" *ABC News*, 28 September 2024
- "[Kyiv under massive drone attack, air defenses activated,](#)" *Ukrinform* 30 September 2024
- "[Ukraine's General Staff confirms strike on arms depot in Russia's Kotluban,](#)" *Ukrinform* 29 September 2024
- "[UN chief urges increased funding for humanitarian aid in Ukraine as winter approaches,](#)" *Anadolu Agency*, 29 September

2024

[“Every Day, Russia Uses About a Hundred Guided Aerial Bombs Against Ukraine – Address by the President,” President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 29 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Day 948:

US announces USD eight billion military aid for Ukraine

War on the Ground:

On 27 September, *The Kyiv Independent* reported that a district police department in the city of Kryvyi Riih in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast was targeted by a Russian missile. Serhii Lysak, the Governor of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast informed about the missile strike and stated the bodies of a man and woman were pulled out from the department rubble. Oleksandr Vilkul, Head of the Ukrainian Military Administration of Kryvyi Riih informed one woman was killed and at least six men injured from the strike. According to Vilkul, three more individuals were trapped inside the rubble. Search and rescue operations at the destroyed department site are ongoing.

On 27 September, *The Kyiv Independent* reported that the Russian attacks on Ukraine killed eight individuals and injured 49 others over the past one day. Oleh Kiper, the Governor of Odesa Oblast informed Russian drone strikes on the town of Izmail killed three citizens and injured 11 others, including a child. Kiper also informed houses, apartment buildings, and cars were damaged by the strikes. Vadym Filashkin, the Governor of Donetsk Oblast informed two residents were killed by strikes in the town of Toretsk, and two other residents were killed in the settlements of Chasiv Yar and Siversk. Filashkin also informed 11 individuals in the region suffered injuries in the past day. Oleh Syniehubov, the Governor of Kharkiv Oblast stated five individuals were injured by an attack on the city of Kharkiv, and three others were injured after attacks in the settlements of Kupiansk, Vuzlovyyi, Vovchansk, and Ivashky. Oleksandr Prokudin, the Governor of Kherson Oblast stated one individual was killed and 19 injured through Russian attacks on 24 settlements, including the regional centre of Kherson. Additionally, the

Ukrainian Air Force informed it shot down 24 out of 32 Russian drones.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 27 September, *RT* reported on an opinion by a professor at the Higher School of Economics, Dmitry Trenin on Vladimir Putin, Russian President decision on nuclear doctrine. In the opinion, he stated that Putin had planned to alter the doctrine seven months before and on the decision the Strategic Deterrence Commission would twice every year to modify the contents constantly. The decision was based on the US's goal to defeat Russia in war and subsequent escalation game. This led Russians in “high places” to think that Russia was “afraid to respond” and in counter to that Putin planned to make corrections to the doctrine to suit the war scenarios. It was also aimed to signal a warning to the West. According to him, Russia's next move will depend on Ukraine and the West reaction and there is a possibility to shift from verbal warnings to “practical demonstrations.”

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 26 September, *France 24* reported that Joe Biden, the President of the United States had announced an additional USD eight billion in military aid for Ukraine. Biden announced after a meeting at The White House with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine. The military aid also included USD 5.5 billion to be authorized before expiry at the end of the US fiscal year on 30 September. Biden expressed confidence Ukraine would prevail in the war, and stated the surge in security assistance was intended to help Ukraine win the war. The President also informed the provision of Joint Standoff Weapon (JSOW) long-range munitions for Ukraine from the US Government. Biden also informed of a forthcoming summit to be held in Germany between allies of Ukraine. However, the US Government informed immediate decisions on allowing the Government of Ukraine permission to fire long-range Western-made missiles into Russia were unlikely. The announcements of additional aid by Biden came amidst a dispute between Zelenskyy and Donald Trump, the presidential

candidate from the Republican Party over military aid for Ukraine.

On 27 September, Defence of Romania stated four warplanes were sent to monitor the situation on the Ukraine border. A report by the Ministry informed two F-16 aircraft of the Romanian Air Force and two F-18 aircraft of the Spanish Air Force from the Extended Air Police took off overnight to monitor the Ukraine situation. The warplanes were sent after the Romanian radar surveillance system indicated kamikaze Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) used by Russia on Ukrainian port infrastructure crossed into Romanian airspace briefly. The incursion caused no impact on Romanian soil, with the search for possible debris continuing. The Romanian defence ministry condemned the Russian attacks and stated it was a serious breach of international law.

On 27 September, the *BBC* reported that Donald Trump, the presidential candidate for the Republican Party had agreed to a meeting with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine. Trump informed Zelenskyy would visit him at Trump Tower, and repeated his claim he could ensure a deal between Zelenskyy and Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia. This was just days after Trump had criticized the Ukrainian president for refusing to make a deal with the Government of the Russian Federation. Since the beginning of the Ukraine war, Trump had stated differing opinions on Ukraine. Trump faced accusations of repeating Russian propaganda and refused to admit whether Ukraine needed to cede territory to Russia as a way of ending the war. Trump had also criticized increased US funding for Ukraine, and referred to Zelenskyy as the "greatest salesman in the world." Zelenskyy also stated Trump did not know how to stop the war. However, on 26 September, Trump posted a screenshot of a text message from Zelenskyy, wherein he requested a meeting with Trump.

On 27 September, *Arab News* reported that the Federal Government of Germany had confirmed Joe Biden, the President of the United States would visit the country. The visit of Biden is scheduled from 10 to 12

October. Steffen Hebestreit, a spokesperson for the Federal Chancellor of Germany, Olaf Scholz informed Biden would host a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contract Group to discuss military support for Ukraine. According to Hebestreit, Biden is expected to hold meetings with Scholz and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the President of Germany. The meeting is expected to be held on 12 October at the Ramstein Air Base of the US Air Force, with over 50 Ukrainian allies expected to attend. Hebestreit stated the visit was like a goodbye for Biden before the US presidential election. The meeting comes ahead of the US election, where Donald Trump, the presidential candidate from the Republican Party has criticized funding by the US Government towards Ukraine.

References

Kateryna Denisova, "[Russian attacks against Ukraine kill 8, injure 49 over past day](#)," *The Kyiv Independent*, 27 September 2024

Kateryna Denisova and Kateryna Hodunova, "[Russian missile hits police department in Kryvyi Riih, killing 3, injuring 6](#)," *The Kyiv Independent*, 27 September 2024

"[Dmitry Trenin: Putin's nuclear doctrine updates are a final warning to the West](#)," *RT*, 27 September 2024

"['Ukraine will prevail,' Biden tells Zelensky after pledging \\$8 billion in military aid to Kyiv](#)," *France 24*, 26 September 2024

"[Romanian fighter jets scramble amid Russian drone attack on Ukraine's port](#)," *Ukrinform*, 27 September 2024

George Wright, "[Trump says he will meet Zelensky despite campaign criticism](#)," *BBC News*, 27 September 2024

"Germany confirms Biden visit and Ukraine allies meeting," *Arab News*, 27 September 2024

War in Ukraine Day 947:

The US, EU and Ukraine condemn Russia's Nuclear Doctrine

War on the Ground:

On 27 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian airstrike in the village of Kherson. The attack led to the injury of four people including two children. According to the Kherson Regional Military Administration, Russians struck the residential buildings with guided bombs in

the evening. The injured people were reported to be hospitalised and treated. On 27 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian missile attack in the region of Kryvyi Rih. It was reported by Oleksandr Vilkul, Head of the city's Defense Council. The post he shared read: "Kryvyi Rih. Missile attack. Don't record or share anything online." According to the authorities, the missile targeted a residential building and people were believed to be under the rubble. Yevhen Sytnychenko, Chief of the Kryvyi Rih District Military Administration also confirmed the attack

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 26 September, *RT* reported on the statements made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President on Ukraine's "Plan of Victory." According to him, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, had no genuine plan to settle the conflict with Russia. He added that Zelenskyy's plan contained no specific points even for his western allies. He further said: "Therefore, there can be no talk of any sort of adoption of the plan." Zelenskyy had earlier informed that the new plan was about "strengthening Ukraine" and not "negotiating with Russia."

On 26 September, *RT* reported on the newly introduced BRICS payment and settlement system for trading within the member states. He said: "As part of cooperation with BRICS countries, we are working to create our own payment and settlement system." At the Russian Energy Week Forum in Russia, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President said that the supplies of Russian oil and gas to their allies enabled economic stability and competence in the global market. Meanwhile, he also stressed the "certain difficulties" posed by the sanctions imposed by the western countries in the global market. He added that the usage of national currency for trading among the BRICS members had led to the increase of ruble between 2021 and 2023. He said that the partner institutions supported this.

On 26 September, *RT* reported on statements made by Peskov on Russia's proposed revival of its nuclear doctrine. According to his statement, Putin's proposal

to upgrade the nuclear doctrine should be treated as a warning to the western nations who were supporting Ukraine. This was against the backdrop of Putin's announcement of the new nuclear strategy to "treat aggression against Russia by any non-nuclear state but with the participation or support of a nuclear state as a joint attack." It meant that Ukraine attempting to attack deep inside Russian territory with the help of western-supplied long-range weapons would be met with serious implications. Referring to these comments, Peskov believed that all the leaders understood the seriousness of the situation. He added: "Especially when it comes to such an unprecedented standoff triggered by the direct involvement of Western nations, including nuclear powers, in the conflict over Ukraine."

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 27 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the reaction from the US, EU and Ukraine on Russia's proposal for an updated nuclear doctrine. According to Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State: "It's totally irresponsible, and I think many in the world have spoken clearly about that when he's been rattling the nuclear sabre, including China in the past." Peter Stano, the EU foreign policy spokesman also called the move "reckless and irresponsible." Meanwhile, Ukraine accused Russia that it was only left with nuclear threat and no other means. Andriy Yermak, head of the President's Office of Ukraine said that these attempts to frighten the world would not work.

On 27 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the statements made by Kamala Harris, the US Vice President on the US's "unwavering support" to Ukraine. According to her statements, the US support for Ukraine is in its "strategic interest." By urging the need to "stand for international order and norms," she praised the Ukrainian people who were defending themselves against the Russians. She also warned that if the territories of Ukraine were given away, Russia would set its eyes on Poland, Baltic states and other NATO allies. She also commented on the suggestions made by

Donald Trump, former US president that Ukraine could settle the conflict with a deal. Harris referred to such comments as “dangerous and unacceptable.” She added that they were not proposals for peaceful resolutions but rather “for surrender.”

On 27 September, *Politico* reported on Donald Trump’s stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. At a campaign event in North Carolina, he condemned Ukraine for not compromising anything which led to the escalation of the conflict. He said: “We continue to give billions of dollars to a man who refuses to make a deal, Zelenskyy.” Further, he said that the destroyed cities and towns of Ukraine could not be replaced. He had also expressed his disapproval of supporting Ukraine and threatened to cut US aid. He said that he would not send American troops to die in Ukraine. Although he has pledged to negotiate a deal with Russia and Ukraine, he always refuses to give further details on the plan.

References

- [“Zelensky has no ‘tangible’ peace plan – Kremlin,” RT, 26 September 2024](#)
- [“BRICS developing own payment framework – Putin,” RT, 26 September 2024](#)
- [“Kremlin reveals target of proposed nuclear doctrine change,” RT, 26 September 2024](#)
- [“US, EU, Ukraine slam Russia's nuclear deterrence doctrine,” Deutsche Welle, 26 September 2024](#)
- [“Ukraine: Kamala Harris slams Ukraine 'surrender' proposal,” Deutsche Welle, 26 September 2024](#)
- [“Trump gives strongest signal yet he won't back Ukraine and Zelenskyy against Putin,” Politico, 26 September 2024](#)
- [“Statement from President Joe Biden on U.S. Support for Ukraine,” WH.GOV, 26 September 2024](#)
- [“Russians launch missile strike on Kryvyi Rih: people trapped under rubble,” Ukrinform, 27 September 2024](#)
- [“Civilians including minors injured as Russians attack village in Kherson region,” Ukrinform, 27 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Day 946:

Putin warns over the right to use nuclear weapons to respond and propose to upgrade its nuclear deterrence strategy

War on the Ground:

On 24 September, *ABC News* published an interview with Zelenskyy wherein he stated the war with Russia was closer to ending than expected. Zelenskyy stated the victory plan of Ukraine could be achieved only through support from the friends and allies of Ukraine. The President also stated Ukraine could push Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia towards ending the war only from a strong position. According to Zelenskyy, the incursion by the Armed Forces of Ukraine into the Kursk Oblast of Russia had made Putin afraid, for his citizens saw he could not defend Russian territory. Zelenskyy had requested the US and UK governments to drop their restrictions on the usage of long-range missiles by Ukraine to conduct strikes inside Russia. However, Putin warned the use of Western weapons against Russian targets would significantly escalate the war.

On 25 September, *Politico* reported that the Government of Ukraine was depending upon the Government of India to help end the war against Russia. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine held a meeting with Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India during the United Nations General Assembly session in New York. An anonymous high-ranking Ukrainian official stated India was the biggest hope for Ukraine reaching a favourable peace deal. The official stated Modi had made clear that any proposal to end the war must not include Ukraine giving up territory to Russia. The Ukrainian government views India and its non-aligned stance as an essential intermediary in helping end the war. While countries like Switzerland, Austria, China, and the US have faced allegations of being biased in favour of either Russia or Ukraine, India is viewed as a non-aligned party with an emphasis on sovereignty being protected. Jaishankar, the Minister of External Affairs of India stated India was the only country which could openly talk with Russia over the Ukraine issue. Jaishankar also stated India was concerned and engaged in trying to end the war, and suggestions had been made for a peace summit to be hosted in India. Heorhii Tykhyi, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine stated India was a reliable partner for Ukraine. Tykhyi also

informed Ukraine wanted to see Indian participation in the peace formula process since India could make a difference.

On 25 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian attack on the city of Kramatorsk in the Donetsk region. The attack had led to the death of two people and injury of 15 others. According to Vadym Filashkin, the Chief of the Donetsk RMA, the Russian strike had destroyed two multi-story buildings, shops and cars. Authorities and rescue missions were reported to be working on the site.

On 25 September, *CNN* reported on Zelenskyy's statements condemning Russia's attack on Ukraine's energy grid. He said: "Since Russia can't defeat our people's resistance on the battlefield, Russian President Vladimir Putin is looking for other ways to break the Ukrainian spirit." He added that Russia was intensifying its attacks to push the country into "dark and cold." He further recalled the attacks on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and warned of a possible nuclear incident there. Apart from that, he talked about the potential threats faced by Ukraine's energy system. According to his estimates, 80 per cent of Ukraine's energy system remained disabled by Russia's attacks. These statements came as part of his recent speech at the United Nations Security Council.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 25 September, the *Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation* claimed the successful repulsion of Ukrainian troops near the settlement of Novy Put in the Kursk region. The latest update from the ministry stated that the interception was carried with the joint support of Russia's aviation and artillery, as a result of which Ukraine lost over 50 personnel, three tanks, and infantry fighting vehicle and an armored combat vehicle. The Ministry further informed that the Russian forces had countered two Ukrainian attacks near the settlement of Lyubimovka in the Kursk region, leading to the death of 15 Ukrainian troops and the elimination of several vehicles. The Russian forces were continuously engaged in combating the Ukrainian troops entering the Kursk region. According to the ministry's

estimates, more than 300 servicemen, seven armored vehicles including three tanks, one infantry fighting vehicle, two artillery pieces and six cars were eliminated.

On 25 September, *RT* reported on the statements made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President in response to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine in its recent speech at the United Nations Security Council. Zelenskyy said that the Russia-Ukraine conflict could not be resolved through talks and Moscow "could only be forced into peace." In response, Peskov said: "A stance that is based on an attempt to force Russia into peace is an absolutely fatal mistake because it is impossible to force Russia into peace." He referred to this thought as a "profound delusion" that would impact Ukraine. He further added that Russia advocated for peace that ensured the foundations of its security and the goals of the ongoing military special operations. He assured that Russia would not settle for anything less.

On 25 September, *The Moscow Times* reported on the capture of two villages in eastern Ukraine by the Russian troops. According to the statements from the government of Russia, the troops "liberated the settlements" of Hostre and Hryhorivka in the Donetsk region. Hostre is located around 30 kilometres west of the city of Donetsk and Hryhorivka lies near the town of Chasiv Yar. These advances would push Russia much closer to Pokrovsk, the strategic and logistics hub of Ukraine.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 25 September, *The Washington Post* reported on Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia statements on Russia's nuclear doctrine. He stated attacks on nonnuclear states were a part of the nuclear doctrine of the Government of the Russian Federation. At a meeting with the Russian Security Council, Putin stated acts of aggression against Russia by nonnuclear states with the participation and support of a nuclear state would be considered as a joint attack on the Russian Federation. Putin also informed Russian nuclear weapons would be

launched after reliable information about a massive aerospace attack which crossed the Russian border was communicated. However, analysts stated the threats made by Putin were impractical. Andrey Kartapolov, the Head of the Defence Committee in the State Duma informed the changes in the Russian nuclear doctrine would make it more flexible and effective. Sergey Markov, a prominent supporter of Putin stated the threshold for nuclear weapon usage had been lowered, and it would be easier now for Russia to deploy these weapons. According to Markov, Russia could now use nuclear weapons against Ukraine since it was being supported by nuclear states like France, the UK and the US. Pavel Podvig, an analyst who runs the Russian Nuclear Forces Project stated the statements of Putin were designed to warn the West of the potential consequences of greater support for Ukraine.

On 26 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the Joint Declaration adopted by the leaders of the G7 and other partner institutions for the reconstruction and redevelopment of Ukraine. It provided for increased military, economic and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine in the short-term and post-war period. According to Joe Biden, US President: "We are launching a Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine's Recovery and Reconstruction to make it clear that we stand with Ukraine now and in the future." He added that more than 30 countries along with the EU had joined the declaration. It aimed at reasserting international support for Ukraine and assisting for its long-term recovery and reconstruction. Apart from that, the document reaffirms Russia's responsibility to financially provide for the damages caused in Ukraine.

References

Seb Starcevic and Veronika Melkozerova, "[Ukraine bets on India to help get peace deal with Putin](#)," Politico, 25 September 2024
 Francesca Ebel, Natalia Abbakumova, and Robyn Dixon, "[Russia's nuclear doctrine to include attacks on nonnuclear states](#)," The Washington Post, 25 September 2024
 Meredith Deliso, "[Zelenskyy says Ukraine's war with Russia is 'closer to the end' as he appeals for more help](#)," GMA

[exclusive](#)," ABC News, 24 September 2024

War in Ukraine Day 944:

Zelenskyy visits the US to discuss the "Plan of Victory"

War on the Ground:

On 23 August, *First Post* reported on the casualties caused by Ukraine's incursion into the Kursk region of Russia. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Ukraine's offensive in the Kursk area led to the death of 31 civilians and injured 256. The number was estimated from the date of 05 September, marking the beginning of the attack. An official from Russia claims that 131,000 civilians had fled from the region due to the attack. He noted that around 120 people, including children, were forcefully detained in a camp in the town of Sudzha. However, Ukraine had rejected these claims.

On 24 September, Zelenskyy met with a bipartisan delegation from the US Congress against the backdrop of the UN General Assembly. Senators like Ben Cardin, Dan Sullivan, Christopher Murphy, and Gregory Meeks attended the meeting. Firstly, Zelenskyy thanked the representatives of the US for their support. Apart from that, he gave a detailed update on the war on the ground, the Kursk incursion, the urgent need for Ukrainian personnel and defence and military packages. The ministers discussed Zelenskyy's plan for victory in detail. He said: "This is a very specific plan on how to strengthen Ukraine without any decisions or pressure from Russia. This plan does not depend on any decisions made by Putin." They also discussed the reconstruction of energy capabilities in the coming year. Meanwhile, Zelenskyy urged the western countries to tighten the sanctions against Russia.

On 23 September, Zelenskyy met Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of Germany in New York. He thanked Scholz for all the military and humanitarian aid provided to Ukraine. Since the war, Germany has granted assistance worth EUR 35 million. The leaders discussed the security in Ukraine and agreed on collaborating on international formats towards the implementation of peace. Zelenskyy added that Ukraine would not

compromise on the integrity of the international community.

On 23 September, Zelenskyy visited the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant in the US which is completely dedicated to fulfil Ukraine's defence requirements. The plant produces components for artillery and mortar shells, particularly 155 mm shells. On his visit, Zelenskyy spoke with the plant's management and employees and thanked the US for the prompt delivery of defence packages. He also discussed plans to start joint weapons production and potential American investments in Ukraine's defence industry.

On 23 September, Zelenskyy met with Josh Shapiro and Bob Casey, the Governor and Senator of Pennsylvania and discussed agreements on regional cooperation between the countries. He said: "I thank the leaders of the American states for their willingness to develop regional cooperation with Ukraine. The implementation of joint economic projects will help restore the destroyed infrastructure and create jobs." Ivan Fedorov, the Head of the Zaporizhzhia Regional State Administration signed an agreement on the cooperation between the Zaporizhzhia Regional State Administration and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The agreement included communication between state authorities, scientific and civil society organisations and businesses. Zelenskyy also noted that Pennsylvania being a hub of weapons and military equipment is a priority for Ukraine.

On 24 September, Zelenskyy met with Fumio Kishida, President of Japan on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. He awarded the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, I class to Kishida and expressed his gratitude for the financial and humanitarian assistance of EUR 12 billion. He also emphasised the imposition of sanctions against Russia. The leaders discussed cooperation with G7 and EU partners to secure the USD 50 billion from frozen Russian assets. Kishida also informed on the new energy assistance package including transformers and generators set to be provided to Ukraine.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 23 September, *RT* reported on the statements made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President on the victory plan proposed by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President. According to Peskov, there was not enough information available to properly evaluate the "victory plan." He said: "If some information appears from official sources, of course we will study it." He added that Russia had a "reserved attitude" to the plan due to the unreliable and contradictory information spreading through the media sources. Dmitry Polyansky, Russia's first deputy permanent representative to the UN, said Russia had no clue about the plan's contents. Zelenskyy is set to present the plan before Joe Biden, the US President, members of Congress, and the presidential candidates- Donald Trump and Kamala Harris.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 24 September, *ANI* reported on the statements made by Peter Pellegrini, President of Slovakia on the peace negotiations in the Ukraine-Russia conflict. At the 79th United Nations General Assembly in New York, he said that peace negotiations could only be attained through the participation of "big players" like India, China and the US. He expressed his interest in the 'compact for the future' adopted at the "Summit of the Future" in the UN to address 56 ongoing conflicts around the world. He added that Slovakia had always called for peace negotiations to end the war. He also noted the importance of peace resolution and called for quick action.

On 23 September, *The Washington Post* reported on remarks made by Mariana Katzarova, a UN-backed human rights expert, on the domestic violence caused by former Russian convicts. According to her, some 170,000 convicted former Russian criminals with commuted prison sentences were sent to fight in the Ukraine-Russia war. She noted that they return after committing serious violations of human rights including rape, murder, sexual violence and killings of women and children. She added: "There is no law in Russia distinctly criminalising domestic violence or gender-based violence." She also informed on the

increasing number of deaths amongst women due to domestic violence.

On 24 September, *Reuters* reported on the statements made by Josep Borell, the EU foreign policy chief on the weakening energy capabilities of Ukraine against the backdrop of war. He condemned Russia for attacking Ukraine's energy infrastructure and thereby pushing the country to darkness. While speaking with the EU foreign ministers and G7 ministers, he urged the western countries to support Ukraine with electricity production capacity. In addition, he condemned both Russia and Iran for escalating the war with new weapons. He also advised Ukraine to improve its military position for the smooth conduct of peaceful negotiations.

References

["Kremlin comments on Zelensky 'victory plan'," RT, 23 September 2024](#)

["India can play important role in peace negotiations: Slovak President Peter Pellegrini on Russia-Ukraine conflict," ANI, 24 September 2024](#)

["31 civilians killed, 256 wounded in Kursk: Russia on Ukraine's military campaign," First Post, 23 September 2024](#)

["Volodymyr Zelenskyy Met with the Chancellor of Germany," President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 23 September 2024](#)

["Volodymyr Zelenskyy Met with Members of the U.S. Congress," President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 24 September 2024](#)

["President Visited Scranton Army Ammunition Plant," President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 23 September 2024](#)

["Zaporizhzhia Region and Pennsylvania State Concluded a Cooperation Agreement," President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 23 September 2024](#)

["Energy Support and Stepping Up Sanctions Against Russia: Volodymyr Zelenskyy Met with Fumio Kishida," President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, 24 September 2024](#)

["West must boost aid to stop Russia plunging Ukraine into the dark, Borrell says," Reuters, 24 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Days 942 & 943:

Ukraine claims attack on Russia's arms depots in Krasnodar city

War on the Ground:

On 21 September, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on Ukraine Armed Forces (UAF) strike on two Russian arms depots by missiles. The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine confirmed the attacks and informed the Tikhoretsk weapons depot in Krasnodar Krai city had been attacked. The General Staff stated the Tikhoretsk weapons depot was one of the three largest ammunition depots in Russia and a key storage facility in the Russian military logistics system. The UAF also informed a Russian Podlet radar system which aided air defence of the arsenal and an echelon that delivered at least 2,000 tons of ammunition were destroyed. Andrii Kovalenko, the head of the Centre for Countering Disinformation run by the Government of Ukraine stated a depot which contained artillery shells, ammunition for Smerch rocket launchers, and North Korea-made K23 missiles had been destroyed. Kovalenko also published videos showing the aftermath of the strike. Veniamin Kondratyev, the Governor of Krasnodar Krai stated earlier a drone strike in the Tikhoretsk district had caused detonations of "explosive objects." Kondratyev also informed that at least 1,200 residents had been evacuated. No casualties were reported from the missile strike in Tikhoretsk. The General Staff of Ukraine also informed the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) that it had launched a missile strike on the 23rd arsenal of the Main Artillery Directorate of the Ministry of National Defence of the Russian Federation in the Tver Oblast of Russia. According to the local government in Tver, an unspecified number of drones were shot down. However, the government did not give any more details. A SBU source informed that a missile strike was launched on the Shaykovka military airfield in Kaluga Oblast where TU-22M strategic aircraft used to attack Ukraine were stored.

On 21 September, *Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine* reported that the Government of Ukraine was continuing with talks with Ukraine's Western partners over the requirement for full long-range capabilities. Zelenskyy stated Ukraine would convince its allies it required all the weapons that could protect itself from Russia,

including long-range missiles and drones. According to Zelenskyy, the overall situation for the security of Ukraine would be better if the country had enough missiles and permissions that its partners could provide. He also informed of successful missile strikes conducted by the Armed Forces of Ukraine against Russia, such as an attack by the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) on an arsenal of Russian troops, and the Special Operations Centre "A" of the SSU. Zelenskyy stated the determination of Ukraine's partners needed to match the courage of Ukrainians; in order for the next week to be a decisive one in terms of stopping the aggression of Russia.

On 22 September, *The Moscow Times* reported on the Russian attack in the Kharkiv region of Ukraine. The strike targeted a two-storeyed residential building and led to the injury of 21 people. Igor Terekhov, Kharkiv city's mayor, condemned Russia for attacking the region even with the absence of military in the region. Following this attack, Zelenskyy urged the western countries to grant permission for the usage of long-range weapons inside Russia. He called for a reinforcement to secure Ukrainian lives.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 21 September, *RT* reported the attack of the Russian military on the cargo carrier that was delivering arms and munitions to Kyiv. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Russian warplanes, drones, missiles and artillery forces targeted two Ukrainian ammo depots and "struck a dry-cargo carrier with missiles and ammunition, supplied by the western countries. However, the exact location and the intensity of the attack were unknown. The ministry added that the Russian military had used high-precision weapons and drones to attack Ukraine's energy infrastructure concerned with its defence capacities. It said: "The objectives of the strike have been achieved. All designated targets have been hit," Meanwhile, Ukraine has not commented on these attacks.

On 22 September, *Politico* reported on the six Russian fighter jets flying over the Baltic Sea. According to the Latvian sea, the planes

were wandering without a flight plan with their transponders turned off. German Eurofighters were sent to intercept and warn them. However, the ministry did not claim the violation of its air space. The German Air Force had earlier reported on another five Russian jets flying over the Baltic Sea.

On 22 September, the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation* stated that it would not attend a peace summit being organized by the Government of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine had earlier stated he wanted Russia to attend the summit. A spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova stated the peace summit was a fraud being propagated by Ukraine and its allies like the US. According to Zakharova, the peace summit aimed to push the 'Zelenskyy formula' as the basis for a settlement to the conflict, and force the Government of the Russian Federation to participate in it. Zakharova referred to the Ukrainian government and the West as 'terrorists' who needed war. Zakharova stated the Russian government wanted a diplomatic solution to the conflict. However, she also informed that serious proposals needed to be discussed based on the conditions listed earlier by Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia. Putin had earlier stated that the Russian government would start negotiations once Ukraine withdrew troops from the Donbas, Kherson, and Zaporozhe Oblasts. According to Putin, Ukraine needed to commit itself to neutrality, demilitarization, and denazification as well.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 20 September, *NATO* reported on the exercise held with Ukraine. During 10-20 September, Ukraine took part in NATO's annual Counter-Unmanned Aircraft System (C-UAS) Technical Interoperability Exercise (TIE) in the Netherlands, for the first time. It had over 450 participants from the 19 NATO allies and three partner countries. The exercise aimed to examine the ability of commercially available counter-drone systems to operate smoothly. 60 counter-drone systems and technologies such as

sensors, drone-on-drone systems, jammers and cyber interceptors were tested live. Ukraine's participation resulted from the NATO-Ukraine Innovation Cooperation Roadmap put forward by the Allied and Ukrainian leaders at the Washington Summit in 2024. This exercise would enhance Ukraine's defence capabilities such as drone autonomy and interoperability. On 20 September, *Politico* reported on the US delivery of the Joint Standoff Weapon, a medium-range missile to Ukraine as part of its expected military package of USD 375 million. The weapon used by the US Air Force, Navy and some allies could strike targets over 70 miles away, thus giving an upgrade to the US-delivered weapons to Ukraine. According to the US officials, the package was yet to be announced and would include artillery munitions, rockets and air defence missiles. However, the State Department officials and the Defence Department of the US did not officially comment on the new military package. It would mark the largest package signed by the US as part of its military aid to Ukraine.

References

["We Will Continue to Talk with Partners about the Need for Full Long-Range Capabilities for Ukraine- Address by the President," President of Ukraine, 21 September 2024](#)
["Zelensky-led 'peace summit' a fraud-Moscow," RT, 22 September 2024](#)
 Abbey Fenbert and Dinara Khalilova, ["UPDATED; Ukraine confirms overnight strikes on Russian arms depots," The Kyiv Independent, 21 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Day 941:

European Commission to reinforce financial assistance up to EUR 45 billion

War on the Ground:

On 20 September, *swissinfo* reported on a Russian missile strike damaging an Antigua-flagged vessel in the port city of Odesa. Oleh Kiper, the Governor of Odessa Oblast informed the airstrike had wounded four individuals. Kiper also informed debris from the Iskander-M ballistic missile damaged a civilian ship from Antigua, alongside port and civilian infrastructure. An anonymous market source stated the vessel was carrying metal products. According to data from

Marinetraffic, a ship-tracking website, Golden Lion, an Antigua-flagged cargo vessel was stranded in Odesa port.

On 20 September, *Jamaica Observer* reported on the *BBC* documented deaths of around 70,000 Russian soldiers since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine. The news outlets used tombstones in Russian cemeteries and publicly available information like death notices in the media, announcements on social media, and official statements to calculate the death toll. *BBC News* stated the names of 70,112 Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine had been identified. However, the news outlet informed the actual toll could be higher since the *BBC* analysis did not include names that were unable to be checked or the deaths of militias in the Russian-occupied regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. *Mediazona* and independent Russian news site *Meduza* estimated the death toll could be about 120,000. The news outlets concluded after analysing official data from notaries on inheritance cases. The Government of the Russian Federation has been secretive about the total death toll from Ukraine, with official figures considered to be an underestimate.

On 20 September, *Euronews* reported that the Government of Ukraine had banned the messaging app Telegram from being installed on state-issued devices. This effectively means that government officials, military personnel and critical infrastructure workers cannot use the app. However, Ukrainians are free to use it on their devices still. According to the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre, the ban is essential for national security during the war with Russia. Previously, the Security Service of Ukraine and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine had stated that the government of the Russian Federation was actively using Telegram for cyberattacks, phishing, spreading malware, establishing user locations, and calibrating missile strikes. Krylyo Budanov, the Chief of the Main Directorate of Intelligence stated that Russian intelligence services were able to access the personal messages of app users, including personal data and deleted messages. Telegram had become widely

popular in Ukraine, for reading news including updates on Russian air attacks.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 20 September, *RT* reported that the Government of the Russian Federation that the Government of Ukraine was abducting Russian civilians and imprisoning them in concentration camps. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Maria Zahkharova stated the Armed Forces of Ukraine were capturing Russian civilians in the Kursk Oblast of Russia at gunpoint, and imprisoning them. Zakharova informed Russian law enforcement agencies were collecting data on Russian civilians being forcibly abducted. The spokesperson compared the alleged behaviour of the Ukrainian government to atrocities committed by Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union during World War II. Zakharova also stated the Russian Red Cross had collected numerous eyewitness accounts of the abductions in Kursk.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 20 September, the European Commission announced its crucial step towards reinforcing support for Ukraine by proposing a comprehensive financial assistance package. The European Commission stated it planned the establishment of a Ukraine Loan Cooperation Mechanism. According to the European Commission, the Mechanism would issue loans of up to EUR 45 billion for Ukraine. Additionally, the European Commission stated the Mechanism would offer support to the Government of Ukraine financed through the leveraging of windfall profits raised from collected Russian assets. In February 2022, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU froze assets from the Central Bank of Russia held in financial institutions in EU states. The prohibition of transactions on these assets resulted in EUR 2.5-3 billion being generated on the balance sheets of central securities depositories per year. The European Commission had decided to utilize these profits for the benefit of Ukraine, with EUR 1.5 billion made available for support to Ukraine by the end

of July. The European Commission further informed the Ukrainian government could use this support to repay eligible loans due to the EU and other lenders participating in the 'Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration Loans for Ukraine' (ERA) initiative of the G7. It also proposed an exceptional Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) loan of up to EUR 35 billion, as the EU contribution to loans under the ERA initiative. According to the European Commission, support is required to meet the budgetary needs of Ukraine which have increased due to continuing Russian aggression. The European Commission proposals require approval by the European Parliament and a majority of EU member states in the European Council, before entering into force. Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission stated the loans were another major EU contribution towards the victory of Ukraine. Valdis Dombrovskis, the European Commissioner for Trade informed the loan package would provide Ukraine with the financial resources required to withstand Russian aggression, and showed the EU's commitment towards supporting Ukrainian sovereignty and economic resilience. Paolo Gentiloni, the European Commissioner for Economy stated the proposal was a pivotal moment in continued support from the EU for Ukraine, and reaffirmed its commitment to stand by Ukraine in its struggle for freedom and democracy.

On 20 September, *Arab News* reported that the Government of Norway was increasing and extending its aid packages for Ukraine. Jonas Gahr Store, the Prime Minister of Norway informed of plans to increase the aid package to Ukraine by NOK four billion or USD 475 million by 2024, and extend it by three years till 2030. Store stated that the additional funds would be dedicated to civilian needs. To pass the package through the Norwegian Parliament, Store and his government will require the support of the opposition. The latest package brings the aggregate Norwegian aid package to Ukraine to NOK 135 billion, from a previous total of NOK 75 billion through 2027.

On 20 September, *swissinfo* reported that Antonio Tajani, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy had stated the Government of Italy would send another Samp-T anti-

missile system to Ukraine. Tajani stated the delivery of the system was to protect hospitals, schools and universities in Ukraine attacked by Russia. However, the foreign minister also informed support for Ukraine did not mean bringing a world war. Tajani also stated a fair peace needed to be agreed upon.

References

- "Ukraine bans the use of Telegram on state-linked devices in the name of 'national security'," Euro News, 20 September 2024
 Max Hunder and Pavel Polityuk, "Antigua-flagged vessel damaged in Russian attack on Odesa port, governor says," swissinfo.ch, 20 September 2024
"Media reports put Russian military death toll at 70,000," Jamaica Observer, 20 September 2024
"Ukrainian military banned from using Telegram," RT, 20 September 2024
"Ukraine running 'concentration camps' - Moscow," RT, 20 September 2024
"Commission proposes up to 35 billion MFA loan for Ukraine as the EU's contribution to the EU-G7 support of up to 45 billion," European Commission, 20 September 2024
"Norway to increase, extend aid to Ukraine," Arab News, 20 September 2024
"Italy sending another anti-missile system to Ukraine, says Foreign Minister," swissinfo.ch, 20 September 2024

War in Ukraine Day 940:

**Russia claims difficult position for Ukrainian forces in Sudzha direction
 War on the Ground:**

On 19 September, *Reuters* reported that Russia had captured two villages in the western Kursk region. According to Aпти Alaudinov of the Akhmat Special Forces, Russia had gained Nikolayevo-Darino and Darino. He noted that the Russian forces had moved their frontline as they were advancing in eastern Ukraine. The villages lie 15 kilometres from the former front lines put up by Ukrainian troops during their Kursk incursion. The control of these villages would give an upper hand to the Russian army to attack Sverdlikovo, a prime logistical centre of Ukrainian forces. This came amidst Russia's strong counteroffensive against the Kursk incursion

led by Ukraine.

On 19 September, *Swissinfo* reported on the Russian airstrike on a geriatric centre in the city of Sumy, targeting its energy sector. According to Ukrainian officials, the attack had led to the death of one civilian. The day-time bombing of a five-storey building in northern Sumy led to the death of one civilian and the injury of 12 others. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine said that the rescue teams were working to save people trapped under the damaged building.

On 19 September, *CBS News* reported on Zelenskyy meeting with the top US leaders during his visit to the US in the coming week. He is expected to meet Joe Biden, the US President, former US President Donald Trump, and Kamala Harris, the US Vice President. He has also scheduled to give an address to the UN General Assembly. Recently, he had expressed his interest in sharing his "Victory Plan" with Biden, Trump and Harris. According to Jean-Pierre, Press Secretary of the White House, Zelenskyy would have a separate meeting with Harris to discuss the ongoing war, Ukraine's strategic planning and the US support to Ukraine. He added: "The president and vice president will emphasize their unshakeable commitment to stand with Ukraine until it prevails in this war."

On 19 September, *Reuters* reported on the recent report published by The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) that condemned Russia's attacks on the energy facilities in Ukraine. As its primary focus, HRMMU took up nine waves of strikes that happened between March and August 2024. The report read: "There are reasonable grounds to believe that multiple aspects of the military campaign to damage or destroy Ukraine's civilian electricity and heat-producing and transmission infrastructure have violated foundational principles of international humanitarian law." It had visited seven destroyed or damaged power plants and 28 communities that were affected by the strikes. It highlighted certain problems faced in urban areas and pointed out the attack posed a threat to Ukraine's water supply, sewage and

sanitation, public health, education and the wider economy. The experts of the HRMMU also said that Ukraine was to expect power supply outages of four and 18 hours a day this winter.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 19 September, the *TASS* reported on the recent developments and updates of the Kursk region by Major General Apty Alaudinov, the deputy chief of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces and the commander of the Akhmat Special Forces unit of Russia. According to him, Ukrainian forces were in a difficult position, trying to gain some control over the Sudzha direction in the Kursk region. He informed on his visit to the rightmost flank of the Russian troops near the cities of Rylsk and Lgov in the Kursk direction. Apart from that, he also reported that the Akhmat special force had demolished one self-propelled artillery weapon, one armoured personnel carrier and an ammunition storage facility in the Kursk direction.

On 19 September, *RT* reported on the Russian strike on Ukraine's prime military communication facility. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation: "Russian warplanes, drones, missiles and artillery had successfully hit the main centre of special radio communications of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Armed Forces of Ukraine." It also destroyed some airfield infrastructure facilities. However, the officials did not inform the location and the severity of the attack. Meanwhile, several Ukrainian media and officials have reported on the explosions and blasts that occurred in Kharkov and Sumy Region. The local officials reported that the Kharkov strike involved the use of ballistic missiles by Russia.

The West View:

Responses from Europe and the US

On 19 September, the EU's official website reported on the announcement made by Ursula Von Der Leyen, President of the European Commission on the supply of humanitarian aid to Ukraine. She proposed an amount of EUR 160 million in

humanitarian aid and EUR 100 million for repair and construction works. She said: "Ukraine needs 17 GW of power capacity for this winter. So today, I want to propose action in three areas: Repair, Connect and Stabilise." The aid focussed specifically on energy security in the form of shelters and heaters for the upcoming winter. She noted that it was necessary to meet the immediate requirements of people in winter while strengthening Ukraine's energy system for the future.

On 19 September, European Parliament reported on a recent resolution in the parliament calling for a lift of restrictions imposed over the usage of long-range weapons by Ukraine inside Russian territory. It had 425 votes in favour, 131 against and 63 abstentions. According to the MEPs, Ukraine was not able to utilise its right to self-defence and remained vulnerable to attacks from Russia. They also highlighted that the delivery of weapons and ammunition was insufficient leading to declining military aid from the EU countries. The MEPs also urged for tougher sanctions against Russia and its allies. Further, they called for international support to Ukraine and a peaceful resolution of the war respecting Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

On 19 September, *Aol* reported on Germany's approval of EUR 397 million as additional military aid to Ukraine. According to Germany's foreign ministry: "In view of the continuously deteriorating military situation in Ukraine, there is a serious risk that Ukraine, without significantly increased material support, could be defeated in its defence campaign." The extra funds will be used to buy ammunition, fighting vehicles, drones and protective equipment, among other items. Germany's military aid to Ukraine would rise up to EUR 8.4 billion if the fund is approved by the budget committee.

On 19 September, *CNN* reported on the potential disruptions faced by Ukraine in its electricity supplies. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Ukraine is set to face the "sternest test" in the coming winter. Fatih Birol, IEA executive director said: "Ukraine's energy system has made it

through the past two winters thanks to the resilience, courage and ingenuity of its people and strong solidarity from its international partners.” The agency noted that the intensified attacks on the Ukrainian electricity supplies could cause electricity shortages in hospitals, schools and other primary institutions during the coming winter. It estimated that Ukraine’s electricity supply shortfall could reach as low as six gigawatts. In its report, IEA presented ten measures to tackle the current energy crisis. It includes strengthening the physical and cyber security of energy infrastructure, quick delivery of equipment and spare parts for repairs, investing in energy efficiency and building the capacity to import electricity and natural gas from the EU. However, it proposes “effective air defence” as the most important measure to counter the crisis.

References

- [“Russian attacks on Ukraine power grid probably violate humanitarian law, says UN,” Reuters, 19 September 2024](#)
- [“Russia advances in the Kursk region, commander says,” Reuters, 19 September 2024](#)
- [“Russia attacks Ukraine geriatric centre and power grid,” Swissinfo.ch, 19 September 2024](#)
- [“Russia strikes Ukraine’s key signals facility – MOD,” RT, 19 September 2024](#)
- [“Russia’s Akhmat special force destroys military storage facility in Kursk direction,” TASS, 20 September 2024](#)
- [“Ukrainian forces in difficult situation in Kursk Region, try gain foothold — commander,” TASS, 19 September 2024](#)
- [“Ukraine’s energy supply faces ‘sternest test yet’ as war grinds toward third winter,” CNN World, 19 September 2024](#)
- [“President von der Leyen announces new EU support for Ukraine’s energy security for the winter,” European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations \(DG NEAR\), 19 September 2024](#)
- [“MEPs: Ukraine must be able to strike legitimate military targets in Russia,” Europarl, 19 September 2024](#)
- [“Zelenskyy poised to meet with Biden, Harris and Trump next week,” CBS News, 19 September 2024](#)
- [“Germany to approve 397 million euros in](#)

[extra Ukraine military aid, letter says,” AOl, 19 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Day 939:

Ukrainian drone attack on Russia’s ammunition depot in Toropets town

War on the Ground:

On 18 September, *The Guardian* reported on the Ukrainian drone attack on the Russian ammunition depot in the Toropets town in the Tver region. It was detected by the earthquake monitoring systems and was considered to be one of the biggest strikes on Russia since the war in 2022. According to pro-Russian sources, the drone struck an arsenal that stored missiles, ammunition and explosives in the Toropets town. The attack was part of Ukraine’s larger plan of targeting oil refineries, power plants, airfields and military factories. The earthquake monitoring stations detected it as a minor earthquake in the area. According to Ukrainian sources, the attack was carried out by the Ukrainian security service in coordination with the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine and the Special Operations Force. Meanwhile, an anonymous official informed that the destroyed arsenal had long-range Russian missiles and guided bombs known as KABs (Корректируемая Авиационная Бомба) meaning “managed (corrected) aircraft bomb.”

On 18 September, *Reuters* reported on the Russian attacks targeting energy facilities in the city of Sumy in northeastern Ukraine. According to the regional authorities, the attack had led to the death of one person in the central city of Kropyvnytskyi. The Ukrainian air force informed that they had destroyed 46 out of the 52 drones launched by Russia. They added that Russia had launched another three guided air missiles which failed to reach the target. There were no reports of damage to any of the critical infrastructure in the region. Meanwhile, the Sumy regional authorities said that the air defence forces destroyed 16 drones. Oleksiy Kuleba, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of reconstruction, regions and infrastructure also informed on the creation of a body to coordinate the defence of energy facilities in the Sumy region, which has been subject to frequent attacks.

On 18 September, *TVP World* reported on the increase in Ukraine's defence spending in the 2024 budget. According to Yaroslav Zheleznyak, a lawmaker from the Holos party, the total budget spending for the year stands at EUR 80.8 billion. The defence spending is raised by an additional EUR 10.8 billion. On the same, Rustem Umerov, the defence minister of Ukraine said: "This will allow not only better support for our military but will also strengthen the country's defence capabilities." He added that EUR 5.9 billion was allocated to soldiers' wages and additional payments to their families and EUR 1.65 billion to modernize the equipment in the army. With no sign of war ending, Ukraine had raised its pace of mobilization and required funds to pay the army personnel. Roksolana Pidlasa, the head of the parliament's budget committee revealed that the fighting cost Kyiv about EUR 126 million each day.

On 17 September, *the Institute for the Study of War* reported on the recent advance of Ukrainian forces in the east of the settlement of Krasnooktyabrskoye in Glushkovsky Raion districts in Kursk Oblast. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the Russian troops were repelling the Ukrainian forces in the regions of Veseloye, Medvezhye and Novy Put in the Glushkovy districts. The ministry also claimed that the Ukrainian forces attacked southeast of Korenevo near Obukhovka and Lyubimovka and northwest of Sudzha near Malaya Loknya despite the counteroffensive operations.

On 18 September, *the Institute for the Study of War* reported on the recapture of some territories in the Kursk Oblast by the Russian forces. According to geolocated footage, Russian troops were advancing eastward to the villages of Olgovka and Uspenovka which is east and southeast of Korenevo district. Russia's Defence Ministry also claimed that its forces were carrying out counter offensives in Nikolayevo-Daryino, Daryino, Lyubimovka and Tolsty Lug in the southeast of Korenevo and southeast of Sudzha near Plekhovo. The Russian 11th Airborne Brigade and the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade were reportedly operating in the Kursk Oblast.

On 18 September, in the video address, *Volodymyr Zelenskyy*, Ukraine's President gave an overview on war. He informed on the two reports presented by General Oleksandr Syrski, the Commander in Chief of the army. The first dealt with Ukraine's operations, particularly in the Kursk region. Zelenskyy informed that the situations in the Kharkiv and Donetsk regions were also monitored. Apart from that, he spoke about his discussion with Serhiy Marchenko, the Minister of Finance and Oleksiy Danilov, the Secretary of National Security over the additional funds required for defence. Additionally, he talked about the ongoing discussions with the team of international experts to implement strategic and logistic needs that were promised at the Washington summit. Lastly, he revealed that the "Plan for Victory" was fully ready to be present before Joe Biden, the US President. The Victory Plan aims to bring a peaceful solution to the Ukraine conflict by not compromising any of its conditions. It also opens the door for another peace summit next year.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 18 September, *RT* reported on the order of evacuation of a Toropets town. A destroyed Ukrainian drone had caused a fire outbreak in Toropets, which has a population of 11,000. According to Igor Rudenya, the Tver region governor: "A partial evacuation of residents from the territory is ordered where the air defences are active and responders are working to contain the fire." However, there were no reports of the occurrence of casualties. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, 54 Ukrainian drones were intercepted overnight in five Russian regions.

On 18 September, *RT* reported on the Ukrainian drone attack on a civilian bus in the Belgorod region. According to the statements of Vyacheslav Gladkov, governor of the region, four civilians suffered injury in the bus. The drone struck a service vehicle carrying employees in Shebekino town. The governor added that the injured civilians were getting necessary medical treatment.

The West View:

Responses from Europe and the US

On 17 September, *ARAB NEWS* reported on Germany's EUR 100 million winter aid to Ukraine. According to the German foreign ministry's statements, "Russia is deliberately attacking Ukraine's heat and energy supply. This is why Germany is providing a further 100 million euros in winter aid for the Ukrainian energy supply." Germany condemned Russia particularly over its attack on Ukraine's energy facilities. This decision came amidst plans to reconstruct Ukraine's energy and power systems ahead of winter. Denys Shmygal, Ukraine's Prime Minister said that all the hospitals and 80 per cent of schools in the country required 1,800 high-capacity generators. He also promised to reinforce the facilities against the increasing drone and missile attacks. On 19 September, *The Straits Times* reported on the Bucharest Nine Summit of Defence Ministers held in Romania. The group which is the eastern flank of NATO comprises Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The ministers urged for a collective response to Russia's increased violation of their airspace through drones targeting Ukraine. These member countries which share borders with Ukraine were repeatedly affected by Russian drones. They expressed their "profound concern over the repeated incursions" and requested the alliance to support in "boosting their capabilities in detecting, identifying and destroying these weapons." Angel Tilvar, the Romanian Defence Minister said: "A robust and coordinated response on an allied level is needed, as well as the swift implementation of NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defence rotational model." In early September, both Latvia and Romania identified Russian drones in the airspace. However, NATO could not verify if the incidents were "intentional."

References

"Blast from attack on Russian arms depot picked up on earthquake monitors," *The Guardian*, 18 September 2024
"Russian attacks target energy facilities, kill one, authorities say," *Reuters*, 18 September 2024
"Ukraine to put more money toward defense after 2024 budget amended," *TVP World*, 18

September 2024

"Our Plan for Victory Is Already Fully Prepared; the Most Important Thing Now Is the Determination to Implement It – Address by the President," *President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy*, 18 September 2024

"Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation," *Institute for the Study of War*, 18 September 2024

"Ukrainian drone attack prompts partial evacuation in Russian town," *RT*, 18 September 2024

"Civilians injured in Ukrainian drone raid on Belgorod Region – governor," *RT*, 18 September 2024

"Germany pledges winter aid package for Ukraine," *Arab News*, 18 September 2024

War in Ukraine Day 938:

German Foreign Minister warn Moldova against Russia's hybrid warfare

War on the Ground:

On 17 September, an article in *RFE* informed that Sumy Oblast in Ukraine was suffering from power cuts after an overnight attack by Russian drones. The Sumy Regional Military Administration informed households in Sumy, Konotop, Ohktyr and other communities were cut off from the electrical grid. Artem Kobzar, the acting Mayor stated there were no casualties from the attack but there were issues in electricity and water supplies. The Ministry of Energy of Ukraine stated the Russian attacks caused a fire at a power substation and cut power to about 281,000 consumers. Vadym Mysnyk, a spokesperson for a northern Ukrainian military unit stated the attack was in retaliation to Ukraine's incursion into the Kursk Oblast in Russia.

On 17 September, *The Washington Post* reported that the medical aid group Doctors Without Borders(MSF) had ceased its operations in Russia after 32 years. MSF said that it had received a letter from the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation informing it had been removed from a register of foreign non-governmental organisations. MSF also informed that it would retain its branch office in Moscow, but operations run by its Dutch affiliate had stopped. MSF is amongst several

international organisations, groups and movements to be banned by the Government of the Russian Federation on grounds that they threaten the state. Earlier, the Russian government banned environmental groups like Greenpeace and the newspaper *The Moscow Times*. Norman Sitali, the Operations Manager for MSF programs in Russia stated the organisation was sad to end the aid programs, since citizens in Russia would be left without medical and humanitarian assistance MSF could have provided. Since 1992, MSF has been involved in a wide range of humanitarian activities in Russia, such as aid for homeless individuals and migrants and assistance for over 52,000 individuals displaced by the Ukraine war. The aid group was also planning to provide aid for individuals internally displaced by the Ukrainian incursion into the Kursk Oblast in Russia.

On 16 September, *Al Jazeera* reported on the 'Bucha witches' being trained by the Government of Ukraine. 'Bucha witches' refers to the unofficial moniker of nearly 100 women aged 19 to 64. These women are being trained by the Ukrainian government in the usage of assault rifles and machine guns to shoot down Russian drones. They also learn how to load arms and coordinate in groups of two and three. The women serve as part-time military volunteers in air defence units in the suburban community of Bucha to the northwest of Kyiv. The women are motivated by the widespread atrocities committed by Russia in 2022 when it briefly occupied Bucha. Dozens of women volunteered for the Bucha military volunteers, motivated by the trauma of the atrocities and the desire for revenge. Valentyna, a mother of three sons who volunteered for the unit stated the women wanted to speed up the victory of the Ukrainian forces, and contribute towards it. Andriy Verlaty, a Colonel in the Armed Forces of Ukraine stated individuals who put on the uniform were defenders and their gender did not matter.

On 17 September, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on the missile strike carried out by the Ukrainian navy on the ammunition depot in the Russia-controlled Ukrainian city of Mariupol. According to the

statements of the navy, the attack led to the demolition of both the storage infrastructure and the stockpiled ammunition. Petro Andriushchenko, an adviser to the exiled mayor of Mariupol also showed images of Russia's destroyed warehouses in the villages of Hlyboke and Donetsk Oblast. However, these could not be confirmed by the media.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 17 September, *RT* reported on Russia's reason to expand the number of military personnel in the armed forces. Peskov said that the decision was taken as a precaution against the "current hostile environment." He added: "The military was increased to almost 2.4 million with 1.5 million servicemen. Previously, Russia had increased its army in December 2023 to over 2.2 million, including 1.3 million troops. Russia's latest expansion came amidst increasing scepticism over the NATO allies in Europe. It has always expressed discontent with the US-led bloc as a threat to its national security.

On 17 September, *RT* reported on Russia's response to the US company Meta's decision to ban Russian media. Meta, the California-based organisation said in a statement that it was de-platforming media platforms like *Rossiya Segodnya* (RT) and other related entities of Russia from its apps, citing "foreign interference activity." The move is set to be implemented globally in the coming days. As a response, Dmitry Peskov, the Press Secretary of the Russian President said that Meta discredited itself with such actions. He added: "Such selective actions against Russian media are unacceptable. We have an extremely negative attitude towards this." In early September, the US State Department imposed sanctions on Russian-funded media outlets, condemning them as "functioning as a de facto arm of Russian intelligence." Maria Zakharova, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson called it a "declaration of war on free speech." On 17 September, *Reuters* reported on the deepening relationship between Iran and Moscow, outlined during the visit of Sergei Shoigu, Russian Security Council's Secretary to Iran. He visited Iran after he met with Kim

Jong Un, the North Korean leader in Pyongyang. Masoud Pezeshkian, the Iranian president, promised to increase measures to enhance the level of cooperation among the countries. He said: "Relations between Tehran and Moscow will develop in a permanent, continuous and lasting way. Deepening and strengthening relations and cooperation between Iran and Russia will reduce the impact of sanctions." The Nour news, an Iranian media agency, reported that Shoigu had also met Ali Akbar Ahmadian, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 17 September, the *Federal Foreign Office of Germany* published a speech given by Annalena Baerbock, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany. Baerbock made the speech at the Moldova Partnership Platform. In her speech, Baerbock warned that the Government of the Russian Federation was engaging in hybrid warfare against Moldova. She outlined three prospective steps which could be taken to counter the threat. First, the Moldova Partnership Platform needed to become a lasting forum with a focus on areas like energy security and reducing corruption where the biggest efforts could be made. The other steps mentioned by Baerbock were supporting reforms in Moldova as part of its eventual accession to the EU such as in the IT and agriculture sectors, and continuing to stand firm against Russian aggression. Baerbock concluded by stating that the EU would stand with Moldova, so they could choose their own path towards a European future of prosperity and democracy. Baerbock also noted how Moldova housed over 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees, and allowed them to remain with Ukrainians still making up five per cent of the Moldovan population. Baerbock also stated the Russian invasion of Ukraine had targeted Moldova as well, since it received 100 per cent of its gas imports from Russia. Baerbock stated that the leadership of Maia Sandu, the President of Moldova had ensured the country did not break, and remained together. Baerbock informed the Moldovan spirit was driven by one principle, to act and not complain. The foreign minister also stated that the EU had provided

Moldova with strong diplomatic support, and the Moldova Partnership Platform was a platform to ensure continued strategic partnership with Moldova. Baerbock informed negotiations were on for providing EU membership to Moldova.

On 17 September, *Reuters* reported that the Federal Government of Germany had stated it would provide Ukraine with an additional aid of EUR 100 million for this winter. Annalena Baerbock, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Germany made the announcement and stated that Russia was planning a winter war to make the lives of Ukrainians miserable. The Government of Ukraine had informed earlier that more air defences were required to allow repairs to infrastructure damaged by Russian attacks. This is in order to secure energy demands for the winter, when power demand is at the highest due to low temperatures.

References

- Mansur Mirovalev, "[Ukraine's 'Bucha witches' volunteer to shoot down Russian drones](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 16 September 2024
- "[Russian Strikes Cut Power In Ukraine's Sumy Region](#)," *Radio Free Europe*, 17 September 2024
- Jamey Keaten, "[Doctors Without Borders closes operations in Russia](#)," *The Washington Post*, 17 September 2024
- "[Germany pledges additional 100 million euros in winter aid for Ukraine](#)," *Reuters*, 17 September 2024
- "[Speech by Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock at the Moldova Partnership Platform](#)," *Federal Foreign Office of Germany*, 17 September 2024
- "[Kremlin responds to Meta's Russian media ban](#)," *RT*, 17 September 2024
- "[Kremlin explains new Russian army expansion](#)," *RT*, 17 September 2024
- "Russian nuclear test site 'ready' – commander," *RT*, 17 September 2024
- "[Ukraine destroys Russian ammunition depots near occupied Mariupol](#), Navy says," *The Kyiv Independent*, 18 September 2024
- "[Iranian president pledges deeper ties with Moscow](#), state media says," *Reuters*, 18 September 2024

War in Ukraine Day 937:

Russia claims recapture of two settlements in Kursk Oblast

War on the Ground:

On 17 September, *CNN* published the video interview conducted with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine. Zelenskyy stated he did not understand what Donald Trump, the presidential candidate from the Republican Party meant when he stated he could end the Ukraine war soon. However, the Ukrainian president also informed Trump was supportive of Ukraine in a phone call. According to Zelenskyy, Trump stated he understood the difficulties of surviving during a war and said he would do everything to strengthen Ukraine. Zelenskyy also stated he did not know what the true intentions of Trump were.

On 16 September, *The Straits Times* reported that Russian drone strikes injured one resident in the Kyiv Oblast in Ukraine. Ruslan Kravchenko, Governor of Kyiv Oblast informed of the attack, stating one resident was injured and five homes damaged by the drone attacks. Kravchenko also stated no critical infrastructure was damaged by the attack. Serhiy Popko, Head of the Kyiv City Military Administration informed Russian drones attacked Kyiv from different directions, but there were no casualties or damage. The Armed Forces of Ukraine stated air defence units destroyed nearly 20 drones which were aimed at Kyiv.

On 16 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian shelling of Bohodukhiv and Podoly in the Kharkiv region. According to the Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office, the attack had led to the injury of two people. According to the initial data collected, Russians had used three KAB-250s guided aerial bombs to carry out the strike. At least 25 residential buildings and an agricultural enterprise were destroyed in the attack.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 16 September, *Anadolu Ajansi* reported that Russian forces took back control of two settlements in western Kursk Oblast. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation stated that the Russian Armed

Forces retook the villages of Uspenovka and Borki. The defence ministry also informed Russian forces repelled five Ukrainian counterattacks near the settlements of Byakhovo, Bolshaya Obukhovka, Vitrovka, Lyubimovka, and Malaya Loknya. The Government of Ukraine did not respond to Russian claims.

On 16 September, *RT* reported on the destruction of a Ukrainian military tank by the Russian military. According to the video footage released by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the tank surrounded with anti-drone netting was struck by a guided aerial munition. The ministry hasn't revealed the type of weapon used to launch the strike. However, the footage suggested that it had used an Orion medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) drone, which must have deployed a Kh-BPLA laser-guided missile.

On 16 September, *RT* reported on the Ukrainian shelling of the city of Belgorod in Russia, 42 kilometres from the border with Ukraine. According to Vyacheslav Gladkov, the governor of the region, the attack had led to the injury of eight civilians out of which one was in critical condition. He informed that about 15 cars and a private house had caught fire. Apart from that, 21 apartment buildings and four private homes were affected by the fire. Belgorod has a population of about 330,000 people.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 16 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the preparation of Italy to deliver the SAMP/T battery to Ukraine. It is a Franco-Italian and the only European-made system, able to track down and intercept ballistic missiles. According to Antonio Tajani, Italy's Foreign Minister, the defence system aimed to help Ukraine protect its population. He said that it was necessary to stop Russia's attacks. He also looked forward to a "serious peace conference" to end the war by 2024.

References

["Zelenskyy reveals details of phone call with Trump from two months ago," *CNN*, 17 September 2024](#)
["Ukraine says Russian drone barrage injures](#)

one in Kyiv region," *The Straits Times*, 16 September 2024

Burc Eruygur, "Russia claims it retook control of 2 settlements in Kursk region," *Anadolu Ajansi*, 16 September 2024

"Eight wounded in Ukrainian shelling of Belgorod – governor," *RT*, 16 September 2024

"Italy set to deliver second SAMP/T battery to] strengthen Ukraine's air defenses – Tajani," *Ukrinform*, 16 September 2024

"Militants shell Bohodukhiv and Podoly in Kharkiv region, two wounded," *Ukrinform*, 16 September 2024

"Russian military takes out Ukrainian tank in Kursk Region – MOD," *RT*, 16 September 2024

War in Ukraine Day 931:

US Secretary of State And UK Foreign Secretary assure support for Ukraine till war ends

War on the Ground:

On 11 September, *The Moscow Times* reported evacuating people living in the Kursk region bordering Ukraine. According to the authorities in the region, more than 1,50,000 people living in communities were forcefully evacuated since early August. The Kursk region's governor Alexei Smirnov said that the people were "relocated to safe areas." Smirnov estimated the loss of the agriculture sector in Kursk to be RUB 85 million.

On 11 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian shelling in the Kherson region in the Dniprovskiy district. The shelling resulted in the injury of two civilians. Roman Mrochko, Head of the Kherson City Military Administration said: "Two people were injured in the enemy's shelling of Kherson; they have been hospitalised now." He added that the Russians were repeatedly shelling the region.

On 11 September, *CNN* reported on Ukraine government's recruitment of prisoners to fight in the war. According to the report, 59th brigade under the Shvkal battalion contains ex-prisoners who were given wages up to USD 500 to USD 4000 per month. Ukraine's Defence Ministry informed release of 4,650 convicts to fight in the war. The initiative was an attempt by the Ukrainian

government to improve the ranks of soldiers. In an interview with *CNN*, Vitaly, one of the ex-prisoners who had served 10 years in prison for four different crimes, informed how life on the front lines was tough. Oleksandr, the commander of the 59th Battalion stated the war was a chance for the former prisoners to reform themselves. However, Oleksandr stated the physical and mental endurance capabilities of the ex-convicts would help them survive.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 11 September, *Anadolu Ajansi* reported on Dmitry Peskov, spokesperson for the Government of the Russian Federation statements on the West. According to him, the West had allowed Ukraine to carry out long-range missile strikes into Russia. According to Peskov, the decision had already been made and an information campaign was being carried out to legitimize it. The spokesperson warned that if Ukraine received long-range missiles, the Russian government would have a "corresponding response." Peskov also stated that the West was increasing its involvement in Ukraine, despite claiming otherwise. The spokesperson stated the war could be resolved only if the West stopped using Ukraine as a "pawn" against Russia.

On 11 September, *RT* informed Murmansk Oblast in Russia was attacked by Ukrainian drones. Andrey Chibis, the Governor of Murmansk Oblast informed of the drone attacks and stated local air defences were put on alert to combat them. The governor also urged residents to remain aware of local air-raid alerts. Chibis later informed all three drones were shot down. The Russian aviation regulator Rosaviatsia informed airports in the capital of Murmansk and Apatity town were temporarily shut down in response.

On 11 September, pro-Kremlin sources reported on an offensive in the Kursk region. According to Major General Aпти Alaudinov, the deputy chief of the Russian army's military-political administration, an elite Russian naval infantry unit attacked the Ukrainian troops around the Korenevsky district, located on the border with

northeastern Ukraine's Sumy region. He added that the Russian army was able to seize several settlements from the Ukrainian troops. The pro-Kremlin sources also reported on the recapture of border towns Gordeevka and Vnezapnoye in the Korenevsky districts.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 11 September, *Al Arabiya News* reported on David Lammy, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the UK, and Anthony Blinken, US Secretary of State joint trip to Ukraine. Blinken and Lammy promised support for Ukraine until the war ended. The trip comes amid Ukraine facing the threat of Russian advances towards the key logistical hub of Pokrovsk. While the US Government has shown support for Ukraine, there are apprehensions in Washington that sending long-range missiles to Ukraine would start a large-scale war. However, Blinken informed the US was committed to providing Ukraine what it required to deal with Russian aggression. On the same day Blinken and Lammy met Denis Shmyhal, the Prime Minister of Ukraine. Shmyhal informed that he hoped the Government of Ukraine would receive long-range weapons for strikes into Russia. The Prime Minister also stated the Ukrainian government needed to respond to "terrorism" from Russia through striking military targets on Russian territory. The Government of the Russian Federation also warned that the usage of US missiles to carry out strikes within Russia would be met with an "appropriate response."

On 11 September, *Daily Sabah* reported on the US and UK packages announced during the news conference with Andrii Sybiha, Ukrainian Foreign Minister, David Lammy and Antony Blinken. The packages were part of the humanitarian support and assistance for demining operations. Blinken announced a total of USD 700 million aid focusing on Ukraine's energy grids which were repeatedly hit by Russian attacks. The fund was allocated to three sectors- USD 325 million for the energy sector, USD 290 million for humanitarian support and the remaining USD 102 million for mine-removal activities. Lammy also proposed a

package of USD 3.9 billion as aid.

References

- ["Kursk Region Governor Says Over 150K Civilians Evacuated From Border Areas," *The Moscow Times*, 11 September 2024](#)
- ["Russia Launches Counteroffensive in Kursk Region, Pro-Kremlin Sources Say," *The Moscow Times*, 11 September 2024](#)
- Elena Tesolva, ["Kremlin says Russia most likely allowed Ukraine to strike deep inside Russian territory," *Anadolu Ajansi*, 11 September 2024](#)
- Sebastian Shukla, Kosta Gak, Frederik Pleitgen and Scott McWhinnie, ["From convict to combatant, Ukraine enlists prisoners to fight Russian forces," *CNN*, 11 September 2024](#)
- ["Drones Target Murmansk Region in Russia's Arctic," *The Moscow Times*, 11 September 2024](#)
- ["Ukrainian drones attack Russian region bordering NATO states-governor," *RT*, 11 September 2024](#)
- ["Two civilians wounded as Russians shell Kherson," *Ukrinform*, 11 September 2024](#)
- ["US, British FMs in Ukraine as Kyiv pushes for long-range missiles," *Daily Sabah*, 11 September 2024](#)
- ["Antony Blinken, David Lammy make joint visit to Kyiv as Ukraine renews appeal for long-range weapons," *ABC News*, 11 September 2024](#)
- ["US, UK top diplomats vow Ukraine victory as they discuss long-range arms," *Alarabiya News*, 11 September 2024](#)
- ["Blinken announces \\$700M in US aid to Ukraine," *Daily Sabah*, 11 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Day 930:

Massive drone attacks reported across Russia

War on the Ground:

On 10 September, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on the massive drone attack in the Bryansk, Moscow, Tula, Kaluga, Belgorod, Kursk, Oryol, Voronezh and the Krasnodar Krai regions. According to Russia's Defence Ministry, 144 Ukrainian drones were intercepted overnight and claimed to be among the largest strikes throughout the war. Andrey Vorobyov, Governor of the Moscow Oblast reported on the death of one woman and injury of three other civilians in the town of Ramenskoye,

located 46 kilometres southeast of Moscow. The attack also led to several fires in buildings. Over 30 international and domestic flights got delayed and Domodedovo Airport in the Moscow Oblast region was shut down. However, Ukraine has not yet responded to these allegations.

On 10 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stance on the alleged delivery of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia. Heorhii Tykhyi, a spokesperson for Ukraine's ministry did not mention the exact measures which would be taken against Iran. However, he agreed that if the act was confirmed, Ukraine would even "sever diplomatic relations" with Iran. He stressed that it not just questioned Ukraine's security, Ukrainian-Iranian relations, or Russian-Iranian relations, but also the entire EU and the Middle East.

On 10 September, *Ukrainska Pravda* reported on the Russian attacks on the settlement of Stanislav in the Kherson Oblast region. It led to the injury of four civilians. The Russian troops also launched drones with explosives upon the civilians in Kherson and Kindiika. They also attacked a civilian vehicle in Kindiika with a UAV drone.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 10 September, *RT* reported on the Russian helicopter attack on the Ukrainian troops in the Kursk region. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, several two-seat Ka-52M attack aircraft had carried out strikes on Ukrainian military personnel and armored vehicles. The Ministry added: "There is no escape from the alligators." The air support controllers' report confirmed that all targets had been destroyed. However, it did not provide the exact number of the targeted Ukrainian forces.

On 10 September, *RT* reported on the statements made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary for the Russian President on Kyiv's overnight drone attack. This came against the backdrop of the UAV drone attack carried out by Ukraine over nine Russian regions. Peskov said: "Night strikes on

residential areas can in no way be associated with military action." He noted that Russia should continue its military activities to protect itself from these attacks.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 10 September, *Politico* reported on the statements made by Kurt Campbell, the US Deputy Secretary of State, condemning China for allegedly helping Moscow in its war with Ukraine. According to him, China was giving "substantial help" towards the arms and ammunition while Moscow in response, handed over its closely guarded military tech on submarines and missiles. Campbell argued that the latest Chinese-delivered technologies were directly applied to the Russian war machine. Earlier, they were believed to be dual-use technologies- used for both civilian and military purposes. However, China has repeatedly refuted these allegations and claims of having an impartial position on the war. Campbell further asserted that Moscow had started delivering sensitive technologies like submarines and missiles in return. He added that these technologies could inflict danger on the US, India, Australia, Japan and South Korea.

On 10 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the announcement of sanctions by the US against Iranian airline Iran Air, Russian and Iranian organisations over their involvement in Iran's military support and the alleged delivery of ballistic missiles to Russia. The US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) imposed sanctions upon ten individuals and six entities based in Russia and Iran.

References

- ["Russian Alligators' pound Ukrainian positions in Kursk Region – MOD," RT, 10 September 2024](#)
- ["Kremlin responds to Ukrainian attacks on Moscow Region," RT, 10 September 2024](#)
- ["Zelensky: We see what steps Russia is planning, and we will act accordingly," Ukrinform, 10 September 2024](#)
- ["MFA on Iran's missile transfer to Russia: We are considering all options, including severance of diplomatic relations," Ukrinform, 10 September 2024](#)
- ["Four civilians injured in Russian attacks on](#)

Kherson Oblast. *Ukrainska Pravda*, 10 September 2024
“US accuses China of giving ‘very substantial’ help to Russia’s war machine.” *Politico*, 10 September 2024
“U.S. announces sanctions against Iran and Russia over sending ballistic missile.” *Ukrinform*, 10 September 2024

War in Ukraine Day 929: **Russia claims capturing a village near Pokrovsk Oblast**

War on the Ground:

On 09 September, *The Moscow Times* reported that Russian forces had captured the east Ukrainian village of Memryk, which is 20 kilometres away from the Pokrovsk region. According to Russia’s Foreign Ministry: “Units of the Tsenter grouping of troops liberated the settlement of Memryk.” Half the population of Pokrovsk has fled since the fighting intensified in the nearby areas. Russia claims to have captured several Ukrainian towns and villages near Pokrovsk in August and September.

On 09 September, *Ukrinform* reported on the latest military package announcement by Sweden. According to the Swedish government, the package was worth SEK 4.6 billion, including equipment, direct procurement and financial contributions. In a statement, the government: “Sweden enters a new phase of military support to Ukraine, with a greater focus on production instead of donation.” The package consists of combat military equipment, Robot System 70 anti-aircraft missile systems, and anti-tank weapons and mines over Ukraine’s special request. The government also aims to provide additional funds for the procurement of small-flying drones in Ukraine.

The Moscow View: **Claims by Russia**

On 09 September, *RT* reported on the FAB bomb strike upon a Ukrainian command centre in the Kharkiv region. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the destroyed unit in the outskirts of a northeastern region was used by the Ukrainian troops as cover. They also released video footage showcasing the massive explosion that toppled the buildings

near the settlement. However, the other buildings nearby were unharmed. The Ministry claimed that Ukraine had lost “up to 80 soldiers and eight pieces of military equipment” in the strike.

On 09 September, *RT* reported on the comments made by Sergey Lavrov, Russia’s Foreign Minister at the meeting on strategic cooperation with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. He said: “Zelenskyy’s initiative has become a pain in the neck for everyone, it is a pure ultimatum.” He condemned the western countries who supported Zelenskyy’s peace formula and argued that they did not intend to negotiate on equal terms. He added that Russia had never considered the peace initiative seriously. He clarified that Russia aimed for equal and humane treatment of people who are integral to the Russian world, Russian culture, Russian language, history and religion. He also urged to conclude the terms of settlement for the negotiation rather than figuring out the time and place.

On 09 September, *Daily Sabah* reported on the comments made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President on Germany’s initiative to hold peace discussions. He dismissed the suggestion and said: “As far as a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Ukraine is concerned, no tangible contours have yet emerged.” These comments came as a response to Olaf Scholz, the German Chancellor suggestion to include Russians in the peace conference.

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

On 09 September, *France24* reported on the EU’s claims over the alleged delivery of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia. According to Peter Stano, EU spokesperson: “We are aware of the credible information provided by allies on the delivery of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia.” He confirmed that the EU would respond with substantial sanctions and restrictive measures against Iran if the claim was proven. These allegations were refuted by Iran’s foreign ministry, arguing that the country had always opted for neutrality. Meanwhile, the Kremlin has not made any direct denial of the claims.

On 10 September, *The Moscow Times* reported on Latvia's claims over the crashed Russian drone in the region. The drone was found to be an Iranian-designed Shahed carrying explosives. According to General Leonids Kalnins, Latvian armed forces commander: "The explosive warhead stuck half a meter deep into the ground...avoiding detonation." However, he did not reveal how and when the drone was deactivated. Colonel Viesturs Masulis, Latvia's air force commander added that the drone was not aimed at any military target drifted to Latvia through Belarus. The Defence Ministry reported on sending additional mobile anti-aircraft units to the borderlands.

References

- ["Russia obliterates Ukrainian command center in Kharkov Region – MOD."](#) *RT*, 09 September 2024
- ["Zelensky's ultimatums 'a pain in the neck' – Lavrov."](#) *RT*, 09 September 2024
- ["EU says it received 'credible' reports that Iran sent ballistic missiles to Russia."](#) *France24*, 09 September 2024
- ["Kremlin rejects Germany's suggestion of peace discussions with Ukraine."](#) *Daily Sabah*, 09 September 2024
- ["Latvia Says Crashed Russian Drone Was Fully Armed Shahed."](#) *The Moscow Times*, 10 September 2024
- ["Sweden announces new military support package worth over EUR 400M for Ukraine."](#) *Ukrinform*, , 09 September 2024
- ["Russia Claims Another Village in East Ukraine, Near Pokrovsk."](#) *The Moscow Times*, 10 September 2024
- ["Russia claims 'massive' drone attack on Moscow Oblast, other regions."](#) *The Kyiv Independent*, 10 September 2024

War in Ukraine Days 927 & 928: Ukraine reports attacks across Donetsk Oblast

War on the Ground:

On 06 September, *Kyiv Post* reported on the Russian attack in the city of Pavlograd in the central Dnipropetrovsk Oblast located 100 kilometres from the Donetsk Oblast. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs: "A five-story residential building was damaged. Firefighters

extinguished the fire and rescued five people." The attack led to the death of one person and injured 55 others. Ukraine's air force reported on involvement of five Iskander ballistic missiles in the attack. Serhiy Lysak, Dnipropetrovsk Regional Military Administration Head also informed about the numerous fires in the city post the attack.

On 07 September, *The Kyiv Independent* informed that drones operated by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) had struck an ammunition and military equipment warehouse in the Voronezh Oblast of Russia. On the same day, local authorities in Voronezh reported a drone and fire attack. This was confirmed by a SBU source. Reports also indicated that the drone strike caused chain explosions of the stored ammunition, and at least four powerful fires. The SBU source stated that SBU drones had targeted the warehouse since it was actively used by the Government of the Russian Federation to supply material for forces in Ukraine. An official in the Ukraine Government informed that the attack had destroyed missiles supplied by the Government of North Korea to Russia. Alexander Gusev, the Governor of Voronezh Oblast stated that the residents of several settlements in the Ostrogozhsky district were being temporarily evacuated. Gusev also stated that residents must not approach the fire site or share images of its location.

On 07 September, *ABC News* reported on Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine vow to ramp up domestic military production through the creation of underground weapons factories. Zelenskyy informed that the Government was setting up underground weapons production facilities for Ukrainian soldiers to self-defend. The President also stated that Ukraine was developing drones and missiles to attack Russia. Zelenskyy also made a renewed appeal for removing restrictions on the usage of Western-supplied weapons on Russian territory. In the past few weeks, attacks by Russia on energy infrastructure and residential areas in Ukraine have increased substantially. The attacks have shown Russia's long-range capabilities and

affected about 70 per cent of power generation capacity in Ukraine.

On 07 September, RadioFreeEuropeRadioLiberty informed that at least five civilians had been killed in Russian shelling in the Donetsk Oblast of Ukraine. Vadym Filashkin, Governor of Donetsk Oblast informed that three men between the ages of 24 and 69 were killed in the town of Kostyantynivka. Filashkin also informed that four residents were injured by the shelling. According to reports, two men in their 50s were killed in shelling near the town of Toretsk. Anastasia Medvedeva, a spokesperson for the Office of the Prosecutor General in Donetsk stated that a fourth person was injured in the attack on Kostyantynivka.

On 08 September, *Kyiv Post* reported on the Russian strike in the Sumy region, across the border from the Kursk region. According to the Sumy Region Prosecutor's Office, the attack led to the death of two people and injured four others. The report claimed that Russian troops had used weapons that were prohibited under international law. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russia had launched four Kh-59 missiles from the Belgorod region and 23 Shahed drones from Kursk and Cape Chaud. The defence mechanisms intercepted one missile and 25 drones. The report argued that Russia had violated the air space of Romania with their Shahed drones. The head of Romania confirmed this and informed that the authorities were searching for possible crash sites in Romania.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 September, the *TASS* informed that three residents were wounded by Ukrainian shelling in Belgorod Oblast. Vyacheslav Gladkov, Governor of Belgorod Oblast informed that shelling by the Armed Forces of Ukraine on Shebekino town in Belgorod Oblast had caused injuries to three residents. Gladkov stated that a woman had suffered shrapnel wounds to the back and thigh and a man had suffered a shrapnel wound to the chest. Gladkov also informed that two houses and four outbuildings in Shebekino had caught fire, as a result of shelling.

On 08 September, *RT* reported on the upcoming visit of Ajit Doval, India's National Security Advisor to Russia. According to the report, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, was set to "discuss New Delhi's efforts to settle the conflict with Ukraine." Doval had scheduled his meeting on Tuesday and Wednesday according to the media. Doval is expected to attend a meeting with the BRICS Security Officials and hold separate discussions with Russian and Chinese officials.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 06 September, France's Defence Ministry announced to use of a share of EUR 1.4 billion in revenues from the frozen Russian assets to aid Ukraine. According to its official statement: "Alongside other (EU) member states, the ministry... will take part in implementing the new support measure for Ukraine from the European Peace Facility." The Ministry further informed the European Commission's confirmation for "swift procurement of priority material from French industry" such as ammunition, artillery and air defence. In May 2024, the EU member states agreed to use the Russian-frozen assets to finance Ukraine's military equipment. Russia responded by denouncing the decision as "illegal."

On 07 September, on a visit to London, Bill Burns, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) stated that Russian threats of nuclear escalation must not be taken seriously. Burns made the remarks during a public appearance in London alongside Sir Richard Moore, Chief of the Intelligence Service of the United Kingdom (MI6). He also informed that in 2022, Joe Biden, President of the United States had given a direct warning through Burns to Sergey Naryshkin, Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia. According to Burns, Biden had made clear on the consequences of a nuclear escalation and the US's continued stance.

On 08 September, *POLITICO* reported on a Russian unmanned drone that flew through Belarus and fell in the Rēzekne region in the east of Latvia. According to Andris Sprūds, the Defence Minister of Latvia: "This situation is a confirmation that we need to

continue the work we have started to strengthen Latvia's eastern border, including the development of air defence capabilities and electronic warfare capabilities to limit the activities of UAVs of different applications." Latvia's armed forces also informed the NATO chain of command and investigations are ongoing. This came amidst Russia's violation of Romanian airspace with Shahed drones.

On 09 September, the *Financial Times* reported on the delivery of Iran bases ballistic missiles to Russia. This has invoked a series of tensions and alarm in Ukraine as they fear of "serious escalation" of Iran's support to Russia in the war. According to Ukrainian officials: "More than 200" Fath-360 short-range ballistic missiles arrived in a Russian Caspian Sea port this week." They believe that this delivery would allow Russia to deploy its long-range hypersonic Kinzhal missiles and strike further deep inside Ukraine's territory. Ukraine's Foreign Ministry condemned the act and called for the international community to increase its pressure on Iran. Meanwhile, Nasser Kanaani, Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson refuted the allegations as "completely baseless." He added that Iran had never been involved in the war and resorted to a political resolution to end it. However, Russian officials and Ukraine's Western partners have not responded to the claims.

References

Yehor Konovalov and Kate Marie Davies, "[Ukraine mourns dead from major Russian strike, vows response with underground weapons production](#)," *ABC News*, 07 September 2024

"[Ukraine Says 5 Killed In Russian Shelling Of Donetsk Region](#)," *RadioFreeEuropeRadioLiberty*, 07 September 2024

"[Three civilians wounded in Ukrainian shelling attack on borderline Belgorod Region](#)," *TASS*, 07 September 2024

Dam Sabbagh, "[CIA boss says West should not be intimidated by Russia's nuclear threats](#)," *The Guardian*, 07 September 2024

"[One Dead, over 50 Injured in Russian Strikes on Ukraine's Pavlograd](#)," *Kyiv Post*, 06 September 2024

"[Russian Airstrike on Sumy Kills Two, Injures Four, Including Children](#)," *Kyiv Post*, 08 September 2024

"[Hundreds mourn mother and daughters killed in Russian strike on Lviv](#)," *Reuters*, 06 September 2024

"[Video footage appears to show Russians killing surrendering Ukrainian soldiers](#)," *CNN*, 06 September 2024

"[Putin to discuss Ukraine peace with PM Modi's national security adviser – media](#)," *RT*, 08 September 2024

"[Ukraine deploys 'dragon drones' against Russia – CNN](#)," *RT*, 08 September 2024

"[Latvia says Russian drone that violated airspace came through Belarus](#)," *Politico*, 08 September 2024

"[France to use frozen Russian assets to finance Ukraine military aid](#)," *France24*, 06 September 2024

"[Iran ships 'hundreds' of ballistic missiles to Russia](#)," *Financial Times*, 06 September 2024

War in Ukraine Day 926:

Zelenskyy calls for ballistic and long-range weapons

War on the Ground:

On 06 September, at a summit of the Defence Ministers from Western countries, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine expressed difficulty in defending Russia due to a shortage of air defences. Zelenskyy called for Storm Shadow, Scalp cruise missiles, and ATACMS ballistic missiles from the UK, France, and the US. According to him, these missiles would allow Ukraine to strike targets inside Russian territory. He highlighted the shortage of missiles and the need for further cooperation from the West. Following Zelenskyy's remarks; Laurynas Kasciunas, the Minister of National Defence of Lithuania, and Bill Blair, the Minister of National Defence of Canada affirmed their support to give more missiles to Ukraine. The UK government announced that it would send an extra 650 air defence missiles to Ukraine for GBP 162 million. The summit comes amid concerns over the west not giving full freedom to Ukraine to launch missiles.

On 06 September, *Reuters* reported on a Russian missile attack on Pavlohrad city in Ukraine resulting in the death of one. Serhiy Lysak, Governor of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast

confirmed the same indicating the injury of more than 30 including children. Lysak also informed on building damage from the fires across the city. Pavlohrad is known for its railway hub connecting the Dnipropetrovsk region.

On 06 September, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on Russian forces drone attack on Kyiv. Serhii Popko, Chief of the Kyiv City Military Administration claimed on intercepting all drones using air defence units. Popko also stated that drone debris had caused a fire in another part of Pechersk. Popko informed that debris had landed near a total of four different areas in Pechersk after the attack. Reports stated that a kindergarten in Dniprovsky district had been struck by debris; which Popko stated was being investigated. No casualties have been reported from the attacks so far.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 06 September, *Reuters* reported on Lloyd Austin, US Secretary of Defence's statement on war in Ukraine having "no capability" to end in Ukraine's favour. This comes in response to Zelenskyy's call for more long-range missiles and demands to remove restrictions on targeting inside Russia. However, Austin stated that deep strikes inside Russia would not be decisive in the war. According to Austin, Ukraine already possessed capabilities such as drones which could be utilised to hit targets inside Russia; rather than missiles supplied by the West. Austin also announced USD 250 million in security assistance for Ukraine. Additionally, Germany has promised to supply an additional 12 self-propelled howitzers, while Canada stated it would send 80,840 small unarmed air-to-surface rockets and at least 1,300 warheads in the coming months.

On 06 September, the *BBC* reported on the UK Government's approval to send short-range missiles to Ukraine. John Healey, UK Defence Secretary is expected to confirm the GBP 162 million missile package. The package will include 650 Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM) to boost Ukraine's air defences. According to manufacturer Thales, LMMs have a range of over six kilometres and cause less collateral damage.

However, Michael Clark, former Director-General of the think tank Royal and United Services Institute said that the missiles would be "exhausted within a couple of months." According to Clark, the intensity of Russian bombardment means that Ukraine requires more missiles. The UK government has provided a total of GBP 12.7 billion GBP in aid for Ukraine, since 2022.

References

["Russian missile attack kills one in Ukraine's Pavlohrad, governor says," *Reuters*, 06 September 2024](#)

[Dan Sabbagh, "Zelenskiy claims support waning for strikes against Russian occupiers," *The Guardian*, 06 September 2024](#)

[Phil Stewart and Sabine Siebold, "Ukraine long-range strikes into Russia won't be a game-changer, U.S. says" *Reuters*, 07 September 2024](#)

[Abbey Fenbert, "Russia targets Kyiv neighborhoods with drones," *The Kyiv Independent*, 07 September 2024](#)

[Hafsa Khalil, "UK to send hundreds more missiles to Ukraine," *BBC News*, 06 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Day 925:

Putin express readiness for peace talks with Ukraine at the Eastern Economy

War on the Ground:

On 05 September, *Swissinfo.ch* reported on the appointment of new ministers in the Ukrainian parliament. There were nine ministers and two deputy prime ministers as the new appointees. This marks Zelenskyy's "biggest government shakeup" since 2022. He said that the government needed "new energy" as the autumn was crucial for Ukraine. Andrii Sybiha, an experienced diplomat with a public figure is set to replace Dmytro Kuleba, as the foreign minister. Olha Stefanyshina took up the position of Justice minister along with her role in coordinating Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO. In addition, Herman Smetanin was appointed as the strategic industries minister and Oleksiy Kuleba, a former deputy head of Zelenskyy's office was appointed as deputy prime minister in charge of reconstruction, regions and infrastructure and Herman Smetanin as the strategic industries

minister. However, Ukraine's foreign policy was unlikely to alter if Zelenskyy was in power. He is set to visit the US with a "victory plan" to present before Joe Biden, US President.

On 05 September, *Daily Sabah* reported on the rise in the death toll from the Russian missile strike in central Ukraine's Poltava region. According to Ukrainian officials, the number of deaths had increased to 54 along with 300 casualties. Ukraine's emergency services also informed about the chances of people being trapped under rubble. The attack faced widespread criticisms globally, especially from the US. Zelenskyy had ordered an investigation into the circumstances that led to the attack.

On 05 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, was expected to meet the US top military leaders at the US Ramstein Air Base in western Germany. The gathering would take place with the "Ramstein" group also known as the Ukraine Defence Contact Group. It is an informal alliance of 50 countries formed in 2023 to support Ukraine against Russia. Zelenskyy was expected to request for increased Western support in the war, including new arms deliveries like long-range missiles and air defence systems. However, the German government has not yet confirmed his arrival. This came amidst one of the largest Russian airstrikes against Ukraine.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 05 September, *RT* reported on the keynote address delivered by Putin at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok. He highlighted Russia's interests in East Asia, cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region and the implications of the Kursk incursion. The meeting was attended by high-profile leaders including Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysian Prime Minister and Han Zheng, Chinese Vice President. In his speech, he highlighted the East Asian countries as a possible means to compensate for the sanctions imposed by the West. He said: "We have defined the development of the Far East as a national priority for the entire 21st century." He noted that the world economy was facing de-

dollarization, citing the BRICS way of using national currencies in transactions. On the Kursk incursion, he pointed out that it depleted Ukraine's strong military forces in the Donbas which was advantage for Russia.

On 05 September, *RT* reported on the statements made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President on the Ukrainian government. According to him, Ukraine did not have a legitimate government since the Maidan coup in 2014. After Zelenskyy's term ended in May 2024, he refused to hold a presidential election and imposed martial law citing the conflict with Russia. Peskov said: "The "de jure President Zelensky now is not the legitimate president of Ukraine." He referred to the condition of the Ukrainian government as the "snowball of illegitimacy." After Zelenskyy's term ended in May 2024, he refused to hold a presidential election and imposed martial law citing the conflict with Russia. He also added that Russia was open to peace talks through the "political-diplomatic" route.

On 05 September, *RT* reported on Dmitry Peskov's statements at the Eastern Economic Forum, condemning the Ukrainian attacks. According to him: "We see the Kyiv regime using cluster munitions on residential areas and purely civilian targets." Meanwhile, he defended the Russian military strikes arguing that it struck only military targets. He added that the Russian military would continue enhancing its efficiency and moving forward until all its goals were achieved.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 05 September, *Le Monde* reported on Putin's readiness to initiate talks with Ukraine. The new announcement came at Russia's Eastern Economic Forum. However, it contradicted his previous stance that rejected peace talks due to the Kursk incursion led by Ukraine. Putin said that Russia was ready to negotiate with Ukraine based on an abandoned deal in Istanbul between Kyiv and Moscow back in 2022. However, the terms and conditions of the deal were never made public. Putin claimed that the deal never came into force as the US demanded Ukraine to reject it. Meanwhile, he also put forward his earlier demands to

handover Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson to Russia.

On 05 September, *Daily Sabah* reported on the statements made by Vladimir Putin, Russia's President on the advancements made in Donbas and Pokrovsk region. He revealed that the primary goal behind the war was to capture the eastern Donbass region, since Russia failed to secure Kyiv in 2022. He further said that the Russian troops were advancing around a dozen kilometres from the city of Pokrovsk, a prime logistics hub of Ukraine. In addition, he claimed the surprise Kursk incursion to have failed to curb the Russian forces from advancing in the already occupied Ukrainian territories. He said: "Ukraine aimed to force us to worry, hustle, divert troops and to stop our offensive in key areas, especially in the Donbas, the liberation of which is our main primary objective." He argued that the Russian forces had started to push out the Ukrainian forces from the Kursk region. However, these claims were not verified and confirmed.

References

["Zelenskyy to visit US base in Germany to request weapons," *Deutsche Welle*, 05 September 2024](#)

["Zelenskiy overhauls cabinet with slew of new ministers, top diplomat," *Swissinfo.ch*, 05 September 2024](#)

["Cooling tower at Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant requires demolition after fire, IAEA chief says," *The Kyiv Independent*, 05 September 2024](#)

["Russia's main goal in Ukraine is to capture Donbass: Putin," *Daily Sabah*, 05 September 2024](#)

["Russia strike death toll in Central Ukraine's Poltava climbs to 54," *Daily Sabah*, 05 September 2024](#)

["Putin says Russia ready for talks with Ukraine," *Le Monde*, 05 September 2024](#)

["Ukrainian governments since 2014 illegitimate – Kremlin," *RT*, 05 September 2024](#)

["Russia only strikes military targets, unlike Kiev – Kremlin," *RT*, 05 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Day 924:

Dmytro Kuleba, Minister for Foreign

Affairs of Ukraine resigns in cabinet reshuffle

War on the Ground:

On 04 September, *The Guardian* reported on the reshuffling of the cabinet by Volodymyr Zelenskyy President of Ukraine amidst the war. In a video address, Zelenskyy stated that he was reshuffling the cabinet in preparation for "an extremely important autumn" and promised a new emphasis on foreign and domestic policy. Dmytro Kuleba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine was among those who resigned; will be replaced by Andriy Sybiha, Deputy Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine. The reshuffle is viewed as the largest since 2022. It comes before expected electricity shortages in the winter due to Russian airstrikes. Zelenskyy stated that these changes were designed to strengthen the government so that Ukraine could achieve its intended results. Other ministers who resigned included Olha Stefanishyna, the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Ukraine's attempted EU accession and Oleksandr Kamyshin, the Minister for Strategic Industries.

On 04 September, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on Russia's mass attack on Lviv. The attack resulted in the death of seven civilians and 64 injured. Andrii Sadovyi, Mayor of Lviv informed that eight children were among the wounded, while about 50 buildings were damaged overall by the attack. Lviv is located 70 kilometres east of the Ukraine-Poland border and has been targeted frequently by Russian missiles and drones during the war. The city of Kryvyi Rih was also targeted by missiles which left six civilians injured. As per local authorities, the attack damaged hotels, educational institutions, apartment buildings, and cars. According to the Ukrainian Air Force, Ukrainian air defences intercepted 22 drones and seven missiles from Russia.

On 04 September, *Euronews* reported on the death of seven civilians due to a Russian missile attack in Lviv city. Andrii Sadovyi, Mayor of Lviv informed that a child and a medical worker were among the dead and over 50 houses, two medical institutions and two schools suffered damage. Serhii Lysak, regional head of Kryvyi Rih stated that five

individuals were wounded by a missile strike there. Missile attacks were also reported from other Ukrainian cities like Kyiv. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine responded to the attacks by requesting Ukraine's allies to provide "more range" for utilising Western weapons to strike deep into Russian territory.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 03 September, the *TASS* reported on the Verkhovna Rada or Parliament of Ukraine criticism of underreporting the number of victims in the Poltava missile strike. Artem Dmitruk, a member of the Rada stated that the Government of Ukraine was lying about the death toll and everything because they were afraid they would be held responsible. According to Dmitruk, the command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine did not order servicemen to go down to basements during the air raid alert, causing their deaths. According to Zelenskyy, 41 citizens were killed in the airstrike including the Chairman of the Russian Civic Chamber Commission.

On 04 September, *RT* in an opinion stated that the incursion into the Kursk Oblast of Russia by the Armed Forces of Ukraine was a foolish gamble. The op-ed states that Ukraine's attack was a kamikaze or suicide attack; which resulted in experienced and well-equipped troops taking part in an assault destined to fail. The op-ed also argued that the Kursk incursion led to Ukraine's defences against Russian attacks on other parts of the front line weakening, and frustrated Ukraine's Western allies as well. The op-ed points out three key aspects of what it deems to be Ukraine's ongoing failure in Kursk. First, it points out how the Kursk incursion led to the Government of the Russian Federation deciding to launch potential negotiations to end the war only after the Kursk incursion is repelled; contrary to Ukrainian hopes that the Kursk incursion would result in Russia agreeing to negotiate on Ukrainian terms. The second point mentioned in the op-ed is that the Ukrainian aims of forcing Russia to withdraw forces from other parts of their frontline to tackle the Kursk incursion have failed. The op-ed points out that on the contrary; the Russian advances, especially

towards the crucial Pokrovsk city close to Donetsk have accelerated. The op-ed brings out the strategic significance of Pokrovsk to Ukraine, as a major transport hub whose loss will pile up pressure on Ukrainian forces in Donetsk Oblast. Third, the op-ed highlights that the Government of Ukraine wanted to show by crossing the border, that red lines given by the Russian government do not matter. However, according to the op-ed, any actions taken by the Ukrainian government including missile strikes deeper into Russia, would only harden the stance of the Russian government. The op-ed mentions that criticism of the Ukrainian government is growing both inside and outside the country. According to the op-ed; the Western media outlets which have always supported Ukraine and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine are now criticising them. The op-ed concludes by pointing out what it deems to be the final irony for Ukraine. While the Kursk incursion was launched to embarrass Russia, it is Ukraine which appears to have suffered embarrassment.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 03 September, the Government of Lithuania criticised Mongolia for its failure to arrest Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia in his recent visit. Putin visited Mongolia but was not arrested by the authorities despite the Government of Mongolia being a signatory to the International Criminal Court (ICC) which issued an arrest warrant against the Russian President last year for war crimes including the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children. Gabrielius Landsbergis, the Foreign Minister of Lithuania stated that Mongolia's behaviour was "unacceptable" and "yet another example of another crack in the system based on international law." The Government of Ukraine had earlier requested the Mongolian government to arrest Putin and later accused the country of enabling Russian crimes by failing to arrest Putin.

On 04 September, the Government of Ireland announced its plans for a new aid package for Ukraine. Simon Harris, the Taoiseach of Ireland is expected to announce the package

during his visit to Kyiv. The aid aims to prevent gender-based violence and support maternity services and rebuilding the homes of conflict refugees. It also aims to provide required humanitarian assistance for the long-term stability of Ukraine and increase Ireland's total funding for Ukraine to over EUR 380 million. Ireland will also support UN offices. Ukraine Humanitarian Fund will receive EUR five million and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees will get EUR 5.5 million for supporting 600,000 individuals with cash assistance for the winter. Along with this, the UN Population Fund will receive EUR three million for providing sexual reproductive health and gender-based violence services.

References

- ["Rada lawmaker accuses Kiev of downplaying death toll of strike at Poltava military school," TASS, 03 September 2024](#)
Olena Goncharova and Martin Fornusek, ["Casualties reported in Lviv, Kryvyi Rih as Russia launches another mass attack on Ukraine," The Kyiv Independent, 04 September 2024](#)
Tarik Cyril Amar, ["Kursk kamikaze attack: The price of Ukraine's foolish gamble is becoming clearer by the day," RT, 04 September 2024](#)
Shaun Walker and Luke Harding, ["Zelenskiy reshuffles Ukraine cabinet as Russian missile strike targets Lviv," The Guardian, 04 September 2024](#)
["Russian missile attack on Lviv kills at least seven, mayor says," Euronews, 04 September 2024](#)
Paulius Perminas, ["Lithuania slams Mongolia over Putin's visit despite ICC arrest warrant," LRT, 03 September 2024](#)
Cillian Sherlock, [Ireland unveils €36mn package for Ukraine, *breakingnews.ie*, 04 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Days: 923

Zelenskyy reports largest missile attack on Poltava

War on the Ground:

On 03 September, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President reported the death of 41 people and injury of 180 from a missile strike in Poltava Oblast. He claimed the Russian ballistic missile had struck a hospital and an education facility. He said:

"One of the buildings of the [Poltava Military] Institute of Communications was partially destroyed. People found themselves under the rubble. Many were saved." According to Ihor Klymenko, Ukraine's Interior Minister, 25 have been rescued from the rubble till now. Following the strike on Poltava, Zelenskyy called for a "full and prompt" investigation into the event. While the Russian "military bloggers" claimed the target to be an "outdoor military ceremony" few have criticised Russia for the open-air attack. According to the Ukrainian Defence Ministry, one of the institute's buildings was damaged partially.

On 03 September, Rafael Mariano, Director of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated his discussion with Zelenskyy over the Kursk nuclear power plant visit and found evidence of nuclear safety concerns and problems in security. He also announced his schedule to visit the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. He is also expected to meet Zelenskyy. The decision comes to monitor the site and avoid nuclear accidents. Until now there has been no harm reported to the plant's safety.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 03 September, Vladimir Putin, the Russian President invited Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh Mongolian President to the upcoming BRICS summit in October. He expressed willingness to discuss economic cooperation with Mongolia.

On 03 September, *RT* reported on Mongolia's refusal to arrest Putin against the International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant. According to the report, since Mongolia was dependent on its neighbouring countries for energy and its adherence to neutrality policy it refused to detain. It is responsible for 95 per cent of petroleum imports and 20 per cent of electricity from surrounding countries. Therefore, supply of the energy is important and it also maintains neutrality in its diplomatic relations. On not adhering to the ICC warrant, the court can only condemn and not impose penalties or impose sanctions as per the report.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 03 September, Romania's lower house of Parliament approved a draft law to donate one of its patriot missile defence systems to Kyiv. The bill is expected to be approved by the Senate and signed into law by Klaus Iohannis, Romania's President. Romania shares 650 kilometres with Ukraine and debris from Russian drones is often found inside. Similarly, NATO has also agreed to give one out of the five missile defence system to Ukraine.

On 03 September, Annalena Baerbock, Germany's Foreign Minister condemned the Russian attack on Poltava city. She called it the deadliest attack since 2024 and said: "Putin knows no limits to brutality... He should be held accountable."

References

- ["Mongolia explains refusal to arrest Putin," RT, 03 September 2024](#)
Derek Gatopoulos And Volodymyr Yurchuk, ["UN nuclear watchdog warns conditions 'very fragile' at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia power plant," Associated Press, 04 September 2024](#)
"At least 51 killed in Russian missile strike on Ukraine's Poltava," *Al Jazeera*, 03 September 2024
["Ukraine updates: Poltava missile strike kills dozens," Deutsche Welle, 03 September 2024](#)

War in Ukraine Days 922:

Putin visits Mongolia

War on the Ground:

On 02 September, *Politico* reported on the Russian missile attack over a school in Kyiv. According to Serhiy Popko, head of Kyiv city's military administration, the air defence forces intercepted several cruise and ballistic missiles out of the 20 missiles fired above Kyiv. The attack also led to fire due to falling debris in four districts. Two of the people were injured. However, the Russian forces were also reported to have attacked Kharkiv and Sumy regions with another 15 missiles. In the Sumy region, Russian forces hit a social and psychological rehabilitation center for orphans. Although there were no children at that time, 18 residents of the nearby houses were reported to be injured.

On the same day, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President urged the US, the UK, France and Germany to allow the usage of long-range weapons for targeting Russia. He also asked for further supply of long-range munitions and missiles. He believes it to be a key factor in preserving the security and territorial integrity of Ukrainians. He said: "One of the most important issues for us is the possibility of using Western-supplied long-range weapons to strike targets in Russia, which holds the key to preventing all the terror that Kharkiv and other cities and localities in Ukraine are forced to go through." Zelenskyy stressed that long-range weapons were the sole solution to halt the Russian missile and drone attacks and end the war to accept peace.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 02 September, *RT* reported on Putin's statements condemning the western countries for their long-standing aim to control Ukraine. He said: "The Russia-Ukraine conflict is the natural outcome of the destructive strategy of the West towards Ukraine." He blamed them for promoting nationalist and anti-Russian organisations in Ukraine. He accused the US and its allies of carrying out the 2014 Maidan coup in Kyiv along with the "radical neo-Nazi groups." For the Kremlin, the "denazification" of Ukraine is one of the primary objectives of the military operation.

On 02 September, *RT* reported on the large-scale attacks carried out by the Russian armed forces across Ukraine. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, energy and defence facilities were struck using long-range high-precision weaponry and kamikaze drones. Russian forces were also reported to have destroyed UAV assembly and storage sites and temporary deployment points. They had used tactical aviation, drones, missiles and artillery along with military in 143 districts.

On 02 September, *RT* reported on the statements on the Kursk incursion made by Vladimir Putin, Russia's President. According to him, Ukraine had failed to achieve its aim behind the Kursk incursion, which was to block the Russian forces in the Donbass

region. He said: “The Russian armed forces are taking control of territories not by 200, 300 meters at a time, but by square kilometers.” He described the Ukrainian army as “Ukrainian bandits” who entered Russian territory to sabotage the border controls. He added that Ukraine did not intend to end the conflict through negotiations. He argued that the current government halted the peace talks as it had little chance to get re-elected in the presidential elections which would be conducted after the martial law was lifted.

On 02 September, *RT* reported that Finland banned Russian citizens from buying property in their country. Antti Hakkanen, the defence minister of Finland, announced the ban which would apply to people “influenced” by Russia as well. Hakkanen referred to Russians as “possible hostile influences against Finland.” According to the statement by the Finnish Defence Ministry: “The ban would apply to “persons whose country of nationality has been found by the European Union to be in violation of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of another country or whose country of nationality may be a threat to Finland’s national security.” Earlier, Finland had halted six real estate sales to Russians. Hakkanen noted that the ban would not apply to dual citizens with permanent residency in Finland or any EU country. A potential bill based on the proposal could come into effect later in 2024.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 02 September, *The New York Times* reported on Putin’s visit to Mongolia over the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) arrest warrant. He was greeted by the Mongolian military guard at the airport. The visit was to commemorate the 1939 Battle of Khalkhin Gol against the imperial Japanese army which led to the victory of the Soviet army and Mongolian allies. Putin highlighted his support for Mongolia as a protector. There were no expectations on updates about the proposed Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline, which would alter Russian gas supplies that had gone to Europe through Mongolia to reach China instead. Mongolia, being a member of ICC was compelled to

arrest Putin over charges of “unlawful deportation” and transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia. However, Russia was not concerned as it believed to have great relationship with Mongolia. According to Dmitriy Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian Federation: “All aspects of the visit have been thoroughly prepared.”

On 02 September, *Swissinfo.ch* reported that General Major Valery Muminjanov, a deputy commander of Russia’s Leningrad military district had been held on charges of corruption. He was detained over allegedly accepting RUB 20 million as a bribe. According to Russia’s investigative committee, he helped some companies get contracts to provide clothes to military in exchange of money. There were no reports on how he had pleaded to the charges.

References

[“Mass attack carried out on energy facilities in Ukraine – Russian MOD,”](#) *RT*, 02 September 2024

[“Russian missiles rain down on Kyiv the night before schools restart,”](#) *RT*, 02 September 2024

[“Zelenskyy asks US, UK, France and Germany to let Ukraine use their long-range weapons to strike targets in](#)

[Russia,”](#) *Ukrainska Pravda*, 31 August 2024

[“Ukraine’s Kursk gambit failed – Putin,”](#) *RT*, 02 September 2024

[“West wants ‘total control’ over Ukraine – Putin,”](#) *RT*, 02 September 2024

[“Another senior Russian defence official held on graft charges,”](#) *Swissinfo.ch*, 02 September 2024

[“Putin Arrives in Mongolia in Defiance of I.C.C. Arrest Warrant,”](#) *The New York Times*, 02 September 2024

[“Finland to ban Russians from buying property,”](#) *RT*, 02 September 2024

War in Ukraine Days 920 & 921: Massive bomb attack in the Kharkiv oblast kills eight

War on the Ground:

On 01 September, *Reuters* reported on a wave of Ukrainian drone attacks targeting power plants and a refinery near Moscow. The Government of the Russian Federation stated that drone debris had caused fires at the Moscow oil refinery owned by Russian

oil company Gazprom Neft and at the Konakovo Power Station in Tver Oblast. Igor Rudenya, Governor of Tver Oblast, confirmed the fire in Konakovo, but electricity and gas supplies were continuing uninterrupted. Mikhail Shuvalov, Head of the Kashira City district in Moscow Oblast informed that there was an attempt to strike the Kashira power plant, although no damage or casualties were recorded. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, air defence units had destroyed 158 drones including nine over Moscow and its surrounding oblasts.

On 01 September, the Government of Ukraine confirmed the death of a resident in Russian airstrikes. In a statement by the Sumy Regional Military Administration, an overnight Russian missile had struck grain trucks, killed one and injured four others near the village of Verkhnya Syrovatka, which is 14 kilometres southeast of Sumy city in Sumy Oblast. The Ukrainian Air Force also claimed that Russia had launched an Iskander-M missile and eight attack drones over Sumy Oblast and Mykolaiv Oblast. Meanwhile, Oleh Synyehubov, Governor of Kharkiv Oblast informed that the number of residents injured by shelling in Kharkiv city rose to 41. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, in response to the attacks called for assistance from global leaders for its defence.

On August 31, an article in *CNN* reported on Russian bomb attacks on the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv resulting in the death of eight residents. Ukrainian authorities informed that six residents including a 14-year-old girl in a playground had been killed and 97 injured on August 30, when the Kharkiv was hit by five guided aerial bombs dropped by Russia. On the same day, two people were killed and 10 injured by an airstrike on the village of Cherkaksa Lozova. Oleksandr Filchakov, Head of the Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office informed that Russian forces had conducted the "massive bombardment" through Su-34 fight jets carrying 500 kilogram guided aerial bombs which are hard to intercept. Filchakov stated that the bombs struck civilian infrastructure in four districts of Kharkiv, with apartment buildings, educational establishments and

administrative buildings among the places damaged. According to Oleh Synyehubov, Head of the Kharkiv Regional Military Administration, the bombs contained a "control module" which indicated that Russia was deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure. Zelenskyy stated the attacks were "horrific" and "cowardly" and that Russia "would be held accountable for its evil deeds." Zelenskyy also urged Western allies to increase their support.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 01 September, *RT* reported on the destruction of 158 Ukrainian drones over Russia. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation informed that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) launched by Ukraine were shot down. These included 46 UAVS above the Kursk Region, 34 above Bryansk Region, 28 above the Voronezh Region, and 14 above the Belgorod Region. Sergey Sobyenin, the Mayor of Moscow informed that at least 11 drones were destroyed near or inside the Russian capital of Moscow, including two in the vicinity of the Moscow Oil Refinery. In a statement by the Russian Defence Ministry, seven drones were shot down over the Moscow Region along with two more. This comes after increased attacks by Ukraine on Russia's power plants.

On 01 September, *WCVB Chronicle* reported on the interception of 158 Ukrainian drones by Russian air defences overnight. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation confirmed the same where 46 drones were subject to an incursion in Kursk Oblast by Ukraine. According to the Russian Defence Ministry, drones were intercepted in over 15 regions, including the border regions of Belgorod, Voronezh, and Bryansk Oblasts. Sergei Sobyenin, the Mayor of Moscow informed on a spark from fire from debris at an oil refinery. The drone strikes come amid an increase in aerial attacks inside Russia by Ukraine since 2024.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 31 August, *Deutsche Welle* published an opinion on the threat to the Ukrainian logistical and supply hub of Pokrovsk from potential Russian attacks. According to

Zelenskyy, the situation in Pokrovsk is “extremely difficult,” and the Institute for the Study of War confirmed: “Russian forces continue to make significant tactical advances southeast of Pokrovsk.” Colonel Markus Reisner, an officer in the Austrian Armed Forces and head of the research department at the Theresian Military Academy informed how Pokrovsk was crucial for it forms the backbone of the Ukrainian defence supply line on the frontline. Reisner stated that the capture of the city of Avdiivka was to protect towns, railroad lines and roads in western Ukraine was also a turning point as it advanced rapidly against the Russian troops. According to the report, Russian forces can target Ukrainian supply routes as soon as they reach the outskirts of Pokrovsk. Gustav Gressel, a military expert at the European Council on Foreign Relations stated that Russian forces would attempt to destroy Pokrovsk and its logistics, with the worst-case scenario being a Russian occupation of the entire Donetsk region. However, Mykhailo Samus, Director for International Affairs at the Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies stated that Ukrainian forces could still block their ground corridors even if Russian forces reach Pokrovsk. While Reisner and Gressel stated that the Kursk offensive into Russia by Ukraine was a gamble which had failed to compel Russia into moving troops away from eastern Ukraine towards Kursk; Samus informed that the further the Kursk incursion progresses and creates a southern flank on the border, Russia would be forced to send resources and troops to Kusk away from Ukraine.

On 01 September, an article in *Swissinfo.ch* informed that the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation had stated that its forces had captured two settlements

in the eastern part of Ukraine. According to the Ministry, Russian forces had taken Ptyche settlement, about 21 kilometres southeast of the crucial logistical hub of Pokrovsk, and “were continuing to advance deep into the enemy defences.” The Ministry also stated that Russia had seized the Vymyka settlement in Donetsk Oblast. Oleksandr Syrskyi, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine acknowledged that the situation was “difficult” but that all the necessary decisions were being taken. The battlefield reports could not be independently verified.

References

- [“Russia captures another settlement in eastern Ukraine-Moscow,”](#) *TRT World*, 30 August 2024
- Burc Eruygur, [“Ukraine says 1 killed, 45 injured in Russian airstrikes in Kharkiv, Sumy regions,”](#) *Anadolu Ajansi*, 01 September 2024
- [“Russia says Ukrainian drones target refinery, power plants near Moscow,”](#) *Reuters*, 01 September 2024
- Radina Gigova and Maria Kostenko, [“Russian bomb attacks on Ukraine’s Kharkiv leave at least 8 dead, more than 100 injured,”](#) *CNN*, 31 August 2024
- [“Russia says it has downed over 150 drones in one of the biggest Ukrainian drone attacks of the war,”](#) *WCVB Chronicle*, 01 September 2024
- [“Russian air defenses repel large-scale Ukrainian drone attack-MOD,”](#) *RT*, 01 September 2024
- Dmytro Kaniewski and Iryna Ukhina, [“Can Ukraine save Pokrovsk?”](#) *Deutsche Welle News*, 31 August 2024
- [“Russia says it has captured two more settlements in east Ukraine,”](#) *swissinfo.ch*, 01 September 2024

EM Daily Brief*

By Advik S Mohan, Samruddhi Pathak and Neha Tresa George



Source: Alberto Lingria/Xinhua, Agence France-Presse, AP Photo/Bruno Fonseca, Marko Djokovic/AFP, action.wemove.eu, Anadolu Ajansi

AUSTRIA

General elections offers chance for far-right to return to power

On 25 September, *Politico* reported on the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) being in favourable position to win the general election in Austria. The FPÖ narrowly leads opinion polls at 27 per cent, ahead of the People's Party (ÖVP) which is polling at 25 per cent. The possibility of the FPÖ gaining power has caused fear in the EU. This is due to the party's antagonistic stance towards the bloc, and its friendliness with Russia. Additionally, Austria is a centre for trade due to its position at the centre of Europe. Austria has served as the gateway to the Balkans for Western Europe, and the main north-south corridor for the EU cuts through Austria. The country has also taken in the most refugees per capita in the EU in the past decade. Herbert Kickl, the leader of the FPÖ had proposed border closures in Austria, alongside the remigration of foreign residents. During his time as Minister for the Interior, Kickl was accused

of questioning the legitimacy of the Austrian intelligence services and taking a hard line on migration, renaming asylum registration centres as "Departure Centres." However, even if it wins the election, the FPÖ gaining power will depend upon whether other parties like the ÖVP decide to work with it. The ÖVP has had coalitions with the FPÖ in the past, alongside an ideological proximity. However, Alexander Van der Bellen, the President of Austria has the power to reject candidates for chancellor and ministers. Van der Bellen, who is a former leader of the Green party, could reject Kickl and the FPÖ, on grounds of protecting Austria's position in the EU. (Matthew Karnitschnig, "[Austrian election offers far right a springboard back to power](#)," *Politico*, 25 September 2024)

People's Party possesses dominant levels of influence

On 27 September, a personal anecdote published in *Politico* informed how the People's Party or ÖVP stayed dominant in

* EM Daily Brief are notes published along with daily alert 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.

Austria. The author began through the background of how the OVP had governed Austria since 1987, and ran an effective deep state in the country alongside the opposition Social Democrats party. The author informed how, for decades, the OVP and Social Democrats gave out teaching positions, civil servant jobs and executive postings in state-controlled companies based on political affiliation, in a clientelist system known as Proporz. It is informed further how the OVP has adapted to the new political system, wherein other political parties like the Freedom Party and the Greens have gained influence. The author stated he witnessed the OVP's power and influence firsthand when ORF, the Austrian public broadcaster, invited him to appear on their live Sunday political talk show, Im Zentrum. The ORF has been subjected to political manipulation in the past, including by the OVP which had appointed members of its party to key positions in the ORF like general director or as an editor. The OVP appointed Roland Weismann, the current General Director of the ORF. The author informed how while on the debate at the talkshow, he stated the OVP was a political Cosa Nostra whose members were motivated solely by the desire to remain in power. According to the author, after the debate, the OVP criticized him as a left-wing agitator and alleged the ORF was biased during the debate. The author stated the heavy criticism by the OVP led to the Im Zentrum programme being cancelled by the ORF. The author also informed how Sonja Sagmeister, a senior correspondent at the ORF was transferred and then fired after a critical interview conducted with Martin Kocher, the Federal Minister of Labour and a senior figure in the OVP. Another example provided by the author was prospective plans by the OVP to criminalize the publication of internal correspondence relating to corruption unless it was made public by authorities. According to the author, the aftermath of the news debate with him and the other instances of targeting of journalists showed how the OVP wanted to retain control of the media. (Matthew Karnitschnig, "[Austria's Cosa Nostra](#)," *Politico*, 27 September 2024)

Elections 2024: Far-right elected into power

On 29 September, Freedom Party (FPÖ), Austria's far-right party, was declared as the largest party in exit polls. FPÖ managed to win 28.3 per cent of votes, more than the current ruling party, People's party (ÖVP), which got 26.3 per cent of votes. The error margin in exit polls is around one per cent. FPÖ's victory marks another country voting far-right into power. However, both parties have failed to achieve a majority i.e., two third of the total seats. This election recorded the highest participation of voters with 78 per cent of the population voting. The dominant issues in the elections were migrations, asylum, flagging economy and the war in Ukraine. After the exit polls, Michael Schnedlitz, the general secretary of FPÖ, said, "the men and women of Austria have made history today." FPÖ leader, Herbert Kickl, has aligned himself with Hungary's leader, Viktor Orban. FPÖ was founded by former Nazi leaders. According to Euronews, the far-right has banked upon the frustration among voters over inflation after COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. (Paul Kirby and Bethany Bell, "[Far right in Austria 'opens new era' with election victory](#)," *BBC*, 30 September 2024; Daniel Bellamy, "[Exit polls indicate Austria's far-right party has won national election](#)," *Euronews*, 30 September 2024)

BELGIUM

Rally in Brussels urges industrial action in support of Audi employees

On 16 September, *Euronews* reported about a rally in Brussels that demanded support for the employees of the Audi factory. In July, Audi announced the restructuring of its Brussels plant. This sparked anger amongst employees. The restructuring comes amidst concerns over the auto sector in Europe. There are concerns over the arrival of Chinese electric cars in the market, and passenger car sales in Europe have declined by 4.6 per cent compared to the previous year. Keeping this state of affairs in mind, demonstrators at the Brussels rally stated the EU required new worker-friendly policies. Robin Tonniau, a forever Audi employee and Member of Parliament from

the PTB party stated a more global strategy and an industrial plan for the future of jobs of workers was required. Tonniau gave the example of how big brands neglected the required investment in electrification in the car industry. (Gregoire Lory, "[Thousands rally in Brussels to back Audi workers and call for EU industrial action](#)," *Euronews*, 16 September 2024)

CYPRUS

Inflation declines 1.5 per cent for August

On 05 September, Cyprus Statistical Service or Crysat reported on the decline in inflation in Cyprus to 1.5 per cent for August. As per the report, there was a simultaneous increase in Consumer Price Index (CPI) by 0.37 units in August 2024, reaching 118.10 units. According to Crysat, the CPI was the "official index for the estimation of inflation." Between January and August 2024, the CPI has risen by two per cent compared to 2023. The Crysat stated that inflationary pressures were driven by the food and hospitality sectors while transport costs had a downward influence. The biggest CPI increases; as compared to 2023 were shown in the categories of restaurants and hotels which witnessed a 5.6 per cent increase whereas food and non-alcoholic beverages saw a 3.4 per cent increase. The largest month-on-month increase was seen in the food and non-alcoholic beverages category with 1.7 per cent growth. Food and non-alcoholic beverages had the biggest positive impact on the CPI rise with 0.79 units added; followed by 0.58 units added by restaurants and hotels. Food and non-alcoholic beverages also contributed most to the month-on-month increase with 0.41 units increasing. Meanwhile, transport had the most negative effect, reducing the CPI by 0.40 units. Crysat stated that the CPI compilation measured the price changes of consumer goods and services used by households, over time. The national CPI of Cyprus specifically covers consumption expenses of specific goods and services of resident households in Cyprus and households intending to live in the country for at least one year. ("Cyprus inflation

decelerates to 1.5 per cent in August," *Cyprus Mail*, 05 September 2024)

Lebanon and Cyprus send back Syrian refugees

On 04 September, Human Rights Watch published a report on the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Government of Cyprus collaborating to prevent Syrian refugees from entering Europe. The report titled: "I Can't Go Home, Stay Here, or Leave': Pushbacks and Pullbacks of Syrian Refugees from Cyprus and Lebanon," informed that the Lebanese army was deporting Syrian refugees back to their home country; and Cypriot security forces were doing the same with Syrian refugees entering Cyprus by boat. These actions were taken despite the threat of returning Syrian refugees facing persecution in their homeland. Nadia Hardman, researcher at Human Rights Watch stated that the Government of Lebanon was violating the prohibition on returning refugees who might face persecution. According to Hardman, the Government of Cyprus was also violating this prohibition by sending refugees back to Lebanon, from where they might be deported to Syria. Lebanon was provided with at least EUR 16.7 million in funding for border security projects by the EU and its member states between 2020 and 2023. The EU also allocated a EUR one billion package till 2027 to Lebanon, including money to security forces alongside equipment and training for border management and tackling smuggling. Hardman stated that the EU must establish independent mechanisms to ensure human rights are adhered to in Lebanese border control operations. Meanwhile, authorities in Cyprus have also collectively expelled hundreds of Syrian refugees without allowing access to asylum procedures. A Syrian woman refugee interviewed by Human Rights Watch stated that officers of the Cypriot Coast Guard "started grabbing and shoving" Syrian refugees onto a return vessel to Lebanon. Refugees expelled back to Syria face the dual threat of detention by the Syrian Army; as well as extortion by armed men to be smuggled back to Lebanon. Dire socio-economic conditions in Lebanon compel Syrians to attempt to leave

Lebanon for Europe. According to the General Directorate of General Security of Lebanon, it arrested or returned 821 Syrian refugees on 15 boats between 01 January 2022 and 01 August 2024. One case involved the Lebanese Army expelling Syrians back to their country via the Wadi Khaled crossing, after rescuing them from a sinking boat. Refugees interviewed by Human Rights Watch also stated that the Cypriot Coast Guard used brutal tactics. According to Human Rights Watch, these expulsions violate the principle of non-refoulement or not returning refugees to countries where they are liable to face persecution. ("Lebanon/Cyprus: Refugees Pulled Back, Expelled, Then Forced Back to Syria," *Human Rights Watch*, 04 September 2024)

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Main opposition wins one third of seats in the Upper house

On 28 September, the ANO, the main opposition party in the Czech Republic won a major regional election. It became the largest party in the Upper House of the Czech Republic, the Senate. The ANO, far-right party, won eight out of the 27 seats after the two-round election for a total of 81 seats. This is being defined as a big boost for the ANO party. National elections in the Czech Republic are due next year. Although the Lower House remains dominant in the Czech Republic's legislative process, the Upper House has a significant role in appointing the judiciary and amending the constitution. ("Main Czech opposition party wins most seats in election for a third of Senate," *Associated Press*, 28 September 2024)

Central Bank reduces interest rates for seventh time in a row

On 25 September, in response to slowing inflation, the Czech central bank cut its interest rates for the seventh time consecutively. Currently, the interest rate is 4.25 per cent after the cuts were announced. The central bank announced the first reduction in interest rates in December 2023, after June 2022. Even the European Central Bank reduced its interest

rates in September to 3.5 per cent. The average monthly wages in the Czech Republic increased by 3.9 per cent in the Q2 of 2024 while the growth rate of the national economy was 0.6 per cent. The Central Bank has predicted a growth of 1.2 per cent for 2024. ("Czech central bank cuts rates with more reductions expected," *Euronews*, 25 September 2024)

Regional and national elections held amid floods

On 20 September, several people in the Czech Republic participated in voting for regional and national elections. The elections are for the Senate, the upper house of the Czech Republic and regional elections. Floods claimed five lives in the Czech Republic. In a few constituencies, voting took place in shipping containers and tents. Currently, a five party coalition is in the government. The coalition is led by Petr Fiala. Fiala has a clear majority of 81 seats in the Senate, however the second round of elections was organised for 27 seats. The Czech Republic's lower house of Parliament dominates the legislative process, but the Senate plays an important role in passing constitutional amendments and approving Constitutional Court judges. ("Czechs vote in Senate and regional elections in the aftermath of massive flooding," *Euronews*, 21 September 2024)

DENMARK

Greta Thunberg arrested in Gaza protests

On 05 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Greta Thunberg was arrested in Denmark during a demonstration to call for an academic boycott of Israeli universities. She was escorted off the campus by the police at the University of Copenhagen. According to a police spokesman, she along with other students were condemned on charges of "forcing their way and blocking the entrance" into the university building. The University is one among the several educational institutions which had organised several protests against university cooperation with Israel. ("[Greta Thunberg arrested at Gaza protest in](#)

Denmark,” Deutsche Welle, 05 September 2024)

ESTONIA

Deputy minister states digitalisation as key for its economic progress

On 22 September, Sandra Sarav, Estonia’s deputy minister for Economy and innovation, spoke on Estonia’s transformation to a digitised economy. Sarav cited Estonia’s open mindedness towards technology as a reason behind its economic progress. She said that because Estonia never had physical bank checks, the government designed a system for electronic checks. The process saved more money and improved efficiency. Similarly, it adapted very soon to electronic voting. In 2023 parliamentary elections, almost 50 per cent of Estonians voted online. Even to get a marriage certificate, Estonia has a digital process to apply online. According to her, Estonians are looking forward to creating more businesses as businesses have become much easier due to online processes in place. However, she also mentions some drawbacks of a highly digitised economy like it requires a high energy demand. She said, “Estonia’s 2030 Digital Agenda suggests the country is hoping to become the greenest digital government and set an example for the rest of the world.” (Hannah Brown, “The Big Question: Estonia has the most tech unicorns per capita in Europe - what’s their secret?,” *Euronews*, 23 September 2024)

FINLAND

Government returns pandas to China, says it's expensive

On 25 September, a zoo in Finland announced that it is returning pandas to Chinese authorities since it is costly for them to maintain the pandas. Two pandas were brought to Finland from China in 2018 after the two countries signed an agreement on protection of animals. The two pandas, namely Lumi and Pryr, were meant to stay in Finland for 15 years. However, the cost of the maintenance was very high. Pandas required a keeper at all times, imported bamboo and a hefty preservation fee to China. The cost was more than all other

species combined in the zoo. The Chinese Embassy in Finland issued a statement saying that both countries tried to figure out ways for the pandas’ sustenance but ultimately, it was a mutual decision to send back the animals. (“Finland to return pandas to China early due to cost,” *BBC*, 25 September 2024)

Government proposes to withhold healthcare from migrants

On 18 September, The government of Finland, which consists of the right-wing Finns party and the National Coalition party, proposed to reverse a law passed in 2023 which enabled undocumented individuals to access healthcare and education in Finland. Doctors have urged the government to change plans to table such an amendment since it will cost lives. The government plans to cut spending and immigration through this amendment. Louise Bonneau, an advocacy officer for the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants said that healthcare is a basic human right and the amendment will compromise Finland’s commitment to equality and justice. (Miranda Bryant, “Doctors criticise Finland’s proposal to withhold healthcare from migrants,” *The Guardian*, 18 September 2024)

FRANCE

Former European Commissioner laments loss of French influence

On 29 September, an article in *Politico* informed Thierry Breton, the former European Commissioner for the Internal Market, had criticised the perceived loss of power and influence for France in the EU. Breton was withdrawn as the French nominee for the European Commission after Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission criticised it. According to Breton, French influence in the new Commission was highly diluted, and France was at the same level as countries like Italy, Spain and Romania. Breton accused von der Leyen of carrying out a pro-German agenda, and a centralization of power. He informed von der Leyen was referred to as an ‘empress,’

and stated the Federal Government of Germany was using her to increase its own power in the EU. Breton warned the balance in Europe was at risk. He also admitted other countries like France were not vigilant enough about the situation and were weak. This had contributed towards their loss of influence. (Giorgio Leali, "Breton slams 'empress' von der Leyen's power grab and France's loss of influence in EU/," *Politico*, 29 September 2024)

Marine Le Pen under trial for embezzlement

On 29 September, an article in *Politico* informed Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Rally party, faced a criminal trial which could impact her political ambitions. Le Pen and 26 other individuals including former French lawmakers face charges of embezzling European Parliament funds between 2004 and 2016. According to prosecutors, Le Pen and the other individuals created a system whereby contracts for parliamentary assistants were awarded to individuals who worked on operations for the National Rally party rather than the EU. If found guilty, Le Pen faces the prospect of up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to EUR one million. Another potential consequence could be a five-year ban on running for public office. The National Rally argued the cases against it resulted from cultural differences between France and the EU over what constituted an employee of a political party. Le Pen and her party are also likely to utilize the trial for their own political advantages. If Le Pen was found guilty, Jordan Bardella, the current President of the National Rally is the likely successor. However, Bardella also faces charges of having allegedly submitted falsified documents to investigators to show he worked on parliamentary affairs and not party business. (Victor Goury-Laffont, "Marine Le Pen is on trial. A guilty verdict could doom her presidential ambitions," *Politico*, 29 September 2024)

Cabinet to discuss on debt and migration

On 23 September, the new cabinet in France composed of 39 ministers, including the

Prime Minister Michael Barnier, came together for the first time since forming the government. During an interview, Barnier acknowledged that bringing the cabinet and the parliament on the same page on the Budget for 2025 would be a challenge. He emphasised that he would not increase taxes to further burden French citizens. France is already in an "excessive deficit procedure" according to an EU recommendation published in June 2024. Meanwhile, he also vowed to control and limit immigration. Barnier will deliver his first general speech to the National Assembly on 01 October. ("French cabinet meets to discuss tackling budget and migrant issues," *Euronews*, 24 September 2024)

New government faces opposition from left-wing and far-right

On 22 September, *France 24* reported that the new French government headed by Michel Barnier, the Prime Minister of France was already facing several challenges. Emmanuel Macron, the President of France appointed the government led by Barnier. Macron had stated the left-wing would not be able to run a stable government and rejected a candidate from the far-right over its extremism. Macron entrusted Barnier with forming the government, comprised of support from Macron's allies and the conservative Republicans and centrist groups. Barnier's government already faces the prospect of a no-confidence motion in the French Parliament, with the left-wing alliance New Popular Front having stated its opposition to the new government. Additionally, thousands of citizens in the streets of French cities like Paris organized protests against the new government and condemned the supposed denial of the French general election results. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a left-wing leader stated France needed to get rid of the new government as soon as possible. Oliver Faure, the First Secretary of the Socialist Party stated Barnier's cabinet was a "reactionary government. Jordan Bardella, the President of the far-right National Rally party stated the government had no future. Francois Hollande, the former President of

France also criticized the new government and stated a no-confidence motion was a good solution. However, a successful no-confidence motion would require the unlikely prospect of the far-right and the leftist bloc voting together. Barnier and Antoine Armand, the Minister of the Economy, Finance, and Digital Sovereignty of France also face the challenge of submitting a budget plan to the parliament. France had been placed on a formal procedure for violating EU budgetary rules. Armand stated “exceptional and targeted” tax increases and cuts in public spending could not be ruled out. Barnier had earlier referred to the financial situation of France as “very serious.” (“[France’s new government under pressure on multiple fronts](#),” *France 24*, 22 September 2024)

Dissent among French Overseas over Prime Minister

On 20 September, *Al Jazeera* reported a rise in unrest in French territories in the Caribbean and Pacific region. The protests resulted in police killing two men in New Caledonia, which raised the total toll to 13 in the region; and a curfew was imposed in Martinique. Micheal Barnier, the new Prime minister of France, has already struggled in forming a government after the snap election in June as no party won the absolute majority. The protests in New Caledonia broke in May 2024 when the Republic of France proposed a plan to reform the voting rights under which Kanak people, an indigenous community, feared that it would dilute their votes undermining their rights. Even though Macron rolled back the reforms, protests continued. The territory is a major producer of Nickel which benefits France immensely. The territory has almost 2,70,000 people and the estimated loss due to violence is USD 2.4 billion. Similar protests are being seen in French Caribbean territory over the cost of living crisis in the country. Activists argue that the government has been lethargic towards chalking out a concrete solution. (“[Violence rocks France overseas territories in challenge for new PM Barnier](#),” *Al Jazeera*, 20 September 2024)

French EU Commissioner resigns over internal discord

On 16 September, *Deutsche Welle News* reported on the resignation of Thierry Breton, the European Commissioner for the Internal Market. Breton’s resignation was just a short while after Emmanuel Macron, the President of France proposed his name for France’s spot in the incoming European Commission. However, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission requested the Government of France to withdraw Breton’s candidacy. According to Breton, von der Leyen requested for personal reasons. He also alleged that she had offered a more lucrative position for France in the incoming Commission. The French government expected Breton to be a counterweight against the influence of the EU by the Federal Government of Germany. Stephane Sejourne, the current Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France will be proposed as the next French candidate. (“[French EU commissioner quits after clash with von der Leyen](#),” *Deutsche Welle News*, 16 September 2024)

Protest emerges in support of rape victim

On 14 September, *The Guardian* reported on widespread protests across France in support of a rape victim. Gisele Pelicot, the woman in question was drugged and raped by over 80 men over a decade, at the behest of her husband. In response, feminist groups organized protests around 30 cities in the country. Protesters informed they were rallying against the rape culture prevalent in France. They also stated the case of Pelicot would raise awareness over the issue. According to Deborah Poirier, a protestor, the case was “the height of horror.” Pelicot had been praised for her courage in demanding the trial to be held in public, rather than behind closed doors. On 12 September, the trial was suspended as Dominique Pelicot, the husband was taken ill. Dominique Pelicot had pleaded guilty earlier and is facing a trial alongside 50 other men accused of raping Gisele. (Kim Willsher, (“[‘It’s the height of horror’: protests in 30 French cities in support of Gisele Pelicot](#),” *The Guardian*, 14 September 2024)

Finance Minister steps down warning the government's choice of fiscal stability over taxes

On 12 September, Bruno Le Maire, France's Finance Minister announced his resignation. He has held the position for seven years and the timing of his resignation is seen as concerning as France struggles through its budget deficit. In 2023, when France's public sector broadened beyond the government's plan the fiscal fell short of 5.5 per cent of economic output. This was 4.9 per cent above the government's target and occurred due to low growth and less tax revenue. In early 2024, Le Maire said: "State finances must be readjusted ... that will require a great deal of determination, strategy, and composure." By May, the credit rating agency had downgraded France's rate due to an increase in deficit making the financial bonds a high risk. Le Marie's efforts to push back the state finance did not materialise due to the legislative elections. The failure to secure an absolute majority placed France's political landscape in an uncertain situation. Le Maire in his farewell address said: "Against the waltz of taxes, we have chosen fiscal stability, against the downgrading of the middle classes, we have revalued work, against mass offshoring, we have initiated the reindustrialisation of our regions, against criticism of France, we have made France the most attractive nation in Europe." ("French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire steps down," *Euronews*, 12 September 2024)

Macron making his political way through the snap elections

On 07 September, the *BBC* published an opinion on Emmanuel Macron, the President of France navigating through political dilemmas. The came after Macron took a lot of time to appoint a Prime Minister for the parliament. Isabelle Lasserre, author of a biography on Macron, said, "It's a mess. Macron has lost his touch." According to the *BBC* report, the call for snap was ill-timed and proved counterproductive since it took him two months to appoint the head of the government. She said that Macron ignored the New Popular Front, the left-wing bloc,

which managed to win the most number of votes and seats in France. She also said that Macron has recently presented himself as aloof and uninterested in restoring national stability in France. The left-wing alliance, which emerged as the most popular political alliance, felt betrayed by the President for not choosing their candidate as the Prime Minister. The article also concludes that Marine Le Pen came out as a winner in the elections as her party, National Rally, emerged as the largest party in the elections. Macron spent most of political energy and capital in containing her party. However, Macron still has two and half years left in his tenure. So far, he has also managed to maintain a neutral image of himself i.e., neither far-right nor far-left. (Andrew Harding, "[Has Macron fixed France's political mess?](#)," *BBC*, 07 September 2024)

Nestle to pay France EUR two million to close probes

On 09 September, Nestle, a Swiss dairy brand which also owns water brands, was asked by French probes to pay EUR two million to close probes over its water brands. The probe has been launched due to illegal wells and treatment of mineral water. Nestle owns water brands like Perrier, Vittel and San Pellegrino. Nestle has also signed a non-prosecution agreement with France which has received mixed views from the prosecutors. Some opine that the non-prosecution agreement was the "biggest concerning the environment signed in France to date." While some argue that "the non-prosecution agreement was justified as Nestlé had cooperated with the probe, had brought its practices into compliance and there were no public health consequences." ("[Nestlé to pay €2 million to close France water probes](#)," *Le Monde*, 10 September 2024)

Ifop polls show 52 per cent satisfied with Prime Minister

On 09 September, Ifop published a poll in the *Journal du Dimanche* suggesting that 52 per cent of people in France are satisfied with Macron's choice of Prime Minister. The poll comes a day after huge protests were organised across France by the far-left

alliance New Popular Front where more than 1,00,000 people took part. Micheal Barnier is the oldest Prime Minister in the history of modern France which became a critical factor when the left targeted his conservative views on homosexuality. Nonetheless, the polls also suggest that 74 per cent of people do not believe that Barnier till the left prepares to table a no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister. The poll was conducted online with 950 participants. The error margin is up to three points. However, there are many variables to consider in the poll i.e., the political views of the audience and if the conclusion of the polls could be generalised for the entire French population. ("Poll finds 52% fare satisfied with Macron's choice of Barnier as French PM," *France24*, 09 September 2024)

Protests spark in France after Barnier becomes Prime Minister

On 07 September, more than 1,00,000 people gathered across France to protest against Micheal Barnier becoming the Prime Minister of France. Barnier comes from the centre-right in the political spectrum of France, while the far-left had won the most votes. Prominent participants of the protests include worker union leaders and New Popular Front members. According to the Interior Ministry, more than 1,10,000 people participated in around 130 protests across the nation. Protestors used slogans like "stolen election" and "denial of democracy." However, Barnier has said that he is open to forming a government with the far-left as well. As per *BBC*, Barnier might be able to defend himself in the no-confidence motion that the far-left will propose, as far-right parties can vote in his favour. On 08 September, Barnier visited a children's hospital, emphasising his focus on public healthcare infrastructure while also stating that his government "will not perform miracles." ("Thousands protest in France over Macron's choice of PM," *BBC*, 08 September 2024)

Opposition targets Barnier over voting against gay rights twice

On 08 September, Jean Luc-Melenchon, leader of a far-left party La France

Insoumise, pointed out Micheal Barnier's, the new Prime Minister of France, stance on homosexuality. He highlighted that Barnier voted against decriminalisation of homosexuality twice, first time in 1980 and then in 1981. Barnier is a 73-year-old leader which the opposition is highlighting, given his conservative stance. Homosexuality was criminalised in France when Germany occupied the country in 1940. The law was not abrogated even when France was liberalised in 1944. The law was abolished only in 1982 with a vote of 278 against 202 in the National Assembly. *France24* also points out the time gap of 40 years since the vote on homosexuality, considering the change that can occur in people over four decades. The Associated Press has emailed the prime minister asking him if he regrets his vote against gay rights in 1982. ("Critics blast new French PM Barnier for having twice voted against gay rights," *France24*, 09 September 2024)

Nuclear power plant in Normandy to restart after shut down

On 07 September, France's latest nuclear power plant, European Pressurised Reactor, shut down by itself the day it became operational in Flamanville, Normandy. The nuclear reactor was built by EDF, a state-owned energy company in France. The spokesperson of EDF said that the incident indicates sound working of the safety system and the reactor will restart after a few technical rechecks. The reactor is supposed to be a model for new generation nuclear reactors as per Emmanuel Macron. The reactor was built 12 years late and required four times the projected budget. It cost EUR 13.2 million while the initial projected cost was EUR 3.3 million. Reactors of similar designs have been previously constructed in Finland and China. However, the Finnish reactor had some faulty hydraulic pumps. The reactor is aimed to supply 1,600 MegaWatts of power which is enough to supply power to at least three million houses in Normandy. France is the only country that generates more than 50 per cent of its total energy requirement from nuclear reactors. ("France's newest

nuclear reactor shuts itself down," *France24*, 08 September 2024)

Prime Minister Barnier begins his term

On 05 September, Emmanuel Macron, President of France, announced the new Prime Minister of France, Michel Barnier. Meanwhile, the left-wing parties are preparing to protest against the decision of Macron, as the left-wing candidate, Lucie Castets, was not chosen as the head of the government. Castets said that she felt betrayed while Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of France Unbowed party, has called for marches and mass mobilisation all over the country. Barnier has begun work to prepare the budget for 2025 which needs to be put to vote on 01 October 2024. Barnier is facing a rocky start to his term as the left-wing bloc is already preparing to place a no-confidence motion in the parliament. During his first interview after assuming office, Barnier said that his government will not be just a right-wing government. He is rather looking to form a rainbow coalition. He said: "I have never been sectarian." He also expressed his intention to reopen the pension reform bill for debate in parliament. He also showed intent to increase taxes as the country is facing a debt of 5.6 per cent of the GDP, which ideally should be three per cent of the GDP. He also said that he is open to implementing some far-right immigration policies. (Christophe Garach, "New French PM plans to reopen debate on pension reform," *BBC*, 06 September 2024; Paul Kirby, "French PM Barnier gets to work as left prepares protests," *BBC* 06 September 2024)

Political parties in a stalemate to choose the next prime minister

On 05 September, *France24* updated the report on the deadlock in national politics of France. *France24* listed the probable names being considered for the position of prime minister. Xavier Bertrand, leader of the Union for a Popular Movement, was being considered for the post. Another name is Bernand Cazeneuve. He was the former prime minister of France from the centre-left Socialist Party. David Lisnard, the Mayor of Cannes, is also being considered for the post. Emmanuel Macron

is under further pressure to appoint a head for the government since the draft of the 2025 Budget will also be placed in the parliament on 01 October. The left-wing coalition has emerged as the biggest alliance in the snap elections held in June. However, Macron has displayed hesitancy towards making a left-wing alliance leader as the prime minister. ("France still in political deadlock as Macron grapples with choosing prime minister," *France24*, 04 September 2024)

Edouard Philippe announces to run for President in 2027

On 05 September, Edouard Philippe, former Prime Minister of France and the first prime minister under Emmanuel Macron announced that he would run for President in the 2027 elections. After his resignation in 2020, Philippe founded his own party Horizons which has largely supported Macron's party. His announcement also comes at a time when Macron is struggling to find a head for the government. Meanwhile, Philippe said that he would support any prime minister picked from a political space ranging from the conservative right to social-democracy. ("French former PM Edouard Philippe launches 2027 presidential bid," *France24*, 05 September 2024)

12 dead after migrant boat sinks in English Channel

On 03 September, an article in *Deutsche Welle* informed that at least 12 migrants had drowned after a boat capsized in the English Channel. Gerald Darmanin, Minister of the Interior of France, confirmed the news and informed that search and rescue missions involving government services like navy helicopters, the fire brigade, and military vessels were underway. It was informed by local authorities that several migrants had been saved, but others remained in a serious condition. Etienne Baggio, captain of the Minck vessel stated that the boat had been trying to cross from France into the United Kingdom when the Minck spotted it in difficulty and went to its aid before it broke up. This is the single deadliest incident involving migrants in the English Channel in 2024; with at least 25

migrants having died this year before the current incident, more than the entire total of 2023. Migrant aid campaign group Utopia 56 criticised the French authorities, stating that their policing was “ineffective” and contributing towards these tragedies occurring regularly. ([“France: At least 12 dead after migrant boat capsizes.”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 03 September 2024)

Macron under pressure to appoint a Prime Minister

On 02 September, Emmanuel Macron, the current President of France, held talks with former Presidents Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande and Bernard Cazeneuve, a former Prime Minister, who has also emerged a front-runner to become the head of the government. Cazeneuve’s team told the media that he will do it only out of sense of duty and not at any cost. The New Popular Front (NPF) party emerged as the largest party in snap elections. However, it failed to achieve an absolute majority. Since then, the national politics has come into a deadlock. Meanwhile, Macron has refused to install Lucie Castets as the Prime Minister. François Bayrou, the leader of the Macron-allied centrist Modem party, told the media that the situation asks for a rapid resolution. NFP has advocated raising taxes on the ultra-rich to finance public services. Thus, budget discussions in parliament are expected to have heated up debates. Yaël Braun Pivet, the Macron-backed president of the National Assembly, said that the delay is causing institutional instability. (“Macron sweats under growing pressure to appoint prime minister,” *Politico*, 02 September 2024)

Waste management faces difficulties due to lithium-ion batteries

On 01 September, *Politico* reported on the menace created by lithium-ion batteries being thrown away with other garbage and not disposed of separately. Later, when the waste is crushed at waste management plants, the batteries get flamed up. According to France's Environment Ministry’s Bureau for Industrial Pollution and Risk Analysis, such incidents have doubled from 2019 to 2023 in French waste management facilities. Municipalities in

other EU countries like Belgium and the Netherlands are also facing similar trends. Due to frequent fires, waste management facilities also have to incur additional costs for protective gear, staff training, and rising insurance premiums. The heart of the problem lies in the use of lithium-ion batteries. There is a 20 per cent rise annually in usage of lithium-ion batteries. People do not realise that some products are battery-operated like e-cigarettes. Therefore, they dispose of it without removing the battery. When the waste is collected, it is crushed to make space for more garbage and it is then that fires are caused due to damaged lithium batteries. Thus, experts suggest that France needs to take initiatives to raise awareness among citizens to segregate waste. (“Electric toothbrushes and light-up sneakers are setting France on fire,” *Politico*, 02 September 2024)

GEORGIA

Parliament passes anti-LGBTQ+ law

On 19 September, the Georgian parliament passed a draft law on "Family Values and Protection of Minors" that explicitly discriminates against LGBTQ+ people. Mamuka Mdinaradze, chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party said that the law is required for countering the LGBTQ+ propaganda. Passing the law is a step further from EU laws. The draft bill covers issues around marriages, adoption and medical procedures. The Georgian government has designated 17 May as the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia and as the day of "Purity of the Family and Respect for Parents." (Sertac Aktan and Tamta Dzvelaia, “Georgia passes Russian-style anti-LGBTQ+ law ahead of crucial election,” *Euronews*, 19 September 2024)

Parliament passes contentious anti-LGBTQ+ bill

On 17 September, an article in *Deutsche Welle News* informed the Parliament of Georgia passed a bill restricting LGBTQ+ rights. The new bill contains provisions allowing authorities to bar Pride events and public displays of the LGBTQ+ flag. The bill

was passed unanimously by 84 lawmakers from the ruling Georgian Dream party, amidst a boycott by opposition parties. According to Georgian Dream leaders, the bill is essential to protect Georgia's traditional moral values in the predominantly Christian country. Salome Zourabichvili, the President of Georgia had stated she plans to block the bill. However, the Georgian Dream has enough parliamentary support to override a possible veto by the president. Tamara Jakeli, Director of the Tbilisi Pride group stated the bill was the most terrible thing to happen to the LGBT community in Georgia, and her organisation could not function anymore. The LGBTQ+ bill drew comparisons with similar bills passed in Russia. It was also passed months after another controversial law on "foreign agents" passed by Georgia. ("[Georgia's parliament approves anti-LGBTQ+ bill](#)," *Deutsche Welle News*, 17 September 2024)

Georgia's claim of EU membership is becoming a distant aspiration says an opinion in DW

On 15 September, *Deutsche Welle* published an editorial about the upcoming elections in Georgia and the polarising issues in the country. Georgia's claim of EU membership is becoming a distant aspiration due to its tilt towards authoritarianism recently. In December 2023, Georgia was given EU membership candidate status. However, the process was soon put to a halt due to the Foreign Agents Bill that the national parliament of Georgia had passed. The law was in congruence with the Russian approach towards opposition leaders. Irakli Kobakhidze, the Prime Minister of Georgia and a leader of the Georgian Dream Party, has even indicated that he will ban opposition parties if elected to power again. Elections in Georgia are due on 26 October. Opposition leaders have accused the Georgian Dream party of dragging Georgia into a war with Russia. Recently, all opposition parties have come together to oppose the Georgian Dream party's anti-EU agenda. (Christian Trippe, "[Georgia's elections: Will voters lean to the EU or](#)

[Russia?](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 15 September 2024)

GERMANY

Green party leaders resign; Escalating German government crisis

On 26 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the leaders of the Greens party in Germany, Ricarda Lang and Omid Nouripour had resigned from their positions. The resignations came after the Greens suffered humiliating defeats in the regional elections in three east German states. The party even failed to cross the minimum threshold of five per cent of the vote required for representation in the state parliament in two of the states. Lang stated Germany was at a crossroads between those who favoured a position of climate neutrality protecting prosperity and those against that. The Greens party has been in a steady decline, losing power in three eastern states where they formed the government in 2019. Additionally, in the elections in June to the European Parliament, the Greens were reduced to just 11.9 per cent of the vote from 20.5 per cent five years ago. Emanuel Richter, a political scientist stated the agenda of the Greens such as the heating law and transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energies had contributed to its decline. Additionally, Richter stated the Greens needed to improve their ways of communication, in order to change the perception that they were rigidly implementing their ideological policies. Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of Germany stated the resignations would have no impact upon the German coalition government. (Marcel Furstenau, "[Germany: Government crisis deepens as Green leaders resign](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 26 September 2024)

Authorities issue warning for flood in German-Polish border

On 25 September, authorities in Brandenburg issued the highest flood warnings, on four-scale measurement, for areas bordering Poland. The Oder River continues to grow in eastern Germany. The German Polish border uses the Oder River as the demarcation line. Dietmar Woidke,

the state premier of Brandenburg, will be visiting Eisenhüttenstadt and Ratzdorf, two worst hit areas in Brandenburg. In Ratzdorf, a border village, many roads and houses are completely submerged in water. Firefighters are preparing to evacuate the village. Similarly in Eisenhüttenstadt, some parts are flooded. The authorities and citizens are reinforcing sandbags to manage the floods. However, the highest flood warning in Germany does not mean a state of emergency or “catastrophe.” (“[Germany: Flood warnings on Oder River in eastern Brandenburg](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 25 September 2024)

Social Democrats edge past far-right AfD in regional elections

On 22 September, an article in *Politico* informed the Social Democratic Party (SPD) had narrowly defeated the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in regional elections in the state of Brandenburg. According to projections, the SPD finished first with 30.7 per cent of the vote, followed by the AfD with 29.4 per cent. The results provided a reprieve for Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of Germany who faced low approval ratings and infighting in his coalition government. A defeat in Brandenburg, governed by the SPD since reunification in 1990, would have dealt a blow to Scholz’s hopes of a second term and put pressure on him to resign for a snap election. However, 75 per cent of SPD voters stated they cast ballots to prevent the AfD from gaining power, rather than out of loyalty to the SPD. The presence of Dietmar Woidke, the popular Minister-President of Brandenburg also helped the SPD, with 60 per cent of voters having a favourable opinion of Woidke. The SPD was also supported by Michael Kretschmer, the Minister-President of Saxony from the opposition CDU party. According to exit polls, the SPD was largely supported by voters aged over 60. Additionally, the left-wing party BSW headed by Sahra Wagenknecht, a former leader of the Left party came third in the elections. The success of the BSW made an alliance between it and the SPD probable. (Matthew Karnitschnig, “[Scholz survives as his party](#)

[edges far-right AfD in Brandenburg election](#),” *Politico*, 22 September 2024)

Government records highest influx of migrants

On 20 September, the Government of the German Federation released a report on the influx of migrants in the country. More than three million refugees were dwelling in Germany on different resident permits as of June 2024. The figure is roughly 60,000 more than June 2023. One-third of these refugees are Ukrainian citizens. Migration became a point of polarisation during the recent state elections in Germany. Refugees make up to four per cent of the population in Germany. This also accounts for people who are overstaying their visas. Left-wing lawmakers suggest that the situation is being exaggerated by the far-right to make it seem like a national emergency. (“Number of refugees reaches new high in 2024,” *Deutsche Welle*, 20 September 2024)

Thousands gather in Fridays for Future protests

On 20 September, more than 75,000 people gathered to protest against climate change across Germany. The protests were a part of Fridays for Future initiative. It was started by climate activist Greta Thunberg as a weekly student protest in Sweden in 2018. 2023 was recorded as the hottest year recorded so far and 2024 is expected to break that record. In northeastern Germany, two climate activists were arrested and jailed for sabotaging an oil pipeline. Protests come during heavy floods in central Europe and wildfires in Portugal.

Frederich Merz to run for Chancellor of Germany

On 17 September, Friedrich Merz, the leader of the Christian Democrat Union (CDU), announced that he will be running for the Chancellor against Olaf Scholz, who has announced that he will be running for a second term in 2025. Merz became the chairperson of the CDU party in 2022. Since then he has shifted CDU’s stance on migration towards the right-wing. This stance differs from Angela Merkel’s, who was more liberal towards immigration.

Markus Söder, a leader of the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU), a sister party to the CDU had denounced Merkel's liberal approach towards immigration on several occasions. However, since Merz made his stance on immigration clear, the differences between CDU and CSU seem to be bridged. Soder said, "The fundamental realignment of the CDU on the issue of migration has healed the wound between the CDU and CSU." The cooperation comes after Alternative for Germany (AfD) swept the state elections in Saxony and Thuringia and the ruling coalition between centre-left parties seems to be losing its appeal. (Emilia Mobius, "[German conservative leader announces chancellor candidacy](#)," *Politico*, 17 September 2024)

Germany's economic sentiment lowest since October 2023

On 17 September, the ZEW Economic Sentiment Index was released which measures the economic morale of a country. Germany faced a drastic fall from 19.2 points in August to just 3.6 points in September. The sub-index that measures current economic conditions fell to -84.5 points in September from -77.3 points in August. This is the weakest reading since May 2020. In terms of industrial sectors, mechanical engineering, the steel industry and the automotive industry have experienced the steepest decline in future outlooks. Construction and telecommunications still seem optimistic as per the Index. The top four automobile manufacturers are facing declines in double digits. Mercedes by 10 per cent, Porsche AG by 15 per cent, Volkswagen AG by 17 per cent and BMW by a drastic 28 per cent. The reason is that these companies are losing their EV market to Asian companies like China's BYD. Despite the release of the Index, the European share market rose by 0.8 per cent and the German share market also rose. (Piero Cingari, "[Germany's economic sentiment takes a dramatic fall as outlook worsens](#)," *Euronews*, 17 September 2024)

Expanded border controls come into effect

On 16 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported

on enforcing Germany's temporary border controls introduced by the Federal Government of Germany. The new checks are for all of Germany's land borders for an initial period of six months. Previously, only the eastern and southern land borders were being checked. The stricter border regulations are a response to recent extremist attacks inside Germany. The German government stated that regulations are needed to tackle cross-border crime and irregular migration. Raphael Bossong, an expert on European migration policy at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs stated the border controls were sending a message that "Germany isn't open anymore." Janine Wissler, co-chairwoman of The Left Party stated that the border controls would create new problems, rather than solving the existing issue. According to Wissler, border controls would primarily affect individuals without a typical German appearance. She also stated that the measures could trigger a "European chain reaction" with barriers everywhere. Ricarda Lang, the co-leader of the German Green Party warned that these measures must not become permanent. Lang stated that the police had limited staff to impose the border controls and businesses were expressing concerns over rising costs in the supply chain. She stated that border measures needed to be proportionate. ("[Germany's expanded border controls come into force](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 16 September 2024)

Germany and Uzbekistan sign a bilateral deal to ease entry of skilled migrants

On 16 September, *Euronews* reported on the bilateral deal signed between Olaf Scholz, the German Chancellor and Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan's President. It was a migration agreement signed in the ancient Silk Road city of Samarkand. The deal aimed to facilitate the entry of skilled workers from Uzbekistan, specifically from the healthcare sector. It would also speed up and ease the deportation of Uzbeks, residing illegally in Germany. According to the estimates of a German press agency, the number of Uzbeks in Germany, eligible for deportation stands at 200. Scholz and Mirziyoyev also signed seven other

agreements on sustainable water resource management and a critical minerals partnership. The agreements were part of Scholz's three-day trip to Central Asia. ("Scholz and Mirziyoyev ink migration deal to simplify entry of skilled Uzbek workers," Euronews, 16 September 2024)

German Chancellor adopts a stricter border control policy

On 11 September, an article in *Politico* informed Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany had adopted a stricter policy on migration and border control. Scholz's measures are in response to the poor poll ratings of his coalition government. The governing parties lost regional elections to the far-right AfD earlier this month. Following the elections, Nancy Faeser, Federal Minister of the Interior and Community of Germany announced checks on all German land borders. The Federal Government of Germany announced plans to speed deportations and cut benefits for some asylum-seekers. Additionally, the German government deported 28 Afghan nationals convicted of crimes to Afghanistan. However, the announced measures sparked a strong response from Germany's neighbours. Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland stated tougher German border controls were a "de facto suspension of the Schengen agreement on a large scale." Tusk was also informed of plans by the Government of Poland to hold consultations with other countries affected by the German plan. According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior of Germany, 30,000 individuals without valid documents have been turned away at the German border since October 2023. Previously, ministers in the German government planned to implement fast-track procedures for the deportation of asylum seekers to other EU states. However, poor poll ratings and the rise of the far-right have compelled the German government to adopt a tougher stance. Migration experts and political analysts have warned the increased border controls are not a long-term solution. (James Angelos, "Germany's Scholz gets tough on border in bid to save political future," Politico, 11 September 2024)

Far-right's bull run to continue says BBC

On 10 September, *BBC* published a report on the rise of far-right parties like Alternative for Germany (AfD) in eastern Germany. After the election in Thuringia and Saxony, AfD has proven its public appeal. Polls suggest that in the upcoming elections in Brandenburg, AfD will emerge as a strong party. BBC interviewed Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a centre-right party, voters and concluded that people had complaints regarding education services, flatlining economy and rising immigration. Therefore, AfD and Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht's (BSW), a far-left party, demand for ending the supply of weapons to Ukraine is resonating closely with people. BSW had advocated left-wing economic policies and a conservative approach towards immigration. According to the opinion poll conducted by ARD, a state-owned broadcast service, almost 27 per cent of votes will go to AfD and Social Democratic Party (SDP), Olaf Scholz's party belonging to the centre-left, will emerge as the second largest party with 23 per cent of votes. BSW is predicted to win 15 per cent of votes, as per the ARD polls. However, AfD is less likely to be in power because other parties have refused to form a coalition with it. (Jessica Parker, "Rise of far right in Germany's east isn't over yet," BBC, 10 September 2024)

Germany to make border controls stricter

On 10 September, the *BBC* reported that the Federal Government of Germany was expanding border controls after the Solingen stabbing attack. The German government informed controls such as spot checks on roads and in trains would be introduced at all its border points from 16 September. The measures will last for an initial period of six months. Nancy Faeser, Federal Minister of the Interior and Community of Germany stated that the checks would reduce Islamist extremism and cross-border crime. The Solingen attack by a Syrian immigrant and the victory of the anti-immigration AfD party in regional elections have compelled the German government to adopt a harder stance towards immigration. The government has

resumed deportations of convicted Afghan criminals to their home country, and allowed asylum seekers at risk of deportation to lose benefits. Meanwhile, the opposition Christian Democratic Union has proposed turning back all asylum seekers at the border. Germany's proposed border controls were criticised by Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland. Tusk stated that Germany's actions amounted to basically a suspension of the Schengen Agreement, which had allowed for unrestricted travel among Germany's neighbours. Germany's decision was also criticised by Austria, although the Czech Republic supported it. (Damien McGuinness and Mallory Moench, "Germany to tighten border controls after stabbing," *BBC*, 10 September 2024)

BBC reports continuing Far-right continue to find space in German politics

On 10 September, *BBC* published a report on the rise of far-right parties like Alternative for Germany (AfD) in eastern Germany. After the election in Thuringia and Saxony, AfD has proven its public appeal. Polls suggest that in the upcoming elections in Brandenburg, AfD will emerge as a strong party. *BBC* interviewed Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a center-left party, voters and concluded that people had complaints regarding education services, flatlining economy and rising immigration. Leaders like the former Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, come from CDU. Therefore, AfD and Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht's (BSW), a far-left party, demand for ending the supply of weapons to Ukraine is resonating closely with people. BSW had advocated left-wing economic policies and a conservative approach towards immigration. According to the opinion poll conducted by ARD, a state-owned broadcast service, found that almost 27 per cent of votes will go to AfD and Social Democratic Party (SDP), Olaf Scholz's party belonging to the centre-left, will emerge as the second largest party with 23 per cent of votes. BSW is predicted to win 15 per cent of votes, as per the ARD polls. However, AfD is less likely to be in power because other parties have refused to form a coalition with it. (Jessica Parker,

"Rise of far right in Germany's east isn't over yet," *BBC*, 10 September 2024)

Businesses fear far-right will drive away foreign workers

On 04 September, *Politico* reported that German businesses were fearing the economic implications of the rise of the far-right in Germany. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) has been rapidly rising in popularity, running on an anti-immigrant platform. However, the Bundesbank, the central financial bank of Germany estimates that the country will be losing more workers to retirement than gaining through immigration by 2026. Joachim Nagel, President of the Bundesbank stated that democracy, freedom and openness for individuals from other nations were central values. Before the European parliamentary elections earlier this year, German businesses like Deutsche Bank, Siemens and BASF had supported a national campaign called "We stand for values." A study of businesses and employers' associations by the Institute for Economic Research found that over 60 per cent of respondents believed that the AfD's rise would make it difficult to recruit skilled foreign workers in the long term. While skilled foreign workers are required to run several sectors in Germany like the hospitality and nursing sectors, the AfD argues that Germany needs to focus upon making its native talent better. Leif-Erik Holm, economic spokesperson for the AfD stated that high immigration does not create economic growth. According to Holm, most of the immigrants arriving in Germany ended up in the social system, rather than in the labour market. The problem is exacerbated by the reluctance of the German population towards alternatives to immigration, such as increasing the number of working hours. Christian Sewing, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Deutsche Bank stated that Germany would witness more growth, only through changing its attitude to work. According to Sewing, Germans needed to work more and harder. (Johanna Treeck, Nette Nostlinger, Carlo Martuscelli and Elena Giordano, "German businesses fear far right success will scare off much-needed workers," *Politico*, 04 September 2024)

Foreign Minister visits Saudi Arabia as part of her Middle East tour

On 05 September, Annalena Baerbock, Germany's foreign minister, landed in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, as part of her Middle East tour. This marked her 11th trip to the region since the war in Gaza, in 2023. She has scheduled her meeting with Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, her Saudi Arabian counterpart to discuss on the "dramatic situation in the Middle East." They were also expected to discuss Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi strikes in the Red Sea. After the visit, Baerbock will travel to Jordan to meet the officials and coordinate the humanitarian aid in Gaza. After that, she is set to meet Israel Katz and Yoav Galant, Israeli foreign and defence ministers. She has also scheduled her visit to the occupied West Bank. ("Middle East: Baerbock begins tour amid stalled Gaza talks," *Deutsche Welle*, 05 September 2024)

Refugee and asylum policy at crossroads

On 03 September, an article in *Deutsche Welle* News reported the debate around the refugee and asylum policy prevalent in Germany. Around 3.2 million individuals living in Germany at present arrived in the country as refugees, and 270,000 new asylum applications are expected in 2024. Many asylum applications have been rejected; while 500,000 new refugee applications are pending. Despite a directive by the Federal Ministry of the Interior for nearly 227,000 individuals to leave Germany; obstacles present with deportation have prevented the deportation of about 80 per cent of the 227,000 individuals. However, following a knife attack by a Syrian individual in the city of Solingen and the success of the anti-migration Alternative for Germany (AfD) in recently held state elections; the Federal Government of Germany is facing increasing pressure over its migration policies. After the Solingen attack, the German government announced several policy changes; such as making deportations easier by reducing the threshold for crimes required for deportation, concluding migration treaties with countries outside the EU, providing no financial support to

asylum seekers in Germany if another EU nation is legally responsible for them. However, opposition parties like the AfD and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) are demanding even stricter action by the German government, such as abolishing the right to asylum in Germany and turning away refugees at the border. The German government has rejected these proposals as unconstitutional; although after the elections Christian Lindner, leader of the Free Democrats (FDP) a member of the German coalition government stated that he was willing to discuss changes to the German Constitution and European laws. While there is a debate over whether turning away migrants at the border would be legally possible; Friedrich Merz, leader of the CDU believed it was possible. Merz cited Article 72 of the European Union Treaty with its provision on law and order as proof. (Sabine Kinkartz, "[Refugee and asylum policy: Where is Germany heading?](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 September 2024)

Politico reports about eastern Germany's elections

On 02 September, *Politico* wrote on the elections held in eastern Germany. According to *Politico*, victory of the Alternative for Germany party in Thuringia and becoming the second largest party in Saxony reflects the voters tilting towards the right in national elections. Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of Germany, said that AfD is damaging Germany and ruining the country's reputation. In Thuringia, AfD has been classified as an extremist party. Nonetheless, it gained 33 per cent of the votes in the state. In Saxony, the Christian Democratic Union managed to get 32 per cent of votes while AfD emerged as the second largest party with a close margin. Mainstream leaders have even called AfD as Nazi party. Christian Social Democrat leaders have even demanded a ban on AfD. According to *Politico*, the winner of the election is the far-left [Sahra Wagenknecht](#) Alliance (BSW). BSW emerged as the third biggest party in both states. BSW has repeatedly criticised Germany's support for Ukraine. BSW has become the king-maker in these state-level

elections. In both states, BSW will play a crucial role in government formation. The three parties in Germany's ruling coalition, SPD, the Greens and Free Democratic Party suffered significant losses in the elections. It was SPD's worst performance, as per Politico, since European Parliamentary elections in June. Polling is due next week in Brandenburg, another eastern Germany state, while AfD is polling first here as well with 24 per cent.

Ultimately, *Politico* concludes that citizens of eastern Germany are embracing AfD as a party. ("5 takeaways from Germany's eastern elections," *Politico*, 02 September 2024)

Volkswagen considers layoffs and closure amid economic difficulties

On 02 September, German automobile manufacturer, Volkswagen, said that it cannot rule out the possibility of closure of industrial plants and job cuts. It has a new target of saving EUR 4 billion. The company announced termination of a job security program which has been in place since 1994. Volkswagen's sales have fallen in comparison to Skoda, Seat and Audi which are its subsidiary companies. Daniela Cavallo, chair of the workers' union, has shunned this statement by Volkswagen and called it an attack on German employment, factories and contracts. IG Metall union called it an irresponsible decision from the largest industrial employer of Germany. ("Germany: Volkswagen considering plant closures and job cuts," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 September 2024)

GREECE

Left-wing party leader removed from post over lack of ideological affiliation

On 13 September, *The Guardian* reported on the removal of Stefanos Kasselakis, the leader of the left-wing opposition party Syriza from his position. The central committee of Syriza announced Kasselakis was removed in a non-confidence motion. Kasselakis had faced criticism since taking over as Syriza leader in 2023, over his lack

of ideological affiliation and perceived right-wing populism. He had planned to transform the left-wing party into a "big tent" party with centrist views as well. Dimitris Psarras, a left-wing writer stated Kasselakis had disregarded the decision-making organs in Syriza during his tenure, and run the party like a company. Pavlos Polakis, a former supporter of Kasselakis stated it had been a mistake to support him. Syriza had fallen in the poll ratings as well, in third place at 9.3 per cent. On the other hand, Kasselakis argued the decision to remove him was through a "secret ballot," and against the will of the party members. Psarras stated it was too early to rule Kasselakis out of the political scene. (Helena Smith, "Greece's leftwing Syriza party ousts leader Stefanos Kasselakis," *The Guardian*, 13 September 2024)

GREENLAND

Maelstrom in glaciers pose risk to scientific expeditions

On 08 September, the *Guardian* reported about stadium-sized ice blocks crashing against each other during underwater currents. This is causing a maelstrom in the glaciers. Despite this, Celtic Explorer, a multi-purpose research vessel operated by Marine Institute, Galway, Ireland is being sent on an exploration mission. Scientists regard this as a "high-risk, high rewards mission." The aim of the mission to understand surging sea-levels. Glaciers in Greenlands are disintegrating and it will certainly have a causal impact on coastal cities' sea levels. Prof Ginny Catania, chief scientist, from the University of Texas (UT) said that the team will be collecting data that has never been collected before. The team will collect core samples of sedimentation at the glaciers' foot. However, the challenge is zero visibility underwater due to the maelstrom. This will also aim to predict the future of Greenland. There are warnings of the collapse of the ice sheet in Greenland which might lead to a seven metres rise in sea levels. According to Prof John Jaeger, from the University of Florida, Florida is already seeing frequent high tides due to rise in sea levels. The focus of the expedition is the Kangerlussuup

glacier in Greenland which is 50 kilometres wide and 300 metres tall. ("Oh my God, what is that?': how the maelstrom under Greenland's glaciers could slow future sea level rise," *Guardian*, 06 September 2024)

HUNGARY

Chief Prosecutor asks the European Union to suspend opposition leader's MEP status

On 26 September, Peter Polt, Hungary's Chief Prosecutor, said in a statement that Peter Magyar, the chief political opponent of Viktor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungary, allegedly confiscated the cellphone of a man who recorded Magyar in a bar in June 2024. Further he said that Magyar then dumped the phone in the Danube river. The device was found and returned to its owner, Polt alleged. Magyar gained popularity in February when he spoke against corruption in Orban's party. Viktor Orban has been in power in Hungary since 2010. Magyar is now supported by 39 per cent of votes, according to a recent poll. The next election is due in 2026. Tizsa party, the opposition party in Hungary, won seven seats in the European parliament in June. They won 32 per cent of the votes in Hungary. ("Hungary's chief prosecutor seeks to suspend legal immunity of Orban's chief rival," *Reuters*, 26 September 2024)

Residents of Budapest deals with aftermath of Storm Boris

On 24 September, the World Health Organisation published a report that discusses the plight of the Hungarian public. It has personal stories of residents of Budapest after the water levels in the city have come down. The report highlights the struggle of families that dwell near the banks of the Danube river. The families are still living in distress of floods, property damages and an uncertain future. There are several dwellers in Budapest who live in houseboats which have been destroyed due to floods. The report says that the floods are a reminder for the European government to work on a joint action plan to fight climate change. ("Flooded but not defeated: the residents of Budapest navigate catastrophic

flooding," *World Health Organisation*, 24 September 2024)

Orban suggests tightening migration laws On 06 September, in the Cernobbio Forum in Italy, Viktor Orban, Hungary's Prime Minister, spoke on the state of migration in the EU. When asked about Hungary's agenda for the six-month EU presidency, Orban listed three priorities. It included, competitiveness, the war in Europe and migration. He compared Hungary's conservative and Germany's liberal approach towards migration, saying: "Never let them in." Following this, Bence Rétvári, State Secretary of Hungary, said, "If Brussels wants illegal migrants, Brussels can have them," suggesting sending migrants to Belgium. The European Court of Justice imposed a fine of EUR 200 million over suggesting transferring migrants to the heart of the EU. Thus, EU countries stand divided on the issue of migration. ("We never let them in': Hungary's PM Viktor Orbán demands new laws tackling migration," *Euronews*, 06 September 2024)

VIKI defence institute gets new Director-General

On 03 September, an article in *Hungary Today* informed that a new Director-General had been appointed for the Defense Innovation Research Institute (VIKI). Dr Gergely Nemeth was appointed to the post by Kristof Szalay-Bobrovniczky, the Minister of Defence for Hungary. Nemeth has substantial experience; having held posts such as Deputy State Secretary for Defence Policy and International Relations in the Government of Hungary, and the Hungarian representative for defence planning and force development in the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO). Nemeth also led NATO's Future Research Group, which provides strategic insights to the alliance on adapting to emerging threats. Nemeth's appointment is expected to enhance the role played by VIKI in innovations and collaborations with European and international partners, and allied systems. VIKI is also expected to focus on increasing efficiency within the evolving defence industrial environment; and strengthen its research, development, and

military science efforts under Nemeth's leadership. (["New Director General of Defense Innovation Institute to Advance Military Research," Hungary Today, 03 September 2024](#))

Witnesses increase in EV registration

On 30 August, *Hungary Today* reported on the surging electric vehicle (EV) registration in Hungary which ranked it the fourth fastest-growing market for EVs in the EU after Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Denmark. According to the European Automobile Manufacturer's Association (ACEA), Hungary experienced a growth of nearly 60 per cent from January to July 2024, compared to last year. This was remarkable, with a 0.4 decline in EV registrations across Europe during the same time. The Ministry of Energy noted that electric vehicles significantly reduced emissions, enhanced air quality and economic growth. They further said: "The number of electric vehicles in Hungary has risen to 60,000, nearly eight times the figure at the beginning of the decade." The Ministry intends for a 50 per cent reduction by the beginning of the next decade, marking Hungary's leadership in environmental stability. (["Surge in Electric Vehicle Registrations Puts us Among European Top-Tier," Hungary Today, 30 August 2024](#))

Colt CZ to expand production capacity of small arms

On 30 August, Colt CZ, one of the world's leading small arms manufacturers based in the Czech Republic announced its production expansion in Hungary. It is one of the leading companies manufacturing firearms, tactical accessories and ammunition for military and law enforcement, personal protection, hunting and sport shooting. It started a joint venture with Hungary in early 2023 and hopes to expand production capacity through new firearms in Kiskunfélegyháza (southern Hungary). The new factory set up in Hungary would incorporate "manufacturing processes, robotics, fully automated turning and milling centers, and advanced surface treatment equipment." Their partnership aimed to "equip the Hungarian Defence

Forces with CZ firearms and to produce handguns for global export from Hungary." (["Renowned Czech Arms Manufacturer Expands Production in Hungary," Hungary Today, 30 August 2024](#))

IRELAND

Rise in Chinese investments in the industrial sector

On 30 September, the *BBC* reported about the rising Chinese investment in Ireland. Chinese companies have increased from 25 in 2020 to 40 in 2023. This will give Ireland the opportunity to reduce its dependence on the US for job creation. In May 2024, Dara Calleary, Ireland's Minister of State for Trade Promotion appreciated how Huawei was contributing EUR 800 million per year to the Irish economy. Meanwhile, since 2018, WuXi, a drug manufacturing company, has invested more than EUR 1 billion in a facility in Dundalk, near the border with Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, Ireland is presenting itself as a "gateway to Europe" for Chinese investments. For China, Ireland's low corporate tax of 12,5 per cent is the main attraction. Although Ireland is diplomatically closer to China, it tries to portray itself as neutral between the US and China. The article discusses how Ireland strikes a balance between the two powers. (Padraig Belton, "Does Chinese investment benefit or damage Ireland?," *BBC*, 30 September 2024)

Apple ordered to pay Ireland EUR 13 billion in tax

On 10 September, the *BBC* reported that tech conglomerate Apple had been asked to pay the Government of Ireland EUR 13 billion in unpaid taxes. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) confirmed the decision by the European Commission, ordering the Irish government to recover the unlawful aid which it had provided to Apple through tax advantages. The Irish government argued that the tax does not need to be paid. The original ECJ decision had covered the period from 1991 till 2014. The ECJ declared that the tax arrangements for profits generated by two Apple subsidiaries in Ireland were illegal. This was because other companies could not garner

advantages in the same manner. While the lower court of the ECJ overturned that judgement; the latest verdict of the higher court of the ECJ makes the first judgement null and void. Apples responded to the latest judgement by stating that the European Commission was trying to retroactively change the rules relating to tax. The company also reaffirmed that it pays all the tax which it is owed. Meanwhile, the Irish government stated that it would respect the ECJ ruling. The Irish government had argued against tax repayments since it believes the loss is worth it to make Ireland an attractive destination for big companies. The country has one of the lowest corporate tax rates in the EU. The court verdict is also a success for the European Commission, which had been pursuing the case since 2016. (Charlotte Edwards and Theo Leggett, "[Apple told to pay Ireland €13bn in tax by EU](#)," *BBC*, 10 September 2024)

Irish Fiscal Advisory Council warns over overspending

On 05 September, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC) warned the Irish Government of overspending leading to a fiscal deficit. In 2021, the government passed a National Spending Rule limiting spending growth to less than five per cent. IFAC said that in 2008-09, the over-expenditure of the government has led the country into financial crisis. The Council warned that overspending is causing unnecessary pressure on the country's economy. Seamus Coffey, the chair of IFAC, said, "The Government continues to make big promises. This is driving up prices and making it harder for people to afford the basics." The government will unveil the new budget on 01 October 2024. The budget is expected to have housing packages and doubling of child benefits. Such social budgeting will only increase the cost of living as per the IFAC. ("Ireland is running a budget surplus: Why has it been warned to stop spending?," *Euronews*, 05 September 2024)

ITALY

Prosecutors demand six-year jail term for Matteo Salvini

On 14 September, Georgia Meloni, the Prime Minister of Italy, posted on X: "It is unbelievable that a minister of the Italian Republic risks six years in prison for doing his job." The case dates back to 2019 when Matteo Salvini, the current deputy Prime Minister of Italy, who was then the Interior Minister of Italy, stopped a boat with migrants on board from docking in Lampedusa. The boat had picked up 147 migrants from the Libyan coast. Geri Ferrara, the primary prosecutor, filed a case in Sicily court raising the issue of endangering migrants' lives. Meanwhile, crew members of the boat have stated that the decision by Salvini to stop the boat from docking resulted in deterioration in sanitation facilities and migrants' living conditions. Ferrara said: "It is human rights that must prevail in our fortunately democratic system." If Salvini is convicted of the case, he could be blocked from holding any government office in future. He has been charged with offences like kidnapping and dereliction of duty. The number of migrants arriving in Italy through sea routes had significantly reduced in 2019 in comparison to previous years. He had implemented the 'closed ports' policy to tackle illegal migration in 2019, as the Interior Minister. Replying to the charges filed, Salvini has replied saying, "Italy could no longer be the refugee camp for all of Europe." Salvini is a leader of the Northern League Party, which opposes illegal migration in Italy. The party is also part of the ruling coalition in Italy. Italy sees the highest number of migrants through sea routes. Most migrants come from the African continent. (Christy Cooney, "Italy deputy PM faces possible jail time for blocking migrant boat," *BBC*, 15 September 2024)

Raffaele Fitto becomes Italy's EU Affairs Minister

On 06 September, the Government of Italy named its new EU Affairs Minister, Raffaele Fitto. Fitto is a leader of the far-right Brother of Italy party. However, he will need approval from the majority of the parliament to assume office. The Socialist

and Liberal party is not in favour of the candidature, thus he will need to procure centre-right votes. Fitto will also have to come out clean due to his cases related to bribery in the past. In 2005, Fitto was accused of partaking in bribery during the regional elections. However, in 2017, the Supreme Court of Cassation cleared him of all the charges. In 2009 as well, Fitto appeared before Court in a case related to shorting the stocks of Cedis, a trading company, which led the company to bankruptcy. However, he was acquitted from charges in 2012. ("Italy's EU Commissioner pick Raffaele Fitto might face a rocky road to approval," *Euronews*, 07 September 2024)

MALTA

Maltese cargo ship carrying explosive to travel through British waters

On 26 September, a cargo-ship carrying 20 tonnes of potential explosive fertilisers will be travelling through UK territorial waters. The ship is owned by a Maltese firm called Ruby Enterprises. It was set on sail from Kandalaksha, a port in northern Russia in July. Although the national maritime emergency services have said that there is no immediate danger from the explosives, the same chemical caused a blast in Beirut in 2020. The fertiliser contains a heavy amount of ammonium nitrate. It is regularly transported around the world and used as fertiliser but is also used in explosives. (Joshua Cheetham and Amy Walker, "Ship carrying explosive fertiliser heads to UK waters," *BBC*, 26 September 2024)

Greenhouse gas emissions rise to nine per cent

On 05 September, *Times of Malta* reported on Malta's fastest greenhouse gas emission rise in the EU. Emissions in Malta increased by almost nine per cent compared to 2023. Malta is one of only seven countries in the EU that failed to reduce their emissions. According to data from Eurostat, the statistical agency of the EU, emissions in Malta have increased in almost all quarters over the past decade. Since March 2023, Malta has also recorded the most emissions in the EU in every single quarter; although

the present emission increase rate of 8.8 per cent is lower than the 9.7 per cent recorded at the end of last year. However, Malta's rise is contrary to overall trends in the EU. The amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the bloc has reduced by four per cent since early 2023; with countries like Bulgaria and Germany cutting their emissions by over five per cent. (Neville Borg, "Greenhouse gas emissions rising fastest in Malta, EU data shows," *Times of Malta*, 05 September 2024)

NORWAY

International Development Minister determined to sign Global Plastics Treaty

On 25 September, Anne Beathe Tvinneim, the International Development Minister of Norway, said in an interview that Norway will not allow countries to hinder the drafting of the global plastics treaty. The treaty is planned to be signed in November in Busan, South Korea. The aim of the treaty is to contain plastic pollution. However, the progress of the treaty has been slowed down due to disagreements between countries. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, plastic demand has almost doubled in the past two decades and will be tripled by 2060. Meanwhile, oil-rich countries like Iran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Russian Federation are already facing challenges due to the introduction of EVs. These countries are counting on plastic production to keep their oil demand going. (Leonie Carter, "Norway: Oil producers cannot be allowed to derail plastic treaty," *Politico*, 25 September 2024)

EVs outnumber petrol-run cars in Norway
On 17 September, the Norwegian road federation (OFV) said that for the first time, out of 2.8 million cars registered in the country, 7,54,303 were EVs and 7,53,905 were petrol-run cars. Diesel-run cars remain as the first choice of Norwegians with just under one million cars registered. OFV has described it as a historic milestone. Norway might become the first country to have a passenger car fleet dominated by electric cars. Meanwhile, Norway is a large producer of oil and gas in Europe. It is also

ten years ahead of the EU's sustainability goals. In August 2024, 94.3 per cent of all car registrations were for electric vehicles. The increase was recorded due to sales of Tesla Model Y. To promote the sale of EVs, Norwegian authorities offer incentives like tax rebates and lower pricing. The trajectory in Norway is in contrast with the trends in Europe since the sale of EVs fell to 12.5 per cent of total sales by December 2023. ("Norway: electric cars outnumber petrol for first time in 'historic milestone'," *The Guardian*, 17 September 2024)

POLAND

Opinion in Euronews highlights the plight of migrants in Poland

On 06 September, *Euronews* wrote about the misery that migrants, who cross the border from Belarus, have to face in Poland. In 2022, Poland also created a barrier on its border to avoid migrants from entering. *Euronews* wrote that the migration issue continues to polarise Polish people. In June 2024, there was an incident of stabbing of a soldier on the Poland-Belarus border area which led to tough scrutiny of Poland's border security. *Euronews* talked to migrants living near the border areas and found that most of them live in constant fear of being mistreated by the police. ("Tensions in Poland over migrants escalate despite drop in attempted crossings from Belarus," *Euronews*, 06 September 2024)

Government announces new guidelines for abortion

On 01 September, the Polish government announced new guidelines for abortions in the country to provide safe access to women and reaffirmed the highly decisive procedure in place. Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of Poland, has promised to liberalise the abortion laws. He has introduced a bill to reduce the abortion allowance tenure to 12 weeks, but the bill could not be passed in the parliament itself. Earlier, abortions were permitted only for women who suffered pregnancy due to rape or incest. The new guidelines published by the Health Ministry said that

recommendation by one specialist doctor, including a cardiologist, endocrinologist or psychiatrist, is enough for a woman to obtain a legal abortion in hospital, and the doctor performing the procedure should not be liable for prosecution. ("Polish government announces new guidelines reaffirming legality of abortion," *Euronews*, 02 September 2024)

Marks 85 years since Nazi Germany's invasion

On 01 September, Poland marked 85 years since Nazi Germany's invasion. The Polish city of Wielun became the first civilian target of Nazi Germany's bombing in 1939. A solemn ceremony was held in Wielun which was attended by Robert Rohde, the ambassador of Germany and Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland. During the ceremony, Duda recalled that they have forgiven yet they remember the killing of 6 million Poles during World War II. He reiterated the demand for German reparations for the loss of Polish lives and damage to Poland's economy during the War. The current government demands reparation totaling up to EUR 1.3 trillion. However, Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland, comes from a pro-EU party and has toned down the demand for reparations. Certain media reports from Poland also suggest that both governments are identifying individuals who had suffered losses during the WWII, number going up to 70,000, and offer them compensation. On the 85th anniversary, Tusk reminded Polish people of the on-going war in Europe. He also made a reference to Germany saying that it is not enough to "bend your head in guilt." He also said that the lesson learnt from the previous war is that "never stand alone." He promised that Poland will never stand against any aggressor alone. Tusk emphasised the strength of the European army. ("Poland marks 85 years since WWII outbreak," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 September 2024)

PORTUGAL

Far-right calls for protests on immigration

On 29 September, the far-right party in

Portugal, CHEGA party, called for protests against “uncontrolled immigration.” CHEGA is also Portugal’s third largest party. Protestors raised slogans like “expulsion of migrants who commit crimes.” Many citizens also blame migrants for the housing crisis in Lisbon. Tensions emerged during the protest when the protestors were passing by immigrant dominant areas. According to the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum, almost one tenth of the population of Portugal comprises migrants. There has been a rise of 33 per cent in the influx of migrants in Portugal. In June, the government tightened laws on immigration. (“Thousands in Portugal march against immigration in rally called by far-right party,” *Euronews*, 29 September 2024)

Government seeks the EU for assistance as wildfires spread

On 18 September, the Portuguese Republic asked the European Commission to activate their mechanism for Civil Protection to combat wildfires in the Aveiro district in western Portugal. So far, the national government has deployed almost 1,600 firefighters. However, since it requires more firefighters, under the Civil Protection mechanism, the EU will also deploy them. The government has issued an alert for the mainland cities as well. The wildfires continue to spread in the western region of Portugal. It has also resulted in death of one firefighter in Oliveira de Azeméis. (“Portugal asks EU for assistance as wildfire reaches residential area,” *Euronews*, 19 September 2024)

Government struggles to combat deadly wildfires

On 18 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported on dozens of wildfires raging in the northern and central regions of Portugal. Portugal is battling over 50 active forest fires, with over 5,000 firefighters, civil defence personnel and soldiers deployed to tackle the fires. 21 firefighting planes and helicopters are also being used, including eight firefighting planes sent by EU countries after a request from the Government of Portugal. The wildfires also caused highways to be closed, and train

services to be suspended. Andre Fernandes, commander of the Portuguese National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection (ANEPC) informed three firefighters from the Vila Nova de Oliveirinha fire brigade died while tackling a fire in the town of Nelas, to the northeast of the capital of Lisbon. Since 15 September, at least seven individuals have died from the wildfires, with over 50 individuals injured. Jorge Ponte, a member of the meteorological agency IPMA stated 16 September was a particularly bad day for the risk of major fires in Portugal. According to Ponte, this was due to the combination of high temperatures, wind gusts reaching 70 kilometres per hour, and very low humidity, all brought by an anticyclone. (“[Portugal: Firefighters battle dozens of deadly wildfires](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 18 September 2024)

RUSSIA

“The Arctic is not NATO’s territory” says Sergey Lavrov in an interview

On 19 September, Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, spoke about Russia’s interaction with other Arctic countries. The Arctic Council has eight members and the presidency rotates every two years. The Arctic Council ensures multilateral cooperation in the region. However, he critiques NATO’s approach towards the region as NATO involvement in the region would bring military presence. He emphasised, “The Arctic is not NATO’s territory.” Lavrov mentioned the potential involvement of India and China and the possibility of trilateral cooperation in the Arctic. With climate change, the Arctic ice is melting leading to more accessibility and more players interested in the region. He also highlights the importance of rule-based order in the region through the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. It outlines the law on the country’s claim and decides on an extension of its territorial sea beyond 200 nautical miles from its coastline. He also mentioned that the US had unilaterally announced the new outer limits of its continental shelf in areas beyond 200 miles from the coast without applying to the commission. Talking about

the US, he also quotes George Orwell, “All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.” Russia’s greater involvement and awareness in the Arctic is natural given its geographical area covered in the Arctic and the historical significance of the region that Russia released during the World Wars. (“Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s interview for the Soviet Breakthrough semi-documentary series project, Moscow, September 19, 2024,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 19 September 2024)

Russia charges four soldiers for torture of US citizen

On 20 September, an article in *Firstpost* informed the Government of the Russian Federation had charged four soldiers from the Russian Armed Forces, for torturing and killing a US citizen who fought with pro-Russia forces in Ukraine. Russell Bentley or “Texas”, the US citizen who lived in Russian-occupied Donetsk was abducted and killed by Russian troops, according to his wife. The Russian Investigative Committee charged Vladislav Agaltsev, Vladimir Bazhin, Andrei Iordanov, and Vitaly Vansyatsky, soldiers in the Russian Armed Forces with causing the death of Bentley through physical violence, torture and negligence. The soldiers also face charges of concealing the crime by moving Bentley’s remains to another place. The case is a rare instance of Russia charging soldiers with crimes. (“Rare Instance: Russia charges 4 of its own soldiers for ‘torturing, killing’ pro-Moscow US fighter ‘Texas,’” *Firstpost*, 20 September 2024)

Conducts largest naval drills Ocean-24

On 10 September, *RT* reported on the biggest strategic naval drill launched by Russia in decades. Vladimir Putin, Russia’s president announced the launch of Ocean-24 which will be held in the Pacific and Arctic Oceans and the Mediterranean, Caspian and Baltic Seas. The exercise aimed to test the readiness and interoperability of the Russian Navy and the Air Force. The exercise will include more than 400 battleships and submarines as well as auxiliary vessels, some 120 aircraft and

over 90,000 personnel. In a meeting, Putin informed that the drill would involve complex military operations such as simulated launching of high-precision weapons. He noted that the exercise would showcase the Russian military’s experience from the ongoing war with Ukraine. Admiral Aleksandr Moiseev, the head of the Russian Navy informed about the Chinese participation in the drills which involved Four vessels and 15 aircraft. Putin also condemned the US dominance. He said: “We can see that the United States is doing everything to hold on to its global military and political dominance, no matter the cost, by utilising Ukraine and seeking to inflict a strategic defeat on our country.” Putin noted that Russia should be ready for any upcoming challenges or threats amidst the escalating geopolitical tensions. He opted for an increase in military cooperation with alliances to counter foreign threats. Putin also accused the US of sending additional troops to Europe, the Arctic and the Pacific, escalating the crisis in those regions. He considered the commencement of the exercise as a beginning to counter these threats. (“Russia holding biggest strategic naval drills in decades,” *RT*, 10 September 2024; “US trying to maintain dominance ‘at any cost’ – Putin,” *RT*, 10 September 2024)

Conducts largest naval drills Ocean-24

On 10 September, *RT* reported on the biggest strategic naval drill launched by Russia in decades. Vladimir Putin, Russia’s president announced the launch of Ocean-24 which will be held in the Pacific and Arctic Oceans and the Mediterranean, Caspian and Baltic Seas. The exercise aimed to test the readiness and interoperability of the Russian Navy and the Air Force. The exercise will include more than 400 battleships and submarines as well as auxiliary vessels, some 120 aircraft and over 90,000 personnel. In a meeting, Putin informed that the drill would involve complex military operations such as simulated launching of high-precision weapons. He noted that the exercise would showcase the Russian military’s experience from the ongoing war with Ukraine. Admiral Aleksandr Moiseev, the head of the Russian Navy informed about the Chinese

participation in the drills which involved Four vessels and 15 aircraft. Putin also condemned the US dominance. He said: "We can see that the United States is doing everything to hold on to its global military and political dominance, no matter the cost, by utilising Ukraine and seeking to inflict a strategic defeat on our country." Putin noted that Russia should be ready for any upcoming challenges or threats amidst the escalating geopolitical tensions. He opted for an increase in military cooperation with alliances to counter foreign threats. Putin also accused the US of sending additional troops to Europe, the Arctic and the Pacific, escalating the crisis in those regions. He considered the commencement of the exercise as a beginning to counter these threats. ("Russia holding biggest strategic naval drills in decades," RT, 10 September 2024; "US trying to maintain dominance 'at any cost' – Putin," RT, 10 September 2024)

Russian birth rate hits lowest rate in quarter of a century

On 10 September, *Euronews* reported that the Government of the Russian Federation was distressed about a decline in the birth rate of the country. The Russian birth rate is the lowest since 1999, with the country recording less than 100,000 live births in June. According to the Russian governmental statistical agency Rosstat, 599,600 children were born between January and June of 2024. This is 16,000 less than the same period in 2023. At the same time, Russia recorded 49,000 deaths more than the previous time. This amounts to a population decline of 18 per cent. Nina Ostanina, Head of the State Duma Committee for Family Protection stated that the country required a "special demographic operation." A spokesperson for the Russian President, Dmitry Peskov stated that the low birth rate was "catastrophic." Since the 1990s, Russia has had to deal with a population crisis. The birth rate has been in decline constantly. The Russian government has introduced several measures to increase the population, like expanding paid childcare for low-income families and introducing tax breaks for larger families. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated the

demographic crisis, with thousands of young men being forced to fight on the border. Alex Kokcharov, a country risk analyst for Eurasia stated that money issues and a tense security situation were compelling families to delay decisions on having children. A report by the Atlantic Council informed that the labour market could shrink as a result of the demographic crisis. The Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, Dmitry Chernyshenko stated that the country could face a shortage of up to 2.4 million workers by 2030. (Tamsin Paternoster, "Kremlin distressed as Russia's 'catastrophic' birth rate drops to its lowest in quarter century," Euro News, 10 September 2024)

Sanctioned Russian banker to serve on IMF board

On 04 September, *The Moscow Times* reported that Ksenia Yudaeva, a Russian banker facing sanctions had been named to the central board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Yudaeva is a former First Deputy Governor at the Central Bank of Russia and currently serves as an advisor to Elvira Nabiullina, the present Governor of the Central Bank. Yudaeva's appointment as Russian Executive Director at the IMF was confirmed by Aleksei Mozhin, the current IMF Executive Director for Russia. Yudaeva's functions at both the Russian Central Bank and the Otkritie Commercial Bank have subjected her to sanctions, as per the US State Department. The sanctions are also supposed to prevent her from entering US territory, freeze US assets and bar US companies and citizens from carrying out transactions with her. ("Sanctioned Russian Central Banker Named to IMF's Board," The Moscow Times, 04 September 2024)

SERBIA

Politico writes on the political accomplishments of Aleksandar Vucic, Serbia's President

On 30 September, *Politico* published an article on Vucic's skillful balancing between the West, People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. He has appealed to the masses through public gestures like cooking for army personnels and dining at

restaurants. Meanwhile, he also refused to impose sanctions on Russia while he is also trading arms with the West. Serbia also claims Kosovo using support from Russia and China. Serbia's strategic importance has further increased due to lithium mines. The next presidential elections in Serbia are due in 2027, however there are limited chances of Vucic coming to power due to his decision to go ahead with the lithium deal with the EU. ("Matthew Karnitsching, "Aleksandar Vučić has a clear strategy in his geopolitical chess game." *Politico*, 30 September 2024)

President announces to resume mandatory military service

On 15 September, Aleksandar Vucic, President of Serbia, announced that he had signed an agreement to bring back the mandatory military service that was abolished in 2011. During his speech, he said: "I hope you all understand how much we need a strong army, how much we need to purchase and manufacture more weapons." His objective behind the decision is deterrence. For the bill of mandatory military service to be passed, Vucic will need a majority in both the government and the parliament where his party holds a strong majority. As per the agreement, the service will be compulsory for men while it will be voluntary for women and the duration will be 60 plus 15 days. Meanwhile, human rights groups have expressed their dissent towards the decision since the decision might tilt the country towards authoritarianism. (Timothy Jones, "Serbia plans to bring back compulsory military service," *Deutsche Welle*, 15 September 2024)

SLOVAKIA

Prime Minister Fico attempt to weaken anti-corruption institutions fails

On 12 September, an article in *Politico* informed Robert Fico, the Prime Minister of Slovakia had dismantled corruption-fighting institutions in the country. In February, the criminal code was amended with punishments for crimes like corruption and fraud reduced. The Special

Prosecutor's Office in Slovakia was also abolished. The Special Prosecutor had investigated several corruption cases, including against officials from Fico's Smer party. Additionally, the Government of Slovakia disbanded NAKA, the police force investigating crimes like corruption. Matus Sutaj-Estok, Minister of Interior of Slovakia stated NAKA had become a tool of political revenge. Another prominent case was L'ubomir Danko, the former head of NAKA, and Michal Surek, a prosecutor being charged with abuse of power alongside two former police investigators. Incidentally, all the individuals named in the chargesheet had worked on the "Purgatory" corruption case. In that case, Fico and several high-ranking officials were suspected of corruption and manipulating police investigations. The Slovak government's decision to release criminals from prison also resulted in Dusan Kovacik, the former top special prosecutor and a close ally of Fico being released. This was despite the Specialized Criminal Court handing a verdict stating Kovacik accepted a EUR 500,000 bribe from the mafia. Peter Kosc, a businessman facing an international arrest warrant recently announced he would return to Slovakia. L'udovít Odr, a former Prime Minister of Slovakia and Member of the European Parliament stated the Slovak government was creating the ideal conditions for corruption. According to Odr, the EU knew what was happening in Slovakia and would have to eventually react to it. However, he stated it would have no impact on Fico and his aides, since they had enacted lifetime annuities. (Ketrin Johecova, "Slovakia loses fight against corruption," *Politico*, 12 September 2024)

SPAIN

Carles Puigdemont refused MEP status by the European Court of Justice

On 26 September, the European Court of Justice gave the ruling denying Carles Puigdemont and Antonio Comín their MEP status after the 2019 elections. Comín won the consecutive elections in 2024 as well. According to Spanish law, elected MEPs are required to visit the national parliament and declare their allegiance to the

constitution in order to be verified as a representative of Spain in the European parliament. However, Puigdemont and Comín failed to verify themselves as they had an arrest warrant due the independence referendum organised for Catalonia's independence in 2017. Thus, their names were taken off from the MEP list and their seats were declared vacant. In January 2020, their MEP status was given back after the ECJ reaffirmed their immunity and ruled that member countries had no right to ban elected MEP members from taking their seats. Thus, the recent ruling by ECJ came as a surprise to lawmakers and politicians. In 2024, Comin refused to travel to Spain after being re-elected as an MEP. The ECJ upheld the Spanish government's decision to reject their MEP status. (Aida Sanchez Alonso & Paula Soler, "EU's top court rejects Catalan separatist Carles Puigdemont's claim to MEP status," *Euronews*, 26 September 2024)

Study warns Spain shifting towards desert climate

On 16 September, *Euronews* published a study by researchers at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC) warning Spain was moving towards a desert climate. The study predicted rainfall in Spain will decrease by up to 20 per cent in comparison with recent levels, by 2050. This would shift the country away from the present temperate Mediterranean climate towards a cold, semi-arid and steppe climate. It is predicted this will lead towards a desert-like climate eventually. If greenhouse gas emissions continue at present, the daily mean temperature in Spain will reach 15.84 degrees Celsius in 2050. Temperatures in mainland Spain and the Balearic Islands rose by 3.27 degrees Celsius, between 1971 and 2022. The number of summer days with temperatures 25 degrees Celsius and above increased from 82.4 in 1971 to 117.9 in 2022, an increase of 43 per cent. Tropical nights with a minimum temperature of 25 degrees Celsius also rose from 1.73 to 14.12 in the same period. The study found an increase in the frequency of heatwaves as well; from an average of less than one per year between 1971 and 1980 to almost two

per year between 2013 and 2022. The heatwaves last for an average of nine days now, compared to three earlier. According to the study, rainfall decreased at a rate of 0.93 mm per year between 1971 and 2022. The scarcity of rainfall and the increasing temperatures have led the country towards increasing levels of drought. The study also noted that while Spain receives extreme rainfall, it is mostly concentrated on the Mediterranean Coast. Moreover, the extreme rainfall does not compensate for droughts. ("[Barcelona and Majorca will shift to a desert-like climate by 2050, new drought study warns](#)," *Euro News*, 16 September 2024)

Pedro Sanchez calls for bridging EU-China trade differences

On 10 September, Pedro Sanchez, the Prime Minister of Spain, gave a speech in Shanghai. It was the last day of his four day visit to China. During his speech, he urged all the EU nations to reconsider EU imposed tariffs on Chinese EVs. He said that raising tariffs might not be the best solution since it can trigger China to increase duties on pork products. If China launches a probe against pork imports, Spain, the Netherlands and Denmark will have to bear the brunt. He said, "we don't need another war, in this case, a trade war. We need to build bridges between the European Union and China." The statements from Sanchez seem diabolical since Spain has supported imposition of tariffs in July during the non-binding consultation. France and Italy outrightly supported the tariffs while Hungary opposed them. Sanchez said that he aimed to 're-balance' the trade deficit between China and Spain. Sánchez signed a deal with Envision Group, a Chinese multinational, to build a \$1 billion plant in Spain for manufacturing electrolysers, the machinery used to separate hydrogen from water and produce green hydrogen. (Jorge Liboreiro, "Sánchez urges the EU to 'reconsider' tariffs on Chinese electric cars, exposing cracks," *Euronews*, 11 September 2024)

SWEDEN

Gang violence makes neighbours sceptical

On 26 September, *Politico* reported on the numerous cases of shootings in Sweden motivated by gang violence. The Norwegian police also suspect Swedish gangs behind a bombing planned in the town of Drøbak. Norwegian authorities also said that there are Swedish drug gangs operating in Norway as well. Meanwhile, Danish authorities have also reported of Swedish gangs and criminals carrying out recruitments of young people in Denmark. In September, Denmark's police reported two murders of Danish individuals that were carried out by Swedish nationals. Peter Hummelgaard, Denmark's Justice Minister, said that children are being hired by these gangs to attack people. Meanwhile, Sweden has taken measures like increasing sentences for gun violence and lowering the juvenile bar age for gang criminals to counter the problem. Scandinavian countries are facing problems with Sweden's gang violence problem entering their territory as well. (Charlie Duxbury, "Sweden's spreading crime epidemic alarms its neighbors," *Politico*, 26 September 2024)

Government cuts taxes on flight bookings

On 20 September, the government of Sweden lifted taxes on flight bookings. The government also admitted that the new law will contribute to an increase in emissions, nonetheless, it went ahead with it. Environmentalists have criticised the law. The flight tax was imposed in 2018 to cut down emissions. The taxes were a result of Greta Thunberg's "flight shame" campaign. However, the newly elected centre-right government said that from 01 July, 2025, these taxes would no longer apply. The Swedish Green Party has accused the government of dismantling the climate policies. Meanwhile, Ulf Kristersson, the Prime Minister of Sweden, justified the tax cuts saying that the flight taxes resulted in heavy competitive disadvantages for Swedish airports. (Miranda Bryant, "Sweden cuts tax on flying despite admitting it would increase emissions," *The Guardian*, 20 September 2024)

Swedish government appoints new foreign minister

On 11 September, an article in *BNN* informed the Government of Sweden had appointed a new Minister for Foreign Affairs. Maria Malmer Stenergard, the former Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy was appointed to the post of Foreign Minister. Stenergard's main focus is expected to be on ensuring constant support for Ukraine. Ulf Kristersson, the Prime Minister of Sweden stated in his parliamentary address supporting Ukraine was the biggest foreign policy challenge for the coming years. Stenergard informed in a press conference Russia needed to remain pressurized with sanctions. She also stated it was important to work towards the goal of EU membership for Ukraine. (["Sweden appoints new Foreign Minister with focus on Ukraine," *Baltic News Network*, 11 September 2024](#))

Government announces plans to scrap tax on air tickets from 2025

On 06 September, Sweden's government announced its plans to scrap the tax it imposes on flight booking. The decision is being praised by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) as more people will be opting for flight booking as an option while environmental groups are protesting against the announcement. A Member of Parliament from the right-wing party, Sweden Democrats Party, said that the decision will make air travel more affordable for the middle class. The tax was originally introduced in 2018. However, environmentalists claim that the government's goal to reach zero emissions by 2050 will not be achieved by cutting taxes on air tickets. The Greens party has opposed the bill. The spokesperson of the Greens party has said, "This is another example of this government's irresponsible climate policy." ("The country that invented 'flight shame' is scrapping their tax on flights," *Euronews*, 06 September 2024)

Foreign minister resigns

On 05 September, Tobias Billstrom, Sweden's Foreign Minister announced his resignation from the parliament from next week. On the social media platform X, he

posted: “It is with a mixture of sadness and pride that I have today informed the prime minister that I will leave the post of foreign minister at the opening of parliament next week.” He had been the foreign minister since 2022 during which Sweden denounced their military non-alignment and joined NATO. Through his unexpected decision, he also revealed his unwillingness to continue in politics. (“Sweden: Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom steps down,” Deutsche Welle, 05 September 2024)

Farmers increasingly using chemical-free methods for seed treatment

On 04 September, an article in Euronews wrote on the increasing usage of heat-treated seeds as a chemical-free alternative for pest control. Kenneth Alness, a former researcher came up with ‘ThermoSeed’ which utilises sharp blasts of steam, to kill pests and preserve the seeds. Alness stated that a farming book detailing how farmers used hot water to treat seeds provided the inspiration for his idea of using steam for pest control; although it took years of testing to deliver yields comparable to chemically treated seeds without the need for drying. Steam requires a tailored approach for each seed type, after which testing to ensure successful germination before full-scale treatment follows. Swedish agricultural cooperative Lantmannen began using ThermoSeed in 2008, and this has prevented the usage of approximately 3,000 cubic metres of chemicals. While the farming community is often sceptical of non-chemical solutions, ThermoSeed has proven to be a popular success. This innovation has already been successful in Alness’s home country of Sweden and neighbouring Norway. Alness now plans to address the remaining challenges; like the high cost of ThermoSeed equipment and the need to scale down to appeal to smaller markets like Asia. (Ines Trindade Pereira, “This chemical-free method for treating seeds is winning over sceptical farmers in Sweden and beyond,” *Euronews*, 04 September 2024)

SWITZERLAND

Swiss citizens reject referendum to protect natural habitats

On 22 September, a referendum was organised by the Swiss Federation on more investments to be made in protection of natural habitats and biodiversity. The voters have rejected the referendum with 60 per cent votes going against the implementation. The Swiss Green Party has expressed its disappointment with the results. The groups against the Biodiversity bill included farming lobbies. In April, Europe’s highest court on human rights also said that the Swiss Federation is not doing enough to protect its biodiversity. According to the public, implementation of the new referendum is too costly. Around 600 million Swiss francs are already spent every year on biodiversity. The referendum would increase the expenditure further by 400 million Swiss francs. (“Swiss voters reject biodiversity proposal in blow to conservation campaigners,” *The Guardian*, 22 September 2024)

Swiss voters reject biodiversity protection and pension reform plans

On 22 September, *France 24* reported on voters in Switzerland rejected plans to improve natural biodiversity protections and reform the pension system in twin referendums. The proposal for the improvement of biodiversity protections was titled “For the future of our nature and our landscape.” It was supported by environmental protection organizations like ProNatura and BirdLife who warned the Swiss biodiversity had declined, and the country had a high level of threatened species and environments. While the Government of Switzerland spends USD 700 million annually for biodiversity protection, environmental organizations stated this was not enough. However, only 37 per cent of voters supported the proposals, which included plans to expand the number of protected areas and improve the budget allocation for biodiversity. The Swiss government and the Federal Assembly rejected the biodiversity proposals and stated the measures would impact the economy, agriculture, construction and energy production. A proposal by the Swiss government to reform the pensions system

was rejected, with just 31 per cent of voters supporting it. The Swiss government had stated the compulsory pension fund which employers and employees needed to pay was underfinanced due to rising life expectancy and low financial market returns. The proposed reforms would require employers and workers to improve their contributions towards the obligatory occupational funds. However, the Swiss Trade Union Federation opposed the reforms. According to the Federation, Swiss citizens would have to contribute more money amidst shrinking pension payments. ("[Swiss voters reject plan to boost biodiversity, vote against pension reform](#)," *France 24*, 22 September 2024)

Exodus of Russian assets from Europe to the Middle East due to sanctions

On 18 September, *Swissinfo* reported an exponential increase in Russian deposits in UAE banks. The UAE recorded the highest annual growth in foreign deposits in 2024. This has led to a steep drop in Russian deposits in Swiss banks. Swiss bankers have argued that Switzerland should in future actively seek to influence global sanctions packages in a way that suits its domestic agenda. Grégoire Bordier, president of the Association of Swiss Private Banks said that Switzerland and Swiss Banks were not a part of the discussions between the US and the EU when the sanctions were being decided. Swiss Banks have marketed themselves as a safe destination for depositing wealth, especially the elite class, due to the law of neutrality followed by Switzerland. However, the government is emphasising that imposition of sanctions does not compromise Switzerland's law of neutrality. (Matthew Allen, "[The impact of Russia sanctions on Swiss banks](#)," *Swissinfo*, 18 September 2024)

Russia accused for switching from its neutrality stance

On 18 September, The Russian Federation accused Switzerland of shifting from its neutral stance as it imposed sanctions on Russia. In April 2024, Switzerland had frozen Russian assets worth of CHF 5.8 million. As per Sergei Guriev, former chief economist at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, said that

sanctions cannot be classified as a punishment, rather it is a way to prevent wars. Even though the goal of the sanctions was to cripple the Russian economy. It has adapted to the war. This year the economy grew 5.4% in the first quarter and 4% in the second quarter. Françoise Tschanz, spokesperson of the Swiss Economics Ministry, said that Switzerland's neutrality policy is limited to only military involvement. He said that despite the sanctions, Switzerland continues to be neutral since it is not militarily involved in the conflict. (Elena Servettaz, "Debunking Russian propaganda on Switzerland," *Swiss.info*, 18 September 2024)

Survey finds majority of Swiss against immigration ban

On 10 September, *swissinfo.ch* reported that the most of the citizens in Switzerland were against an immigration ban, despite concerns over an increase in immigration. Results of the Opportunities Barometer 2024 survey showed that 74 per cent of citizens in rural areas were concerned about the population reaching 10 million inhabitants. The figure was 65 per cent in suburban areas and 63 per cent in urban areas. However, 61 per cent of respondents rejected a blanket ban on immigration. A ban for individuals outside the European Union was more narrowly rejected. While measures like the political integration of foreign residents or the construction of more roads were rejected, over 70 per cent of respondents agreed with measures like working beyond the retirement age, expanding the public and providing more daycare centres. A controlled system in which only individuals with language skills or sufficient points for qualifications would be allowed to immigrate received substantial support; at over 65 per cent. 43 per cent of respondents believe the biggest challenge to a Switzerland of 10 million inhabitants is high rental costs, and the housing shortage. 15 per cent of respondents stated that higher pension contributions were the most positive opportunity offered by immigration, while 13 per cent stated it was immigration. 80 per cent of the surveyed population also

incorrectly cited the population increase numbers in Switzerland, over the past decade. ([“Majority of Swiss against the immigration ban, survey finds,” *swissinfo.ch*, 10 September 2024](#))

Parliament scrapes pensions for former public servants

On 07 September, a committee in the Federal Assembly of Switzerland voted in favour of abolishing generous pensions provided to former ministers and federal judges. The bill was proposed and passed by the right wing party, People’s Party. Rémy Wyssmann, a leader of the People’s party, said that federal judges and ministers enjoy a privilege that other citizens of Switzerland do not. According to Wyssmann, former ministers and judges should be given the same treatment by the government as everyone else. Members who opposed that bill said that it might undermine the political freedom of former ministers post retirement. (“Swiss government pensions come under pressure in parliament,” *Swissinfo*, 08 September 2024)

Government dismisses ECHR climate ruling

On 03 September, the Swiss Government was widely criticised by environmental groups for setting inadequate targets concerning global warming. The Swiss government has proposed the Secure Energy Bill which was approved by the public and will be in action by January 2025. The bill lays the foundations for expanding renewable sources of energy in Switzerland. However, Greenpeace Switzerland, an environmental group, said that the government’s targets are insufficient to reduce the global warming rate to 1.5 degrees Celsius. As per the report by *Swissinfo*, Switzerland’s targets are inconsistent with limiting global warming. So far, there has been very limited independent evaluation of the policy initiatives of the Swiss government on global warming. (“ECHR ruling: research group highlights Swiss climate shortcomings,” *Swissinfo*, 03 September 2024)

Russia’s growing gold imports despite

EU ban

On 03 September, *Swissinfo* published an analysis on Russian gold still being an important entity being imported by Switzerland and how the gold imports finance the ongoing war in Ukraine. Russia’s economic growth rate in 2023 was 3.6 per cent while facing 16,000 sanctions. Even in 2024, the growth rate of Q1 was 5.4 per cent and four per cent in Q2. The demand for gold in the Global Central Bank has been rising since 2022. Since early 2022, Russia has been trying to link the Rouble to gold due to ongoing sanctions and BRICS countries are searching for a common currency. Gold hit the highest price of USD 2,530 per troy in August 2024. This has been helping Russia’s economy. Even though Switzerland imposed sanctions on Russian gold, Russia continued to export it as the stocks were stored in vaults in London before the conflict began. This has raised concerns over what *Swissinfo* calls “gold laundering.” The London Bullion Market Association (LBMA), the standard-setting body for the global wholesale market for precious metals, used to have six Russian refineries among its members. Therefore, the gold is still present there. (“Explainer: Why Switzerland remains a ‘big buyer’ of Russian gold,” *Swissinfo*, 03 September 2024)

THE NETHERLANDS

Controversy arises over Stolpersteins

On 23 September, *Euronews* reported on the controversy to have erupted over the concrete cubes known as Stolpersteins bearing the names of Holocaust victims such as Jews, Romani, and homosexuals. These cubes are widely found on the streets of over 1,200 European cities. However, the decision of the Netherlands to place Stolpersteins for 45 Dutch political prisoners, including activists and communists ran into controversy. This was because the proclaimed mandate to place Stolpersteins was only for Jewish, Roma, and Sinti Holocaust victims, and different victims must have a different mark of remembrance. The recent controversy also shed light on the historical role of the Dutch state and security services in collaborating

with the Nazi authorities. Another point of controversy was that political victims must be held to the same level as Jewish victims. Stolpersteins had been criticized in the past, as well. Local Jewish communities in Germany and Poland rejected the plaques on grounds of their placement on the street being undignified. The City of Paris rejected Stolpersteins, because they sent out an unsuitable image for France where 75 per cent of Jews survived. (David Mouriquand, [“What is a Stolperstein and why is there controversy in the Netherlands?”](#) *Euro News*, 23 September 2024)

Government seeks opting out of EU's common migration policy

On 20 September, the government of Netherlands announced that it plans to opt-out of the EU-wide laws on asylum and migration. The Netherlands has a far-right government in power, led by the PVV party. Marjolein Faber, the Asylum Minister of the Netherlands, said that his governments aim to make the Netherlands unattractive for asylum-seekers. According to *Deutsche Welle*, around 40,000 asylum-seekers arrive in the Netherlands every year. Even Denmark has negotiated with the EU to stay out of the common Asylum policy. The EU passed the migration pact in April 2024. All 27 members will be voting on whether the Netherlands can opt out the Migration Pact or not. The far-right led coalition government in the Netherlands came to power in July 2024. Even Dick Schoof, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, is an independent candidate, the PVV party remains a dominant force in the parliament. After coming to power, the coalition proposed stricter border controls. It also indicated that it can declare a state emergency and suspend asylum laws in some parts of the country. (“Netherlands seeks EU migration opt-out,” *Deutsche Welle*, 21 September 2024)

Joins Italy and Spain in anti-tourism protests

On 08 September, citizens of the Zeeland region in the Netherlands appealed to the Council of the State to curb tourism development infrastructure. According to

NL Times, every third house in Zeeland is a vacation home. Noord-Beveland municipality houses around 8,000 citizens and is quiet throughout the year except during the tourist season when the city is flooded with traffic. *NL Times* found that the tourism in the city has peaked due to construction of a bridge that connects the island to the mainland Netherlands. Tourism has continued to rise since then. Residents of Noord-Beveland have approached a foundation called “Wij Zijn Noord-Beveland” to fight against tourism in the city. Such incidents were also seen in Spanish and Italian cities where the public was protesting against rising tourism and the pressure it puts on public healthcare and waste management systems. (“[Zeeland residents want to take action against mass tourism](#),” *NL Times*, 09 September 2024)

Opinion highlights the need for circular economy

On 08 September, *NL Times* reported a severe shortage of earth materials that the Netherlands could face by 2050 if the country does not adopt a circular economy. *NL Times* talked to researchers in Leiden University working on gaps in government policies. They pointed out certain examples like demolition of windmills while they are operational, EV batteries being stuck into frame design where certain parts become irreparable, negligence of circularity during construction of homes, windmills and large batteries. Significant growth is expected in all these sectors. According to the *NL Times*, reuse is the only way to keep earth materials from being discarded. (“[Netherlands must implement a circular economy or face severe shortages by 2050](#),” *NL Times*, 08 September 2024)

Dutch primary and secondary schools ban phones and tablets for students
On 02 September, the Netherlands imposed a ban on smart devices in schools. The government has imposed a blanket ban on the country. The government said that increasing the use of smart devices has reduced students' ability to concentrate and has a detrimental impact on their academic performance. The debate in the Netherlands has been going on since January 2024,

children's parents groups had lobbied for a total ban on smart devices. European countries like Greece and Italy have already imposed such bans. ("Netherlands: Nationwide ban on phones in schools underway," *Euronews*, 02 September 2024)

THE UK

UK water company plans to tanker water from Norway

On 26 September, Southern Waters, the UK's biggest water company, held discussions with Extreme Drought Resilient Services, a UK-based private water company, to deal with water shortages. Southern Waters has around 2.7 million customers. The companies are in talks to import water from Norway through Norwegian fjords. Tim McMahon, the Managing director of Southern Waters, said that the company is exploring options like temporary distillation plants as well. Meanwhile, water companies are also lobbying the British parliament to pass the bills to raise water bills. (Julia Kollewe, "Southern Water considers shipping supplies from Norwegian fjords to UK," *The Guardian*, 26 September 2024)

Government deploys 700 troops to evacuate citizens

On 25 September, Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK, urged British citizens to leave Lebanon immediately. Israel has been bombarding the southern part of Lebanon. The Royal Air Force helicopters and aircrafts are on standby to provide. The UK has initiated the first phase of the evacuation plan to avoid the havoc that was created in Afghanistan in 2021. During an interview in New York, he said: "We need de-escalation, we need a ceasefire, we need to pull back from the brink." 10,000 British citizens are estimated to be in Lebanon. The UK has a significant military presence in Cyprus with RAF Akrotiri and Royal Navy ships of RFA Mounts Bay and HMS Duncan. The UK Ministry of Defence has also sent 700 military troops to Cyprus to prepare for possible evacuation. American citizens also have been advised to leave Lebanon. The Israeli attack in Lebanon reportedly killed almost 570 people. (Chris Mason, "Leave

Lebanon now, Starmer tells Britons," *BBC*, 25 September 2024; Rowena Mason, "UK moves 700 troops to Cyprus ready to evacuate Britons from Lebanon," *The Guardian*, 25 September 2024)

Issues warnings amidst heavy rains and floods

On 23 September, the Met office in the UK issued weather warnings in England and Wales. So far, yellow weather warnings have been issued which implies disruption like floods and power cuts. Railway lines from Bedford to Bletchley have also been shut. The London Fire Brigade said that they received around 350 flood related distress calls. Transport for London has warned passengers that metro lines have been either partly suspended or subject to minor to severe delays because of floods. (Vicky Wong and Matt Taylor, "Flash floods and heavy rain batter England and Wales," *BBC*, 23 September 2024)

Meta to use Facebook and Instagram posts for training AI

On 13 September, an article in *The Guardian* informed the tech company Meta planned to go ahead with plans to use UK Facebook and Instagram posts for training Artificial Intelligence (AI). Meta informed it had "engaged positively" with the International Commissioner's Office (ICO) over the plan. The ICO informed it had decided to monitor the experiment, instead of regulatory approval. Stephen Almond, the Executive Director for Regulatory Risk of the ICO stated organizations using generative AI models for data needed to be transparent. However, privacy advocacy groups had raised alarm regarding the plans. Open Rights Group (ORG), a privacy campaigner accused Meta of turning individuals into "involuntary test subjects". Meta had accused the EU of hampering AI development, with its refusal to allow EU citizens' posts to be used for AI training. On 13 September, Meta confirmed plans to use publicly shared posts to train AI models were being resumed, for Facebook and Instagram users in the UK. The company also informed no usage of private messages and content from minors. (Matthew Weaver, "Meta to push on with plans to use

UK Facebook and Instagram posts to train AI," *The Guardian*, 13 September 2024)

Starmer demands reforms in the National Health Services

On 11 September, Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK, said that people have every right to be angry over the increasing waiting time in the NHS for treatments. Wes Streeting, the Health Secretary of the UK, said that he would reform the NHS. The statements have come after a report was published by the Government of the UK after a nine-week review of the NHS. Starmer has proposed three key areas that require reform. First, the transition to a digital NHS; second, care from hospitals to communities; and third, focusing efforts on prevention over sickness. The report said that the NHS is still struggling with the aftershocks of the pandemic. The report said the NHS had been weakened due to no amendments in the policies of the 2010s and lack of investment in buildings and technology. The NHS also lacked a way behind the private sector in terms of digital innovations. The staff-to-patient ratio is also a disadvantage and the staff has not expanded compared to the pressure on the hospitals. The waiting list in British hospitals currently stands at 7.6 million. According to the report, long waits are causing around 14,000 deaths a year. While 2.8 million people are unable to work due to poor health, thus the NHS has a significant impact on the economic productivity of the nation. Starmer said: "Raise taxes on working people or reform to secure its future. We know working people can't afford to pay more, so it is reform or die." Matthew Taylor, the head of the NHS Confederation, said that the report is deeply troubling. (Nick Triggle, "NHS must reform or die, PM says after major report," *BBC*, 12 September 2024)

NAO audit highlights additional UK arms donations to Ukraine would cost GBP 2.71 billion to replace

On 11 September, a report by the National Audit Office (NAO) published that UK arms donation to Ukraine of GBP 2.71 billion would be in addition to the GBP 7.8 billion committed by Prime Ministers of the

UK. This is the first audit into military spending done by the UK, since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began. The audit highlights the additional costs of replenishing stockpiles. The cost of replacing old munitions like missiles and artillery also exceeds their GBP 171.5 million value on the books of the Government of the UK. This is because the UK Ministry of Defence wants to replace the old weapons supplied at current prices. However, surplus stockpiles are nearly exhausted, meaning the rate of weapons donations in the UK has slowed. Gareth Davies, Head of the NAO stated that the Ministry of Defence had to balance the UK's strategic interests with maintaining the UK's military capabilities. Davies stated that it is also essential to ensure there are appropriate stockpiles in case of a future military crisis. The value of the donations is not included in previously announced Ukraine war budgets, and the costs are only accounted for as replenishment contracts are issued. This means that the UK will have spent more than the GBP 2.46 billion budgeted for Ukraine in the 2022-23 year. However, different calculations reveal that the cash cost of all military operations was GBP 2.9 billion in 2022-23; the largest sum spent on war by the UK since 2012. However, arms donations to the UK have declined to a value of GBP 15.9 million in 2023-24. This means the UK will have to manufacture the bulk of the weapons it wants to send to Ukraine. Replenishment funding is expected to come from contingency services allocated by the UK Treasury. The Defence Ministry is also expected to replace equipment, at a time when there are shortfalls in its overall equipment budget. (Dan Sabbagh, "UK arms donated to Ukraine would cost £2.71 bn to replace, says watchdog," *The Guardian*, 11 September 2024)

Government signals tightening budget

On 11 September, in an interview to the *BBC*, Rachel Reeves, the Chancellor of the UK said: "The Budget on 30 October will require difficult decisions on tax, on spending, and on welfare." The UK has been facing a tough time with its economy since 2021. By the end of 2023, the UK fell into a

shallow recession. However, the first half of 2024 proved to be economically better. Since June 2024, there has been a drop in output for advertising, architects and engineers. According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), car and machinery firms performed poorly economically in June 2024. ONS also recognised the positive impact of sports tournaments like the European Football League and Paris Olympics on businesses in the UK. (Lucy Hooker, "[Chancellor warns hard decisions ahead in Budget](#)," *BBC*, 11 September 2024)

Government to cooperate with Europe on boat smugglers

On 06 September, Yvette Cooper, Home Secretary of the UK, said that the UK government will work with the European police to tackle human trafficking that takes place through the English Channel and is assisted by boat smuggler gangs. The crisis surfaced after 12 people, including a pregnant woman, passed away while trying to cross the English Channel. James Cleverly, the shadow Home Secretary, said, "It is not enough to talk about 'smashing the gangs' when the real-life consequences are so serious." The UK government is targeting human traffickers operating through the northern French coast of the English Channel. The new UK government has pledged to stop the crossing of smaller boats towards British territory. Cooper said that the government has increased returns of failed asylum seekers and has shut costly hotels housing them. ("UK working with European police to tackle boat gangs," *BBC*, 06 September 2024)

Prime Minister Starmer defends winter fuel cut

On 08 September, the *BBC* informed that Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK had defended his government's decision to cut the winter fuel payment. Starmer made the remarks during an interview with *BBC News*; the first interview since he took office. The winter fuel payments of between GBP 200 and 300 for over 10 million pensioners in the UK was removed by Starmer's government in July. The decision came under criticism from several quarters. The critics included the leaders of trade

unions and members of Starmer's own Labour Party. Sharon Graham, the Secretary-General of trade union Unite stated that the UK Government should not be taxing pensioners while leaving the wealthy untouched. However, Starmer stated that the condition of the UK's finances had made the cuts necessary. He also accused previous governments of not making difficult decisions and confronting issues like the cost of winter fuel payments. The PM stated that he was convinced his government could deliver that change. However, he informed that this meant "do the difficult things now," and make "tough choices." The PM acknowledged that the winter fuel decision was unpopular. (Laura Kuenssberg, "[PM defends 'tough decision' over winter fuel cut](#)," *BBC*, 08 September 2024)

UK faces the question of nuclear waste storage

On 09 September, the *BBC* informed that the UK was facing a dilemma regarding the dumping of its radioactive nuclear waste. Most of the radioactive nuclear waste of the UK is temporarily present in the nuclear site of Sellafield in Cumbria. Claire Corkhill, Professor of Radioactive Waste Management at the University of Bristol stated that the waste remains radioactive for 100,000 years. Corkhill also informed that the waste releases energy which can penetrate and damage the cells in human bodies. Sellafield faces a problem of overcrowding, which means that the UK Government will have to seek a new site for dumping the waste. The process of waste control in Sellafield is undertaken by 11,000 staff 24 hours a day, with an estimated cost of over GBP two billion per day. However, one of the oldest waste storage silos in Sellafield is currently leaking radioactive liquid into the ground. Additionally, Sellafield is home to older radioactive material, from the Cold War era. According to Corkhill, the nuclear waste present at Sellafield needs to be isolated from future generations and future civilizations. While the plan is to contain solid waste from Sellafield in permanent underground storage, there remains a question as to where to locate that facility. A few local

communities such as Seascale close to the Sellafield site, and South Copeland have been considered for the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). However, there have been complaints from residents regarding the utilisation of their communities for dumping facilities. It is believed that construction of a GDF can begin only after all the studies are conducted, and there is a level of community support. It is also estimated that nuclear waste cannot be dumped before the 2050s. (Victoria Gill and Kate Stephens, ["Which rural area will take the UK's nuclear waste?"](#), *BBC*, 09 September 2024)

Prime Minister Starmer visits Ireland

On 06 September, Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the UK, visited Ireland with an intent to reset ties with the country post Brexit. This is the first visit by a British Prime Minister to Ireland in the last five years. Starmer has come out as a more European Prime Minister to support the UK's involvement in European affairs. The UK's referendum to leave the EU in 2016 had strained bilateral ties between the UK and Ireland. During the press conference, Starmer said, "Our relationship has never reached its full potential, but I want to change that." The spokesperson of the PM's office in Britain said that the visit "marks a new era of cooperation and friendship between Britain and Ireland. Starmer will also meet Irish businessmen to boost bilateral trade. ("UK PM Starmer visits Ireland seeking to reset relations after election win," *Reuters*, 07 September 2024)

UKRAINE

Russia will be challenged to defend if Ukraine is allowed to use long-range missiles to attack inside says opinion in BBC

On 12 September, the *BBC* published a report on the importance of Storm Shadow missiles for Ukraine. According to the report, it predicts the lifting of restrictions by the US and the UK on Ukraine to use long-range missiles into Russia. Ukraine which was already supplied with such long-range missiles has been demanding permission to use them inside Russia. Storm

Shadow is an "Anglo-French cruise missile" with a capacity of 250 kilometres. It is fired from the aircraft which flies close to the terrain and detonates its warhead. The missile is considered the ideal weapon for intercepting bunkers and ammunition depots of Russia. However, each costs USD one million so it is used carefully compared to cheaper drones. One such example is Ukraine's targeting of Russia's Black Sea naval headquarters in Sevastopol. The permit to use it inside Russia remains restricted is due to the concern over escalation. The White House fears pushing Russia into retaliation which might invoke Article 5 of NATO. In such an instance, sending Storm Shadow missiles would mean less since Russia is observed to have defenced up its missiles and bombers to counter such attack. However, one of the military analysts warned that Russia would face a challenge in ensuring protection across its vast territory leading to command and logistics problems. (Frank Garner, ["What are Storm Shadow missiles and why are they crucial for Ukraine?"](#), *BBC*, 12 September 2024)

Permission for Ukraine to use long-range missiles could trigger escalation says opinion in The Guardian

On 11 September, *The Guardian* analysed the potential implications if the West decided to allow Ukraine to fire long-range missiles inside Russia. The joint visit by Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State, and David Lammy, UK Foreign Secretary to Ukraine, alongside the upcoming visit of Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the UK to the US have led to increased speculation that Ukraine will be given permission. The Government of Ukraine argues firing Western-made weapons such as Storm Shadow and Atacms missiles with a range of over 190 miles into Russia, would allow it to respond to Russian aggression. Relentless Russian missile attacks have already resulted in about two-thirds of Ukrainian power generation being destroyed. There are also concerns in Kyiv the Russian capacity to fire offensive missiles far exceeds the global capacity to manufacture interceptors. However, the fear is if Ukraine begins using long-range missiles against

Russia; it could escalate the war. According to the article, an escalation in missile use may come only as part of a wider military plan. At the end of August, reports indicated Andriy Yermak, the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine presented a list of bombing targets inside Russia to the US Government. There are no large stocks of missiles present either, making the US Government sceptical they could change the war. While the Ukrainian government has argued long-range missiles could compel the Government of the Russian Federation to negotiate for peace, it remains unclear how Moscow would react. The article also mentions how Ukraine might not have the luxury of time. In less than two months, the US will conduct its presidential election. Donald Trump, one of the leading presidential candidates has not made clear his support for Ukraine; complicating matters for Kyiv. (Dan Sabbagh, "[West's missile go-ahead to Russia would hold no shortage of risks](#)," *The Guardian*, 11 September 2024)

Trump reveals Ukraine war approach

On 11 September, *Politico* reported Donald Trump's prospective policy towards Ukraine. During the presidential debate, he said that he would push for a negotiated settlement to end the war. According to the report, Trump's comments showed that he was willing to negotiate and have deals with Russia, rather than challenging its expansionist tendencies. When Chris Muir, the debate moderator asked Trump if he wanted Ukraine to win the war, the candidate replied he wanted the war to stop. Trump informed that he shared a good relationship with both Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine, and Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia. Trump stated he could bring Zelenskyy and Putin together. He also stated it was in the best interests of the US to have a negotiated deal to end the Ukraine war. According to Trump, Russia's nuclear deterrence made it difficult to counter Putin. The article noted how Trump was stating something acknowledged privately by a few members of the present US Government; that a negotiated settlement to end the Ukraine war might be in the best interests of

everyone. (Joseph J. Schatz, "[Trump just showed how he'd approach the war in Ukraine](#)," *Politico*, 11 September 2024)

REGIONAL

Switzerland and Italy redraw borders due to glaciers melting

On 29 September, *The Guardian* reported a shift in historically drawn borders between Switzerland and Italy. Both countries will modify the border near Matterhorn peak, one of the highest summits in Europe. It lies between Switzerland's Zermatt region and Italy's Aosta valley. Europe is the fastest-warming continent. A joint Swiss-Italian commission agreed for the border changes in May 2023. The Swiss Federation has signed the agreement while Italy has not signed yet. Switzerland lost four per cent of its glaciers' volume in 2023 and six per cent in 2022, the highest ever recorded. Climate scientists have said that the Marmolada glacier, the largest glacier in the Dolomites, could melt completely by 2040. In 2022, a part of the glacier collapsed claiming 11 lives. (Angela Giuffrida, "[Melting glaciers force Switzerland and Italy to redraw part of Alpine border](#)," *The Guardian*, 29 September 2024)

Europe raises concerns on Chinese cars' software

On 27 September, Europe followed the suit after the US announced its intention to ban the Chinese technology that links cars to navigation systems for American roads. Margrethe Vestager, an expert on technology in Europe, said that she is reviewing the implications of the software with other economic security experts. According to *Politico*, this is opening another front on the ongoing technology war between the US, China and other regions. Some of the key technologies that are causing drift between countries are microchips, artificial intelligence and 5G & 6G technology. The US has already announced its concern over cyber-hacking threats. Meanwhile, Canada and the UK are also launching probes into car technology and surveillance. In July, the US and European officials also held a meeting to address threats to cyber-surveillance and

attacks. Meanwhile, European researchers and officials are working on a document "ICT supply-chain toolbox" which will propose measures on electric-vehicle connectivity and renewable sources. ("After US, Europe probes Chinese car software," *Politico*, 27 September 2024)

NATO to deploy new command in Finland

On 27 September, *Reuters* reported that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would set up a new northern land command in Finland. Antti Hakkanen, the Minister of Defence of Finland informed the new command had the responsibility of leading land operations for NATO in Northern Europe, in case of a military conflict. Hakkanen also informed the new command had an initial budget of EUR 8.5 million, and consisted of a few dozen international officials. Pasi Valimaki, the Commander of the Finnish Army stated land operations planning in the Nordic region was the responsibility of the new unit for now. The centre known as Multi Corps Land Component Command is expected to operate under the Norfolk Joint Force Command of NATO, and the Finnish Army headquarters in the town of Mikkeli. The Government of Finland had not requested a permanent multinational NATO force to be deployed, due to the strength of its own forces. ("NATO to set up northern land command in eastern Finland," *Reuters*, 27 September 2024)

A new setback in North Macedonia's bid to join the EU

On 26 September, *Daily Sabah* reported an upset in North Macedonia's road to joining the EU. Its candidature has again come under scrutiny due to disputes with Bulgaria. Hristijan Mickoski, the Prime Minister of North Macedonia, said that the EU is trying to dictate North Macedonia's foreign policy and he would accept no further delay in talks over the country's membership in the bloc. North Macedonia and Albania had started talks for EU membership together in 2022 when the war in Ukraine broke out. However, Albania's negotiations seem to be much ahead of North Macedonia's. However, the EU

spokesperson denied such allegations. Both countries had applied for EU membership about 20 years ago. Mickoski said that it was unfair to link North Macedonia's EU prospects with Bulgaria's demand. ("North Macedonia upset over obstacle on its EU bid over Bulgaria dispute," *Daily Sabah*, 26 September 2024)

Anti-immigration sentiments rise in Europe

On 27 September, *The Guardian* reported on the rising anti-immigration sentiment in Europe. In 2015, 1.3 million people migrated to Europe. Most countries are electing far-right wing parties into power that advocate curbing immigration. In September itself, Germany implemented controversial border checks, the Netherlands voted for an anti-immigration party. Even Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Finland have introduced harsh immigration laws. Germany has reduced welfare for refugees, while the Netherlands' politicians have announced that they want to make the Netherlands an "unattractive" country for refugees. This is also threatening the unity of the 27-members EU bloc. This is considered as the biggest economic achievement of the EU. This achievement is under threat. (Jon Henley, "Anti-immigration mood sweeping EU threatens its new asylum strategy," *The Guardian*, 27 September 2024)

Brexit takes a toll on EU plant exporters

On 26 September, the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) said that the trade between the EU and British garden retailers and growers is under strain due to the new border processes that have been implemented due to Brexit. The HTA wrote a letter to Lady Hayman, the borders, biosecurity and plant health minister which mentioned that some EU nursery traders are now completely withdrawing from the UK. On 30 April, the UK government introduced new border checks for plants entering from the EU to the UK. The letter also mentioned an incident where lorries carrying decorative plants from Italy were held for more than eight days over concerns that they might be transporting pests into the UK in a border control post in Ashford.

The HTA has said, "We recognise the need for a strong biosecure system yet one that still facilitates and encourages legitimate trade." (Jack Simpson and Angela Giuffrida, "[EU plant exporters turning backs on UK over post-Brexit border checks, says trade group](#)," *The Guardian*, 26 September 2024)

"Cyprus is ready for peace talks with Turkey," says Nikos Christodoulides

On 26 September, Nikos Christodoulides, the President of Cyprus, said that he is ready to negotiate on the reunification talks with Turkey. Cyprus was split from Turkey after the coup was carried out through Greek intervention. This led to violence among Turkish Cypriots and Greeks as well. There were reunification talks but they reached a deadlock in 2017 and have not resumed since then. Thus, there is a divide in Cyprus among Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots demand a two-state solution while Greek Cypriots refer to the UN resolutions on reunification. Emphasising on the urgency to find a solution, Christodoulides said, "I am committed and I am ready to sit at the negotiating table today. Not tomorrow. Today." According to Reuter, the Cyprus issue is eclipsed by other conflicts in the Middle East. ("[Cyprus leader says he is ready to resume peace talks today](#)," *Reuters*, 26 September 2024)

AI firms fear impact of escalating compliance costs

On 25 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the extensive level of Artificial Intelligence (AI) regulations present in the EU risked stifling innovation in the bloc. Oleg Stavisky, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of AI-powered music app Endel stated regulations and bureaucracy would stifle local development in the EU. 'Big Tech' firms like Apple and Meta have delayed releasing AI models and features in the EU, over concerns regarding the level of regulations. Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl, the Director-General of DigitalEurope which represents over 45,000 European technology firms stated the overregulation and rising costs of regulatory compliance were forcing several European firms to

leave the market. Alexandru Voica, the Head of Corporate Affairs and Policy at Synthesia, an AI video platform, stated regulations meant European startups could not compete with their US counterparts. Another point mentioned was the lack of sufficient funding for European tech firms. According to Asparuh Koev, the CEO of Bulgarian logistics firm Transmetrics, the EU failed to adopt and create technologies on its own due to limited funding. (Arthur Sullivan, "[Europe's AI bosses sound warning on soaring compliance costs](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 September 2024)

EU Africa fund not enough to combat migration fears says an opinion in Deutsche Welle

On 25 September, *Deutsche Welle* informed the EU's fund for Africa was "spread too thinly" to deal with migration. The European Court of Auditors released a report which stated the EUR five billion Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) financed a broad range of actions in the areas of development, humanitarian aid, and security. According to the report, the EUTF had kept broad priorities, and not dealt with the root causes of migration. The report stated the EUTF functioned in an ad-hoc way with different projects such as the renovation of a Roman theatre. The report noted there was no guidance as to which project must be given a pre-eminent position. Another point given in the report was that the number of jobs created and the number of industrial parks and business infrastructures were over-reported. For instance, a project in Ethiopia to increase employment in order to prevent irregular migration succeeded in reducing the unemployment rate in five migration-prone areas by only 0.32 per cent. Niels Keijzer, a Senior Researcher at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability stated some EUTF member states prioritized increasing border security projects and funding. The report also stated the EU lacked formal procedures to follow up to report, record, and follow up on alleged human rights violations in EU projects. (Anchal Vohra, "[EU's Africa fund 'spread too](#)

thinly' to reduce migration," Deutsche Welle News, 25 September 2024)

Climate change causes floods across Europe

On 25 September, a report was published by World Weather Attribution which said that rains caused by Storm Boris were the heaviest rains ever recorded in Central Europe. The floods in September claimed 24 lives. The report said that heavy storms like Storm Boris occur once every 100 to 300 years. However, given the fossil fuel induced climate change, such storms might become more frequent. The report emphasised on the urgency of replacing oil and gas with renewable resources. Today, earth temperature has increased by 1.3 degree Celsius from pre-industrial era. If the earth further warms by two degree Celsius, the frequency of such storms will increase by 50 per cent. ("Climate change made Central Europe floods more likely: study," Deutsche Welle, 25 September 2024)

Europe's potential role in Israel-Hezbollah conflict

On 25 September, Josep Borrell, the Foreign Affairs chief of the EU, held a press conference on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York. He spoke on how Europe could play a vital role in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. He said, "Civilians in Lebanon are paying an intolerable price." The EU bloc is focussing on de-escalating the war. *Deutsche Welle* highlighted the importance of the EU for Israel and its persuading power. The EU is Israel's largest trading economy. It contributes to 31.9 per cent of Israel's imports. Critics of Israel's aggression in Gaza have urged the EU to use its economic leverage and sanction Israel. *Deutsche Welle* enlists reasons behind the EU's inactivity towards Israel. The EU bloc is divided on every issue in the Middle East to take a unified decision. (Rosie Bichard, "Can Europe help contain spiraling violence in Lebanon?," Deutsche Welle, 25 September 2024)

Estonia and Finland to cooperate on Gulf of Finland protection plan

On 23 September, Major General Andrus Merilo, commander of Estonian Defence Forces, said that cooperation between Finland and Estonia is underway on plans to completely block enemy activity in the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic sea. In 2022, Estonia has announced plans to expand its naval forces. It has purchased several naval mines and long-range Blue Spear anti-ship missiles. Merilo said that Baltic countries need to come together and invest more in countering Russia's Baltic fleet. ("Estonia and Finland establishing Gulf of Finland protection plan," Baltic News Network, 23 September 2024)

Challenges China's probe in imported dairy products

On 23 September, the EU approached WTO for a dispute settlement mechanism. The appeal has been made on the basis of "lack of evidence" on China's probe to investigate the EU's dairy products. The probe was launched in August by China's Commerce Ministry. The probe focuses on production of fresh and processed cheese, blue cheese and other cheese, milk and cream products. Eight member states, namely Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Italy and Romania, will be affected by the investigation. The probe seems like a tit-for-tat move from China over the tariffs that were imposed by the EU on Chinese EVs. The EU had accused China of providing unfair subsidies to EV makers which helped them sell the EVs at a much cheaper price compared to European EVs. Valdis Dombrovskis, the Commission's executive vice president in charge of trade, and Wang Wentao, China's minister of commerce, held a meeting in Brussels to discuss negotiations for the EVs tariffs. This is the first time that the EU has approached WTO over anti-subsidy investigations. The European Dairy Association, a lobby group for dairy farmers, has shown solidarity with the EU vice president. In 2023, the EU exported €1.76 billion in dairy products to China and Ireland is the leading exporter. (Jorge Liboreiro, "Brussels takes China to the WTO over 'questionable' probe into EU dairy products," *Euronews*, 24 September 2024)

Sweden and Finland urge the EU to provide subsidies based on rule of law

On 24 September, Jessica Rosencrantz, Sweden's Minister for European Affairs, and Joakim Strand, Finland's Minister for European Affairs, wrote a letter to the European Commission saying, "All member states must adhere to our common values, notably rule of law, democracy, and fundamental rights," emphasising on making EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) allocation conditional. The CAP has allocated EUR 264 billion from the period of 2023-2027 to support farmers through direct income support and other means. The letter from Swedish and Finnish Ministers came after Poland passed a controversial judicial reform and Hungary also breached EU laws on asylum seekers. The letter has requested the EU to make full use of mechanisms like imposing fines and deducting EU allocation budgets. The letter said, "Our taxpayers need to trust that the EU's common funds are used appropriately and responsibly." (Jorge Liboreiro, "Sweden and Finland want to tie EU farm subsidies to rule of law," *Euronews*, 24 September 2024)

Christophe Hansen becomes EU agriculture minister

On 19 September, Christophe Hansen became the new EU commissioner for agriculture. He is a centre-right politician from Luxembourg. His farming background and his cousin being the agriculture minister of Luxembourg has certainly provided leverage for his choice as the agriculture minister. He is the second youngest European commissioner in Ursula von der Leyen's European Council. The average age of the current Council is 52. He also has been an advisor to Astrid Lulling, Luxembourg's first female MEP and a trade unionist, on agriculture, the environment and economic matters. He has also previously worked on the EU's new deforestation rules, the Common Agricultural Policy and a drinking water directive. Since 2023, he has been living in Luxembourg and has joined the national agriculture committee. ("Center right gets its way as golden boy Hansen lands EU farm job," *Politico*, 20 September 2024)

Floods in Europe: Countries deal with aftermath

On 20 September, Georgia Meloni, the Prime Minister of Italy, announced a fund of EUR 20 million for victims of heavy flooding in the region of Emilia Romagna. Meloni has called for a cabinet meeting to discuss the initial release of funds and restoration of basic facilities like drinking water and electricity. The meeting is scheduled for 21 September. More than 1,000 people had to be evacuated in northern Italy due to Storm Boris. Meanwhile, central European countries are dealing with the aftermath of Storm Boris. The Czech Republic authorities have started the process of cleaning up streets and houses. Many houses in the Czech city of Krnov were declared inhabitable. Meanwhile, in the Klodzko region of Poland, the army and locals are clearing debris from the streets left by Storm Boris. Telecommunication facilities were also disrupted in a few areas in Poland. Reuters also reported on the fiscal pressure that the floods have put on the European economies. Andrzej Domanski, the Finance Minister of Poland, said that the relief fund allocated by the EU of EUR 5.6 billion will cover some of the damages but not all of them caused due to floods. The report suggests that climate change is causing further stress on European economies which are already strained due to the ramifications of COVID-19 and the Russia- Ukraine war. On 19 September, the Czech Republic announced that it would allocate 0.4 per cent of its GDP to the damages caused by floods. This depicts the scale of budget allocation among European countries. As per the analysis provided by Moody's, European countries might face further fiscal deficits as many of them are already shrinking. However, the firm said that countries were more prepared for the floods than in 2023. Floods have also taken a heavy toll on insurance companies. According to the UK Environmental consultant JBA Risk Management, river flooding costs €7.8 billion each year to the UK economy. ("Italian government announces plans to allocate €20 million to flooded northern regions," *Euronews*, 20 September 2024; Jan Lopatka, Karl Badohal and Gergely Szakacs, "Deadly floods add to

fiscal strains in central Europe,” Reuters, 20 September 2024)

Storm Boris causes havoc in northern Italy

On 19 September, police in the northern Italian region of Emilia-Romagna reported that at least two persons are missing and more than 1,000 people have been evacuated in the region. The lack of preparedness of Italian authorities have raised questions on the country’s infrastructure to deal with climate change. Even in May 2023, the Emilia-Romagna region reported 17 persons killed due to heavy rains. Italy is among Europe’s climate risk spots. In 2024, it experienced pangs of unprecedented heatwaves, drought, wildfires, storms and severe flooding. Wroclaw in Poland was the worst hit city by the Storm. The European Commission has announced a relief fund of EUR 10 billion for the victims of the floods. At least 24 people have died so far due to floods in Europe. (Angela Giuffrida and Jon Henley, “Two missing and 1,000 evacuated as Storm Boris devastates northern Italy,” *The Guardian*, 19 September 2024)

Turkey is diversifying its options after halted EU membership

On 19 September, Hakan Fidan, the Foreign Minister of Turkey, said, during his speech, “Turkey acted on good intentions with regards to its ambitions for full EU membership.” Turkey applied for EU membership in 1987 and the negotiations have been stalled. In fact, Turkey signed the Ankara Agreement with the European Economic Community in 1963, showing interest in being associated with it. He defended Turkey’s move to join Russian-led BRICS. The move is seen with cynicism in the West. He said that every country needs political and economic alliances. The BRICS alliance was formed with an aim to counterbalance the eurocentric approach in global economics. Recently, it expanded to include Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the UAE. Fidan said that Turkey is also interested in strengthening ties with ASEAN. Turkey’s membership procedure for the EU was halted due to concerns over human rights, democratic governance and the unresolved

dispute with Cyprus. (Emre Basaran, “Turkey wouldn't be interested in joining BRICS if it was an EU member state, foreign minister says,” *Euronews*, 19 September 2024)

EV sales in the EU drastically fall

On 19 September, the European Automobile Manufacturers Association released a report that said that car sales in the EU have fallen by 18.3 per cent in 2024. The four biggest markets for cars in Europe have recorded a steep downfall in sales. Car sales in Germany fell by 27.8 per cent, in France by 24.3 per cent, in Italy by 13.4 per cent and in Spain by 6.5 per cent. Even in 2023, car sales had fallen by 43.9 per cent. The contraction in sales is also increasing concerns over sustainability and zero emissions targets that the EU had set. The spokesperson of the European Automobile Manufacturers Association said, “The European auto industry supports the Paris Agreement and the EU’s 2050 transport decarbonisation targets and has invested billions in electrification.” The Association represents 15 automobile makers. (Doloresz Katanich, “EU car industry calls for urgent action as EV new car sales tumble,” *Euronews*, 19 September 2024)

EU and China to reconsider tariffs on EVs

On 19 September, the European Commission and the Government of People’s Republic of China held high profile talks to resolve the dispute on EVs that has arisen due to imposition of harsh tariffs on Chinese EVs. The EU has accused PRC of providing subsidies to their EV makers which is making the prices artificially lower. Meanwhile, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce has said that it is willing to craft out a solution through negotiations and talks. Wang Yi, the foreign minister of PRC, also organised a roundtable discussion with EVs makers in the EU to tone down the steep rise in tariffs. However, after the discussions, there was a mutual commitment to re-evaluating the option of price undertakings. Euronews also reported on the lobbying efforts that the PRC is making to make some members vote against the imposed tariffs. A majority of 15 countries that represent at least 65 per cent

of the European parliament need to oppose the duties to prevent them from being implemented. Hungary is a potential opposer of the tariffs since it is attempting to attract Chinese investments. PRC is also trying to lobby Spain since Pedro Sanchez, the Prime Minister of Spain, asked the EU to reconsider the imposed tariffs in a statement. Next week the EU Parliament will be voting on whether to increase the tariffs imposed on Chinese made EVs to 50 per cent. This is combined with falling demand for EVs in Europe. This is taking a toll on the European EV makers. Moreover, companies like Mercedes Benz are also facing deterioration in their sales in China. The Chinese Commerce Ministry said that if such harsh tariffs are imposed, the move will be met by similar tariffs from China as well. (Jorge Liboreiro, "EU and China fail to deliver breakthrough on electric cars dispute, but talks will intensify," *Euronews*, 19 September 2024; Finbarr Bermingham, "EU and China trade negotiators fail to strike deal on electric vehicle imports," *South China Morning Post*, 20 September 2024)

Starts procedure to deduct EUR 200 million from Hungary's budget

On 18 September, The EU initiated the procedure to deduct EUR 200 million from Hungary's annual EU budget. The decision was announced after Hungary missed its second deadline to pay the fine imposed by the European Court of Justice. The fine was imposed due to Hungary's restrictions towards asylum seekers and had to be paid in a lump sum amount. Hungary missed the first deadline in August and the second one on 17 September as well. Meanwhile, Hungary is facing EUR 1 million fine for each day it delays. As a retaliation, Viktor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungary, said that he will send buses for migrants from Hungary to Brussels voluntarily and free of charge. So far, no buses have been sent by Hungary. However, the statement was heavily criticised by Belgium and other EU members. Moreover, Hungary has also announced a new scheme under which would extend the National Identity Card to Russian and Belarusian citizens. The EU has raised security concerns over the decision.

Hungary justified the decision by citing labour shortage as a reason. ([Jorge Liboreiro, "Brussels moves to deduct €200 million fine from Hungary's EU funds, as country refuses to pay up," *Euronews*, 18 September 2024](#))

Role of renewable energy lobby in the new European Council

On 18 September, *Euronews* reported on the influence behind Ursula von der Leyen's, the President of European Parliament, choice of European Council. Wopke Hoekstra, European Commissioner of the Netherlands, was re-appointed as the EU climate commissioner. Meanwhile, the energy portfolio was taken by Dan Jørgensen, European Commissioner of Denmark, and has been given the energy portfolio. Jørgensen's appointment has rekindled the hope for the Green Deal, the flagship policy proposed by Leyen during her first term. Teresa Ribera, Spain's environment minister, has been appointed as the executive vice president of transition to clean energy. Linda Kalcher, executive director of the think tank Strategic Perspectives, described the European Council members of climate and energy as a "dream team." According to the report in *Euronews*, Leyen is confident that Denmark's EU Commissioner will be able to handle the pressure from oil and energy companies to promote green energy policies in Europe. Hoekstra has even called lack of taxation on aviation industries as "absurd." However, there are still speculations over who will represent the EU at COP26 in Azerbaijan in November. ([Robert Hodgson, "Dream team': Green groups breathe a sigh of relief on von der Leyen's climate choices," *Euronews*, 17 September 2024](#))

European leaders call for emergency meetings as flooding continues

On 18 September, Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland, declared a state of natural disaster in flooded areas of the country. So far, more than five people have died due to floods in Poland. The Czech Republic also continues to deal with rising water levels in the Oder River. Four people

who were swept away by the River on 17 September are still missing as per the police reports. In Hungary, the Mayor of Budapest said that this is the biggest flood in the last one decade that the city has faced. Sandor Pinter, the Interior Minister of Hungary, said that 12,000 troops are on standby to deal with any emergency that might arise. The water levels of the Danube river, the largest river in Europe that flows through ten countries, continue to rise. (["Poland declares state of natural disaster in areas affected by severe flooding," Euronews](#), 18 September 2024)

Ursula von der Leyen announces new Council

On 17 September, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Parliament, announced nominees for the new European Council. The Council, also known as College, has 27 members. Every EU member country appoints an EU Commissioner. The EU Commissioner is a part of the Council. Leyen is the European Commissioner for Germany. The regulations proposed by the Council come into effect across the Union after they have been passed through the Parliament and the Council. Member countries are given two years to incorporate those changes. According to *Politico*, usually German and French leaders take the influential departments. However, Emmanuel Macron's, the President of France, party lost national elections in June. Meanwhile, Olaf Scholz', the Chancellor of Germany, party lost state elections in eastern Germany. These nominees will get voted in the European parliament. In case a nominee does not get votes to become a part of the Council, Leyen will ask that member country to announce a new EU commissioner. In the proposed Council, there are 11 women and average age is 52 years, which was 56 years in the previous Council. Amongst the members, Maroš Šefčovič, EU parliamentarian from Slovakia, has been elected in the EU for the fifth time.

Leyen has been a strong advocate of Ukraine's right to defend itself in the Russia-Ukraine war. As per the new Council, Kaja Kallas, European Commissioner of Estonia, will be handling the Foreign Policy

office while Andrius Kubilius, the EU Commissioner of Lithuania, will be given the Defence department, which is a newly created portfolio. The decision seems to be strategic as per *Politico* as both important portfolios have been given to Baltic countries. Kubilius will be reporting to Finland's EU Commissioner, Henna Virkkunen, who is the Vice-President of Technology, Sovereignty, Democracy and Security. According to *Politico*, the EU bloc plans to expand in the next five years and include Ukraine and western Balkan countries in the Union. Marta Kos, the EU Commissioner of Slovenia will be in charge of the EU enlargement. Kos' responsibilities will also include focussing on Europe's interests in the Mediterranean region i.e., curbing migration.

Another important portfolio is the EU budget. Piotr Serafin, the EU Commissioner of Poland, will be given the responsibility of the EU budget. Donald Tusk's European People's Party, played a vital role in helping Leyen win a second term in the EU parliament. Serafin will be reporting directly to Leyen. While, countries of southern Europe i.e., Portugal, Spain and Italy are given other economic portfolios. The EU Commissioner of France has been given the Industrial policy to handle. A surprising decision by Leyen was to give Raffaele Fitto executive vice presidency. Fitto is the EU Commissioner of Italy. He is a EU parliamentarian from Georgia Meloni's hard-right Brothers of Italy party. Valérie Hayer, chief of the liberal Renew party, called this decision "unacceptable" and even said that he might withdraw support for Leyen's Council, also called College. Fitto is seen as a moderate voice in Meloni's hard-right party. However, these are only the nominees proposed by Leyen, the EU Commissioners will be approved by the EU parliament, first.

(["What just happened? A beginner's guide to von der Leyen's European Commission," Politico](#), 17 September 2024; ["Von der Leyen's new Commission: Male and slightly less stale," Politico](#), 17 September 2024; ["5 takeaways on Ursula von der Leyen's new Commission," Politico](#),

17 September 2024)

New lines of command for new European Commission revealed

On 17 September, *Politico* reported on the new Commissioners of the European Commission and the Directorate-Generals and task forces they will head. The Commissioners were appointed by Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission for her second term. In the new power structure, six Commissioners will be serving directly under von der Leyen. Each Commissioner was given a particular Directorate-General (DG) to head. For instance, Henna Virkkunen will head the DG for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, and Digital Services. Similarly, Teresa Ribera Rodriguez has been put in charge of the DG for Competition. Stephane Sejourne was put in charge of the DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. This is alongside the other positions held by the Commissioners, such as executive vice president for tech sovereignty, security and democracy held by Virkkunen or executive vice president for prosperity and industrial strategy held by Sejourne. The new European Commission has a layered power structure, with there being several other Commissioners holding lower-level positions and reporting to a higher-level Commissioner. For instance, Ekaterina Zaharieva who will head the DG for Innovation and Research will be working under Virkkunen and Sejourne. The six Commissioners directly under von der Leyen have an additional 3-4 Commissioners working under them. Each of the Commissioners was handed a specific DG to focus upon, and work for. (Lucia Mackenzie, "Who works for whom in the new EU power structure," *Politico*, 17 September 2024)

Rivers in Central Europe continue to flood

On 17 September, the death toll, due to severe flooding in Central European countries, increased to 21, beside several others missing. Due to Storm Boris, the rainfall in the Central European countries was five times the average rainfall expected

in September. Several parts of Austria, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary were submerged in floods which led to thousands of people being evacuated. The Danube river, which runs through ten countries in Europe, peaked in Slovakia and its water level rose by metre in every 24 hours. The German Federation is also implementing measures like mobile flood protection walls in eastern Germany. Gradually, water levels in Elbe river in Saxony are also rising. The water levels in the city of Dresden in eastern Germany have risen up to 5.8 metres. If the level crosses six metres, the authorities will issue a flood warning. Authorities of Poland are also preparing for evacuations in Wroclaw. The main zoo in Wroclaw has asked residents to assist the zoo management to fill sandbags to protect animals from heavy flooding. However, the zoo management has said that they have moved animals to a safer place. The border between Poland and the Czech Republic has been hit the hardest due to floods. Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland, announced a relief fund of EUR 200 million for victims of floods. In the Czech Republic, almost 60,000 households are facing electricity cut offs and food and drinking water scarcity. The state of lower Austria has been declared a disaster zone. The floods in Austria have caused 21 dams to collapse and left many households without access to electricity and water. The rainfall in the town of St Polten in Austria broke a 75 year record by receiving heavy rainfall in four days. Austria has deployed its army and announced a relief fund of EUR 300 million. Around 33,000 emergency service workers have been deployed. Austrian authorities have also closed the Danube river for navigation due to high water levels. The closure has led to 70 vessels being stuck in Austria. The Ministry for Climate Protection and Mobility said that snow on the mountains has started melting due to high temperatures, raising concerns over further rise in water levels in Austria rivers. Storm Boris is forecasted to move towards northern Italy from 17 September. (Jon Henley, "Central Europe braces for further flooding as swollen rivers continue to rise," *The Guardian*, 17 September 2024; "Europe floods: Tusk in

southern Poland for crisis meeting,” Deutsche Welle, 18 September 2024)

Storm Boris trigger massive floods across Central Europe

On 17 September, the *BBC* reported on the devastation caused by Storm Boris in central Europe. Poland, Austria, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary were the worst-affected countries. Kordian Kolbiarz, the mayor of the Nysa city in Poland had called for the evacuation of all 44,000 residents. The country had declared a state of natural disaster. Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of Poland assigned one billion zloty for the victims and applied for the EU relief funds. The number of deaths rose to around 16 with seven in Romania. Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland also saw casualties. Slovakia was affected by the overflowing Danube River with water levels exceeding nine metres. Hungary was preparing for a further rise in water levels in the coming days. Meanwhile, the Czech Republic received the highest amount of rainfall. In Austria, the Ministry of Climate allocated EUR 300 million as recovery funds. The intense rainfall was supposedly due to climate change and atmospheric pressure. The weather conditions were expected to stabilise in the coming week with much drier conditions in Central Europe. The weather forecasts indicated that the storm was expected to move further south into Italy, especially the Emilia-Romagna region. (“Polish city urged to evacuate as floods batter central Europe,” BBC, 17 September 2024)

Western Balkan states witness brain drain, argues an opinion in Euronews

On 16 September, an article in *Euronews* informed about the worsening brain drain in the Western Balkans states. The six states of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia are among the brain drain leaders of the world. Research by the German Marshall Fund stated the countries could lose 25-50 per cent of their skilled and educated workforce in the coming decades. Due to massive emigration, the countries lost significant proportions of

their population. This ranges from nine per cent in Serbia to 24 per cent in Bosnia-Herzegovina and 37 per cent in Albania. Peter Barlakovski, a Macedonian student stated corrupt institutions and the lack of improvement in the situation were responsible for students leaving. According to experts, the Macedonian Ministry of Education neglects students after spending money on scholarships. (Borjan Jovanovski, “Brain drain in Western Balkans spikes amid absence of opportunities,” Euro News, 16 September 2024)

Italy and Spain face austerity as a result of green financing

On 16 September, *Euronews* reported that the economies of Italy and Spain were likely to face higher levels of austerity due to their climate investments. A study conducted by think tank Agora Energiewende stated the energy transition of the European economy could involve 2 per cent of growth by 2040. However, it warned Spain and Italy faced specific challenges, owing to their high debt levels. According to the report, debt levels in the two countries were likely to increase, unless additional austerity measures were implemented. Agora informed that EU member states must begin assessing and addressing fiscal risks connected with their green transition in national budget plans and debt sustainability analyses. The think tank also estimated that investment of at least EUR 462 billion or 2.7 per cent of the economic output of the EU would be required every year throughout this decade, to sustain the green transition. According to the study, investment needs would further increase to EUR 564 billion or 3.3 per cent of EU economic output in the 2030s. Agora also stated investments in areas like clean tech and net-zero infrastructure would strengthen manufacturing and create jobs in the EU. According to Agora, economic convergence between Western and Eastern Europe is essential, and the EU needs to ensure funding for its programme to safeguard poorer citizens during the transition. The Agora report comes amidst a probe by the European Court of Auditors into the alleged misuse of green funds. Luke Haywood, Policy Manager for Climate and Energy at

the European Environmental Bureau stated a lack of oversight at the EU level had contributed towards the funding of projects not aligned with green policy. (Marta Pacheco, "[Italy and Spain at risk austerity in climate-neutrality race, new study suggests](#)," *Euronews*, 16 September 2024)

Storm Boris hits central Europe, claims eight lives

On 15 September, close to eight dies in a drowning caused by floods in Poland, Austria, Romania and the Czech Republic. On 15 September, Werner Kogler, vice chancellor of Austria, informed that a firefighter had died due to heavy flooding and declared Vienna as a disaster area. Areas in eastern Vienna have been covered by three metres of snow while rail services have also been suspended in several areas of Austria. Simultaneously, Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland, also informed that one person has drowned in the Kłodzko region. Almost 1,600 people have been evacuated from the Kłodzko region so far. Polish authorities have also deployed its army to assist firefighters during the floods. A local river in Kłodzko also rose to 6.7 metres. This water level has surpassed the record established in 1997 when heavy floods took at least 56 lives in the region. On 14 September, Poland closed its Gołkowice border with the Czech Republic after a river flooded its banks. Hungarian authorities have issued an alert for their citizens in Budapest and the Danube River recorded water levels up to 8.5 metres. Gergely Karácsony, the Mayor of Budapest, said, "One of the biggest floods of the past years is approaching Budapest." The Czech Republic has registered a report for four missing individuals whose car is expected to have been swept by a flooded river in Lipová-lázne, a town in eastern Czech Republic. (Sam Jones, "[Catastrophe of epic proportions': eight drown in Europe amid heavy floods](#)," *The Guardian*, 15 September 2024)

Keir Starmer to discuss migration policies with Georgia Meloni

On 15 September, Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK, told the media that he is interested in discussing migration laws with

Georgia Meloni, the Prime Minister of Italy. Their bilateral meeting will commence from 15 September. Migration is expected to be a priority among other discussions. Starmer is keen on exploring options for the UK to curb illegal migration. According to Starmer, Italy has managed to decrease illegal migration. Both countries wish to reduce migration through sea routes. So far in 2024, Frontex, European Union's border security service, has recorded a drop of 64 per cent. In the first six months of 2024, 43,000 arrivals have been recorded compared to 1,58,000 in 2023. Meanwhile, the UK is still struggling to reduce arrivals from the English Channel. On 15 September, eight people died due to drowning of a boat in the English Channel which was trying to reach the UK. Italy has struck financial deals with Tunisia and Libya that aim to reduce illegal migration. The EU paid Tunisia EUR 105 million in 2023 to boost border security and train their coast guard. Italy gave patrol vessels and EUR 100 million to support small businesses in Tunisia. Italy has signed a similar deal with Libya wherein Italy will supply equipment to the Libyan coastguard. A similar deal was struck by the EU with Turkey in 2016 when the EU gave EUR six billion to boost border security. This resulted in drastic fall migrants' arrival. Human Rights Watch, a human rights group, has accused the EU and Italy of compelling migrants to live in dangerous situations in which they are trying to flee. Tunisia is facing a deterioration in democracy which is causing citizens to seek refuge in other countries. Starmer and Meloni come from two opposites of the political spectrum. However, their bilateral meet is expected to result in productive deals and agreements, as per *BBC*. ("[Mark Lowen, 'Starmer to discuss migrant boat crossings with Meloni in Italy](#)," *BBC*, 15 September 2024)

European Central Bank cuts interest rates as inflation lowers

On 12 September, an article in *Euronews* informed the European Central Bank (ECB) had reduced its interest rates. The ECB issued a statement informing the Governing Council had lowered the deposit facility rate by 25 basis points. According to

the ECB, this was the appropriate time to take another step in moderating the degree of monetary policy restriction; taking into account the strength of monetary policy transmission and the Governing Council's assessment of the inflation outlook plus the dynamics of underlying inflation. The interest rate on the main refinancing facility which banks pay when they borrow money from the ECB for a week was 3.65 per cent. On the deposit facility used by banks for making overnight deposits with the Eurosystem, it was 3.50 per cent. The marginal lending facility which offers overnight credit to banks with the Eurosystem had an interest rate of 3.90 per cent. Sylvain Broyer, the Chief EMEA economist at S&P Global Ratings stated the ECB had implemented the rate cut without any policy guidance. According to Broyer, the Governing Council had no reason to implement more interest rate reductions or increase the pace. This was because wage growth was higher than productivity, and service inflation was increasing. Broyer also stated the upcoming reduction in the repo rate by 35 basis points would not have an impact, since the liquidity needs of the banks were being met fully by the ECB. Grzegorz Drozd, a market analyst at Invest Conotxia informed the ECB was compelled to take the decision, owing to inflation levels nearly reaching the target while the economy was at a standstill. Drozd also stated that the increased volatility of the EUR and USD pairs showcased the impact of the latest decision on the market. Estimates showed consumer price growth in the Eurozone had slowed to 2.2 per cent, the slowest increase since July 2021. However, the eurozone's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by just 0.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2024. (Angela Barnes, ["European Central Bank cuts interest rates again as inflation slows," Euro News, 12 September 2024](#))

Approves Hungary and Slovakia energy deal with Russia

On 12 September, *Politico* reported on the EU's response to an agreement allowing Hungary and Slovakia to continue importing Russian oil. The oil deal by Hungarian oil company MOL would allow the Government

of Hungary to take control of Russian oil supplies when they cross the border. This means Hungary will not be subject to a ban by the Government of Ukraine on supplies by Russian oil company Lukoil. Earlier, the Hungarian government had claimed the ban would damage the Hungarian economy. The Hungarian government and the Government of Slovakia are friendlier with the Government of the Russian Federation, in comparison to the governments of other EU states. Olof Gill, trade spokesperson for the European Commission stated the EU continued to believe there was no threat to Hungary's energy security from the Ukrainian sanctions. Gill also informed Lukoil was the only supplier facing sanctions, and traders could continue operations within Ukrainian territory. Gill had responded to Juraj Blanar, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia who stated the European Commission had not helped the citizens of Slovakia and Hungary. Slovakia and Hungary were granted a temporary exemption to the EU-wide ban on Russian oil arriving through pipelines. While they were supposed to seek alternatives, Hungary has increased oil imports via the Ukrainian pipeline by 50 per cent since 2021. MOL has also seen a substantial rise in its profits. Hungary has been accused of profiting from the war by purchasing cheap Russian oil. (Gabriel Gavin, ["Hungary energy crisis fears unfounded, EU says," Politico, 12 September 2024](#))

EU member states criticise Germany's strict border controls

On 11 September, Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland, and Austria's Interior Minister condemned Germany's move to announce stricter border controls. Germany's land border with France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Denmark have become heavily regulated since 07 September. The border controls have come after the ruling coalition parties, consisting of the Social Democratic Party, Free Democratic Party and Greens party, in Germany, faced predicaments due to election results in Thuringia and Saxony. Migration emerged as a polarising issue in the elections. Christian Democratic Union leader Friedrich Merz said, "Clearly the

federal government is hopelessly divided internally and cannot agree on effective measures.” Nancy Faeser, the Interior Minister of Germany, said that controls would protect against the “acute dangers posed by Islamist terrorism and serious crime.” TLN, a Dutch transport group, has accused Germany of undermining the Schengen agreement. (Paul Kirby, “Neighbours criticise German move to extend border controls,” BBC, 09 September 2024)

Sweden and Denmark police to coordinate to reduce gang violence

On 11 September, Denmark and Sweden announced that their police force would operate across their border to contain the spread of gang violence. Malmö city in Sweden and Copenhagen in Denmark are experiencing a rise in deaths due to gang violence in their countries. A Malmö police officer said that the issue is the age of criminals. Gangs always hire young people to commit such crimes. One of the reasons behind this is that they are cheaper to hire and they will get harsh sentences due to their age. In 2023, Swedish police reported a high number of underaged people getting hired to carry out hits. The attacks are carried out using guns, bombs and hand grenades. These children are targeted online. Criminals often recruit members in socially disadvantaged immigrant neighbourhoods. (Tom Carstensen, “Denmark and Sweden police operate across borders to tackle gang crime spree,” *Euronews*, 11 September 2024)

European Court of Justice court rules Google to pay fine of EUR 2.4 billion
On 10 September, the *BBC* informed the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that tech conglomerate Google must pay a EUR 2.4 billion fine. The case began in 2009 when British firm Foundem filed a complaint against Google. The firm argued that Google had made its shopping recommendations appear more prominent than rivals in search results. In 2017, the European Commission agreed that Google had monopolised online price comparison and prevented competitors from gaining. The Commission also levied a fine of EUR 2.4

billion. However, Google appealed against the decision. The latest decision by the ECJ brings an end to this case. Google responded to the judgement by stating that it was disappointed. Anne Witt, a Professor of Law at EDHEC Business School’s Augmented Law Institute stated that the judgement was “bad news” for Google. Witt also informed that several other cases were pending against Google. The tech giant faces a case against the US Government over its ad tech business; regulators in the UK have concluded that the firm used anti-competitive practices to dominate the online advertising technology market. Google has also faced fines worth EUR 8.2 billion from the European Commission. (Tom Gerken, “[EU court rules Google must pay€ 2.4bn fine](#),” *BBC*, 10 September 2024)

Europe Central Bank calls for boost in investments

On 08 September, a report was published by the European Central Bank. The report was compiled by former chief of the Central Bank, Mario Draghi. It emphasised joint borrowing by EU countries. It suggested that investment of EUR 750-800 million, annually, can boost European economies. It said that this amount of investment can keep European economies at par with other economies in the world. According to Draghi, Europe needs a radical change in investments. During a press conference in Brussels, Draghi said: “we must genuinely fear for our self-preservation.” During the conference, he also introduced his blueprint for the “new industrial strategy” for Europe. He said the European governments have ignored the slowing down of their economies. The report also pointed out Europe’s weakness in emerging technologies. However, regional ministers of Germany and the Netherlands have spoken against the suggestions made by the report. Christian Linder, Finance Minister of Germany, said that joint borrowing will solve structural problems. (“Europe needs ‘massive’ investment drive to catch global competitors: Report,” *Al Jazeera*, 09 September 2024)

Kosovo and Serbia urged to normalise relations

On 06 September, the EU envoy of Western Balkans urged Kosovo and Serbia to normalise their diplomatic relations. The envoy said that normalising relations would assist their candidature for EU membership as well. Aleksandar Vučić, President of Serbia, and Albin Kurti, Prime Minister of Kosovo, reached an agreement in March 2023 which could not be implemented further. The US and EU have urged both sides to implement the agreement. The agreement is called the Orchid Agreement which was drafted in North Macedonia. Kosovo was a Serbian province until 1999. It separated from Serbia after NATO's bombing campaign in Serbia ended pushing Serbian forces out of Kosovo. The relations have been tense since then. Kosovo proclaimed independence in 2008 while Serbia does not recognise Kosovo's independence. ("EU envoy urges Kosovo and Serbia to step up efforts towards normalising relations," *Euronews*, 06 September 2024)

Increase in asylum seekers and refugees

On 04 September, *Euronews* reported on the continued increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. Data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refugee Agency showed that the number of refugees and asylum applicants in Europe in 2023 had increased, driven by conflicts. The highest number of refugees to Europe have come from Ukraine and Syria; with nearly six million Ukrainians and over 1.3 million Syrians coming as refugees. The data also revealed that Syrians and Afghans continued to be the largest groups of asylum-seekers, as 209,000 Syrians and 155,000 Afghans submitted asylum applications. Germany alone received 117,363 asylum applications from Syrians and 61,000 from Afghans. Coastal Schengen area nations like Italy and Croatia have been the main point of entry for refugees and migrants; with Italy witnessing the arrival of 27,960 migrants just between January and March of 2023. This has prompted greater action on border controls from some European countries; such as Italy's agreement to send single men awaiting asylum to Albania. There has also

been a political impact; since far-right parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD) have grown in popularity capitalizing on security threats following the rise in illegal immigration. (Kamuran Samar, "Number of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe keeps rising, data shows," *Euronews*, 04 September 2024)

BSF debate on NATO's deterrence

On 03 September, an article in *The Slovenia Times* informed that a panel debate at the Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) had discussed the future of the NATO. According to the panel debate, deterrence and increased investments would be crucial for NATO going forward. Angus Lapsley, Assistant Secretary General of NATO stated that the alliance needed to push back against the growing intensity of Russian actions; and show that it would hurt Russia in case of a conventional attack by investing in money, people, and industrial capacity. Mevlut Cavusoglu, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs for Turkiye, stated that NATO needed to establish a better dialogue with Southern and middle powers to adapt itself to a multipolar world. According to Cavusoglu, NATO also needed better cooperation with Asia, due to shared security concerns. Damir Crncec, State Secretary of the Defence Ministry of Slovenia informed that his country would meet the goal of investing two per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in defence, and stated that military and dual-use capabilities needed to be strengthened. Meanwhile, Alexandre Escorcica from the French Ministry of the Armed Forces stated that the invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia had led to a stronger NATO; and that the alliance would need to consider the security concerns of all its members now. According to Robin S Quinville, Director of the Global Europe program at the Wilson Centre; the Ukraine war had made NATO understand the importance of effective deterrence; including having robust ground-level capabilities and drones. Valerio de Luca, Chairman of the Academy for Innovation, Economic Development and Security stated that Europe needed to invest more in defence. ("NATO fit for future, deterrence

will remain key, Bled forum told," *The Slovenia Times*, 03 September 2024)

Report on agriculture signals changes in farm laws

On 04 September, the EU published a report after seven months of dialogue between NGOs, farmers' unions and lobbyists for industrial and organic agriculture. The report has been published after a need for fundamental changes in the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU. Ariel Brunner, director of BirdLife Europe, one of the environmental groups, said that the report would be a game-changer. Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission chief, said that the report will serve as a roadmap for 'Vision for Agriculture and Food.' The report said that there will be a substantial annual increase in payments directly linking to environmental measures, which is currently 32 per cent. The negotiation process is highly praised by environmentalist groups. ("Agriculture report could signal dramatic change in EU farm subsidies," *Euronews*, 04 September 2024)

Politico evaluates Europe's air defence

On 02 September, Russia bombarded Ukraine with at least 127 missiles and 109 drones. The bombardment has shifted the war capabilities' focus towards ground-based air defence platforms donated to Ukraine by its Western allies. Politico has evaluated the merits of Patriots, an American-made air defence system. According to Fabian Hoffmann, a researcher on missile technology at the University of Oslo: "The Patriot is by far the most used system in Ukraine, and it has had a good track record." Buyers of the Patriot seek a battlefield experience of the product. The Patriot is used by Israel, was used by the US during the Gulf War of 1991 and by the KSA against the Houthis. Meanwhile, the Franco-Italian-made SAMP/T system, has been used by the French Navy this year against the Houthi rebels in the Red Sea. Despite being Europe-made, not a single European country has bought the defence system. Meanwhile, the US-made system is getting publicity through the Ukraine War. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, called it the most powerful system and

nothing works better against ballistic missiles. ("Patriot games: How America is outgunning Europe on air defense." *Politico*, 03 September 2024)

Hungary misses its deadline to pay the fine imposed by the ECJ

On 02 September, Hungary missed its first deadline to pay EUR 200 million to the European Commission. The fine was imposed by the European Court of Justice. The Commission has given a second payment date that is 17 September. If Hungary fails to abide by the second deadline as well, EUR 200 million will be deducted from the EU share allocated to the country. The fine was imposed due to Hungary's breach of EU law based on the long-standing restrictions it has on asylum-seekers. The dispute first started in December 2020 when the ECJ asked the Hungarian government, led by Viktor Orban, to provide access to asylum application procedures to those seeking international protection. Hungary had been accommodating refugees in detention-like conditions. After Hungary ignored the 2020 ruling, the European Commission filed another case which resulted in the ECJ fine imposition. Meanwhile, Orban has described the ruling as outrageous. He said that the bureaucrats in the EU are worried more about illegal migrants than European citizens. ("Hungary misses first deadline to pay €200 million fine imposed by ECJ." *Euronews*, 02 September 2024)

Several contenders for posts in new European Commission

On 03 September, an article in *Politico* informed that several contenders were competing for the portfolios in the European Commission. 26 portfolios are scheduled to be announced by Ursula Von Der Leyen, President of the European Commission next week. The names of the contenders jostling for key portfolios are listed out in the article. For the crucial Economy portfolio, the contenders include Raffaele Fitto, Piotr Serafin, Magnus Bruner, and Tomaz Vesel, Similarly, Valdis Dombrovskis and Thierry Breton are competing for the defence commissioner position. Christophe Hansen and Wopke

Hoekstra are among the candidates for agriculture commissioner; while Hoekstra, Jessika Roswall, and Michael McGrath are in the fray for the trade portfolio. Similarly, Henna Virkkunen and Maria Luis Albuquerque are candidates for the tech portfolio; and the likes of Jozef Sikela and Julian Popov for the post of energy and climate commissioner. The new post of commissioner for enlargement is likely to be taken up by either Dombrovskis or Oliver Varhelyi, while the crucial portfolio of cohesion is expected to be taken up by Roxana Minzatu, Apostolos Tzizikostas or Ekaterina Zaharieva. (Barbara Moens, Paul Dallison, Camille Gijs, Koen Verhelst, Paula Andres, Jacopo Barigazzi, Max Griera, Giovanna Faggionato, Victor Jack and Karl Mathiesen, ["The frontrunners for the best jobs in von der Leyen's next Commission."](#) *Politico*, 3 September 2024)

INTERNATIONAL

Keir Starmer and Donald Trump meet in New York

On 26 September, Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK, and Donald Trump, the Republican Presidential candidate of the UK, met in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting. The UK government office issued a statement on the meeting. Meanwhile, the office also said that Starmer was unable to meet Kamala Harris, the Vice President of the US, due to a tight schedule. According to Politico, this meeting was also to make up for statements previously made by British leaders on Trump. For instance, David Lammy, U.K. Foreign Secretary has once called Trump "woman-hating, neo-Nazi sympathising sociopath." Even Starmer has criticised Trump at various occasions. Politico also reports that the UK is concerned that the US might pull funding from the UN if Trump is elected as the President. (Emilio Casalicchio, "Keir Starmer and Donald Trump dine for 2 hours," *Politico*, 27 September 2024)

China plans to rally support for its Ukraine peace plan

On 25 September, *Politico* reported on the Government of the People's Republic of

China plan to work with the United Nations (UN) to enlist support for an agreement to end the Ukraine war. According to a document by the Government of Ukraine, the Chinese government is attempting to persuade diplomats, especially from Latin America, Asia and Africa to support peace talks "taking into account security interests". The document stated the Chinese government's objective is to prevent Russia from losing. A joint six-point peace plan released by China and the Government of Brazil earlier had urged no escalation of fighting on the battlefield or provocation by any party. However, the Ukrainian government believes this would allow Russia to continue its hostilities on Ukrainian territory. A spokesperson for the US State Department stated the China-Brazil peace plan did not protect Ukrainian sovereignty and ignored Russian aggression. Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State stated any prospective peace plan required support from Ukraine. However, Ukraine worries the Chinese peace plan could gain support at the UN. According to the Ukrainian government document, the Chinese government could promote global support for its plan if a substantial number of countries support its plan in the UN. (Phelim Kine, Nahal Toosi, Suzanne Lynch, and Nick Taylor-Vaisey, ["How China plans to get more backers for its Ukraine peace plan at the UN,"](#) *Politico*, 25 September 2024)

The US and China criticise EU's environment protection laws

On 19 September, *The New York Times* reported that the US and China, are lobbying the European parliament due to its environmental protection laws. Under the new law, several supply chains will be traced and even diverted that endanger some forests in the EU. The US has warned that the new law might disrupt the supply of diapers and sanitary napkins in the EU. On the other hand, China said that it cannot comply with the new law since it cannot share the data of some of its companies' supply chains due to privacy issues. Therefore, Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of Germany, has asked the EU to postpone the passing of the new laws. The new laws are

being proposed in the wake of illegal deforestation that is putting some species at the risk of extinction. In 2023, the judiciary in the EU imposed a ban on all products derived from cattle, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, rubber, soybeans and wood. The penalties for trading these items are significant. Apart from Germany, 20 EU members have also requested a delay in implementation of new laws. (Patricia Cohen, "[Backlash Erupts Over Europe's Anti-Deforestation Law](#)," *The New York Times*, 20 September 2024)

India-Denmark meeting aims to strengthen maritime collaboration

On 20 September, Sarbananda Sonowal, India's Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways held a meeting with his Danish counterpart to discuss Green Shipping, Digitalization and Sustainable Development in terms of maritime security. The cooperation comes under the umbrella agreement, India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2019 and revised in 2022 to increase its scope. The collaboration has extended to Quality shipping, Cooperation on Port State Control, Maritime training and education, research and development, Piracy, Green maritime technology, shipbuilding and green shipping. Both countries are focussing on curbing carbon emissions. Both countries signed the Joint Action Plan on Green Strategic Partnership (2021-2026) and maritime cooperation is an important part of the Plan. ("[India-Denmark Maritime Collaboration Gathers Momentum](#)," *Maritime Gateway*, 21 September 2024)

NATO chief to head Munich Security Conference

On 12 September, *Politico* reported Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would become the new chairman of the Munich Security Conference (MSC). Stoltenberg replaced Christoph Heusgen, a German diplomat in charge of the MSC for the past two editions. Wolfgang Ischinger, a former Chairman of the MSC will remain President of the Foundation Council of the

MSC Foundation. The MSC is renowned for providing a space for international security policy debates. Several key global politicians; such as Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine, and Kamala Harris, the Vice-President of the United States have used the MSC platform to state their views and objectives. For instance, Zelenskyy used the MSC forum to request faster arms supplies to Ukraine, while Putin used the platform to inform others regarding his anti-NATO security doctrine. Stoltenberg will have the task of effectively navigating the MSC at a time of tension over the Ukraine war and the future of NATO. (Gordon Repinski and Nicholas Vinocur, "[NATO's Jens Stoltenberg will be new Munich Security Conference chief](#)," *Politico*, 12 September 2024)

Serbia: a ground for proxy war between global powers

On 09 September, *Politico* published a report that opinionated on an ongoing proxy war between the US and China in Serbia. The US, China and Russia are setting their footprint in Serbia. Serbia acts as a buffer country between the US and Russia. Europe lost its influence over the region after the war with Kosovo was over. After the war between Serbia and Kosovo, the West became distant from Serbia. During the 1990's, Serbia fought four wars because of the political ambitions of the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milošević. However, in 2000, pro-democratic forces replaced him and turned him to the International Criminal Court. These democratic efforts made by Serbia were not applauded by the West. The West, meanwhile, was preoccupied with the conflicts in the Middle East. Serbian ambitions to join the EU and NATO were also not reciprocated well by the West. In 2017, when Aleksandar Vučić came to power in Serbia, he sought better economic and political relations with Russia and China. Before the Russia-Ukraine war, EU and US leaders did not make active efforts to attract Serbia for economic agreements. China signed a free trade agreement with Serbia. However, after the war broke out, Russia's footprints in the region became a concern for Europe. In

2024, Germany emerged as the largest investor in Serbia and signed a deal on lithium mining, on behalf of Europe. France sold 12 Rafael fighter jets to Serbia in September 2024. Meanwhile, Serbia always said that it wants to join the EU. Politico blames the EU's lethargy to appease Serbia that it is not an open supporter of Ukraine in the war. Thus, the agreement of Rafael jets with France is more than just a military buy, according to *Politico*. (Matthew Kaminski, "Will America or China Win the Serbian Proxy War?," *Politico*, 10 September 2024)

Russia and China to hold joint military exercise in the Sea of Japan

On 09 September, China's Defence Minister announced organising the Sino-Russian naval and air force exercises called "Northern/Interaction-2024." The exercise aims to "deepen the level of strategic coordination between the Chinese and Russian militaries, and enhance their ability to jointly respond to security threats." The Ministry also announced "Ocean-2024", which is Russia's strategic naval exercise in the Pacific and China will be a part of it. This will be the second edition of the Northern/Interaction exercise. In the 2023 edition, China had sent five warships and four ship-borne helicopters. ("Chinese, Russian navy, air forces to hold joint drills again in Sea of Japan," *South China Morning Post*, 09 September 2024)

Russia's rising influence in Africa

On 09 September, the *BBC* reported on the rising influence of Russia on Burkina Faso, a country in the Sahel region in Africa. The article highlights the role of the mercenary group Wagner in African politics. In August 2024, Wagner was involved with Mali's army in fighting the Tuareg separatists near the Algerian border. On 04 August, Mali cut its diplomatic ties with Ukraine, making its political stance clear. On 06 August, just two days later, even Niger severed its diplomatic ties with Ukraine. In August, 40 people were arrested in Nigeria for showcasing the Russian flag during protests. Christopher Musa, the army chief, said that showcasing foreign symbols is a "treasonable offence." Local media also reported about protesters

asking the Russian president to rescue them. Niger is also housing many Russian military trainers in its capital city, Niamey. Since the coup on 26 July 2023, Niger has gradually pivoted towards Russia. Meanwhile, the West is gradually withdrawing its forces from the Sahel region. Russia also continues to influence through spread of information through media against US involvement in the region. ("War 'tour', football and graffiti: How Russia is trying to influence Africa," *BBC*, 10 September 2024)

Hungary and Bahrain to ink closer ties

On 05 September, *Hungary Today* reported on Peter Szijjarto, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary visit to Bahrain to forge ties. Szijjarto met Abdullatif bin Rashid al Zayani, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain to discuss the possibilities for greater cooperation between their countries. Szijjarto stated that both ministers agreed that peace must be pursued through dialogue rather than war, with arms transfer making the situation worse. In the joint statement, the ministers agreed on combating terrorism and improving stability in Europe and the Middle East. Szijjarto also urged free trade talks and visa agreements to continue, and greater cooperation between the EU and the Gulf. An important point raised by Szijjarto in his visit related to economic partnerships with the Foreign Minister informing that Festipay, the Hungarian event management provider was investing in Bahrain substantially including at the Formula 1 race. Additionally, negotiations for an investment by the oil company MOL into environmentally friendly oil extraction and potentially building a rubber bitumen plant in Bahrain also took place. ("Hungary and Bahrain Strengthen Ties Through Cooperation on the Fields of Industry and Economy," *Hungary Today*, 03 September 2024)

US fighter jets reach Finland for the first time

On 05 September, *Forces news* reported on fighter jets from the US Air Force (USAF) had landed in Finland. Two F-35 Lightning

II aircraft from the 493rd Fighter Squadron of the USAF successfully landed on a 30-metre-wide strip of the Hosio Highway in an exercise part of the Agile Combat Employment (ACE) strategy for enhancing survivability and adaptability by operating from unconventional locations. Lieutenant Colonel Dustin Merritt, Director of Operations for the 493rd Fighter Squadron stated that this was the first step towards implementing ACE, and would make the relationship between the US and Finland stronger moving forward. While the narrow highway landing strip posed a challenge since pilots had to accurately land and decelerate, it showcased how the F-35 could be used in difficult environments that reflect real-world scenarios. The F-35 has three main variants; A, B and C. The F-35 A is the conventional variant designed for conventional landings; while B and C are utilized for short take offs and carrier landings respectively. (["USAF marks a first in Finland as F-35A Lightning II jets come in to land on highway,"](#) *Forces News*, 05 September 2024)

Austria to deport Afghans with criminal records back to their home country

On 02 September, Karl Nehammer, Chancellor of Austria, announced that Austria and Germany are working out an agreement to deport Afghans and Syrians with criminal records back to their homeland. Nehammer said that one of the primary challenges is deporting them to Afghanistan and Syria. Germany deported 28 people to Afghanistan on 30 August which Austria commended. Nehammer has also called for EU-wide deportations. He said that they deport asylum seekers directly to Afghanistan or Syria as it would be against EU laws. Meanwhile, citizens of these countries make up two third of total asylum seeking applications. According to

Austria's Immigrations Department, a total of 9,000 applications were received from Afghan asylum seekers. Human rights groups, including Amnesty EU, have said that this decision would be a breach of international law. Since the Taliban came to power in 2021, it has been accused of oppressing women. ("Austria joins Germany in deporting Afghans with criminal records back home," *Euronews*, 02 September 2024)

Bundeswehr officially withdraws from Niger

On 01 September, Bundeswehr, Germany's army, ended its eight year mission withdrawing its last batch of soldiers from Niger. The last batch of German soldiers consisted of 60 troops. They flew from Niamey, the capital of Niger, from the army's air base. The air base in Niamey served as a logistics centre for the UN's MINUSMA peacekeeping mission until 2023. Nigerian and German Foreign Ministries announced at the signing ceremony that "Germany has withdrawn troops and equipment from Niger." A second transport jet flew after the troops had left. The jet contained equipment from Germany. Throughout the eight years, 3,200 German soldiers were deployed in Niger. Niger was a western ally in Africa against the US War on Terror and European ambitions in the region. However, in 2023, Niger underwent a coup and a military junta came into power. The military leaders of Niger have turned their alliance towards Russia. Niger has been housing several Russian military trainers in Niamey. Neighbouring countries Mali and Burkina Faso are pursuing similar agreements with Russia. ("Germany withdraws troops from junta-run Niger," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 September 2024)

About the authors



Advik S Mohan

Mr Mohan is a Research Intern at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS, Bangalore. His areas of interest include politics and societal issues in the United Kingdom, foreign relations in the Asia Pacific region, and conflicts and security in the Middle East.



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.



Neha Tresa George

Ms George is a Research Associate at the National Institute of Advanced Studies. Her interest lies in the war in Ukraine, the domestic politics of Europe, and gender and ethnic-related issues.



Samruddhi Pathak

Ms Pathak is a Research Intern at NIAS, Bangalore. She is currently pursuing her doctoral studies at Symbiosis International University. Her area of interest are European politics.

NIAS Europe Monitor
Our recent publications
<https://globalpolitics.in/europe/>

