



# NIAS Area Studies

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## EUROPE MONITOR

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Finland President's Visit to China | Georgian Parliamentary  
Election 2024 | Moldova's Referendum



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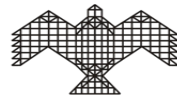
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## Europe Monitor

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## WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES

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The War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 979 to Day 958 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.

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By Advik S Mohan, Samruddhi Pathak and Neha Tresa George



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

## COMMENT

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### Finland President's Visit to China

By Advik S Mohan

*China gains from Finland's presence as a friendly country amidst worsening ties with the EU.*

On 27 October, the President of Finland, Alexander Stubb, began a state visit to China. Stubb informed through a tweet on X that the visit provided an opportunity to discuss key international and security issues and present Finland's foreign and security policy to China."

On 29 October, President Stubb met President Xi Jinping. Xi described the relationship between China and Finland as a future-oriented, new-type cooperative partnership with exceptional value. He also encouraged greater cooperation between Finland and China in green transformation, information technology, artificial intelligence, and other emerging industries. Additionally, Xi stated that Finland would be included in the list of unilateral visa-free countries to promote people-to-people exchanges. Xi also said China would continue working towards a diplomatic resolution for the Ukraine war.

President Stubb informed that the closer China grew with Russia, the more difficult the relationship between China and the EU would become. He also stated that measures promoting trade protectionism, like tariffs, were only short-term measures detrimental to the national and global economies. During their meeting, Stubb and Xi issued the Joint Action Plan between China and Finland on Promoting the Future-oriented New-type Cooperative Partnership. The Partnership focuses on various areas such as sustainable growth, science and technology, low-carbon development, and education.

Stubb also met the Premier of China, Li Qiang, wherein both sides committed to expanding cooperation. Additionally, Stubb attended the China-Finland Business Summit, which had over 80 entrepreneurs

and business leaders from China and Finland attending. The Summit focused on green energy and tourism as areas of cooperation. Additionally, he visited the Fudan University in Shanghai. At Fudan University, Stubb interacted on global affairs with faculty and students, including Finnish exchange students.

#### What is the background?

First, the bilateral ties between China and Finland. Finland was one of the first Western states to recognize communist China in 1950 and the first Western country to sign a trade agreement with China back in 1973. The two signed a free trade investment agreement in 2004. While there have been tensions between the two countries, such as Finland's criticism of the 2020 Hong Kong security law and a dispute over a Chinese-led security breach of the Finnish parliament, the two countries have maintained cordial relations with regular ministerial visits. Finland abstained from joining tariffs imposed against Chinese EV imports by the EU earlier this year.

Second, economic cooperation. In 2017, during the visit by Xi to Finland, the two countries agreed to a future-oriented New-type Cooperative Partnership. China is Finland's fifth-largest export partner and the largest in Asia. Wood pulp, paper products, electronics, and electrical equipment are responsible for the majority of Finnish exports to China. Companies from both countries have also been involved in investment projects in each other. For instance, Finnish phone conglomerate Nokia has been involved in setting up telecommunications networks and infrastructure like 5G across China. Similarly, Finnish marine and energy equipment firm Wartsila collaborated with local Chinese firms on sustainable technologies. Joint economic initiatives like

the Finnish-China Green Industry Park Forum and the China-Finland Innovation Enterprise Committee have promoted common knowledge sharing and development.

Third, the security issues. The war in Ukraine has seen Finland and China take contrasting stances. Finland shares a border with Russia and shunned its traditional position of neutrality to join the NATO bloc after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It has also played a proactive role in providing humanitarian assistance for Ukraine. In contrast, while China has called for peace in the war, it has maintained close ties with Russia.

Fourth, the China-EU tensions. The visit by Stubb comes amidst increasingly fractious ties between China and the EU. In the past few months, the EU has imposed tariffs on the imports of Chinese Electric Vehicles (EVs) due to allegations of China flooding EU markets with cheap goods. However, there is a divide over ties with China among the EU. Member states like Germany and Hungary have tried maintaining cordial relations with China, while other countries like the Czech Republic have criticized China's perceived policies. In this scenario, the visit of a senior EU leader like Stubb for high-level exchanges with the Chinese leadership is significant. Finland has maintained cordial ties with China, following a nuanced stance. The visit

by Stubb further shows the prioritizing of economic ties over political ones.

### **What does it mean?**

The visit of Stubb saw an expansion of economic ties between China and Finland. The new Joint Action Plan agreed between the two countries prioritizes cooperation across diverse areas like sustainable growth, energy transition, education, science and technology, and sports. Additionally, the Plan prioritizes holding regular meetings, such as the Joint Economic Committee meetings and cooperation on issues like disarmament, human rights, and climate change. The Plan promises to review the progress made in 2027. Ties between China and Finland are likely to continue to progress. Both countries view benefits in cordial ties. For Finland, China is a crucial economic partner. On the other hand, China gains from Finland's presence as a friendly country amidst worsening ties with the EU. It also shows Beijing's desire to maintain cordial relations with the European bloc and not lose its advantages in a trade war.

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## COMMENT

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### **Georgian Parliamentary Election 2024: Accusations of Rigging**

*By Manoranjan Kumar*

*The ongoing polarization reflects the high stakes of Georgia's geopolitical position between Russian influence and Western integration goals.*

On 26 October, Georgia voted for a new parliament and government. The central electoral commission said the ruling Georgian Dream Party won, securing nearly 54 per cent of votes—the party heads for a fourth consecutive term in office with 89 parliamentary seats. The opposition, a coalition of four parties, secured 37.7 per cent votes with 61 seats.

On the same day, the pro-Western opposition contested the result, alleging ballot-stuffing, bribery, voter intimidation and violence during election and polling.

On 27 October, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili called on Georgians to protest against the result. She said: “This was a total rigging, a total robbery of your votes.” President Zourabichvili, a former ally of the ruling Georgian Dream and turned a fierce critic, said that she did not recognize the results and referred to the vote as a “Russian special operation”. However, Russia has denied any involvement in the Georgian election.

On 28 October, BBC interviewed Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze. He rejected the opposition’s claims of vote-rigging and violence. He said: “Irregularities happen everywhere, in every country. Out of 3,111 polling stations, there had been incidents in just a couple of precincts but that in all others the environment was completely peaceful.”

On 29 October, NEWS WIRES quoted Georgia’s central election commission that it will recount ballots from five polling stations, randomly selected from each election district, following the opposition’s refusal to recognize the results.

#### **Issues at large**

First, a brief background of the Georgian political system. Georgia, a country of 3.6 million people in the Caucasus mountains, is a democratic republic, combining elements of parliamentary and semi-presidential system. The President is the head of state but has limited power than the Prime Minister. The country has a multi-party system, although a few dominant parties hold the majority influence. The Georgian Dream Party and the United National Movement are two major parties. The Georgian Dream party has been in power since 2012. This year's election was held under a new proportional electoral system, in which parties had to reach a five per cent threshold to win seats in the 150-seat Parliament.

Second, major issues in the parliamentary election of 2024. The 2024 election was crucial, as the voters had to choose between a pro-Western opposition coalition and a Russia-inclined ruling party. However, 80 per cent of Georgians favour joining the EU, according to various poll data during the election. The ruling Georgian Dream Party campaigned with slogans including 'No to war!', 'Choose peace', and 'Yes to the EU but with dignity!'. However, the opposition has repeatedly accused the party of subverting this objective. The ruling government's policies are deciding factors in the parliamentary election. It includes "foreign agent law," which is similar to Russian law and is used to crush political dissents. This law states that nongovernmental groups and independent media outlets must register as "agents of foreign influence." This legislation has sparked mass protests across Georgia. Another legislation called "LGBT propaganda" was passed by the current

government to restrict the rights of this vulnerable group. Unemployment and mass migration were other significant issues in this election.

Third, the election results in 2024 and allegations by opponents. The Georgian Dream's unprecedented victory has sparked controversy, with all opposition parties rejecting the results. They have raised concerns over election integrity, voter intimidation, ballot-stuffing, and the use of state resources to sway the election in favour of the Georgian Dream. The exit poll results favoured the pro-West opposition coalition. The opposition party Coalition for Change's leader described the result as 'a constitutional coup.' International observers have criticized the elections, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union. It has called for investigations into irregularities and reports of coercion, especially targeting vulnerable and public sector workers. However, according to observers, the election was peaceful, and there was uncertainty regarding the election's legitimacy.

Fourth, the EU's stance. The EU closely monitored the election as Georgia gained candidate status in December 2023. The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, called on Georgia's election commission to investigate the reported violations. The head of the European Parliament delegation to the OSCE mission, Antonio Lopezsturz White, expressed deep concern about the democratic backsliding in Georgia. The EU has already responded by freezing Georgia's bid to join the bloc, accusing it of democratic backsliding after the government passed the 'foreign agent law' in June.

### **In perspective**

After the 2024 parliamentary election results, the situation in Georgia seems concerning. The alleged fraud in the election by the ruling Georgian Dream has put the country's democratic future in loom. A group of Georgian election monitors found evidence of complex and large-scale fraud, particularly in rural areas and demanded the annulment of at least 15 per cent of votes. The opposition parties have decided not to enter the new "illegitimate" Parliament and demanded fresh elections run by an international election administration. It seems Georgia is in serious political turmoil. If the allegations of electoral misconduct are not resolved, Georgia will likely face mass protests in the coming days. It will be interesting to see how Georgia will handle this extraordinary situation amid international pressure on alleged election irregularities.

For EU membership, it is mandatory to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria set by the European Council. The requirements include stable liberal democracy, rule of law, human rights, respect for minorities, and a functional market economy. The ongoing situation is weakening the chances of Georgia's integration into the EU. The voters seem divided over the country's future course. Support for the pro-Western opposition groups came from urban and younger voters, who envision their future with the EU. Meanwhile, the ruling government received the support of conservatives by stressing family values and criticizing Western excesses. This ongoing polarization reflects the high stakes of Georgia's geopolitical position between Russian influence and Western integration goals.

*Manoranjan Kumar is a guest faculty at NCWEB, University of Delhi.*

## COMMENT

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### **Moldovo's Referendum: Between EU membership, Russian influence and public dissatisfaction**

By Advik S Mohan

*The polarization between those favouring closer ties with Russia or the EU is likely to continue, irrespective of who wins the presidential election.*

In October, Moldova held a referendum on EU membership alongside its presidential elections. The referendum results of changing the Moldovan constitution to include membership of the EU saw 50.46 per cent in favour of adding a clause in the constitution to add EU membership. Only 46 per cent of voters living in Moldova supported the constitutional change. Besides, the Moldova's presidential elections witnessed no candidate winning an absolute majority. Maia Sandu, the incumbent President from the liberal PAS party won the first round. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that Moldova had shown it was independent, strong, and wanted a European future, despite the hybrid tactics used by Russia. The Government of the Russian Federation expressed doubt over the election results.

The referendum was opposed by opposition parties in Moldova. Additionally, the local governments in the breakaway region of Transnistria and the autonomous region of Gagauzia also have opposed the referendum.

#### **What are the major issues?**

First, differences over Moldova's ties with Russia and the EU. Russia has traditionally played a dominant role in Moldova as a close economic partner. However, the perceptions have altered in recent years, especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since then, the incumbent Moldovan government under President Sandu has tried to move closer to the EU, prioritizing membership of the bloc. In June 2022, EU gave Moldova the candidate status.

In October 2023, the new national security strategy of the Moldovan government designated Russia and its proxies as a

persistent threat to Moldova. Similarly, the Moldovan government has attempted to reduce its dependence upon Russia for energy supplies. The Moldovan government also changed the legal definition of high treason in the Criminal Code, by providing assistance to a foreign state and foreign organization and carrying out hostile activities through disinformation campaigns listed as criminal offences. The Sandu government justified the changes as required to tackle Russian influence. Russia has been accused of trying to tackle its waning influence by pumping large amounts of cash into Moldova. The Moldovan government accused Russia of using mafia tactics by running a pyramid scheme attempting to bribe Moldovan voters with the support of Ilan Shor, a Moldovan oligarch residing in Russia. Valeriu Pasha, a program manager at the thinktank WatchDog. MD Community stated Russia ran an interference operation worth EUR 150 million, severely impacting the election results.

Second, public dissatisfaction over the slow-paced economy and corruption. The economy was negatively impacted by the decline in trade with both Russia and Ukraine and the difficulties in switching from Russian energy supplies. Gazprom slashed one-third of its energy supplies to Moldova. Inflation in Moldova remained high for most of the past two years, being above 30 per cent regularly. Additionally, many Moldovans were frustrated with the perceived slow pace of the Sandu government in dealing with corruption, implementing reforms, economic dissatisfaction and frustration with the government as a fertile ground.



Third, regional tensions in Gagauzia and Transnistria. Historically, Russia enjoy greater influence in these two regions. Transnistria declared independence from Moldova in the 1990s and has sustained for over three decades as a partially recognized state with Russian support. Actions by the Moldovan government such as making political demands for the independence of Transnistria punishable with imprisonment and enforcing greater customs checks on goods from Transnistria added to the alienation felt by residents in Transnistria. The majority of the residents in Gagauzia, speak Russian, rather than Romania. Additionally, local politicians in Gagauzia supported by Russia like Evghenia Gutul, the Governor of Gagauzia have blamed the Moldovan government and the EU for high inflation and energy prices. Gagauzia is one of the poorest regions of Moldova, with an estimated 40 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. The Russian government has promised preferential access to the Russian market for goods from Gagauzia and payments for pensioners and public-sector employees. The sense of alienation felt in these regions helped the opposition and anti-EU forces gain during the election.

### **What next for Moldova?**

The future of Moldovan politics hinges upon the results of the run-off of the presidential elections between Sandu and Stoianoglo on 03 November. A victory for Sandu will mean a continuation of the existing policies of the Moldovan government, more inclined towards the EU rather than Russia.

However, the election results have shown a substantial part of Moldova is opposed to the Sandu government. In a prospective second term, Sandu might be compelled to accommodate the opposition's views more, especially on Russia. This might make taking decisions like holding the EU referendum and presidential election together or changing the definition of treason more difficult, with greater criticism. Whereas, a victory for Stoianoglo has led to fears that the Moldovan government will be more inclined towards supporting Russia, rather than the EU.

While Stoianoglo has stated he supports the European aspirations of Moldova, some members of the opposition alliance like the Gagauzia government have already taken a stridently pro-Russian stance and are sceptical of the EU. A government led by Stoianoglo might place accession to the EU as a lower priority than a Sandu government. However, public sentiment in Moldova is also antagonistic towards Russia after the Ukraine invasion. Thus, a new Moldovan government would face public pressure if it completely gravitated towards Russia. The polarization between those favouring closer ties with Russia or the EU is likely to continue, irrespective of who wins the presidential election.

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## COMMENT

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# The Housing Crisis in the Netherlands: What has caused it and what has been the government response?

By Advik S Mohan

*A lasting solution to the housing crisis is possible only through structural changes.*

Amidst the ongoing housing crisis in Europe, the Netherlands is one of the worst affected countries. There has been a shortage of houses in the country for the past three years. According to research agency ABF, the country had a shortage of around 401,000 homes in 2024. The Dutch government aims to bring the deficit down to two per cent of the total housing stock.

The crisis has made it more difficult for middle-income households and individuals in the Netherlands to find a home. House prices are estimated to have increased by at least 150 per cent in the past decade. The average home in the Netherlands now costs EUR 452,000, over 10 times higher than the average salary in the Netherlands. The country has a shortage of an estimated 401,000 homes. Due to the high demand, it takes about seven years on average to find a permanent home

What has caused the Housing Crisis in the Netherlands?

First, the failed policies of the Dutch government. The government has always been focused upon stimulating the financial market demand to ensure potential house buyers have the funds required to buy homes. For instance, jubelton or tax breaks have been provided for potential house buyers. However, the Dutch government has failed to stimulate the supply of new homes. Dutch governments have focused little on ensuring the proper construction of quality homes for residents.

Second, the influence of the neo-liberal ideology in the Netherlands. The Dutch government allowed housing corporation stock to be sold to large investors with

financial resources, including foreign ones. As a result, about 25 per cent of all homes in the four big cities of the Netherlands are owned by investors. Without proper measures to improve the housing supply, measures like mortgage tax relief for buyers have resulted in housing prices being further driven up, with only the entrenched investors and owners benefitting. In 2010, the Dutch government even abolished the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment.

Third, the rapidly increasing population. The Netherlands is expected to cross 20 million citizens in 2024. The Dutch population has substantially grown in the past decade, with an estimated three million individuals entering. The substantial population growth has also contributed to the demand for housing increasing. This has resulted in several politicians such as Geert Wilders, the leader of the right-wing PVV which got the most votes in the general elections last year blaming immigration for the crisis.

### **What has been the government response, and how effective have they been?**

One step taken by administrations in the Netherlands was the decision by several big cities in the Netherlands such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam to ban investors from buying homes in specific neighborhoods. The objective behind this policy was to allow first-time buyers better chances at finding a home. However, a study by the University of Amsterdam and Erasmus University found the policy had a minimal impact. According to the study, the policy benefitted middle-income households and tenants who could already afford houses. Moreover, the policy negatively affected lower-income tenants since rent prices increased by 4 per cent. Another governmental policy aimed at

combating the crisis through restricting homes to tenants earning less than EUR 44,000 a year resulted in more landlords selling homes, increasing private sector rents.

Another key step taken was granting individual municipalities in the Netherlands with the power to take steps to discourage investors and big landlords from buying up homes, such as a self-occupancy rule requiring property buyers to prove they would be living there as well. In the same light, the transfer tax rate on individuals who bought property for investment purposes without residing in the property bought was increased to nine per cent from two per cent. These steps aimed to help homes be bought by first-time buyers such as the youth more than landlords who already owned property. However, the share of free-sector rental houses is not enough to meet the large housing shortages, and also does not provide a lasting solution for the problem of individuals not owning their houses.

Additionally, the government began transforming spaces like cruise ships, apartments, hotels and office buildings into temporary housing and accommodation. This was aimed mainly towards asylum seekers and refugees in the country without a home, but also for the general population lacking a home. However, this has proven to be only a temporary solution.

### **What Next?**

The Dutch government which took office earlier this year set the target of building 100,000 homes per year, with an estimated EUR five billion allocated for that purpose. An additional investment of EUR 2.5 billion

is planned, to make the residential areas of the country more accessible to live for residents. However, a lasting solution to the housing crisis is possible only through structural changes. Due to the failure of the government to resolve the crisis effectively, initiatives launched on an individual level have tried to mitigate the crisis. In 2020, a group of students began an initiative known as De Torteltuin which plans to complete a sustainable housing collective involving a block of 40 apartments and a shared living area for every four to five households by 2026. Similarly, forty-eight adults launched a sustainable housing community known as Ecovillage Boekel, comprised of 36 sustainable flats. This ecovillage includes building homes with bio-sustainable materials like wood, and a heating system which stores solar energy. Initiatives like these on a national scale implemented by the Dutch government could help in mitigating the crisis. The Austrian capital of Vienna offers a potential model of social housing 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, keeping rent prices low.

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## COMMENT

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### **Anti-LGBTQ+ Law in Georgia: Why Now and Who Supports It?**

By Advik S Mohan

*Georgia faces the prospect of slipping into greater authoritarianism and a more anti-Western stance, with the existing government.*

On 03 October, Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the Georgia Parliament signed the Anti-LGBTQ+ bill into law. The bill imposing restrictions upon the LGBTQ+ community in Georgia was approved by the lawmakers on 17 September but Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia refused to sign. This provided five days for the speaker of the Parliament to sign into law. The bill includes a ban on same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples, demonstrations showing gender identity, and showing LGBTQ+ content on the media or through the education system. This comes amidst concerns over increasing homophobia in Georgia, promoted by the ruling party Georgian Dream with the implicit support of the Georgian Orthodox Church. It also threatens to further the tense relations between Georgia and the EU.

#### **What is the bill and what is its background?**

In September, the Parliament of Georgia approved a new bill imposing restrictions on the LGBTQ+ community. 84 voted in favour out of 150 in the Georgian parliament who were only from the ruling Georgian Dream party. The provisions of the bill include a ban on same-sex marriage, adoption by same-sex couples, and public gatherings or demonstrations accused of promoting gender identity and same-sex relationships. Additionally, the bill bars gender-affirming care and gender changes, open LGBT Pride events, and public displays of the rainbow pride flag. According to the bill, radio and television channels will be banned from showing scenes or advertising that promote same-sex marriages. Teaching LGBT content in the education system would also be restricted. Another component of the bill was the declaration of 17 May as a public holiday and a day to mark the sanctity of the

family and respect for parents.

Discussions for a potential ban on LGBT propaganda in Georgia began in 2023, after Fridon Injia, a member of the pro-government European Socialists party stated he would draft a bill to combat LGBT propaganda. According to Injia, the LGBT propaganda was against the Georgian family and would negatively impact the mentality of a Georgian man. The same year, Irakli Garibashvili, the Prime Minister of Georgia at the time stated LGBT propaganda was being used to change the traditional values followed by the majority in society. Following the line of Garibashvili, several members of his party, Georgian Dream took a more aggressive stance, condemning what they perceived as LGBT propaganda. Several leading figures from the party such as Mamuka Mdinardze, parliament's majority leader, and Kakha Kaladze, the Mayor of the capital of Tbilisi alleged that LGBT propaganda was being spread to young children at kindergartens and schools, negatively influencing the younger generation. Georgian Dream figures defended the prospective bill in Georgia as a necessary step required to protect the Christian values of Georgia, and the children from being influenced by LGBT content. However, government officials such as Mdinardze stated they were not against the rights of the LGBT community, only against the spreading of propaganda.

#### **What has been the response to the bill?**

Shalva Papuashvili, Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia stated that the bill was an essential step against "LGBT propaganda" which was "altering traditional relations." Irakli Kobakhidze, Prime Minister of Georgia stated the bill was a tool to improve the perception amongst Georgians of Europe as a place of traditional and

Christian values, rather than LGBT propaganda. The bill is viewed by the ruling party and its supporters as a key step required to combat what they perceive to be LGBT propaganda being spread in Georgia. They are also of the opinion that the bill will help preserve the traditional moral values of Georgia. The bill was criticized by opposition parties in Georgia. Tamar Chergoleishvili, the leader of the liberal European Georgia party stated Georgian Dream was creating artificial problems in the country. Other opposition parties in Georgia like Droa, the Georgian Labour Party and the Citizens Party also criticized the bill, alleging that it was being used as a way to distract the population from the misgovernance of the government and create non-existent enemies. The stance of the opposition parties is driven by their liberal outlook, as well as the opportunity to target the government over the issue of the anti-LGBT bill. Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia criticised the bill and promised to veto it. However, the centre-left Georgian Dream party has strong parliamentary support which means it can override a potential presidential veto. On the other hand, Tamar Jakeli, the Director of Tbilisi Pride, a campaign group stated the bill was the “most terrible thing” to happen to the LGBTQ community in Georgia. It is feared the bill could worsen homophobia and attacks on the LGBTQ community in a country where same-sex marriage is already prohibited.

### **Why was the Georgian Orthodox Church pushing the case?**

The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) has enjoyed a historically dominant role in Georgia. The GOC was considered as essential to ensure the traditional Orthodox heritage and protection of Georgian culture during the decades of Soviet rule. A constitutional agreement signed between the GOC and the State of Georgia in 2002 provided the GOC with special privileges such as exemptions from taxes and a special consultative role with the government. The dominance of the GOC also helps explain the homophobia prevalent in Georgian society. The Church has always opposed the LGBTQ community, regarding them as a threat to Georgian culture. In 2013, Ilia II, the

Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church referred to homosexuality as an “anomaly and disease.” The same year, rallies in Georgia to mark the International Day against Homophobia were attacked by demonstrators affiliated with the GOC. Attacks on LGBT groups in Georgia have been increasingly common. On 05 July 2022, conservative groups affiliated with the GOC attacked the offices of Tbilisi Pride and the Shame Movement, a liberal activist group. In July 2023, Pride Week was cancelled after an attack by conservative groups. While the GOC has condemned violence, its leaders have continued to perpetuate hatred against the LGBT community. The rhetoric of the GOC has some support in the conservative Georgian society. A survey by the UN in 2022 showed 56 per cent of respondents believed the LGBT community needed to be protected, but must not impose its way of life on others. The Georgian government has also supported the GOC’s homophobic position through its rhetoric and policies like the recent law. Tamar Jakeli, the Director of Tbilisi Pride stated the attacks on the LGBT community gave the government a scapegoat to distract citizens away from issues like poverty and inflation.

The GOC’s homophobic rhetoric also reflects its concerns over increasing liberalism in Georgian society, and a shift towards the EU. According to an opinion poll conducted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in 2023, 79 per cent of respondents were in favour of closer ties with the EU. The GOC fears a loss of its power and influence if Georgia moves more towards the West and the EU. In its bid to avoid gravitating extensively toward the West, the GOC has received substantial support from Georgian Dream, the ruling party of Georgia since 2012.

### **What has been the government’s response?**

In recent years, the Georgian Dream has moved more towards a conservative nationalist position. An example of this is the ‘foreign agents’ law passed by the government. The bill stated civil society and media organizations receiving over 20 per cent of their funding from abroad would be

labelled as ‘foreign agents.’ It is believed that the bill was prompted by criticism from the EU that the Georgian government was eroding democracy in the country, and a set of conditions required for making Georgia a candidate for EU membership such as sanctioning Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder and honorary chairman of Georgian Dream. Conservatives in Georgia reacted harshly to the demands, accusing the EU of attempting to undermine Georgian sovereignty. Four parliamentarians from Georgian Dream left the party to form a new party called People’s Power. The goal of People’s Power was to reveal the agenda of the EU and the US to destroy Georgian democracy. The party also alleged that Western Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Georgia were trying to overthrow the Georgian government. Irakli Kobakhidze, Prime Minister of Georgia promised to cooperate with the new party. The government introduced the Foreign Agents Bill to end foreign interference and protect Georgian sovereignty. However, civil society and opposition parties in Georgia criticized the bill as an attempt to stifle media diversity and freedom of opinion in Georgia. The bill sparked the largest protests in Georgia since independence.

### **Will the bill affect Georgia’s relationship with the EU?**

The recent shift of the Georgian government has severely impacted its relationship with the EU. On 09 July 2024, the EU informed the accession process of Georgia to the EU was halted as a result of the foreign agents law. Additionally, USD 32 million in military aid for the Ministry of Defence of Georgia was frozen. Georgian hopes of joining NATO and cultivating close ties with the US government also suffered a blow. Washington suspended the annual Noble Partner military exercises held with Georgia and imposed a visa ban on top politicians from Georgian Dream. Apart from the Foreign Agents Law, a potential point of contention in Georgia-EU relations has been the Georgian government attempting to maintain cordial ties with the Government of the Russian Federation. After the invasion of Ukraine, the Georgian government did not impose sanctions upon Russia and trade ties

have continued. The recent bill on foreign agents and the anti-LGBT law in Georgia has drawn comparisons to similar laws passed by the Russian government. Russia supported the Georgian government during the recent protests, in comparison to the reaction of the EU. According to analysts, the shared conservative values between the Georgian and Russian governments on issues like LGBT rights and the EU’s emphasis upon liberalism had contributed to a thaw in ties between Georgia and Russia. Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder of Georgian Dream and the former Prime Minister of Georgia accused the West of trying to undermine Georgian sovereignty and being responsible for Georgia’s problems. However, while some have feared Georgia becoming a Russian satellite state like Belarus, the reality is more nuanced. Since a 2008 war with Georgia, Russia has recognized the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia and supported them. The Russian government has shown little sign of changing its position, despite the Georgian government promising to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia. Thus, Georgia is unlikely to become a full-fledged ally of Moscow, unless the border issue is resolved. Nevertheless, Georgia faces the prospect of slipping into greater authoritarianism and a more anti-Western stance, with the existing government. The upcoming parliamentary elections on 26 October have been called as a battle for the country’s future. Salome Zourabichvili, the President of Georgia stated the country faced a choice between a secure European future and moving into Russia’s orbit. The Georgian government has also been trying to move closer with the Government of the People’s Republic of China, joining the Belt and Road Initiative and allowing a Chinese consortium to construct a port on the Black Sea coast. If Georgian Dream wins the elections, the country is likely to continue its antagonism towards the West. Additionally, Georgia is unlikely to receive membership in the EU and NATO soon, pushing it further away from the West and more towards other states like China and Russia.

## War in Ukraine: Daily Updates\*

By Advik S Mohan, Neha Tresa George and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: President.gov.in, Belta News, Sputnik/Vladimir Fedorenko, TNS, REUTERS/Guglielmo Mangiapane and Chris J Ratcliffe/EPA, kremlin.ru, Institute for the Study of War

### **War in Ukraine Day: 979**

**Putin announces strategic nuclear deterrence exercise**

#### **War on the Ground**

On 30 October, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on the first drone attack in Chechnya, Russia's North Caucasus republic. According to Agentstvo, a media outlet, the drone targeted a building of the Russian Special Forces University which was named after Vladimir Putin. Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya's dictator said that the strike damaged a building although no casualties were recorded.

On 29 October, *Guernsey Press* reported on the Russian attacks on Kyiv and Kharkiv which led to the death of four people and injury of 15. According to the report, drones, missiles and bombs were used in a continuous aerial attacks. According to Oleh Syniehubov, Regional Governor of Kharkiv, the aerial attack led to the destruction of 20 houses. Another bomb struck the landmark Derzhprom building in Kharkiv city,

wounding seven people. Ihor Terekhov, mayor of Kharkiv confirmed the intensifying attacks by Russia on Kharkiv. He also warned the people to be cautious during air raid warnings.

On 30 October, a report was published by Mariana Katzarova, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Russia. She said that Russia engaged in "torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" as "state-sanctioned tools for systemic oppression." She added that this was not a new phenomenon for Russia. The report elaborated on the 1300 political prisoners in Russia who were subjected to brutal treatment that included rape and other forms of sexual violence. The torturers were reported to be using methods like forcing the person's head to remain underwater, carrying out mock executions and rape with rubber batons, broomsticks, or bottles. One of the methods used is known as the "call to Putin" where the sensitive parts of the body such as the genitals are subjected to electric

\* 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.

shocks. However, Putin was not directly condemned for ordering the torture. Katarova received information from human rights and other sources working in Russia.

### **The Moscow View Claims by Russia**

On 29 October, RT reported on the strategic nuclear deterrence exercise set to be held in Russia. Vladimir Putin, Russia's President announced the launch of the exercise involving ballistic and cruise missile launches. Putin said: "Given the growth of geopolitical tensions as well as the emergence of new external threats and risks, it is important to have modern strategic forces that are constantly ready for combat use." He added that Russia aimed to maintain its nuclear arsenals at the "sufficient level" and not to move to an arms race. The exercise is aimed to ensure the safety and security of the region. Russia will be equipped with new stationary and missile systems with higher precision and shorter launch preparation. Putin added that the newly installed systems would have higher anti-missile defence penetration capabilities.

On 29 October, CNN reported on Russia's claims over the control of Selydove town, located southeast of the city of Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region. Selydove was a key area for the Ukrainian stronghold by which they aimed to prevent Russia's advances towards eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian officials have not yet confirmed the Russian claims. However, Vitaliy Milovidov, 15th brigade national guard spokesperson had mentioned on intensifying Russian attacks aimed to have a foothold. Selydove is a town capable of accommodating large number of people and also hide equipment.

On 29 October, Euronews reported on the visit of Choe Son-hui, North Korea's Foreign Minister to Russia. It was her first visit to Russia in two weeks. The exact reason for the trip was unknown. The visit comes after NATO confirmed the deployment of North Korean soldiers in Russia. The Kremlin said that Putin had no plans to meet her. Further details of the visit were unknown. However, there were speculations about Russia delivering technology to North Korea which

would in turn escalate the threat from North Korea's weapons programme.

On 29 October, RT reported on the statements made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President on the newly opened Rheinmetall arms factory in Ukraine. The company plans to establish four factories inside Ukraine. According to him, the factory would be treated similarly like all the defence facilities in Ukraine, despite it being owned by Germany's largest defence contractor. The statement came amidst the announcement of the launch of the new Rheinmetall factory in Ukraine by Armin Papperger, the company's CEO. He said that it would carry out services in infantry vehicles and tanks along with the production of gunpowder and air defence systems. Peskov said that it would come under the category of a "legitimate target" for the Russian military.

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

On 29 October, Politico reported on the US's decision to charge a premium on its G7 EUR 45 billion loan to Ukraine set to be given before the end of 2027. The scheme finalised its rule last week and asked countries to adjust their interest rates based on borrowing costs. The surcharge being discussed in the US is 1.3 per cent higher than Washington's cost of borrowing on financial markets. The premium is a guarantor against the risk that the Russian-frozen assets used to pay the loan would be unfrozen prior to the repayment of the loan. According to some officials of the EU, the US was looking for a higher rate of return on its portion of help to assure the Congress that the taxpayers were not at risk.

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## **War in Ukraine Day 978:**

**Nordic ministers support the Ukraine President**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 28 October, the Government of Croatia and the Government of Ukraine had agreed to a weapons exchange deal. According to the deal, Croatia will receive financial aid for the purchase of up to 50 Leopard 2A8 tanks. In exchange, the Croatian government promised to send 30 M-84 tanks and 30 M-80 infantry fighting vehicles alongside spare parts and ammunition to Ukraine. The Ministry of Defence of Croatia informed Ivan Anusic, the Minister of Defence of Croatia signed a memorandum of understanding with Boris Pistorius, the Federal Minister of Defence of Germany. The price of the new Leopard 2A8 tanks will be reduced by the amount to be paid by the Federal Government of Germany towards Croatia for transferring equipment to Ukraine. Anusic informed the initiative would be implemented soon, and it aimed to help Ukraine combat Russian aggression. Croatia has provided Ukraine with over EUR 300 million in assistance, since the beginning of the invasion.

On 28 October, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine held a meeting with Bjarni Benediktsson, the Prime Minister of Iceland. Zelenskyy is scheduled to attend the

fourth Ukraine-Nordic Summit during the visit. The Ukrainian President praised Iceland for supporting Ukrainian membership of NATO. He stated NATO membership for Ukraine was a reliable way towards achieving a just peace. Additionally, Zelenskyy informed a unified and decisive response was necessary to deal with the involvement of North Korean troops and Russian usage of weapons provided by North Korea and Iran.

On 28 October, *swissinfo* reported on Yoon Suk Yeol, the President of South Korea statement on shared information on the deployment of North Korean troops in Ukraine. During a phone call with Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, Yoon stated the deployment of North Korean troops by Russia to Ukraine might occur sooner than expected. Additionally, Yoon informed the Government of South Korea hoped to take practical countermeasures with the EU and member states against the North Korean aggression. He also informed they would improve efforts to monitor and block illegal exchanges between Russia and North Korea. Meanwhile, von der Leyen informed the presence of North Korean troops exacerbated the Ukraine war.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 28 October, *RT* reported on Russian warplanes destroying a Ukrainian temporary deployment point in Kharkov Oblast. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation informed about the successful attack through a glide bomb and stated that a powerful blow was delivered to the enemy. The ministry further informed that the command staff of a Ukrainian Armed Forces unit was present at the facility. According to video footage, the destroyed facility was in the town of Volchansk, located about six kilometres away from the Russian border. The Russian government has used glide bombs to target Ukrainian fortified positions regularly.

On 28 October, the Government of the Russian Federation had accused Western countries of openly trying to interfere in the parliamentary elections in Georgia. Dmitry

Peskov, the Press Secretary of the President of the Russian Federation informed voters in Georgia had the right to independently choose their own future and make relevant decisions. Peskov alleged that Western countries were trying to interfere in the elections and arm-twist the Government of Georgia into following Western terms. Peskov also denied allegations that the Government of the Russian Federation was trying to influence the situation in Georgia. The comments by Peskov came amidst a dispute between the Georgian government and the Georgian opposition over election results.

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

On 28 October, Mark Rutte, the Secretary-General of the NATO stated North Korean troops were present in the Kursk Oblast of Russia. According to Rutte, the presence of North Korean soldiers in Kursk was a significant escalation of its involvement in the Ukraine war. Rutte also stated the deployment was a dangerous expansion of the Russian war. However, Rutte also stated the deployment of North Korean troops showed the weakness and desperation of the Government of the Russian Federation. The remarks by Rutte came after Ukrainian intelligence had stated North Korean troops were prepared for combat with Ukraine. Sergey Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation responded to Rutte's remarks by stating that the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of North Korea had signed a security and defence treaty. According to Lavrov, the public treaty contained provisions which promised assistance if one of the countries was attacked.

On 28 October, *ERR News* reported on Eero Rebo, a Colonel from the Estonian Defence Forces had stated Russia was exaggerating its gains in Ukraine. According to Rebo, the Russian Armed Forces achieved only victories of local importance, such as in villages already under Ukrainian control. Rebo also stated there were negative developments on the battlefield, due to weather conditions which prevented equipment sales to the

battlefield. Additionally, Rebo informed the extensive firepower deployed by Russia succeeded in pushing Ukrainians out of certain areas on a tactical level. However, he also stated attacks by Ukraine on Russian ammunition depots were successful and produced results on the battlefield.

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### **War in Ukraine Days 976 & 977: Belarus President supports joint peace plan of China and Brazil**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 27 October, *ANI news* reported on the claims made by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine over Russia's attacks on Ukraine. According to him, Russia had ramped up its attacks with more than 1,100 guided aerial bombs, 560 drones and over 20 missiles of different types in the previous week. In his post on X, the social media platform, he thanked all the people who worked hard to protect and provide assistance to Ukraine. He further said the Ukrainian administration was working to counter the Russian offensives and strengthen the country.

On 27 October, Zelenskyy announced the creation of a "new format of cooperation"- Ukraine plus the countries of Northern Europe. He thanked all these countries, especially Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland for cooperating on the

defensive, political and economic fields. He stated the priority areas to be increasing domestic arms production and drones to support the Ukrainian army. He highlighted the increasing threats in border cities such as Sumy and Kharkiv and Ukraine's plans to improve diplomatic efforts with officials from the Northern Europe and energy companies.

On 26 October, *Reuters* reported on the attacks in Ukraine's southern Kherson region. It had led to the death of two civilians who were killed by a drone and an artillery fire. According to Oleksandr Prokudin, the regional governor of the Kherson region, the area was constantly being attacked by Russian artillery, drones and missiles.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 27 October, *The Moscow Times* reported on the claims of the Russian army over the advances made in eastern Ukraine. The Russian military said that its recent advance had led to the capture of a frontline village, Izmailovka village, eight kilometres north of an industrial hub in Kurakhove. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the army units captured the Izmailovka settlement. The announcement comes after Russia's claims of intercepting over 51 Ukrainian drones above the border areas of Russia.

On 27 October, *RT* reported on the warnings of Vladimir Putin, Russia's President over the usage of long-range weapons deep inside Russia. At the BRICS summit, Putin said that he hoped the West had heard and understood the consequences of his warning. He reiterated that the usage of these weapons against Russia would be considered a direct attack by the countries that supplied the weapons to Ukraine. He argued that NATO would help Ukrainian military in using high-precision weapons as it required space intelligence which Ukraine does not have. He said: "What is happening now is all being done by the hands of NATO officers. The only question is whether they will allow themselves to strike deep into Russian territory or not." He added that the Russian army was considering the chances and offering various options as responses.

On 27 October, *RT* reported on the Russian repulsion of an incursion into the Bryansk region, which borders Belarus in the west and Ukraine's Chernigov and Sumy regions on the south. According to Aleksandr Bogomaz, Governor of Bryansk, the Russian military along with border guards and National Guard units drove back an "armed group" that attempted to cross Russia's border with Ukraine near the village of Manev. The governor said that these forces opened fire which forced them to return. However, the extent of the incursion force and the losses are yet to be revealed. Bogomaz has also not reported on any casualties on the Russian side. He added that the situation was under control by the regional operations headquarters. The Russian Defence Ministry and Ukrainian military have not yet made any comments on this.

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

On 26 October, *Belta* reported that Aleksandr Lukashenko supported China and Brazil's attempts to formulate a peace plan to end the war in Ukraine. He said that both China and Brazil tried to promote a "jointly developed plan" to end the war. He added that he supported their participation in this process as both countries were not rivals of Russia. He further said that issues such as "territorial delimitation, cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of troops from the line of contact" were to be prioritised at the negotiating table. On the prisoner exchanges between Russia and Ukraine, he said that Belarus would continue facilitating the prisoner swaps and humanitarian missions between Russia and Ukraine. He added that the exchanges took place in their territory and supervision. He revealed that Belarus had normal contacts with Ukraine and could convey things easily. He further said that "some MPs, diplomats and the military were authorized to make the relevant contacts." On the alleged deployment of North Korean troops in Russia. He said that Russia did not require a third party to fight in the war. He emphasised that he did not believe these allegations as there was no proof. He condemned this claim as an escalation of the conflict which would allow NATO to send their troops and strike deep

inside Russia.

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### **War in Ukraine Day 975:**

**Putin expresses willingness for "rational compromise"**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 25 October, an article in *Axios* informed Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine had warned North Korean troops could be present in combat zones in Ukraine within days. Zelenskyy informed through a tweet on X that North Korean troops could be deployed as early as 27 and 28 October. Additionally, the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine informed about 12,000 North Korean troops were present in Russia already.

On 25 October, an article in *The Korea Times* informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Korea had stated any troop dispatch to Ukraine would be in line with international law. Kim Jong-gyu, the Vice Foreign Minister stated any action carried out would be in line with international law, despite forces describing it as illegal. However, Kim did not confirm whether North Korean troops were fighting in

Ukraine, stating that was under the jurisdiction of the North Korean defence ministry. The comment by North Korea comes after Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia declined to deny reports about North Korean troops fighting.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 25 October, an article in *RT* informed Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia had stated the Government of the Russian Federation was ready for a negotiated compromise with the Government of Ukraine to end the conflict. However, Putin informed that any outcome needed to be favourable to Russia. He also informed the Russian government was in favour of accepting compromises, if they were rational towards Russia. According to Putin, the unwillingness of the Ukrainian government to negotiate hampered any potential peace discussions. The Russian President also informed Russia had received a proposal from the Government of Türkiye to discuss a potential peace deal.

On 25 October, an article in *RT* informed the Bank of Russia had increased its key interest rate by 200 basis points to a record high of 21 per cent. The Bank gave the persistence of inflation as the reason for the interest rate increase, which is part of a monetary tightening campaign followed by the Bank. The central bank also informed that inflation was higher than the previous forecast of 6.5-7 per cent, and consumer prices increased by 9.8 per cent in the past month. Additionally, the Bank informed it expected inflation to stand at 8.0-8.5 per cent this year, higher than the target of four per cent. According to the Bank, a wider budget deficit and additional budget expenditures were responsible for the increase in inflation. The Bank also informed additional monetary tightening was required to ensure inflation was able to remain within the target of four per cent.

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

On 25 October, an article in *Alarabiya News* informed the Federal Government of Germany had stated the deployment of North Korean troops in Ukraine by Russia

would be a clear escalation. Kathrin Deschauer, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany urged North Korea to refrain from sending troops. Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor stated the development was worrying. According to Scholz, the deployment of North Korean troops showed Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia was facing difficulties during the war.

On 25 October, an article in [swissinfo.ch](https://www.swissinfo.ch) informed Boris Pistorius, the Minister of Defence of Germany wanted to develop an advanced version of the Taurus cruise missile known as Taurus Neo. An anonymous source from the German Parliament informed Pistorius wanted to buy 600 of the Taurus missile advanced versions. The source informed the ruling government in Germany supported the Taurus purchase, making its implementation likely despite a tight budget. However, the Taurus project is only listed as an option in the 2025 budget documents at present. The magazine Der Spiegel informed this was because Pistorius is yet to secure the EUR 350 million required for the project. Due to this, the first deliveries of the Taurus Neo are unlikely before 2029.

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## **War in Ukraine Day 974:**

**Russia ratifies Defence Treaty with North Korea**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 24 October, *Swissinfo* reported on the Russian attacks in the eastern Ukraine. According to the regional authorities, six people were dead and 10 were injured. Oleh

Syniehubov, the governor of the Kupiansk region reported on a thermobaric ammunition attack in the town that wounded 10 people. He said a shop, the town market and a two-storey building were targeted in the attack. Russian forces were reportedly advancing slowly back to the Kupiansk town, the place where they were pushed back in 2022. Increased Russian shelling was reported in the strategic city of Pokrovsk in eastern Donetsk that killed three people. Russian troops were seen to make advances in the coal-mining town of Selydove, southeast of Pokrovsk and Chasiv Yar. However, the regional authorities have not yet revealed whether the Russians have entered the town.

On 24 October, Ukraine's military intelligence services reported on the North Korean troops deployed in the Kursk Oblast. It observed 12,000 troops including 500 officers and three generals entering conflict. In a statement, Ukraine said: "Moscow has appointed Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov responsible for control of the training and adaptation of North Korean troops." Whereas in the BRICS summit, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President called the war attempts to counter Russia as "illusory." He said: "I will say directly that these are illusory calculations, that can be made only by those who do not know Russia's history." On the same day, Kharkiv's regional governor reported on the injury of four following a Russian strike in one of the frontline towns in Kupiansk in northeast Ukraine. Russian forces have been observed making advances near Kupiansk and nearby villages for several months in 2022, post Ukrainian capture back, it has been advancing slowly towards the northern outskirts of Kupiansk.

On 24 October, *The Moscow Times* reported on the statements of Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General at the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia. He emphasised "just peace" and called for an end to the war in Ukraine. On the final day of the summit, he said: "We need peace in Ukraine, a just peace in line with the UN Charter, international law, and the UN General Assembly resolution." He also spoke on the importance of following "the principles of sovereignty, territorial

integrity, and political independence of all states.” Vladimir Putin, Russia’s President and Guterres were set to meet the next day for direct talks.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 24 October, *RT* reported on the ratification of a bilateral defence treaty with North Korea in the Russian state of Duma. It was earlier signed in June, following Putin’s visit to North Korea. The agreement highlights the “comprehensive cooperation between the countries that included national security issues.” They vowed not to engage with third parties that disrupted others’ sovereignty and pledged to support each other in case of any attacks. Andrey Rudenko, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister believed that the agreement would upgrade the relationship with North Korea to a new level. He said: “This treaty is open, it will be published, there are no secret points in it. Everything is written clearly.” He also expressed Russia’s aim to counter the growing threats from the West. He also warned against the deployment of strategic nuclear weapons in the Asia-Pacific due to the growing military alliances. The decision of ratification of the agreement came amidst increasing allegations against Russia over the deployment of North Korean soldiers on the battlefield. When asked about this during the BRICS summit, Putin cited the “Comprehensive treaty” signed between them and said that whatever they did under this agreement was their business.

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

On 24 October, *yle* reported on the closure of two Russian border crossings in Finland. According to the border guard forces, the borders of Parikkala and Lieksa have been unused for years. Samuli Murtonen, the deputy commander of the North Karelia Border Guard said: “The decision does not change the prevailing situation in any way and does not affect local residents.” The decision to close the borders was taken by the Finnish and Russian border guard officials earlier this month. One of the reasons behind it was “suspected instrumentalised migration by Russia” which prompted the Finnish government to close

all crossing points along the eastern border last year. With the decision to close the border, the Finnish government was supposed to amend the regulation, erasing references to the Parikkala and Lieksa border posts. Practical measures had already started along the borders, including the removal of signs.

### **The Global Fallout:**

On 25 October, *Anadolu Agency* reported on the statements made by Yoon Suk Yeol, South Korea’s President, over the alleged deployment of North Korean troops in Russia. At a joint press conference following a summit with Andrzej Duda, the Polish President, he pledged that Seoul would not “sit idle.” He said: “If North Korea dispatches special forces to the Ukraine war, we will provide support to Ukraine step by step and consider taking necessary measures for the security of the Korean Peninsula.” South Korea and Poland decried the deployment and called for joint efforts to counter the security threats.

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### **War in Ukraine Day 973:**

Increased combat clashes in the Pokrovsk city in eastern Donetsk

### **War on the Ground:**

On 23 October, Ukraine's military reported on 166 "combat clashes" in the past 24 hours in Pokrovsk, Kurakhivsk in Donetsk. Eastern Donetsk was reported to be under constant drone attacks with 56 assaults. Pokrovsk's

location serves as Ukraine's supply hub and an important rail supply route for Ukraine's defence supplies. This has been critical for Ukraine's Vulhedar town in north of Donetsk. The area is also under slow Russian advance taking control of four towns in eastern Ukraine in Donbas. However, Russian Defence Ministry is yet to confirm.

On 23 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the interception of 57 Russian drones in an overnight attack. According to the Ukrainian Defence Forces, the Russian military attacked with 81 Shahed-type attack UAVs and unidentified drones from the region of Primorsko-Akhtarsk and Kursk. They also targeted Odesa region using a Kh-31P guided missile from the Black Sea. The defence forces were reported to have destroyed the 57 drones over the regions of Odesa, Mykolaiv, Vinnytsia, Sumy, Cherkasy, Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil, Kirovohrad, Kyiv, Poltava, Chernihiv, and Kharkiv regions. 15 drones were reported to have been lost. However, nine of them were observed in the airspace. In response to this, an air alert was raised in several regions.

On 23 October, *Yonhap News Agency* reported on the statements of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), South Korea's intelligence agency on the deployment of North Korean soldiers in the war. According to its statements, around 3000 soldiers were expected to have been sent to Russia for military support. The agency added that 10000 more were believed to be stationed by December 2024. Citing a report by NIS, Park Sun-won of the opposition Democratic Party said: "After the first batch arrived in Russia from Oct. 8-13, an additional 1,500 soldiers have been sent there." The dispatched soldiers were believed to be accommodated at military facilities in Russia to undergo special training on the usage of military equipment and unmanned aerial vehicles. NIS said that Russians considered the soldiers to be physically and mentally fit although they slacked off in handling

modern warfare. North Korea has not made any official comments so far.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 23 October, the *TASS* reported on the attack of a Russian Su-34 frontline bomber on a Ukrainian stronghold in the border Kursk region. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the crew safely returned after confirming the interception of the Ukrainian personnel. The Ministry also said the strike was launched at examined targets by air bombs with unified glide.

On 23 October, the *TASS* reported that the Russians were testing drone swarm technology for their special military operations. According to a Russian serviceman, the troops were testing the technology near Chasov Yar city. With the increasing usage of attack drones, the Russian military aimed to combat Ukrainian electronic warfare through this technology effectively. In addition, it was reported that the forces of the Espanola Volunteer Brigade in the Chasov Yar area were using technologies like FPV drones equipped with machine vision, network-centric drone control technologies and new kinds of unmanned vehicles.

On 23 October, *RT* reported on the destruction of a Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) station by the Russian forces. The EW was identified as a NOTA EW system in the Kursk region to counter the UAVs coming from Russia. Footage was released by Russia's Defence Ministry, showing a projectile causing an explosion. However, the Russian military did not reveal whether the NOTA was in use but said that its operators were killed in the attack. According to the statement from the Defence Ministry, the Ukrainian system failed to keep up with Inokhodets the weapons system used for the strike.

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

On 23 October, *Euronews* reported on the visit of António Guterres, the UN's Secretary-General to the BRICS summit hosted by Russia in Kazan. His decision to accept the

invitation was condemned by Ukraine and Lithuania. According to the Kyiv Foreign Affairs Ministry: "This is a wrong choice that does not advance the cause of peace. It only damages the UN's reputation." It also noted that Guterres had earlier declined the invitation to attend the peace summit organised in Switzerland. Gabrielius Landsbergis, the foreign minister of Lithuania also referred to the decision as "unacceptable." Guterres and his spokespeople have not made any official response to these criticisms.

On 23 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the response from Germany over the alleged deployment of North Korean soldiers in Russia. The German Foreign Office summoned North Korea's charge d'affaires over these allegations. The Berlin officials called this "serious and in violation of international law." They added that Pyongyang's support "directly threatened German security and the European peace order." This was against the backdrop of a report by the NIS claiming that North Korean soldiers were being deployed in Russia as part of the "comprehensive strategic partnership" signed between the countries.

On 23 October, *Espresso.Global* report on the evaluation made by the UK on Russia's drone capabilities. The UK Ministry of Defence cited that Russia had launched more than 1300 drones against Ukraine in September 2024, marking its highest monthly attack. According to their estimates and current data, Russia would bypass this number in October 2024. The report read: "Russia is likely increasing its capacity for large-scale drone strikes on Ukraine, boosting Iranian-supplied drones with increased domestic production." The UK intelligence added that Russia aimed to target sites including energy infrastructure by striking deep into Ukrainian territory.

On 23 October, *Politico* reported that NATO and the US had confirmed the alleged deployment of North Korean troops to Russia. According to Lloyd Austin, the US Defence Secretary, this was a serious issue that would have an impact on Europe and the Indo-Pacific. He said that the US was investigating the rewards North Korea

would get in return for helping Russia. Farah Dakhlallah, NATO spokesperson said: "Allies have confirmed evidence of a DPRK troop deployment to Russia. If these troops are destined to fight in Ukraine, it would mark a significant escalation in North Korea's support for Russia." Meanwhile, Ukraine had already called for the surrender of soldiers when they were deployed to fight in Ukraine. In light of this issue, NATO summoned a South Korean delegation to summarise the report published by the NIS. However, Russia had called these allegations "fake news" and "contradictory information."

On 23 October, *Arab News* reported on the "call for peace" brought by Vladimir Putin, Russia's President during the BRICS summit, which was attended by 20 world leaders. During the summit, Putin invited offers from the members to mediate the conflict with Ukraine. It was the "largest diplomatic forum" in Russia since its Ukraine invasion in 2022. At the summit, Xi Jinping, the Chinese President warned against an escalation of fighting in Ukraine. He said: "We must adhere to the three principles of 'no spillover from the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no adding oil to the fire by relevant parties,' to ease the situation as soon as possible." Narendra Modi, India's Prime Minister also expressed his intent to support "dialogue and diplomacy."

On 23 October, *Euronews* reported that a 57-year-old man was charged with a double murder of Ukrainian soldiers who were under treatment in Germany. He was reported to be a Russian supporter of the Ukraine invasion. He was arrested following a knife attack that killed two soldiers in the small town of Murnau. According to the Munich prosecutors, the suspect who was an acquaintance of the two victims attacked them over an argument about the situation in Ukraine. They also said that a knife was retrieved from his home nearby. They added that the man is "a supporter of an exaggerated Russian nationalism" and "supports unreservedly the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine."

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## **War in Ukraine Day 972:**

**European Parliament approves loan up to EUR 35 billion to Ukraine**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 22 October, *The Moscow Times* reported on the Russian drone attack in the northeastern Ukrainian region of Sumy. The overnight attack had led to the death of three people including one child. According to the regional authorities, more than two dozen Iranian-designed drones were found in Sumy. Ukrainian Air Force revealed that around 60 drones were detected in the Ukrainian airspace. Sumy, which lies across the Kursk region was experiencing increasing bombardments from Russia according to the local officials.

On 21 October, *The Korea Times* reported on the statements of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, calling for a response to the alleged North Korean deployment in Russia. In his address, he said: "This is a challenge, but we know how to respond to

this challenge. It is important that partners do not hide from this challenge as well." He added that Russia and its allies should be stopped to end the war. The head of Ukraine's Main Directorate of Intelligence stated that they were waiting for the North Korean troops to show up for the first units in the Kursk direction. They were also unsure about the number of soldiers who would be equipped.

On 22 October, *France24* reported on Ukraine's declining population since Russia's invasion in 2022. Florence Bauer, Eastern Europe head at the UN Population Fund said that its population had declined by eight million with the birth rates being one of the lowest in the world. The current birth rate was one child per woman against the 2.1 children per woman to maintain a stable population. Bauer said that the war had impacted the villages with older populations, depopulated ones and couples unable to start families. She added that exact estimate could only be analysed with a full census at the end of the war.

On 22 October, *Anadolu Agency* reported on the response from South Korea over the alleged deployment of North Korean troops in Russia. It had vowed to launch "phased measures" and urged Pyongyang to "immediately withdraw troops from Russia." North Korea and Russia have not responded to the allegations although they defended their right to strengthen their military relations. NATO was seeking more information to confirm the development.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 22 October, the European Parliament approved new macro-financial assistance (MFA) up to EUR 35 billion worth loan to help Ukraine against Russia during 2024 and 2024. 518 voted in favour while 56 voted against it along with 61 abstentions. The loan was part of the G7 package promised back in July. These MFA loans depended upon Ukraine's continuous commitment to uphold its democratic measures, human rights and policy conditions to be underlined in an MoU. The Council intends to adopt the proposal after the Parliament's vote. It will come into effect after its publication in the

Official Journal of the EU.

On 22 October, *ABC News* reported the closure of a Russian consulate in Poland. Radek Sikorski, Poland's foreign minister said that this was in response to the "Hybrid war actions against Poland and its western allies" in the form of acts of sabotage which included arson attacks, alleged to be sponsored by Moscow. He said that Poland had the right to take "decisive actions" if it did not end. The consent for the Russian Consulate in Poznan was withdrawn and its personnel were restricted from coming to Poland. He added that around 20 sabotage investigations were ongoing. In response, Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson promised "A painful response to yet another hostile act."

On 23 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the statements made by Alexander Stubb, Finnish President, upholding NATO security against the backdrop of the Ukraine-Russia war. He said: "I think it's very important that NATO has a strong deterrence, and that deterrence is based on troops, it's based on missiles, and it's based on a nuclear deterrence." He highlighted that Finland would be a security provider to NATO with its largest military capabilities across air, sea and land. It also urged the EU to invest in defence and to swiftly respond to the growing demands of emerging threats. He also promised Finland's support to Ukraine and expressed his interest in Ukraine being a member of NATO.

On 22 October, *POLITICO* reported on a potential bill of USD 20 billion share of the G7 loan, set to be approved by the US. According to Janet Yellen, Treasury Secretary of the US: "We're 99 percent there and it's nailing down just a couple of relatively small things." The loan would give a chance to the G7 nations to provide longer-term funding for Ukraine's war efforts. On the G7 loan from the Russian frozen assets in the EU, Yellen said that she was confident that the money remained locked and would be serviced by the Russian assets.

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### **War in Ukraine Day 971:**

**US Secretary of Defence announces USD 400 million military aid**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 21 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the execution of captured Ukrainian soldiers by Russian forces. Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) had launched a pre-trial investigation into the execution of two Ukrainian soldiers near the Selydove, Donetsk region. According to preliminary data, Russian military servicemen captured the two on 18 October in the Pokrovsk district of the Donetsk region. They then put them face down on the ground and shot them at close range with automatic rifles. According to PGO, the shooting of the prisoners violated the Geneva Conventions as it was regarded as an international crime. The investigation was headed by the Main Directorate of the Security Service of Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

On 21 October, *Al Jazeera* reported on South Korea's response to the alleged deployment of North Korean soldiers to Russia. South Korea had called Georgy Zinoviev, the Russian ambassador and condemned Pyongyang's acts while calling for their "immediate withdrawal." According to

Seoul's National Intelligence Service, 1500 North Korean soldiers from the elite "Storm Corps" had arrived in Russia and were set to head to the front lines of the war with Ukraine. It also added that additional forces were yet to be deployed. Seoul's Foreign Affairs Ministry stated: "We condemn North Korea's illegal military cooperation, including its dispatch of troops to Russia, in the strongest terms." Meanwhile, Zinoviev pointed out that the cooperation between Russia and North Korea did not intend to threaten the interests of South Korea. Yoon Suk-Yeol, the South Korean President also urged NATO to take "concrete countermeasures." Russian officials have not yet confirmed the deployment although they pledged to continue their alliance with North Korea.

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

On 21 October, *CNN* reported on the visit of Lloyd Austin, the US's Secretary of Defence to Ukraine. He met with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President and Rustem Umerov, the President and the Defence Minister of Ukraine. Austin said: "It's been absolutely remarkable that Ukraine has been able to do what it's done." They further discussed on importance of defending Ukrainian territory, particularly the eastern region of Pokrovsk and the regeneration and recruitment of the Ukrainian army. According to Zelenskyy, the issue of using long-range weapons was also discussed. In addition to all these, Austin announced a USD 400 million military package, providing additional munitions, armoured vehicles and anti-tank weapons to Ukraine. Till now the US has provided USD 59.5 billion in "critical assistance."

On 21 October, Mark Rutte, NATO Secretary General warned over North Korea sending of troops to aid Russia in war in Ukraine. He stated his talks with Yoon Suk Yeol, South Korea's President on how its spy agency found the presence of North Korean special forces in Russia for training. Rutte said: "North Korea sending troops to fight alongside Russia in Ukraine would mark a significant escalation." Kim Hong Kyun, South Korean First Vice Foreign Minister condemned the troop transfer saying:

"Strongly urged the immediate withdrawal of North Korean forces and the cessation of related cooperation." In response, South Korea summoned the Russian ambassador to Seoul calling the deployment as a serious threat. Kim also stated that there would be a joint measure from the international community to address the threat to their security interest.

On 21 October, Germany's Command Task Force (CTF) launched a "multinational naval tactical headquarters for the Baltic Sea" in Rostock a coastal city in Germany. The CTF will coordinate the naval activities for all NATO allies on the Baltic Sea focusing on "peace, crisis and war." Boris Pistorius, Germany's Defence Minister said: "We are committed to ensuring the security of the Baltic region, the strength of NATO, and the defense of our shared value." According to Pistorius, a command staff already exists in Rostock which will later function for NATO's tasks. Germany will lead the group along with 11 other NATO members. This will operate as a symbol to indicate Baltic-NATO relations amid the war in Ukraine and the threat of the Russian Baltic Fleet near Kaliningrad. This fleet exists separate from the Russian mainland between Poland and Lithuania which has gained significance post-Cold War. Earlier, NATO's objective was to ensure the western front of the Baltic was protected from the Soviet Union's Baltic Fleet and prevent Moscow's warships from attacking the US's supply convoys which were key to Europe's security. Since the Baltic accession to NATO, guarding Baltic sea routes has formed part of NATO's agenda.

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## **War in Ukraine Day 964:**

**Russian defence minister visits China; strengthens defence cooperation.**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 14 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the statements of Andrii Kostin, Ukraine's Prosecutor General to the Brazilian authorities. He said that he had received intelligence information regarding Putin's visit to the upcoming G20 summit in Brazil next month. He said: "Due to information that Putin may attend the G20 summit in Brazil, I would like to reiterate that it's an obligation for the Brazilian authorities as a state party of the Rome Statute to arrest him if he dares to visit." He argued that failure to arrest him would in turn suggest that leaders accused of crimes could travel anywhere. However, the Brazilian authorities had informed that Putin had not responded to the invitation.

### **The Moscow View: Claims from Russia**

On 14 October, *RT* reported on the statements made by Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian president on the potential nuclear talks with the US. He said that Vladimir Putin, Russia's President considered these talks necessary to minimise nuclear threats. He said: "We must consider all security issues as a whole, taking into account the current state of affairs." He stressed that the scope of the talks should be broader as nuclear powers like the US, UK and France were involved directly or indirectly in the war. Earlier, the US had shown interest in opening dialogue with Russia, China and North Korea over nuclear security issues.

On 14 October, *The Moscow Times* reported on the meeting between Andrei Belousov and Dong Jun, the defence ministers of Russia and China respectively. On his visit to

China, Belousov called for "strengthened military cooperation" between the countries. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Belousov was set to "hold a number of negotiations with the country's military and military-political leadership." Meanwhile, Dong Jun called for a "deepened strategic collaboration" and "advanced military relations." He also highlighted the growing relationship between the two countries by referring to it as "a model for major power relations."

On 14 October, *The Moscow Times* reported on statements by Tatyana Moskalkova, Russia's presidential human rights commissioner. According to her, Ukrainian troops had forcibly taken over 1,000 residents from Russia's Kursk region since their incursion. She said: "We know nothing about their fate. This is a gross violation of their rights and international norms of treatment of civilians." She added that she intended to raise the issue in the next meeting of her Ukrainian counterpart. While reporters could not independently verify her claims, Ukraine did not respond to the accusations.

On 14 October, *The Moscow Times* reported that the Kremlin refuted the claims of Moldova's authorities that it was interfering with the country's presidential elections and the referendum on joining the EU. According to Dmitry Peskov: "There are still many people in Moldova who support having good relations with our country." He added that these people were restricted from having their own political representation and politicians were banned from showing their alliance to Russia. Earlier, a police investigation in Moldova had discovered a vote-buying scheme that was found to be influenced by Russia.

On 14 October, *RT* reported on Vladimir Putin's decision to ratify the treaty on the comprehensive strategic partnership with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It was signed during his visit to Pyongyang back in June. The treaty involves both countries to assist each other in case of any foreign aggression. Further, it put forward "cooperation with each other to ensure regional and international peace and

security." They also concluded to not sign any agreements against the sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, the right to free choice and development of political, social, economic and cultural systems and other key interests of the other Party with any third countries." According to Russian media agencies, the proposal for ratification was being registered in the State Duma's docket.

On 14 October, *RT* reported on the Kremlin's response to "Steadfast Noon," NATO's annual nuclear exercise currently being conducted in Western Europe. Dmitry Peskov said that the drill was "untimely" against the backdrop of the ongoing Ukraine conflict. He added that the exercise would only escalate the tensions between the parties. Russia had always considered this system to be against the principle of nuclear non-proliferation.

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

On 14 October, *France24* reported that David Lammy, the UK's Defence Minister will attend the Foreign Affairs Council held in Luxembourg on the invitation from Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. This marks the first visit of a UK Defence Minister to the EU in two years. It came as part of the EU's aim to "reset" relations with the UK. Lammy said: "This visit is an opportunity for the UK to be back at the table, discussing the most pressing global issues with our closest neighbours and tackle the seismic challenges we all face."

On 15 October, *Reuters* reported on the statements of Mark Rutte, NATO's Secretary General on his first visit to the alliance's Ukraine mission in Wiesbaden. He said that NATO would not be intimidated by Russia's nuclear threats and continue its strong support to Ukraine. He said: "The message is that we will continue, that we will do what's necessary to make sure that he will not get his way, that Ukraine will prevail." He spoke at Clay Barracks, a US base that hosts the headquarters of the new mission, NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU).

On 14 October, NATO began "Steadfast Noon," its annual nuclear exercise in

Western Europe. It will involve more than 60 aircraft taking part in training flights. It is set to continue for two weeks and involves fighter jets capable of carrying US nuclear warheads although it does not involve live weapons. Mark Rutte, NATO's Secretary General said: "Steadfast Noon is an important test of the Alliance's nuclear deterrent and sends a clear message to any adversary that NATO will protect and defend all Allies." The exercise will have flights mainly over the host countries Belgium, the Netherlands and over the airspace of Denmark, the UK and the North Sea. This marked NATO's ways to take steps to ensure its "safety, effectiveness and credibility."

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### **War in Ukraine Day 962 & 963: Increased attacks in Sumy region lead to mass evacuation**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 14 October, an article in *Firstpost* informed that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine accused North Korea of

providing troops to support Russia. Zelenskyy stated that the Government of the Russian Federation had a growing alliance with regimes like North Korea. He added that the alliance was no longer merely about the transfer of weapons, but also involved the transfer of people from North Korea to fight for Russia. He made the remarks after a visit to Ukrainian allies where he requested more military and financial aid to combat Russia.

On 13 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the statements of Rustem Umerov, Ukraine's Defence Minister on the rising investments in Ukraine's defence industry. According to him, France, the UK, Italy, and Germany had assured their investments in Ukraine's defence complex. Following a meeting with the foreign ministers of these countries, he said: "I worked as part of the delegation led by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. We held productive meetings and have strong support and agreements that bring our victory closer." They discussed further steps to increase weapons production in Ukraine and measures to launch joint ventures with European allies. Umerov confirmed that the Russian frozen assets would be used for their defence needs. He also thanked the governments of France, Italy, Germany and the UK for their unwavering support.

On 14 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the evacuation of people from the border communities in the Sumy region. According to the Sumy Regional Military Administration, 535 people including 143 children were evacuated from 189 settlements. With the increasing attacks near border settlements, an order was signed by the Sumy Military District Administration and the Siversk Military District Administration for the compulsory evacuation of people from 11 settlements of Novoslobidska and Putivlska territorial communities of Konotop district, 90 settlements of Bilopilia, Vorozhbianska, Krasnopilia, Miropilia, Mykolaivka, Khotin, Yunakivka territorial communities of Sumy district. Around 500 children are to be evacuated.

On 13 October, an article in *TVP World* reported that the Government of Ukraine

had informed international agencies about executions of Prisoners Of War (POWs) by the Government of the Russian Federation. Dmytro Lubinets, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner or Ombudsman for Human Rights informed the United Nations (UN) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) about the systematic execution of Ukrainian POWs by the Russian government. Lubinets also stated the actions of the Russian government violated international laws like the Geneva Convention. He requested the international community to not turn a blind eye to the crimes committed by Russia. Andrii Sybiha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine stated in response to the reports that the International Criminal Court must issue arrest warrants against Russian executioners and torturers. Sybiha also demanded greater international pressure on Russia, such as international access to detention sites and facilitating the release of POWs.

On 12 October, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine had informed of new arms agreements. Zelenskyy stated the Government of Ukraine and the Government of France had decided to create joint Ukrainian-French production facilities. According to Zelenskyy, the French investments were an opportunity to specifically establish new production facilities. Zelenskyy stated investments by allies into production facilities had significantly expanded weapons production, especially of drones. He also informed the Minister of Defence of Ukraine and the Ministry of Strategic Industries were responsible for ensuring the implementation of all agreements. Zelenskyy also stated Ukrainian allies who did not have weapons could aid Ukraine through providing financing and special technologies.

On 12 October, an article in *France 24* informed the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of Ukraine targeted each other with drone attacks. The Russian government informed it shot down 47 Ukrainian drones. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation informed the 47 drones shot down included 17 in Krasnodar Oblast, 16 over the Azov Sea and

12 over the Kursk Oblast. Russia also informed the Ukrainian drone attacks had killed one individual in Belgorod Oblast. According to the Ukrainian Air Force, Russia launched 28 drones towards Ukraine. The Ukrainian Air Force informed 24 of the 28 drones were destroyed in the Sumy, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Poltava and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts. Ivan Fedrov, Head of the Zaporizhzhia Military Administration informed Russian bombardments had wounded four citizens. Additionally, the Ukrainian Chief of Staff informed Ukrainian forces struck a fuel depot near Rovenky in Lugansk Oblast. Russian emergency services also informed they curbed a fire at the Feodosia oil terminal in the Crimea region, which emerged after a Ukrainian attack.

### **The Moscow View: Claims from Russia**

On 13 October, *TASS* reported on the liberation of a settlement in Mikhailovka in the Donetsk People's Republic by the Russian forces. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the Battlegroup Centre of the Russian army defeated seven Ukrainian brigades and liberated the settlement. The ministry added that the Russian forces struck the infrastructure of a Ukrainian military airfield and drone warehouses.

On 13 October, an article in *RT* informed Alexander Lukashenko, the President of Belarus had stated an escalation by the West in the Ukraine conflict was prevented through amending the Russian nuclear doctrine. Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia had informed in September the Russian nuclear doctrine would be changed. According to the doctrine, aggression against Russia or Belarus by a non-nuclear state with the support or participation of a nuclear state was to be considered a nuclear attack. Lukashenko stated the doctrine change cooled down the hotheads in the West. He also stated it prevented long-range missile strikes by Ukraine on Russia. According to the president, the doctrine update was discussed by Putin five years ago, and was not a fresh development.

On 13 October, the Government of the Russian Federation stated that it captured

another village in eastern Ukraine. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation informed the village of Mykhailivka was under Russian control now. Mykhailivka lies close to the town of Selydove, under Russian attack for the past few months. The capture of Mykhailivka came amidst an increased advance by the Russian Armed Forces towards the crucial mining town of Pokrovsk. The Government of Ukraine admitted this week the situation in the region was difficult.

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

On 14 October, *Ukrinform* reported on Hanno Pevkur, Estonia's Defence Minister's statements about purchasing defence equipment from Ukraine. According to him, Estonia was considering buying defence products from Ukraine, thus helping increase Ukrainian production. The martial law imposed in Ukraine banned the export of arms and defence materials. However, Pevkur noted that this ban would not apply if countries come to a mutual agreement. He added that Estonia was interested in buying items particularly long-range missiles.

On 14 October, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty* reported on the meeting scheduled among the EU foreign ministers. The meeting aimed to discuss the conflict in Middle east and the EU's support for Ukrainian defence and recovery against the backdrop of Hungarian resistance. The EU plans to impose sanctions on organisations and actors responsible for destabilizing Moldova's democracy and its path to the EU membership. It will also push for sanctions on Iran for supplying Russia with ballistic missiles.

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## **War in Ukraine Day 960:**

Zelenskyy presents the "Plan of Victory"

### **War on the Ground:**

On 10 October, *France24* reported on Zelenskyy's visit to France to present the "Victory Plan" to Emmanuel Macron, the French President. This visit came as part of his 48-hour trip to London, Paris, Rome and Berlin trying to cater military and financial support to Ukraine. According to Elysee, the official website of the French government, the talks aimed "to reaffirm France's determination to continue to provide, over the long term and with all of its partners, unwavering support to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people." The visit came after Macron visited a military camp in eastern France, to meet a brigade of Ukrainian troops who are training in France.

On 11 October, *France24* reported on the announcement made by Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister, over the Ukraine Recovery Conference. After discussing with Zelenskyy, Meloni informed that Italy was set to host the Conference from 10 – 11 July 2025. The previous conferences were held in Switzerland, London and Berlin. In the meeting where Zelenskyy presented his "Victory Plan," Meloni assured Italy's support to Ukraine. She said that Italy

intended to put Ukraine in the best possible condition to negotiate peace. Zelenskyy will also meet Pope Francis at the Vatican as part of his Europe tour.

### **The Moscow View: Claims from Russia**

On 10 October, *RT* reported on the Kremlin's response to the Italian source which claimed that Ukraine was ready for a ceasefire. According to Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President, Russia had not yet received any signals indicating that Ukraine was ready for a truce. Dmitry Litvin, the communications advisor to the Ukrainian President also denied these claims. He said: "We have the 'peace formula' which says clearly what Ukraine views as a just peace." These responses came against the claims put forth by an article in *Corriere della Sera*, an Italian daily which said: "The Ukrainian leader would be ready for a ceasefire along the current line - without recognizing a new official border - in exchange for some Western commitments." The article further suggested that the softening Ukrainian stance was due to Russia's advances in the Donbass region. This came ahead of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Rome, as part of a tour of several European capitals.

On 10 October, *RT* reported on the comments made by Dmitry Peskov over the claims of involvement of North Korean soldiers in the Ukraine war. He has refuted the statements of Kim Yong-hyun, the South Korean Defence Minister who claimed earlier that Pyongyang could send its forces to the war. Peskov termed it as another "hoax." The claims put forth by Yong-hyun were in the context of the "Comprehensive Treaty Partnership" signed between North Korea and Russia which demanded action if one of the countries were attacked.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 10 October, Mark Rutte, Secretary General of NATO visited London for meetings with Keir Starmer, the UK Prime Minister, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine and David Lammy, the UK Foreign Secretary and John Healey, the UK Defence Secretary. This was his first visit to an Allied nation after taking charge as the Secretary-General. The leaders discussed the UK's



significant contributions to NATO and support for Ukraine. He appreciated the UK's commitment to NATO and highlighted that it was one of the three countries that are investing 2 per cent of its GDP in defence. Additionally, he announced the upcoming NATO's annual nuclear exercise "Steadfast Noon" scheduled on 14 October. He also highlighted the UK's contribution to the reconstruction of Ukraine. On the same day, Joe Biden, the US President and Olaf Scholz, the German Chancellor spoke on the US-German relationship and support for Ukraine. Biden expressed his interest in continuing their alliance on geopolitical priorities. He also spoke about delivering assistance to Ukraine.

On 10 October, *Anadolu Agency* reported on the commencement of NATO's annual nuclear exercise "Steadfast Noon" scheduled to be held on 14 October. Mark Rutte announced it during his meeting in London with the leaders of Ukraine, the US and the UK. He said: "In an uncertain world, it is vital that we test our defence and strengthen our capabilities so that our adversaries know NATO is ready and able to respond to any threat." The two-week exercise will involve around 60 aircraft, including F-35A fighter jets and B-52 bombers, from 13 NATO nations. According to NATO officials, around 2000 military personnel will participate in the missions along with the US nuclear warheads. The drills will be hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands and will take place over the North Sea area.

On 10 October, the European Commission adopted a EUR 1.8 billion support package to Moldova for its Reform and Growth Facility for the period 2025-2027. It aims to boost Moldova's economy and bring it closer to its path to EU membership. The Growth Plan is based on three pillars mainly- "to increase financial assistance in the next three years, enhance access to the EU's single market, to support Moldova's socio-economic reforms." These will be done through the construction of new roads, infrastructure, energy security, healthcare, flexibility of supply chain, facilitating trade and transport connections, building on economic competitiveness and green transition. This was the biggest package announced by the EU since

Moldova's independence. Once the plan is adopted by Moldova, it will be asked to submit the reforms undertaken to accelerate its growth and alliance with the EU.

On 10 October, *the Financial Times* reported that the US intended to participate in the G7 fundraising for Ukraine despite uncertainty over the Russian frozen assets. According to some US and EU officials, the US aims to join the USD 50 billion loan to Ukraine even without the EU extending its sanction period. The original plan was to give USD 20 billion each from the US and the EU while Canada, Japan and the UK contributed to the rest. However, the US made its involvement dependent on changes to the EU sanctions thus assuring that the USD 210 billion in the Russian assets remained frozen throughout the year. On this, Hungary vetoed demanding that the sanctions should be renewed every six months. This led to the US and the EU adopting alternative plans to raise funds.

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## **War in Ukraine Day 959:**

**Russia launches ballistic missile in Odesa Oblast**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 09 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the overnight attack on a Russian arsenal near Karachevo in the Bryansk region. According to the report, Ukraine’s Unmanned Systems Force (USF) executed this operation overnight. The USF further noted that the 67th arsenal of the Russian army’s missile and artillery department is used to store and modify artillery and other weapons, including those supplied by Iran. It added that its units were in constant efforts to counter Russia’s offensive capabilities.

On 09 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian ballistic missile attack on a port infrastructure in the Odesa Oblast. The strike had led to the death of five people and injury of nine more. According to Oleksiy Kuleba, the Minister of Development of Communities and Territories: “All victims are Ukrainians. Currently, those injured are getting medical assistance, five are in serious condition.” The attack further led to the destruction of a container ship *Shui Spirit*, which was hoisting the flag of Panama. This was the third foreign ship suffering from a Russian attack in the last four days. Kuleba called for an increase in weapons, air defence, diplomacy and sanctions to deal with the Russian offensive.

On 09 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the statements of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President during the South East Europe summit in Dubrovnik, Croatia. He confirmed that receiving an invitation to NATO was part of the “Victory Plan.” He said: “A specific invitation to the Alliance is not NATO membership. Of course, it is better to be a member of the Alliance. But we are talking about strengthening our position now.” He also acknowledged the skepticism that came from several NATO members regarding Ukraine’s membership in NATO and cited this as the reason for the need of invitation as a first step.

On 09 October, *Reuters* reported on the declaration of emergency near Karachevo in the Bryansk region. This came after the Ukrainian troops claimed that it had carried out an overnight strike targeting one of Russia’s arsenals. The local branch of the Emergencies Ministry declared an emergency over the “detonations of explosive objects.” The Bryansk emergencies ministry said that the situation was brought under control and did not mention any weapons arsenal. Meanwhile, Alexander Bogomaz, the regional governor informed that the Russian air defence forces had destroyed over 24 drones over Bryansk.

### **The Moscow View: Claims from Russia**

On 09 October, *RT* reported that Russian troops liberated two villages in the Kursk region. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the troops liberated two villages: Novaya Sorochina, 15 kilometers north of Sudzha, and Nikolsky, a small populated area in the southwest of the Ukraine-controlled pocket of Kursk Region. It added: “The Ukrainian personnel were pushed back from their positions, and retreated in disarray.”

On 09 October, *RT* reported on the remarks made by the Russian Embassy in the UK in retaliation to the new wave of sanctions imposed on Russia over the alleged usage of chemical weapons in the war against Ukraine. The Embassy claimed that the Western countries were facilitating the delivery of banned chemicals to Ukraine for its use on the frontlines of war. The Embassy argued that the new sanctions were a means to divert from the various instances of the usage of chemical weapons by Ukraine.

On 09 October, *RT* reported on the statements made by Russia’s Defence Ministry on the destruction of Ukrainian armored vehicles. The Russian troops were reported to have destroyed two Ukrainian vehicles in the Kharkov region with explosives-laden FPV drones. The Ministry also informed that the Russian forces intercepted two tanks, including a French-made AMX-10. They also destroyed several artillery guns manufactured in France, Britain and the US. In a separate statement, the Ministry claimed that Ukraine had lost

over 50 troops in the Kharkov region within 24 hours.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 09 October, *Reuters* reported on the statements of Vasyl Bodnar, Ukraine's ambassador to Turkey. He said that Ukraine intended to hold a peace summit by the end of 2024 along with Russia. However, he refuted the possibility of any direct bilateral talks with Russia. He said: "One of the most important goals of this summit is to reach a fair peace in Ukraine. We are not talking about a format here in which Ukraine and Russia sit across from each other and Ukraine listens to Russia's demands." He added that the international community along with Ukraine would sit together and create a list of steps to establish peace in Ukraine. They aimed to discuss the demands with Russia based on this list. He pointed out that Turkey would play an important role in mediating the conflict as it has maintained its close ties with both Ukraine and Russia. On 08 October, *Reuters* reported on the statements made by Viktor Orban, Hungary's Prime Minister. He said that Ukraine cannot win the war with Russia on the battlefield. He added that a dialogue and ceasefire was needed to save the lives of people. Further, he said that the strategy adopted by the EU countries was not working out. He talked about his country seeking to establish a normal economic relationship with Russia in areas unaffected by sanctions. He also accused some western countries and called them "hypocrites" for blaming Russia and being heavily dependent upon Russia for gas and crude oil.

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### **War in Ukraine Days 957 & 958:**

**Ukraine claims attack on oil depot in Crimea**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 08 October, *swissinfo.ch* reported that the Ukrainian Air Force had shot down 18 drones launched by the Russian Armed Forces in Odesa Oblast. The Ukrainian Air Force stated Russia had launched 19 drones and two Iskander-M ballistic missiles in the attack. Oleh Kiper, the Governor of Odesa Oblast stated the drone attack on the city of Chornomorsk caused a fire in an apartment building, but there were no resulting casualties. Kiper also informed the drone attack caused another fire in an administrative building, and one drone fell into an open area without detonating. Officials from the Government of Ukraine also informed a Ukrainian was killed and five others injured by a Russian missile attack on a Palau-flagged vessel in the port of Odesa.

On 08 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the evacuation of two settlements in the Belgorod region of Russia. According to Vyacheslav Gladkov, the governor of the Belgorod Oblast, the two border villages-Petrivka and Solovyovka were decided to close down at a meeting of the Operational Headquarters. The meeting also decided to resettle the residents and arrange new housing for them. One of the reasons cited by Gladkov was the continuous shelling faced by the residents of the villages.

On 07 October, the *BBC* reported on the Ukrainian strike on an oil depot, off the coast of Crimea. According to Ukrainian officials, the country's missile forces launched an overnight strike on the Feodosia terminal, the largest oil processing facility on the peninsula. Russia-installed officials did not

confirm the strike. However, they had acknowledged a fire at the site. No casualties have been reported. According to the TASS, a municipal-level emergency had been declared and around 300 people had been evacuated from the region. The Russian officials also informed of the ongoing efforts to bring down the fire.

On 08 October, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian strike at the border of Sumy region. According to the Sumy Regional Military Administration, the Russian army fired 22 times at the border which led to the death of two civilians, Further, 26 explosions were recorded in the region. Mykolaivka, Khotin, Richkiv, Bilopilia, Krasnopilia, and Novoslobidska communities were shelled by Russia with anti-aircraft missiles.

On 08 October, *France 24* reported on the Government of South Korea statement on the death of North Korean soldiers in Ukraine. Ukrainian media had earlier reported that a Ukrainian missile strike in Donetsk killed six North Korean military officers fighting alongside the Russian Armed Forces. Kim Young-hyun, the Minister of National Defence of South Korea stated the report was highly likely to be true. Kim also informed he expected more troop deployments to Ukraine by the Government of North Korea, due to the mutual agreements between the North Korean government and the Government of the Russian Federation. The North Korean and Russian governments expanded military ties in recent years, with North Korean missiles and other weapons believed to be in use by Russia in Ukraine. Lim Eul-chul, a Professor at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies in South Korea stated the involvement of North Korean forces in Ukraine was to gain real-world combat experience and handling of different weapons.

### **The Moscow View: Claims from Russia**

On 08 October, *RT* reported on the statements made by Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister on Ukraine's bid to use the western-long range weapons inside Russia. He said: "As soon as this decision is taken by the West to allow Ukraine to use long-range missiles, we will learn that, and the

contingency mentioned by Vladimir Putin will already be in action." He was referring to the "contingency plan" outlined by Vladimir Putin, Russia's President if the long-range weapons were used to strike Russia. Earlier, Putin had mentioned that any such attacks would be considered as a direct attack by the countries that supplied the weapons. He further suggested that he could arm the opponents of the West with similar weapons in retaliation.

On 08 October, *RT* reported on the statements made by Aleksandr Grushko, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister condemning NATO and its expansion. He said: "NATO representatives have stopped hiding that they are preparing for a potential armed clash with Russia." He further added that regional defence plans were approved while military action against Russia was continuously being planned. He was referring to the Steadfast Defender exercise from January to May, one of NATO's biggest drills conducted near Russia's western border. He accused NATO of expanding its influence and threatening Russia by "...refusing to engage in dialogue with Moscow."

On 08 October, *RT* reported on the destruction of a French-made Caesar self-propelled howitzer in Ukraine by the Russian forces. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, it was targeted using a missile, a Kh-BPLA laser-guided munition, fired by a Russian Inokhodets (Orion) medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) strike drone. The military shared a footage of powerful explosion. It was discovered at a firing position in Ukraine's Sumy region.

On 07 October, *RT* reported on the disruption faced by Russian public broadcaster VGTRK. According to the company, their online services were subjected to an "unprecedented hacker attack." However, there were no significant damage reported. National TV channels Rossiya-1, Rossiya-24 and online portals Vesti.ru and Smotrim.ru are among the multiple channels and outlets under the VGTRK media holding umbrella, which publishes and broadcasts in 53 of Russia's

languages. The company said that its experts were working to stop the consequences of this interference. Meanwhile, some of the online services and live streams on the main website have not yet been restored.

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

On 08 October, *Politico* reported on the statements made by Sébastien Lecornu, the Armed Forces Minister of France on the delivery of Mirage 2000 fighter jets to Ukraine. He said: "Mirage 2000s could be flying in Ukraine in the first half of 2025." The jets were promised in early 2024 itself by Emmanuel Macron, the French President. According to Lecornu, the French were trying to modify the fighter jets to suit the Ukrainian needs. He said that they aimed to fit air-to-ground capabilities and reinforce electronic warfare systems. He added that the exact time of delivery would depend on the progress of the training of pilots. Both Macron and Lecornu have declined to reveal the exact number of jets which were to be delivered to Ukraine.

On 09 October, the *BBC* reported on the sanctions imposed by the UK on Russian soldiers and agencies over the usage of chemical weapons. Russia's Radiological Chemical and Biological Defence troops and their commander Lt Gen Igor Kirillov along with two of the Russian defence ministry's scientific laboratories will be subjected to assets freeze and travel ban. David Lammy, the UK's Foreign Secretary warned that Putin would face consequences for breaching international law. He referred to Russia's usage of chemical weapons as "flagrant...cruel and inhumane." He pledged to use his whole powers to curtail these activities. Earlier, the US had also accused Russia of using chemical agents which Russia refused to accept.

On 08 October, *The Guardian* reported that Kamala Harris, the Vice President of the US and presidential candidate from the Democratic Party for the US election had

stated cooperation from the Government of Ukraine was required for peace talks. In an interview with the 60 Minutes programme of CBS News, Harris stated cooperation from Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine was required for any peace talks or peace deal. Harris informed she would not have a meeting with Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia without the involvement of Zelenskyy. Harris also warned Donald Trump, the presidential candidate from the Republican Party and her election opponent would surrender Ukraine to Russia on the first day.

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## EM Daily Brief\*

By Advik S Mohan, Samruddhi Pathak and Neha Tresa George



Source: Dato Parulava/POLITICO, Cristian Cristel/Xinhua/dpa, AP News, alertfonds.nl, JOHN THYS/AFP, Tbilisi Pride/FB

### ALBANIA

#### Former President arrested on corruption charges

On 22 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Ilir Meta, the former President of Albania and leader of the opposition Freedom Party was arrested on charges of corruption. The former President was arrested on his return to the Albanian capital of Tirana from Kosovo. The office responsible for investigations of corruption in Albania stated Meta was arrested for illegally collecting money through a foreign debt-collecting scheme and benefitting from dubious business deals alongside his ex-wife. Meta also faces allegations of illegally accepting lobbying payments from a US firm, and a failure to declare EUR 100,000 in income and a EUR 335,000 apartment. However, Meta denied all the charges against him. Sali Berisha, the leader of the opposition party the Democratic Party of Albania, and a close ally of Meta alleged political reasons were behind the arrest of

Meta. Berisha also accused Edi Rama, the incumbent Prime Minister of Albania and a former ally of Berisha of running a kleptocratic regime. Meta faces the prospect of up to 12 years in jail if he is found guilty of the charges against him. ("[Albania: Former President Ilir Meta arrested](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 October 2024)

#### Protestors demand resignation of the government

On 08 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on clashes occurred between protestors from opposition parties and the Albanian police. The protests were over corruption allegations against the current Government of Albania and the imprisonment of Ervin Salianji, an official from the opposition Democratic Party. Another demand was the release of Sali Berisha, the former Prime Minister of Albania from house arrest. Protestors demanded the replacement of the current government with a technocratic caretaker cabinet before general elections to be held next year. Protestors threw

\* 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.

petrol bombs at government buildings, chanted slogans like Down with the dictatorship and burnt posters of Edi Rama, the Prime Minister of Albania. Police officers used tear gas against the protestors as they approached government buildings. The violent clashes come before the scheduled start of negotiations between the Albanian government and the EU over shared areas of interest in the rule of law, the functioning of democratic institutions, and the fight against corruption. ("Albania: Clashes as protestors call on government to resign," Deutsche Welle, 08 October 2024)

## AUSTRIA

### Far-right Freedom Party member chosen as parliamentary speaker

On 24 October, the Austrian parliament chose Walter Rosenkranz from the Freedom Party (FPÖ) as the speaker becoming the first far-right politician to hold the position. Historically the position has been held only by the strongest party while FPÖ won 28.9 per cent of votes in the recent parliamentary elections performing better than the conservative People's Party (ÖVP). Rosenkranz won 100 out of 183 votes in the lower house in the held voting. Green Party voted against and Jewish groups also warned against elected Rosenkranz. The FPÖ has also been accused of not distancing from far-right extremism. According to the report, FPÖ is unlikely to govern long-term due to failure to win a majority and under pressure to secure coalition partners. ("Austria elects far-right parliamentary speaker," Deutsche Welle, 24 October 2024)

### Social Democrats and OVP exclude far-right from the coalition despite election victory

On 23 October, the *BBC* informed Alexander Van Der Bellen, the President of Austria had requested Karl Nehammer, the incumbent Chancellor of Austria and leader of the People's Party (OVP) to form a coalition government. Van Der Bellen requested the OVP to form the government despite the Freedom Party receiving the most votes in the September elections. Van Der Bellen stated Hebert Kickl, the leader of the Freedom Party could not find a coalition

partner ready to offer him the post of Chancellor. The President informed he had asked Nehammer to hold coalition talks with the Social Democrats party. The OVP had come second in the elections with 26.3 per cent while the Social Democrats finished third with 21 per cent. The Freedom Party received nearly 29 per cent. Nehammer informed the OVP and Social Democrats would require a third partner in the coalition to ensure a stable parliamentary majority. Meanwhile, Kickl accused Van Der Bellen of tampering with the established procedures of government formation in Austria by not handling the responsibility of forming the government to the election winner. (Bethany Bell, "Austria far right shunned for coalition despite winning election," BBC, 23 October 2024)

## BOSNIA

### Floods claim 26 lives

On 14 October, the death toll rose to 26 due to heavy flooding in central and southern Bosnia. Heavy rains hit the four municipalities on 04 October. This led to several bridges and roads being destroyed and most of the population being deprived of basic facilities like drinking water and electricity. On 13 October, residents reported that they heard a loud thunder in the middle of the night and witnessed heavy flooding that swept away the debris created by the previous floods. Rescue teams are being deployed in heavy numbers. Apart from 26 citizens being reported dead, one individual is also being reported as missing by the local authorities. Flooding and landslides have clogged the River Neretva which is causing further flooding. ("Death toll in Bosnia's floods reaches 26, with at least 1 person still missing 10 days after storm," The Associated Press, 14 October 2024)

## BELARUS

### President Lukashenko's proposals to contribute to BRICS

On 24 October, *BELTA News* reported that Aleksandr Lukashenko, the President of Belarus had listed out a set of proposals for improving the BRICS bloc. Lukashenko informed that the Government of Belarus

was aligned with the philosophy of BRICS, and had shown itself to be an effective and responsible partner. Lukashenko informed Belarus had shown substantial progress on the matter of achieving sustainable development and building a self-sufficient economy. He also informed Belarus was ready to help other countries achieve sustainable development, using its experiences. The Belarussian president also expressed his desire to provide greater support in the fields of security and providing support in the fight against hunger, poverty and climate change. Additionally, Lukashenko stated that Belarus was ready to contribute to humanitarian cooperation within BRICS. He informed that helping other countries in the fields of energy-efficient technologies, industrial biotechnology, medicine, education and the aerospace field were among priorities for Belarus. On the BRICS bloc, he said that it needed to work hard and act faster to achieve its objectives. According to Lukashenko, the bloc needed to ensure the key matters were identified and the issues were resolved. Lukashenko also offered the creation of a common payment system as a way to ensure the different member states coordinated together, and the BRICS bloc made its tangible contribution. He also stated the collective West would laugh at and trample the BRICS countries if they did not unite together and develop their concepts. Additionally, Lukashenko expressed his desire for Belarus to develop closer relations with the BRICS countries. ("Lukashenko: BRICS needs to work hard, otherwise the West will win and will simply laugh at us." *BELTA News*, 24 October 2024; "Lukashenko puts forward Belarus' proposals for BRICS." *BELTA News*, 24 October 2024)

## **BULGARIA**

### **GERB-UDF coalition receives highest vote share in the elections**

On 28 October, *The Sofia Globe* reported on the results of the elections held in Bulgaria on 27 October. GERB-UDF coalition, Boiko Borissov, the former Prime Minister's party secured the highest vote share of 26.39 per

cent. We Continue the Change-Democratic Bulgaria (WCC-DB) came second with 14.2 per cent followed by Pro-Russian Vuzrazhdane and Delyan Peevski's Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) with 13.36 per cent and 11.55 per cent. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the United Left coalition came fifth with 7.57 per cent while Alliance for Rights and Freedoms (ARF) coalition came sixth with 7.48 per cent. In total eight parties competed against each other in the elections. The final results along with the proportion of seats held and the names of the MPs in the legislature would be announced later. ("Bulgarian elections: GERB-UDF top as eight groups set to win seats – preliminary results." *The Sofia Globe*, 28 October 2024)

### **Conservatives fall short of majority in general elections**

On 27 October, *Le Monde* reported that the conservative GERB party led by Boyko Borisov, the former Prime Minister of Bulgaria had got the most votes in the general elections in Bulgaria. According to poll institute projections, GERB received 25 per cent of the vote, with 80 per cent of the polled votes counted. The reformist coalition PP-DB and the far-right Vazrazhdane party were set to finish second, receiving 13-15 per cent of the ballots. However, it remains to be seen whether the GERB will succeed in finding partners to govern. The recent election was the seventh general election held in Bulgaria since 2020, with no stable government formed since then. According to a recent opinion poll, around 60 per cent of Bulgarians viewed the political deadlock as alarming. The political instability also brought to a standstill anti-corruption reform and the energy transition in Bulgaria. Additionally, Vazrazhdane benefitted from the deadlock. Dobromir Zhivkov, the Director of the Market Links Institute informed that the growing influence of Vazrazhdane meant it was a likely partner for GERB. The relationship between the two parties also improved with the support of GERB for the controversial anti-LGBTQ bill. Zhivkov also informed that GERB could form a minority cabinet with



Delyan Peevski, the business tycoon who formed a breakaway faction within the MRF party. According to Zhivkov, the probability of a coalition between GERB and Peevski depended upon whether Donald Trump who was more lenient towards corruption won the US presidential election.

(“[Conservatives top Bulgarian elections but fall short of majority](#),” *Le Monde*, 27 October 2024)

## CYPRUS

### **Strategic dialogue with the US to tackle counterterrorism and illicit finance**

On 23 October, the defence officials of the US and Cypriots launched a strategic dialogue to bolster security and address counterterrorism by training personnel from Middle Eastern countries and preventing sanction evasion. James O’Brien, US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs said: “It is a big moment in the relationship between our countries and to be part of this feels like being part of a historic occasion.” According to the report, there was a shift in Cyprus’s policy towards the US after the Russian invasion. Constantinos Kombos, Cyprus’ Foreign Minister expressed the government’s commitment to partner with the US Department of Justice and the FBI to counter illicit finance and tax evasions. The FBI has been helping train Cypriot police to identify and prosecute cases. The dialogue is to showcase the US as a credible partner on humanitarian issues. (“[US and Cyprus launch a strategic dialogue to bolster security](#),” *Abc News*, 23 October 2024)

## DENMARK

### **Chennai climate tech start-up to represent India at Next Generation Digital Action Program 2024**

On 27 October, Scrapify Ecotech, a climate tech startup from Chennai was one of the two companies chosen to represent India at the Next Generation Digital Action Program 2024 in Denmark. The startup will display EcoFloater, an innovative water drone that helps in the cleanup of water bodies. The drone uses advanced technology like a real-

time water quality monitoring facility for its multiple uses such as the removal of plastics and other pollutants and providing live updates on cleaning progress and water quality. Additionally, the waste collected by EcoFloater is connected to a software platform to be sold as raw material to recyclers and manufacturers through a bidding system. Scrapify Ecotech has also been offered product development support, lab support, access to advanced laboratory facilities, software product development, and connections with investors providing required capital by iTNTHub which works under the Government of Tamil Nadu. (Sangeetha Kandavel, “[Chennai’s Scrapify Ecotech to showcase EcoFloater Water Drone at Denmark](#),” *The Hindu*, 27 October 2024)

## ESTONIA

### **Increasing concern over Baltic states over migration attacks**

On 20 October, *ERR News* reported on how Russia’s relations with Belarus would lead to more hybrid attacks on Europe’s eastern border. Estonia’s 1000-member reserve is currently working to defend its eastern border. Whereas in 2021, Belarus showcased a hybrid attack on the EU by redirecting migrants from Poland and Lithuania’s borders. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) warned that as a result of the war in Ukraine such hybrid attacks could increase. Marek Kohv, an expert at the International Center for Defense and Security (ICDS) said: “What we’re currently seeing from the Belarusian direction, so to speak – these are migrants from either the Middle East or various African countries.” In a migration attack, people would be held within the border if the migrating country does not agree migrants to cross its border. In the case of Belarus, the migrants are allowed back. Therefore, to cope, a crisis unit has been formed with Estonia’s 1,000 reservists to aid police in a migration attack. (“[Estonia to establish 1,000-strong crisis unit to curb migration attacks](#),” *ERR News*, 20 October 2024)

### **Boom in IT sector jobs, says a report**

On 08 October, European Center for Entrepreneurship and Policy Reform (ECEPR) published a study that suggested that there has been a rise of 60 per cent in the jobs relating to the IT sector and creative sector since 2014. In 2024, there was an increase of 9.1 per cent. Estonia has a higher concentration of skilled labour than the Netherlands, Norway and Germany. Estonia has established, what the report calls, a knowledge-based economy. It has produced the best educational outcomes in Europe. The study also suggested that central and eastern European countries are having the highest concentration of knowledge-intensive jobs. These countries also offer competitive tax policies. In Portugal and Cyprus, knowledge-intensive jobs have doubled since 2014. Estonia's high-tech manufacturing industry employs over 6,500 people while the IT services industry employs nearly 4,200 people. ([International study: Estonia grows as a knowledge economy](#), *ERR News*, 08 October 2024)FR

## **FINLAND**

### **President Stubb aims for closer cooperation with China during his visit**

On 29 October, the *South China Morning Post* reported on the visit of Alexander Stubb, Finland's President to China. Stubb along with Xi Jinping, the President of China agreed to forge closer cooperation on areas such as green transformation, information technology, the digital economy and artificial intelligence, new energy and other emerging industries. Xi also promised to expand "humanistic exchanges," including visa-free entry to China for Finnish nationals to promote "people-to-people" exchanges. In addition, Stubb urged for peace in Ukraine and condemned Russia for "violating international law." They also agreed to collaborate on climate change, biodiversity and global sustainable development. Stubb is the first Finnish leader to visit China in five years. (["China's Xi seeks closer ties with Finland on green energy, peace plan for Ukraine."](#) *South China Morning Post*, 29 October 2024)

### **President begins visit to China to improve cooperation**

On 27 October, *Global Times* reported on Alexander Stubb, the President of Finland schedule to visit China. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China informed Stubb is scheduled to meet Xi Jinping, the President of China, Li Qiang, the Premier of China, and Zhao Leji, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress during the visit. Lin Jian, a spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry informed the visit by Stubb would mark the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Finland. Lin informed the Government of the People's Republic of China was willing to maintain high-level exchanges and the traditional friendship with Finland. Additionally, he stated the Chinese government was willing to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation with Finland in areas like the economy, trade, investment. Cui Hongjian, a Professor at the Academy of Regional and Global Governance at Beijing Foreign Studies University stated ties between China and Finland had remained stable despite tensions between Beijing and the EU, and the visit by Stubb would likely tap into new potentials for cooperation. Areas such as agriculture, forestry, sustainable development, green transformation, and technology will be discussed. Zhu Keli, the founding director of the China Institute of New Economy informed that the capabilities of Finland in technology research and development, alongside the vast market size and formidable manufacturing base of China created a dynamic landscape for economic cooperation and promoting growth and innovation between the two sides. (Fan Anqi, ["Finnish President to start China visit: 'move contributes to China-EU relations at time of turbulence'"](#), *Global Times*, 27 October 2024)

### **Record number of exports in military and civilian weapons**

On 21 October, *yle* reported that Finland had set a record for the number of military and civilian weapons exported. According to

SaferGlobe, a peace and security think tank, Finland exported weapons worth EUR 333 million in 2023. The analysis by SaferGlobe also showed that the export of military grade arms amounted for EUR 192 million of the total exports, while civilian weapons were worth EUR 141 million. Europe accounted for the majority of military weapon exports, while the US, Canada and Australia accounted for the majority of civilian weapon exports. ("Finland's arms exports hit all-time high," *yle*, 21 October 2024)

### **Building natural sinks backfire as they emit greenhouse gases**

On 14 October, the *Guardian* reported the experiences of households in Lapland during the summer season in 2024. Finland's policy has been centred around reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building natural carbon sinks to absorb them. Finland aims to be carbon neutral by 2035 and it started implementing certain laws two years ago to achieve that goal. Initially, nobody questioned the plans since more than half of the country's land is covered with forest area. However, in 2022, scientists discovered that the forest sink has reduced by 90 per cent from 2007 to 2022. Counter-intuitively, in 2021-22, Finland's land sector was a net contributor to global heating. Despite cutting emissions by 43 per cent across all other sectors, net emissions in Finland are about the same level as they were in the early 1990s. The research has taken aback the international community since 118 countries were relying on building carbon sinks to combat climate change. The number of dying trees also increased in recent years as forests are suffering drought and high temperatures. In south-east Finland, the number of dying trees has risen rapidly, increasing by 788 per cent in just six years between 2017 and 2023, and the amount of standing decaying trees is up by about 900 per cent. Meanwhile, Finland also has a strong lobby of timber companies which support planting of trees. The spokesperson of Metsä Group, a union of more than 90,000 forest owners, said that whenever a forest is harvested and new trees are planted, it

implies that carbon absorption can be increased. ("What happens to the world if forests stop absorbing carbon? Ask Finland," *The Guardian*, 15 October 2024)

### **Hate crime rises**

On 10 October, a report published by Police University College suggested a rise in hate crime against immigrants. A total 1,606 hate crimes were reported in 2023, a rise of 29 per cent. Out of them, 1,090 were motivated by nationality and ethnicity. Amongst the victims 60 per cent were men and 40 per cent were women. This suggests that the report did not account for crime against non-binary people. The hate crimes have nearly doubled since 2020. Last year, Somali nationals living in Finland were the minority group most frequently targeted by suspected hate crimes relative to their population size. ("Somalis and people with disabilities make up large share of hate crime victims," *yle*, 11 October 2024)

## **FRANCE**

### **President Macron visits Morocco to reset relations; says "The present and future of Western Sahara are part of Moroccan sovereignty"**

On 28 October, *Le Monde* reported on the visit of Emmanuel Macron, the French President, to Morocco, which aimed to resolve relations with the country following several years of tension. He accepted the invitation of King Mohammed VI, the King of Morocco. He was accompanied by several French ministers and business leaders including Bruno Retailleau, French Interior Minister, Antoine Armand, Economy Minister and Rachida Dati, Culture Minister. The King referred to this visit as an opportunity for "a renewed and ambitious vision covering several strategic sectors." They were reported to have signed several deals including one of EUR 10 billion. The visit came amidst France's disputes with Rabat over issues like France's unclear stance on the disputed Western Sahara. ("Macron visits Morocco for a diplomatic reset," *Le Monde*, 28 October 2024)

### **Paris conference helps raise humanitarian aid for Lebanon**

On 24 October, *Politico* and *France 24* reported that the Government of France had raised USD 800 million in humanitarian aid and USD 200 million in security assistance for Lebanon through a conference held in Paris. Senior officials from 70 countries and international organizations gathered for the conference, where Emmanuel Macron, the President of France informed his government would provide EUR 100 million for Lebanon. The key focus of the addresses delivered at the conference by Macron, Najib Mikati, the Prime Minister of Lebanon. and Antonio Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General was the demand for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon. Macron urged an end to the conflict soon and blamed both the Government of Israel and the Lebanese militia group Hezbollah for the escalating crisis in Lebanon. Macron also informed the French government had set an initial target of EUR 500 million for the conference. Mikati also appreciated the solidarity shown with his country. France and Israel have witnessed worsening ties in recent months, over the Israeli refusal to agree to a cease-fire. However, Jean-Noel Barrot, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France stated France still supported Israel. Barrot informed France believed Israeli security was guaranteed through diplomacy rather than force. (Clea Caulcutt, "[France helps raise \\$1B for Lebanon aid/.](#)" *Politico*, 24 October 2024; Kethevane Gorjestani, "['Ceasefire' is the main theme of Lebanon aid conference hosted in Paris.](#)" *France 24*, 24 October 2024)

### **Government bans Israeli booths and equipment in Paris defence show**

On 16 October, *Le Monde* reported on the ban imposed on Israeli delegations from setting up any stands or exhibiting hardware during the Euronaval defence show. The organisers of Euronaval informed the Government of France had approved the participation of Israeli delegations only without any stand or exhibition of equipment. The organisers also informed Israeli companies and

citizens could attend the defence show if they abided by the prior conditions. The ban comes amidst a dispute between the French government and the Government of Israel. Emmanuel Macron, the President of France stated the ban of weapon exports to Israel was the only way to stop the wars in the Middle East. Yoav Gallant, the Minister of Defence of Israel criticised the remarks by Macron and the ban from Euronaval as a disgrace to the values of the free world. Gallant also alleged the decision by France aided Israel's enemies. ("[France bans Israeli booths and equipment from defense show.](#)" *Le Monde*, 16 October 2024)

### **Government caught between the EU and farmers' demands**

On 14 October, *Politico* reported on the dilemma the French government is facing over the EU- South America trade deal. The deal involves importing beef and other agricultural products from Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia. Bolivia has recently joined the Mercosur bloc. The imports will harm the agricultural industry of France. This problem becomes political because French farmers have the most politically powerful groups in France. This can change the discourse of national politics in the French republic. Before the national and EU elections of 2024, the French government had the power to veto certain bills in the EU parliament. However, Emmanuel Macron's party lost the national elections as well as the EU elections which made his hold weaker. Now, other EU countries have power to outnumber France. Many surveys have suggested that the French public is not onboard for free trade and is extremely protective of its agricultural industry. The chief negotiators of the EU and Mersocur bloc met in Brazil from 07 to 09 October. French diplomats have also informed that France is isolated in the EU parliament on this issue. The deal is expected to be sealed by January 2025. The negotiations have been going on since 2019. However, the EU going ahead with the deal reflects reduced French influence in the EU. (Camilla Gus and Clea Caulcutt, "['Isolated' France faces political storm over EU-South American trade deal.](#)" *Politico*, 14 October

2024)

### **Far-right leader Le Pen's EU embezzlement trial begins**

On 14 October, Marine le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Rally, appeared before the court over charges of using European Parliament money to pay French staff who were working for their party when the National Rally was called National Front. The trial started on 13 October and will last for nine weeks. Le Pen is a strong contender for the presidential elections due in 2027. Meanwhile, Le Pen denies these allegations. The European Parliament has estimated a damage of EUR 3.5 million due to the alleged fake jobs created by Le Pen. Le Pen, in her defence, has said that her rallies as an MEP to support her party also comes under her duties as an MEP. If found guilty, Marine le Pen could face up to ten years of prison, a fine of EUR one million and severely sabotage her political career. The National Rally party still struggles to emerge clean from its earlier image of being racist and anti-Semitic. (["French far right's Marine Le Pen denies wrongdoing at EU embezzlement trial," France24, 14 October 2024](#); ["Le Pen claims innocence in fake EU jobs trial," Le Monde, 15 October 2024](#))

### **Brandy manufacturers worried over Chinese tariffs**

On 11 October, *Reuters* reported about the anxiety among Brandy producers in France due to recent tariffs imposed by China. French Brandy constitutes almost 99 per cent of total Brandy exports to China. Meanwhile, China is also investigating pork imports from the EU. *Reuters* has reported that wine producers feel like they have been held hostage by the EU's imposition of EVs tariffs and China's retaliatory measures. China has announced harsh import duties of 34 to 39 per cent EU imported wines and brandy. However, Anthony Brun, the chairman of the general union of Cognac winegrowers UGVC, said that the scope of the Brandy industry in France seemed bleak even before China had imposed taxes. Marc Fesneau, France's former agriculture minister, said that China is aiming at France through the imposition of tariffs. (Sybille de

La Hamaide, ["French brandy producers brace for impact of EU-China trade dispute," Reuters, 11 October 2024](#))

### **Government promises to not hit middle class with tax hikes**

On 10 October, Antoine Armand and Laurent Saint-Martin, budget ministers of France, assured French citizens that the new taxes introduced will not affect the middle class. Saint-Martin told the media, "We're not going to put public finances back on track by destroying growth." He said that the hikes will only affect around 65,000 households. Meanwhile, the government has also announced spending cuts of EUR 3.8 million on healthcare. France's High Council for Public Finances, an independent watchdog, said that the new hikes are overly optimistic. The two year corporate tax hike will affect 440 corporate offices. Tax hikes are also being introduced on share buybacks. (Georgio Liali, ["France pledges to spare middle class after unveiling draconian budget cuts," Politico, 10 October 2024](#))

### **PM Barnier to unveil 2025 Budget in the National Assembly**

On 09 October, Michael Barnier, the Prime Minister of France, will unveil the Budget for 2025 in the National Assembly. The Prime Minister has proposed EUR 40 billion of spending cuts and EUR 20 billion in tax hikes. Barnier has called France's fiscal deficit "colossal debt." France was put under "excessive deficit procedure" in 2023 by the EU but the deficit has only increased since then. Thus, the new budget is expected to have unpopular taxes and cuts. The left-wing New Popular Front coalition is supporting Barnier's tax cuts, which were implemented by Emmanuel Macron, the President of France. Meanwhile, lawmakers from Macron's right-centre party will oppose the budget since the policies will kill growth, according to them. They will push the government to drop tax hikes. There is still confusion on the situation that might arise if Macron's party rejects that budget. However, the previous two budgets were passed in the Assembly without an absolute majority. A controversial constitutional

mechanism allows the government to bypass a vote unless a no-confidence motion is passed within 48 hours. (Victor Ghoury-Laffont and Clea Caulcutt, "[Barnier's first big test: A budget to cut France's 'colossal debt'](#)," *Politico*, 09 October 2024)

### **Authorities deport Osama bin Laden's son from Normandy**

On 08 October, Bruno Retailleau, the Interior Minister of France, informed the public through X that Omar bin Laden, son of Osama bin Laden, has been deported from a village in Normandy due to accusations of glorifying terrorism on social media. The sharing of posts was called a 'Matter of National Security.' According to local media reports, bin Laden is now residing in Qatar. Omar bin Laden has been living in Normandy since 2016 with his wife, who is a British national. French authorities have implemented a new measure called "obligation to leave French territory" which is used to deport foreign nationals. Omar bin Laden claims that his X account was hacked before the controversial post was made. The tweet was made on 02 May 2023. It called Osama bin Laden a martyr. Omar bin Laden was trained in Al-Qaeda camps from the age of 14. However, he claims that he left Al-Qaeda in 2000. ("[France deports Osama Bin Laden's son from Normandy village](#)," *Euronews*, 08 October 2024)

### **Debate on secularism sparks after a student was taken under police custody**

On 08 October, an 18-year-old student in Tourcoing, a city in northern France, was taken under police custody for assaulting a teacher. The teacher has asked the student to remove her hijab, and head scarf. The student pushed and slapped the teacher before leaving the school. Later, she was found in her house and has been arrested. Under the French principle of secularism, public institutions are supposed to maintain neutrality which means that students are forbidden from wearing religious symbols. The ban on headscarves imposed in 2004 has been criticised by several groups. Critics argue that the law unfairly affects the

Muslim community and limits personal freedom. ("[Violence in French school sparks debate on headscarf and secularism](#)," *Euronews*, 08 October 2024)

### **Michael Barnier can survive the no-confidence motion says an opinion in Euronews**

On 09 October, the minority government led by Michael Barnier is set to survive the no-confidence motion as per . The no-confidence motion is tabled by the New Popular Front, the left-wing alliance, which has 192 lawmakers. The far-right National Rally, led by Marine Le Pen, said that it will abstain from voting. Currently, the parliament is divided into three blocs, the left-leaning New Popular Front, the far-right National Rally and centrist allies of Emmanuel Macron's party. The New Popular Front has displayed its dissatisfaction with Macron's decision since Barnier's party managed to win only five per cent of votes in the snap elections in July. Olivier Faure, a politician from the left-leaning Socialist Party, said that the vote is an opportunity to know "who is in the opposition and who is not." ("[French government set to survive no confidence vote with support of far right](#)," *Euronews*, 08 October 2024)

## **GEORGIA**

### **US President Biden criticises Georgian election conduct**

On 30 October, *Politico* reported on Joe Biden, the President of the United States had criticism on the conduct of the recent parliamentary elections in Georgia. Biden stated that the elections in Georgia were not described as free and fair by domestic and international observers. He urged the Government of Georgia to launch a transparent investigation into possible election violations. He also informed that the government must begin an inclusive dialogue with all political forces in Georgia about restoring election integrity. Additionally, Biden stated the Georgian government must repeal the controversial foreign agents law. (Dato Parulava, "[Biden deeply alarmed by democratic backsliding](#)")

in Georgia after election outcry.” Politico, 30 October 2024)

### **United National Movement Pro-EU Georgian party members accuse Russia for meddling in the elections; Russia denies**

On 26 October, Georgian Dream party led by Bidzina Ivanishvili won the parliamentary elections with 54 per cent of votes. The same was confirmed by the electoral commission surprising the pro-EU opposition. Four opposition parties was able to secure collectively only 37.58 per cent losing its chance to form a coalition government. According to election observers, they found traces of intimidation and violence in rural areas and highest votes of 90 per cent for the Georgian Dream coming from Javakheti region of southern Georgia and 44 per cent across the districts in capital. Georgia witnessed the largest turnout since 2012 and Irakli Kobakhidze Prime Minister said: “Any attempts to talk about election manipulation (...) are doomed to failure.” In response, Giorgi Vashadze, leader of United National Movement coalition said that the opposition would not engage in any talks or demand for an “international supervision” instead would “not enter the parliament, refuse all mandates and fight till victory.” On the allegations placed on Russia, Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin spokesperson denied saying: “We aren't meddling in Georgia's internal affairs, and we have no intention of meddling.”

### **The EU introduces a scheme for the EU-tech companies**

On 28 October, *Politico* reported on a new scheme of the EU for its tech companies. It has planned a budget which amounts to EUR 900 million for the next three years. The scheme aimed to divert the EU's tech companies from tapping non-EU funds, especially on critical technologies like microchips and quantum technology. This had made the EU highly dependent on China and the US for these technologies. Under the scheme, the eligible companies could apply for an equity investment between EUR 10 million and EUR 30 million which would in

turn give the EU active ownership. The fund aimed to ramp up companies related to tech, clean tech or biotech. The EU had announced that it would concentrate on chips and quantum technology from next year. Ursula Von der Leyen, the European Commissioner laid out her mandate which promised to expand the “European Innovation Council Fund” thus allowing to make up to EUR 15 million in equity investments. (Pieter Haeck, “EU to spend €900M on expanding critical technologies.” *Politico*, 28 October 2024)

### **Violence sparks over vote rigging parliamentary elections; President calls for citizens to protest**

On 27 October, *Politico* reported on Salome Zourabichvili, the President of Georgia calling on citizens to protest after the results of the parliamentary elections. Zourabichvili accused the Government of Georgia headed by the Georgian Dream Party of rigging the election. The President also stated the Georgian government stole the right to choice of Georgian citizens, and accepting the election results would mean accepting the subordination of Georgia to Russia. The demand for protests came after results showed Georgian Dream gathered 53 per cent of the vote in the parliamentary elections. Opposition groups informed their elected parliament members would not take up their parliamentary mandates, due to the fraudulent elections. Tina Bokuchava, an opposition politician stated the elections needed to be held again to represent the mandate of the citizens. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), an observer organization reported there were concerns over vote buying, imbalances in financial resources, a divisive campaign atmosphere and recent legislative amendments. Gela Mtvlishvili, an election observer informed a Georgian Dream party coordinator was seen giving money to a voter at a polling station. Ana Natsvlishvili, an opposition politician accused the Georgian government of allowing criminal gangs to undermine the voting process with aggression and intimidation, amidst reports of physical altercations at polling stations. A

polling station in the town of Marneuli was closed down after a video showed a representative from Georgian Dream stuffing a ballot box with dozens of ballots. However, leaders from the ruling party such as Mamuka Mdinardze, the leader of the Parliamentary majority, and Irakli Kobakhidze, the Prime Minister of Georgia have dismissed allegations of vote rigging and violence. Politicians from the EU also criticized the results, although Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary congratulated Georgian Dream on their victory. (Dato Parulava and Gabriel Gavin, [“Georgia president calls for protests as opposition cries foul over election,”](#) *Politico*, 27 October 2024; Dato Parulava, [“Violence mars voting in Georgia’s pivotal election,”](#) *Politico*, 26 October 2024)

### **Ruling party draws support from sports figures before election**

On 25 October, *Politico* reported that the ruling government in Georgia was relying upon sports figures for support before the parliamentary elections. Lasha Talakadze, a three-time Olympic gold medallist in weightlifting, and Geno Petriashvili, an Olympic gold medallist in wrestling are both candidates for the ruling party Georgian Dream in the elections. Talakadze stated that having careers in both politics and sports was not incompatible, and he would be the voice of Georgian athletes in the parliament. Nino Samkharadze, a political analyst at the think tank Georgian Institute of Politics stated that political parties used uncontroversial sports athletes as candidates in order to help influence voter behavior. Georgian Dream has also made efforts to associate with the popular national football team, with four national team players appearing in a television ad. (Dato Parulava, [“Georgia’s ruling party brings in the muscle for election,”](#) *Politico*, 25 October 2024)

### **Election marred by crackdown on critical voices**

On 25 October, *Politico* reported that the Government of Georgia was facing accusations of targeting journalists and

opposition figures critical of the government. Nika Gvaramia, the former Minister of Justice of Georgia and an opposition politician who was convicted of abuse of power and sentenced to over three years in prison stated that the ruling government could try to intimidate or suppress the vote. The Georgian government also raided the houses of Eto Buziashvili and Sopo Gelava, two researchers with the Atlantic Council who had published a report alleging the Georgian government was focused on obtaining economic benefits from Russia. Additionally, investigators also searched the offices of Concentrix, a US tech giant and Fortune 500 firm specialized in outsourcing. Luka Pertaia, a Georgian reporter stated the Georgian government was trying to deliberately intimidate voters, civil society and opposition politicians. According to Pertaia, this created the perception that anyone associated with the West would be targeted. The EU has suspended the candidate status of Georgia, due to backsliding on human rights after the passage of laws targeting Western-backed organizations and the LGBTQ community. The ruling Georgian Dream party has claimed closer ties with the West will lead to conflict with Russia. (Gabriel Gavin, [“Climate of intimidation haunts Georgian elections,”](#) *Politico*, 25 October 2024)

### **Pro-EU Georgians protest ahead of elections**

On 20 October, *France 24* reported on thousands of protestors in Georgia who held “pro-Europe rally,” ahead of parliamentary elections. The elections scheduled for 26 October would be a decider of the pro-western opposition parties who stand against the current Georgian Dream Party who are blamed for turning towards authoritarianism and setting off from the track to join the EU. In the protests, the EU and Georgian flags were held along with banners stating “Georgia chooses the European Union” in the march. Pro-Western President Salome Zurbishvili joining the protest said: “Shows that Georgia has already won and will



reintegrate with Europe.” According to the report, several Georgians used “My Voice to the EU” and Facebook platforms to gather Georgians. Earlier, the EU paused Georgia’s accession process following its “foreign influence law,” and earned criticism. According to analysts, the Georgian Dream party is attempting to hold on to power despite the vote results. (Liza Kaminov, [“Tens of thousands of pro-EU supporters rally in Georgia ahead of key vote,”](#) *France 24*, 20 October 2024)

## GERMANY

### **Government promises more visas for skilled Indian workers**

On 25 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the Federal Government of Germany had promised to increase the number of visas provided to skilled Indian workers. The German government agreed to increase the number of visas provided to skilled Indian workers to 90,000 from 20,000. Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of Germany stated that Germany was open for skilled labour. Additionally, Scholz informed that Indians worked in economically beneficial sectors such as medicine, IT, and nursing care. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India welcomed the agreement as mutually beneficial for both India and Germany, towards a better future for the Indo-Pacific and the entire world. According to the Ministry of the Interior of Germany, Indians are the nationality most likely to find work in Germany under the opportunity card scheme. The Ministry informed there were 780 successful applications from India. ([“Germany promises India more visas for skilled workers,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 25 October 2024)

### **Defence Minister signs Trinity House agreement with the UK to reinforce defence cooperation**

On 23 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the new defence agreement signed between Germany and Britain. Boris Pistorius, Defence Minister of Germany held a meeting with John Healey, UK Defence Minister in London. The leaders declared that the new “Trinity House Agreement”

would reinforce their cooperation and ability to conduct exercises in the EU’s eastern flank. According to Pistorius: “With projects across the air, land, sea, and cyber domains, we will jointly increase our defence capabilities, thereby strengthening the European pillar within NATO.” He warned that the EU’s security should ensure against the backdrop of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, Healey highlighted the deal as the “milestone moment in our relationship with Germany and a major strengthening of Europe’s security.” He further said that the agreement dealt with collaboration in commercial areas like weapons production. German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall was set to open a new factory becoming the first manufacturer of artillery gun barrels in Britain for a decade. The Defence Ministry in Berlin also referred to the deal as an “expression of the British change of direction towards Europe,” referring to the new government formed in the UK.

### **Agency detects first case of MPOX with new variant**

On 21 October, an article in *Deutsche Welle* informed the Robert Koch Agency (RKI), the institute controlled by the Federal Government of Germany responsible for disease control and prevention had detected the first case of mpox in the country with the Ib variant. It did not provide details on when and how the case occurred. However, the RKI also stated there was no increased risk to the general population in Germany, as a result of the new case The RKI informed it was closely monitoring the situation, and would adapt its recommendations if necessary. The agency also informed currently available vaccines were assumed to be effective against clade I viruses. The clade Ib variant is believed to be more contagious than other MPOX variants, although there is a lack of reliable data on the variant as well. ([“Germany detects first mpox variant Ib case,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 21 October 2024)

### **Chancellor Scholz presents new tax breaks and investment support**

On 13 October, Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor

of the German Federation, presented a new agenda for tax breaks and investment support before the voters with federal elections due in September 2025. The proposal has been presented to counter rising inflation and unemployment in the country. Germany is also struggling with high energy costs and competition from the People's Republic of China and the US. All parties of the coalition have proposed a plan to give income tax breaks to 95 per cent of German households. Minimum wages should also be increased to 15 euros per hour from the current rate of 12.5 euros per hour. Bonuses will also be provided for buying locally manufactured electric vehicles. (["German SPD lays out campaign for industry growth, job protection, tax breaks," Reuters, 13 October 2024](#))

### **Economy to further contract in 2025**

On 09 October, Robert Habeck, the Economy Minister of the Federation of Germany, announced that the country's GDP is expected to shrink for the second consecutive year by 0.2 per cent. Earlier, a growth rate of 0.3 per cent was predicted. The economic slowdown has been caused by multiple announcements like Volkswagen's decision to lay off several workers and closing down some domestic plants. Meanwhile, even Intel, a chip making company, announced suspension of its plans to build a plant worth EUR 30 billion. Due to the high fiscal deficit, the government did not announce any economic stimulus. During his announcement, Habeck said that disputes within the federal government and within the EU were deteriorating the situation further. Habeck said that the growth is expected to resume from 2025 with one per cent and in 2026 with 1.6 per cent. (Nette Nostlinger, ["Germany's economy goes from bad to worse," Politico, 09 October 2024](#))

## **GREENLAND**

### **International airport projects to boost mining and tourism sectors**

On 20 October, the *BBC* reported on Greenland's latest international airport in Nuuk, the capital city. This will allow

the largest aircraft to land as a direct connection between the US and Europe for the first time. The airport project is expected to improve the local economy and make the Arctic more accessible. Greenland covered in an ice cap with a scarce population is within Denmark. It is located on the southwestern coast on a hillside. Till now an American larger plane, Kangerlussuaq built during World War II operated in two runways on Greenland. The other is Narsarsuaq in the far south which formed part of a US military base earlier. End of November, larger planes will now be able to land in Nuuk for the first time. According to Jens Lauridsen, the chief executive of operator Greenland Airports: "I'm sure we will see a lot of tourism, and we'll see a lot of change." In 2026, the second international airport is also expected to open in Ilulissat one of the major tourist destinations. These airports cost more than USD800 million which Danish partly financed after loan package from Chinese investors. This becomes key to Greenland's economy as it depends massively on the public sector and fishing and such an infrastructure boost is seen as positive by politicians for mining and tourism sectors. (Adrienne Murray Nielsen, ["In from the cold: New airports set to open up Greenland," BBC, 20 October 2024](#))

## **ICELAND**

### **Prime Minister dissolves the parliament**

On 13 October, Bjarni Benediktsson, the Prime Minister of Iceland, announced the dissolution of the parliament through a press conference. He said that there were growing disagreements between the three political parties that are a part of the ruling coalition. If Halla Tómasdóttir, the President of Iceland, accepts the motion, the parliament will be dissolved and snap elections will be held on 30 November. The governing coalition in Iceland consists of the Conservative Independence Party, the centre-right leaning Progressive Party and the left-leaning Greens party. The coalition has been in power since November 2021. However, it is facing pressure since the volcanic eruptions occurred last year

displacing thousands of citizens. This resulted in high inflation and rising interest rates. ([“Iceland's Prime Minister dissolves ruling three-party coalition, citing infighting.” Euronews, 13 October 2024](#))

## IRELAND

### **Data Protection Commission (DPC) fines LinkedIn for breaching personal data**

On 24 October, an article in *Fox54News* informed professional networking platform LinkedIn was fined EUR 310 million by the Data Protection Commission (DPC) responsible for enforcing data privacy in Ireland. LinkedIn faces charges of breaching the personal data of users for targeted advertising, which provides advertisements to users based on their personal information. The DPC informed that LinkedIn has been provided with three months to bring its internal processes in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the EU. Graham Doyle, the Head of Communications at the DPC stated the processing of personal data without an appropriate legal basis violated the fundamental right to data protection of data subjects. On the other hand, LinkedIn informed it had been in compliance with the GDPR, and was working to ensure all its practices met the regulations. The fine on LinkedIn is in line with recent attempts by the EU to regulate better the activities of big tech companies, such as legal victories by the European Commission in cases against Apple and Google. The DPC had also fined Meta with EUR 91 million for a lack of appropriate security measures. ([“Ireland fines LinkedIn 310 mn euros over EU data breach.” Fox54 News, 24 October 2024](#))

### **Government introduces new rules for regulation of social media**

On 22 October, *Politico* reported on Ireland’s new rules to regulate social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The new media and internet regulator in Ireland, Coimisiun na Meán, published its Online Safety Code to regulate tech conglomerates, many of whom have their European headquarters in Ireland.

Niamh Hodnett, the Online Safety Commissioner stated that adopting the Online Safety Code ended the era of social media self-regulation in Ireland. The new code bans the uploading and sharing of harmful content on social media, such as videos promoting self-harm and eating disorders or inciting racism. Additionally, tech companies are now compelled to restrict minors’ access to adult content like pornography and introduce methods for users to report content against the rules. Tech platforms are required to comply with the general obligations by 19 November, while the rules requiring changes in the internal systems have a deadline of 21 July 2025 to meet. Companies face a fine of up to EUR 20 million or 10 per cent of their annual turnover, in case of non-compliance. The new code falls in line with steps taken by the EU for the greater protection of social media users, especially children. Earlier, the Government of Ireland was forced to pay a fine of EUR 2.5 million for its failure to effectively implement EU regulations of social media. Catherine Martin, the Minister for Media of Ireland stated the new code introduced real accountability for online platforms and required them to take actions to protect its users. ([Mathieu Pollet, “EU tech bastion Ireland brings in new rules to crack down on X, TikTok.” Politico, 22 October 2024](#))

## ITALY

### **Confidential data of politicians breached; Opposition demand inquiry**

On 29 October, an article in *Politico* informed that Nunzio Samuele Calamucci, an IT consultant was accused by Italian prosecutors of breaching a national security database. The prosecutors stated that Calamucci led a team of young software engineers which created and maintained databases on Italian citizens, as part of a remote team for the Ministry of the Interior of Italy. However, the group later downloaded private data belonging to thousands of Italians, including Sergio Mattarella, the President of Italy, and Matteo Renzi, the former Prime Minister of

Italy. The breach was led by Equalize, a private investigative company, which allegedly used a computer virus to control government servers remotely and through moles. Suspicious financial activity, private bank transactions, and police investigations were among the information found in the databases. According to reports, the data was sold to clients or used for the blackmail of entrepreneurs and politicians. Opposition parties demanded a parliamentary inquiry into the case, and an explanation from Giorgia Meloni, the Prime Minister of Italy. The Italian data protection authority also informed it would launch a taskforce to deal with the security of national databases. (Hannah Roberts and Antoaneta Roussi, "[Massive hack-for-hire scandal rocks Italian political elites](#)," *Politico*, 29 October 2024)

### **Rome court rules against repatriation of migrants to Albania**

On 19 October, the *BBC* reported on the court's decision against Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister for a five-year migration deal to send those rescued from sea to Albania. According to the report, a special immigration court in Rome ruled to bring the deported 12 migrants back to Italy from the Adriatic coast in northern Albania as it was viewed unsafe. Meloni's migration deal attracted many Western allies but on the court ruling, the Italy government announced to challenge the ruling. Meloni said: "It's not for the judiciary to say which countries are safe - it's for the government." In 2024, EU's irregular migration through Central Mediterranean route has reduced by 64 per cent. Italy's agreement with Albania is aimed at repatriating close to 3,000 irregular migrants from two camps which is estimated to cost EUR 800 million. This has triggered criticism among the opposition however Matteo Piantedosi, Italy's Interior Minister argues that the government would appeal stating the plan to become European law in the next two years. (Paul Kirby, "[Italy faces big setback over migrant camps in Albania](#)," *BBC*, 19 October 2024)

## **LITHUANIA**

### **Social Democrats aim to improve security after favourable election results**

On 29 October, an article in *Deutsche Welle News* informed the new Lithuanian government to be headed by the Social Democrats party or LSDP would prioritize security. Teodoras Zukas, a political scientist informed that support for Ukraine, attention to human rights violations in authoritarian countries, and higher levels of spending on defence needs were likely to remain integral to the foreign policy of Lithuania. Andzej Puksto, a political science professor at Vytautas Magnus University informed the new government might disagree with the frequency and intensity of its official contacts with the Russian opposition, due to its failure to influence political outcomes in Russia. The government might also take a tougher stance towards Russian emigration to Lithuania, unlike the previous government which provided shelter, residence permits and protection to Russians opposed to the government of Vladimir Putin. Puksto also stated the new government might normalize ties with China, which declined under the previous government. However, he also stated the new government would not cut ties with Taiwan. While the established parties still hold power in Lithuania, the populist Nemunas Dawn party is likely to pose a significant challenge to their stronghold. (Konstantin Eggert, "[Lithuania's Social Democrats look to bolster security](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 29 October 2024)

### **Social Democrats likely to top runoff election**

On 27 October, the opposition Social Democratic Party was likely to get the most seats in the parliamentary elections in Lithuania, according to preliminary results. The party won 50 out of the 141 seats in the Lithuanian Parliament and won the most seats in the first round of parliamentary elections two weeks ago. The Social Democrats are expected to form a coalition government along with two other parties the Democratic Union "In the name of

Lithuania" and the Lithuanian Popular Peasants Union. Rima Urbonaite, a political analyst stated that the Social Democrats benefitted from the perception that they would resolve crises like inflation which the current conservative government was blamed for. However, Urbonaite also informed that it might be difficult for the Social Democrats to form a coalition. Analysts are of the view it would be difficult for the Social Democrats to form a government without Nemunas Dawn, a new populist party. However, the Social Democrats have ruled out working with Nemunas Dawn. (["Lithuania votes in runoff election amid security concerns about Russia, center-left opposition leading," \*Le Monde\*, 27 October 2024](#))

### **Government rules to restrict low-skilled foreign workers**

On 19 October, *Kun.UZ* reported on the Lithuanian government's decision to introduce a cutoff on recruitment of low-skilled foreign workers from non-EU countries. The latest policy will regulate the influx of "migrant labour and address the security concerns." As per the regulation, 1.4 per cent of Lithuania's permanent population which is 40,000 will be the limit for all the new arrivals. Once the limit is reached, foreigners who receive wages above the threshold or are part of high-demand professions will be allowed a temporary residence permit. Additionally, no foreigners will be allowed to work without that permit. This comes as Lithuania's Migration Department; 80,000 residence permits were given in 2023 which was eight times increase from 2017. The largest number of migrants were observed to be from Belarus, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan employed in low-skilled jobs. The influx has also created "counterintelligence and terrorism risks" as the department does not have the resources to monitor all migrants. Ingrida Šimonytė, Lithuanian Prime Minister said: "Yes, there have been issues, and some of these have been partially resolved by the laws already in place. I believe that with the introduction of the quota in 2025, we will have additional

regulatory measures to address these concerns." (["Lithuania to cap influx of low-skilled workers from Non-EU countries," \*Kum.uz\*, 19 October 2024](#))

### **Social Democrats emerge as the largest party in exit polls**

On 14 October, exit pollsters released their statistics suggesting majority seats for the Social Democrats party. Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, the head of the party, said that she will try to form the government. The Social Democrats party had promised to hike taxes for rich individuals in Lithuania to counter inequality. It also promised to increase spending on healthcare. Lithuania has one of the lowest inflation rates in the EU and has seen a double digit growth rate. The current government led by Ingrida Šimonytė has also been supporting Ukraine through the war. It has provided military aid and EUR 153 million monetary aid this year. The voters were upset with the government due to the high influx of migrants from the Belarus border and strict measures that were imposed during the lockdown. The next phase of voting will take place on 27 October when each constituency will vote for one candidate from the top two candidates elected in this phase. (["Social Democrats take lead in Lithuania's general election with 90% of votes counted," \*Euronews\*, 14 October 2024](#))

## **MOLDOVA**

### **Meta suspends a group of fake accounts targeting Russian speakers in Moldova**

On 11 October, Meta removed fake accounts from its platforms that were criticising pro-EU parties in Moldova. The issue is sensitive because Moldova has presidential elections on 20 October. Meta said that it removed seven Facebook accounts, 23 pages, one group and 20 accounts on Instagram for violating its "coordinated inauthentic behaviour policy". The suspended accounts connect to a businessman Ilan Shor, leader of the banned political entity "Victory." He currently operates in exile from Moscow. Meta said that its operations were around tracking Russian language media accounts. Meanwhile, even Moldovan police have

been included in the case. The police searched the homes of leaders linked to Shor. Police have said that thousands of voters were paid money through accounts in a Russian bank to manipulate the vote. Shor was sentenced to 15 years in jail in absentia last year for paying USD one billion from Moldovan banks to unidentified accounts. He denies allegations of trying to bribe voters. (Supantha Mukherjee, "[Meta removes fake accounts in Moldova ahead of presidential election](#)," *Reuters*, 14 October 2024)

## NORWAY

### Temporary border checks introduced over terror threats

On 13 October, the Norwegian police issued a statement informing that temporary border checks will be introduced from 22 October due to concerns over terror threats. The threats have arisen in the wake of escalation in the Middle East. The introduction of border check conflicts with EU border policies since Norway is a part of the Schengen area. The border-free Schengen area allows around 425 million EU and non-EU citizens to travel to Norway freely for tourism, educational and work purposes. Most EU countries are part of the Schengen area excluding Cyprus and Ireland. However, after Germany introduced border checks for six months, Norway has followed the same suit. Many experts suggest that this will lead to delay in border crossing of goods, affecting trade. However, the police have clarified that all vehicles and travellers will not be checked. Nancy Faeser, Interior Minister of Norway, said that the new border security measures were important to tackle the threat of Islamic terrorism. (Katy Dartford, "[Norway introduces temporary border checks after raising its terror threat level](#)," *Euronews*, 13 October 2024)

## POLAND

### Prime Minister Tusk takes a harder stance on migration

On 21 October, *Politico* reported on Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of Poland aggressive stance on the topic of migration to Poland. Tusk had informed the Government of

Poland would stop recognizing requests for political asylum. Aleks Szczerbiak, a political scientist with the University of Sussex stated Tusk was trying to neutralise the issue of migration, viewing it as a threat to his political future. Tusk wants to replace Andrzej Duda, the incumbent President of Poland from the right-wing PiS party at the presidential elections in Poland next year. According to Szczerbiak, Tusk wanted to ensure his Civic Platform party was the party of national security before the presidential elections. However, Jaroslaw Fils, a political scientist at the Jagiellonian University stated Tusk needed to take concrete actions over the issue, if he wanted to improve his position over this issue. Szczerbiak warned of the danger that Tusk might be outstripped by the existing right-wing on the migration issue, as happened in the Netherlands. (Jan Cienski, "[Playing with 'electoral rocket fuel': How Poland's Donald Tusk hopes to weaponize migration](#)," *Politico*, 21 October 2024)

### PM Tusk temporarily suspends right to asylum

On 12 October, Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland, announced a new migration strategy to control irregular migration. During the meeting with other coalition parties, he said that Belarus and Russia are aiding human traffickers and people smugglers to abuse the right to asylum policy of Poland. Since 2021, Poland has been receiving an exponentially high number of refugees with origins from Africa and Middle East entering through Belarus, illegally. He has accused both countries of using these tactics to destabilise the EU bloc. Tusk has not made it clear how he will justify the move before the international community. Under international law, countries are obliged to offer people the right to claim asylum. During his speech, he said, "Poland must take back 100 per cent control over who comes to Poland." Most migrants do not stay in Poland, they move to Germany instead. Recently, Poland built a five metre high steel fence along its border with Belarus. Meanwhile human rights groups have heavily criticised the move. (Adam Easton, "[Poland to temporarily](#)

suspend right to asylum. PM Tusk says,” BBC, 13 October 2024)

### **New regulations over visa approval**

On 10 October, the government announced that it will be tightening the visa approval process after the cash-for-visa scandal during the previous government. There were allegations that Polish consulates sold temporary work visas to migrants for thousands of US dollars. The estimated number is around 2,50,000 since 2021. Government officials said that even student visas will be scrutinised. Visa fees have also been hiked to tackle irregularities in visa applications. The Supreme Audit Office said that a total of 46 kinds of irregularities were identified in five different regions. (Monika Scielowska, “Poland tightens visa rules as probe confirms previous government’s cash-for-visas scandal,” *The Associated Press*, 11 October 2024)

## **PORTUGAL**

### **Government to control brain drain by eradicating taxes temporarily**

On 10 October, the government of Portugal introduced a new scheme after the right-wing government held discussions with left-wing opposition. Under the new scheme, youngsters earning up to EUR 28,000 per annum will have a tax exemption of 100 per cent during the first year of their employment. The tax exemption will be decreased to 75 per cent from the second to fourth year of employment then 50 per cent from fifth to seventh year and 25 per cent until the tenth year of employment. According to the government, it will stop 3,50,000 to 4,00,000 youngsters from settling outside the country. The government estimated that the scheme will cost around EUR 645 million in 2025. The scheme has been introduced to stop the outflow of the youth of the country. According to the Emigration Observatory, 30 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 39 have left the country due to low wages. (Sam Jones, “Portugal proposes decade of tax breaks for young people to stem brain drain,” *The Guardian*, 11 October 2024)

## **RUSSIA**

### **South African president calls Russia as a “valued ally” in BRICS**

On 23 October, *RT* reported on the statements made by Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of South Africa, on the sidelines of the BRICS summit held in Kazan. He called Russia a “valued ally” and “friend” who supported the country during apartheid. He said: “We’re really delighted to be here and to know that we are going to have important discussions here in Kazan within the BRICS family.” Vladimir Putin, Russia’s President said that Russia-South Africa relations were based on “comprehensive strategic partnership, equality, and mutual respect.” He added that the countries aimed to maintain a “fair and multipolar world order.” He also called for an expansion in mutual trade and investment by pointing out the three per cent increase in January-August in 2024. (“Russia is a valued ally – South African president,” *RT*, 23 October 2024)

### **Putin hosts Indian and Chinese leaders at BRICS summit**

On 22 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the summit for the BRICS bloc had begun in Russia, with Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia hosting the summit. The summit is the first since the expansion of BRICS occurred in 2023. The current summit is also the largest international gathering hosted by Putin since he began the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Putin met global leaders like Xi Jinping, the President of China, and Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India during the summit, which is also an opportunity to show that Russia is not politically isolated. Putin referred to Xi as his “dear friend” and stated that Russian-Chinese cooperation was one of the stabilizing factors in the global arena. Putin also informed that Russia and China intended to improve coordination and cooperation to ensure global security and a just world order. According to Xi, the relationship between Russia and China was a profound friendship with increasing cooperation and coordination for the modernization and development of the countries. During his meeting with Modi,

Putin stated that Russia and India had a strategic partnership that could develop further. Meanwhile, Modi informed of his desire to ensure a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine. Additionally, Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of South Africa stated that Russia was a valuable ally for his country, while Putin informed Russia-South Africa that relations were centred around strategic partnership, equality, and mutual respect. China, India and South Africa have not taken an antagonistic stance against Russia after the Ukraine invasion, despite Western pressure ([“Russia’s Putin hosts leaders of China, India at BRICS summit,” Deutsche Welle, 22 October 2024](#))

### **BRICS summit in Kazan to be "The largest foreign policy event"**

On 21 October, *The Moscow Times* reported on the BRICS annual summit set to be held in Kazan, the capital of Russia’s republic of Tatarstan. Yuri Ushakov, Kremlin foreign policy aide had described the summit as “The largest foreign policy event ever held” in Russia. It will host plenty of high-profile guests as 24 of them are expected to arrive. Apart from the BRICS+ member states, Antonio Guterres, NATO’s Secretary General and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey’s President will also attend the meeting. Russia’s post-Soviet allies like Azerbaijan and Belarus have applied for a formal membership. However, Kazakhstan chose to “abstain” from the alliance according to its official spokesperson. Ushakov said that the BRICS+ members had differing views on the enlargement of the alliance. ([“Russia to Host Landmark BRICS Summit in Ongoing Bid to Reshape World Order,” The Moscow Times, 21 October 2024](#))

### **Myanmar-Russia holds second joint maritime security exercise**

On 21 October, *The Moscow Times* reported on the “Second Myanmar-Russia joint maritime security exercise” (MARUMEX) conducted between 20 and 24 October. The three-day joint drill exercise aimed to defend against threats from air, sea and land along with maritime security measures. The last drill between the countries was held in November 2023. Four

corvettes and a logistic vessel from Russia had arrived at Thilawa port in the Yangon region of Myanmar. According to a Southeast Asian daily, the Russian warships would conduct “harbor phase” exercises. However, no further details were provided. Earlier, the junta had informed that it would hold a live-fire maritime security exercise in the North Andaman Sea. Regarding this, it had restricted fishing boats and aircraft from travelling around the region. ([“Russian Navy Ships Arrive in Myanmar for Joint Drills,” The Moscow Times, 21 October 2024](#))

## **SPAIN**

### **Prime Minister Sanchez inaugurates India’s first private military aircraft plant**

On 28 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the visit of Pedro Sanchez, Spain’s Prime Minister to India. He along with Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India inaugurated Tata Aircraft Complex, India’s first private military aircraft plant. It will produce the Airbus C-295 transport military aircraft in collaboration with Airbus Spain. Sanchez praised Modi’s vision “to turn India into an industrial powerhouse and a magnet for investment and business-to-business collaboration.” Meanwhile, Modi said that this project would strengthen the relations between India and Spain along with the ‘Make in India and Made for the World’ mission. This came amidst India’s increasing attempts to strengthen its “local defence and aerospace manufacturing capacities.” The Defence Ministry of India signed an agreement with Spain, amounting to USD 2.5 billion for 56 cargo and troops carrying C295 aircraft from Airbus Defence and Space. ([“Spain’s PM launches India’s first military aircraft plant,” Deutsche Welle, 28 October 2024](#))

### **Protests against housing crisis**

On 14 October, more than 1,50,000 Spaniards organised a march in Madrid demanding better housing facilities. The number of protestors remains mooted as the government claims that 22,000 participated in the protest while public present said there were 1,50,000. Core



issues were affordability as AirBnb and Booking.com dominate the short-term rental market. This increases the rental cost for all real estate properties. People marched shouting slogans, "Housing is a right, not business." In July, the government of Spain announced launching investigations against short-term rental homes without a licence. Spanish citizens have been protesting against rising tourism for a few months now. Landlords are gradually shifting towards providing rental homes to tourists since it is more lucrative. Residents of Barcelona also protested against rising tourism. Residents of the Canary Islands and Malaga have also participated in several protests against rising rents demanding more regulation in the real estate market. ("[Spain: Thousands protest for affordable housing.](#)" *Euronews*, 14 October 2024)

### **PM Sanchez announces plans to integrate migrants in to labour market**

On 09 October, Pedro Sanchez, the Prime Minister of Spain, announced plans to ease the assimilation and settlements of migrants in Spain and promote migration in an effective way. The announcement comes in sharp contrast with other European countries. Sanchez justified his stance as Spain needs migration since its birth rate is amongst the lowest in the EU and migration is a realistic means to grow the economy and sustain the welfare state. The plan aims to integrate migrants into the labour market and to reduce red tape for residency applications. In May 2024, few reports called Spain the fastest growing economy in the EU. He urged the citizens of his country to reject stereotypes and hoaxes about migration. (Ashifa Kassam and Sam Jones, "[Pedro Sánchez unveils plans to help migrants settle in Spain.](#)" *The Guardian*, 09 October 2024)

## **SWEDEN**

### **Data shows GDP decline of 0.1 per cent**

On 29 October, *Reuters* reported on data from Statistics Sweden, the statistical agency of Sweden showed the Swedish

economy was in a recession. According to the data, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Sweden had contracted for two consecutive quarters. GDP in the third quarter declined by 0.1 per cent, compared to the previous quarter. Statistics Sweden informed that the GDP decline in September along with weak development in August contributed to overall weak growth. Additionally, the Swedish central bank informed the Swedish economy was stagnant, and it expected a policy rate cut. ("[Swedish economy in recession, preliminary data shows.](#)" *Reuters*, 29 October 2024)

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

### **The government plans to strengthen domestic chip industry**

On 10 October, Dirk Beljaart, the Economic Minister of the Netherlands, announced that he is willing to form a coalition within the EU to remain competitive against the US and China in the semiconductor industry. Beljaart held a meeting with Adolfo Urso, the economic minister of Italy, to discuss cooperation for bringing investment in the chip industry. Although the Netherlands is not a member of the G7, it has been invited to discuss technology policy. Thierry Breton, former EU industry chief, is called the architect of EU Chips Act. The act was introduced in April 2023 proposed a subsidy plan of EUR 43 billion and aims to boost the EU's share in chip industry to 20 per cent globally by 2030. Beljaart also met Gina Raimondo, the US Secretary for Commerce, to discuss cooperation. Meanwhile, the US Secretary's office is expected to introduce new restrictions on China's semiconductor equipment. ("[Dutch economy minister pushes for European chip industry coalitio.](#)" *Reuters*, 11 October 2024)

## **THE UK**

### **Chancellor promises increase in taxes and employer insurance and inheritance tax in the latest budget**

On 30 October, the *BBC* informed the upcoming UK Government Budget was set to define the political landscape in the

coming years. Rachel Reeves, the Chancellor of the Exchequer promised substantial increases in taxes, including an increase in employer National Insurance and inheritance taxes. The UK Government also has the ability to borrow more, after a change in the debt rules. Additionally, the government also plans to increase the minimum wage. Investments in the rebuilding of schools and buying equipment for the National Health Service are other priorities in the budget. Rishi Sunak, the leader of the Conservative Party stated that the increase in National Insurance tax would hurt the working class. While Reeves stated the Budget is required to meet the economic challenges of the UK, its impact remains to be seen. (Chris Reeves, [“Reeves’ big Budget will set agenda for years to come.” BBC News](#), 30 October 2024)

### **Chancellor announces new funding for health service to ease hospital care backlog**

On 29 October, the *BBC* informed the UK Government had announced GBP 1.57 billion in funding for the National Health Service (NHS). The funding is to be used for the purchase of new surgical hubs, scanners, and radiotherapy machines. The NHS has been facing several challenges, with a hospital care backlog of 7.64 million. Additionally, the NHS is falling short of its targets for cancer, emergency, and hospital treatment. The government plans to increase the number of NHS hospital appointments and procedures in England by 40,000 per week. Wes Streeting, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the United Kingdom stated the Budget funding would help reverse the NHS decline. However, Streeting admitted it would take time to completely resolve the issues faced by the NHS. Rachel Reeves, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer stated the Budget would provide resources required to meet the challenges. (Hugh Pym and Philippa Roxby, [“Chancellor sets out new funding for extra NHS appointments.” BBC](#), 29 October 2024)

### **Former British colonies urge dialogue on slave trade reparations**

On 26 October, *Politico* reported on the former British colonies call to the UK Government to begin a dialogue on possible reparations for the slave trade. A communique from 55 Commonwealth countries after the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit ended with the heads of government agreeing for a meaningful, truthful, and respectful conversation about reparatory justice with regard to the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and chattel enslavement. The communique was released, despite the UK government having insisted earlier that reparations were not part of the summit agenda. The issue of reparations was also a part of the statement by Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK towards the Commonwealth members. Starmer stated that while he understood the strong sentiments over the issue, he wanted to move forward not backwards, especially on issues like climate resilience, education, trade, and growth. ( Dan Bloom, [“Commonwealth summit agreement raises slavery reparations after row with UK,” Politico](#), 26 October 2024)

### **Government announces new freeports in plan to boost economic growth**

On 25 October, the *BBC* informed that the UK Government was scheduled to announce the creation of five new freeports and a new investment zone in the upcoming UK budget. Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK informed the creation of the freeports was part of a plan to help create thousands of jobs and ensure more trade in the UK. The freeports are areas located near shipping ports or airports, where imported goods do not have tariffs imposed upon them. Businesses operating in freeport areas also pay lower amounts of national insurance and property taxes, with the intention of boosting economic activity like trade, investment, and job creation. According to the UK Government, freeports in the UK have attracted GBP 2.9 billion of investment and created an estimated 6,000 jobs. Tariffs in freeports are paid only on finished products transported to other parts of the UK. Starmer stated the freeports were

functioning well. However, he acknowledged they could be better with improvements like better structures and more involvement from local authorities. This was in response to criticism that freeports only move economic activity away from one part of the country to another, rather than creating new opportunities or roles. Starmer also informed a new investment zone would be created in the East Midlands, with the aim of boosting high tech green industry. (Tom Espiner, "[UK pledges thousands of new jobs in freeports plan](#)," BBC, 25 October 2024)

### **Climate Change Committee warns over shortage of nuclear power**

On 21 October, *Politico* reported that the UK faced the prospect of a vastly reduced nuclear fleet. It was estimated that the country will have just one functional nuclear power plant by 2028. The independent organization Climate Change Committee stated the lack of new nuclear capacity posed a significant risk to the net zero climate goals and ambitions of the UK. The rapid decline of the nuclear capacity of the UK has been blamed upon the poor decisions and failures of successive UK governments. Both the Conservative and Labour parties blamed each other for the failure to build new nuclear plants and invest in the industry during their respective administrations. Additionally, French energy conglomerate EDF owned by the Government of France which is the majority owner in the five remaining nuclear power plants of the UK has faced accusations of running its projects late and with large budgets. Four of the EDF plants are also scheduled to close down in the next few years. According to experts, the UK is too reliant upon French energy, and the UK Government failed to provide required levels of funding into its own infrastructure. Tom Greatrex, the head of the Nuclear Industry Association lobby group stated it was essential now that the UK government take stronger actions vis-à-vis nuclear energy. (Nicholas Earl, "[Britain's heading for a nuclear power crunch. Blame the French](#)," *Politico*, 21 October 2024)

### **Employee rights bill to be pass in the Parliament**

On 09 October, Louise Haigh, Transport Secretary of the UK, said that a new bill will be tabled by the Labour party this week on amendments in the employment rights bill to address some loopholes exploited by employers. The provisions are being introduced in reference to the layoffs announced by P&O Ferries company in 2022. The company had fired more than 800 crew members without any prior notice. Under the new regulations, ferry operators based outside the UK will have to pay the national minimum wage of GBR 11.44 per hour from 01 December under the Seafarers' Wages Act. P&O Ferries and Irish Ferries offer competitive market prices because they hire workers on low wages. The new amendments will apply to ferry operators that dock ships at least 120 times in a year on British ports, irrespective of the nationality of the ferry operator. If an operator fails to provide minimum wage, they will have to pay a surcharge every time they dock on a British port. Most cargo and cruise ships will not be affected by the new laws because they spend more time in international waters. (Gwyn Tophan, "[New UK laws to stop repeat of P&O mass sackings scandal go before parliament](#)," *The Guardian*, 09 October 2024)

### **Government to build renewable energy storage**

On 10 October, the Labour government launched a new scheme to attract investments in renewable energy storage infrastructure. This will help in creating backup in renewable energy facilities. The scheme aims to boost investors' confidence and create new jobs. The government seeks building infrastructure for low duration energy storage (LDES) facilities. Currently, the government has facilities to store up to 2.8 GW. Other storage facility technologies include liquid air energy storage, compressed air energy storage and flow batteries, which are currently in development. The report said that 20GW of LDES could save the electricity system £24 billion between 2025 and 2050. This will reduce household energy bills and dependence on natural gas. The National

Electricity System Operator has estimated that 11.5 to 15.3 GW of LDES will be required by 2050 to achieve net zero emissions. ([“New scheme to attract investment in renewable energy storage,” Government of the UK, 09 October 2024](#))

### **Foreign Secretary Lammy to visit China for win-win cooperation**

On 09 October, *Reuters* published an exclusive report that David Lammy, the Foreign Secretary of the UK, will visit China in the coming week. The government is looking to rebuild its ties with China and resume investment. Lammy will be meeting Chinese officials and British businessmen in Shanghai. The Chinese foreign ministry has said that it seeks win-win cooperation with the UK. Meanwhile, there is a case of espionage being held against two British nationals in China. China is also looking forward to building a new embassy in London. The two countries also hold historical baggage over Hong Kong. More than 180,000 people have moved to Britain from Hong Kong under a special visa programme set up after there was unrest in Hong Kong after China introduced new amendments which compromised Hong Kong's autonomy. (Jeo Cash and Laurie Chen, [“British Foreign Secretary Lammy to visit China in bid to reset ties, sources say,” Reuters, 09 October 2024](#))

### **MI5 chief warns of significant threat from Russia**

On 08 October, *The Guardian* reported that Ken McCallum, the Director-General of MI5 had stated the Government of the Russian Federation was engaging in a sabotage campaign against the UK. McCallum stated the GRU military intelligence agency from Russia was engaged in a “sustained mission to generate mayhem on British and European streets.” McCallum also informed Russia relied on criminal networks to carry out disruptive attacks and arson and assassination and sabotage plots, since most of its spies were removed from the UK. Russian spy activity had increased after a chaotic period following the invasion of Ukraine when 750 Russian diplomats were

expelled across Europe. The level of state-based investigations by MI5 which included Iran and China alongside Russia, increased by 48 per cent in the past one year. (Dan Sabbagh, [“MI5 chief: UK facing growing threat from Islamic State, Russia and Iran,” The Guardian, 08 October 2024](#))

### **PM Starmer faces crisis of premiership 100 days into tenure says *Politico***

On 08 October, an op-ed in *Politico* informed Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom faced significant challenges 100 days into his tenure. The op-ed informed reports of political allies of the Labour Party being preferred for civil service jobs, acceptance of freebies from donors and lobbyists by government ministers, and discontent amongst special advisors to the UK government caused problems for the government, despite its substantial parliamentary majority. The removal of Sue Gray, the Chief of Staff for Starmer was an attempt by the Prime Minister to regain control over the situation. Discontent over the approach and methods utilized by Gray in government led to rivals briefing against her in the media and leaking information about her high salary. According to the op-ed, the removal of Gray is an example of the willingness of Starmer to remove alliances in order to move forward. Members of the Labour Party expressed confidence in Morgan McSweeney and James Lyons, the replacements for Gray appointed by Starmer to handle political communications. An anonymous Member of Parliament from Labour stated the appointments were a positive sign which indicated a shakeup amongst the top governmental ranks. Alex Thomas, Program Director at the Institute for Government think tank stated the appointment of a new head for the UK Civil Service would strengthen the government setup. The op-ed also stated it was urgent for Starmer to reveal a strong domestic agenda of governance for his government after the removal of Gray, to counter criticism. (Esther Webber, Stefan Boscia, and Sam Blewett, [“Keir Starmer’s reset shows his premiership is already in crisis,” Politico, 08 October 2024](#))

## TURKEY

### **Kurdistan Workers' Party claim terrorist attack in Ankara**

On 25 October, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) claimed the attack on Turkey's defence firm in Ankara where five were killed and 22 injured. PKK issued a statement in Telegram: "The act of sacrifice at TAI campus in Ankara at around 15:30 local time on Wednesday was carried out by a team of the immortals battalion." Earlier, Turkey's government stated on having proof against involvement of the PKK. It also launched airstrikes on PKK in northern Iraq and Syria. The PKK group is considered as terror group by Turkey, the US and the EU since 1984. Since then, the PKK was found to be engaged in an armed conflict and has claimed up to 40,000 civilian and military victims. It is observed to have 60,000 members of "fighters, supporters and sympathisers." Main operations are deemed to take place in Kandil mountains in northern Iraq and is also one the hotspots for Turkey's bombing. However, the resolution efforts began after Recep Tayyip Erdogan President of Turkey initiated the peace efforts although it collapsed in 2015 over new wave of violence. (Burak Ünveren, "[Turkey, the Kurds and the PKK](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 October 2024; "[Kurdistan Workers' Party claims deadly Ankara attack](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 October 2024)

### **Terrorist attack in Ankara**

On 23 October, a terrorist attack was carried out against the Turkish Aerospace Industries Inc. (TUSAS) facilities in the Turkish capital of Ankara. Ali Yerlikaya, the Minister of the Interior of Türkiye informed that three individuals were killed in the attack, and two terrorists were neutralized. TUSAS is responsible for the maintenance on F-16 fighter jets in Türkiye and the sale of its own systems like military and training aircraft. Yilmaz Tunc, the Minister of Justice of Türkiye stated the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office had launched a judicial investigation into the attack. Mark Rutte, the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also expressed support for Türkiye after the terror attack. (

Elena Giordano, Joshua Posaner and Stuart Lau, "[Deadly terrorist attack strikes key defense company in Turkey](#)," *Politico*, 23 October 2024)

## UKRAINE

### **Joint summit with Nordic countries ends with strengthening mutual security**

On 28 October, [President.gov.in](#) reported on the leaders of Nordic countries support for Ukraine after the Ukraine-Nordic summit. The Prime Ministers of Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Sweden issued a joint statement along with the President of Ukraine after the summit. In the statement, the leaders reaffirmed support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of Ukraine. They also informed their support for Ukraine was steadfast and would continue for as long as necessary. The leaders further stated that the Nordic countries viewed improving comprehensive and long-term security cooperation with Ukraine with special importance. Additionally, the statement informed that bilateral agreements on security were important for strengthening mutual security. It was further stated that the Nordic countries had promised to develop the defence industry of Ukraine and provide support for enhancing the defence capabilities of Ukraine. The statement also reiterated the Nordic view that the place of Ukraine was in NATO. ("[Joint Statement of the fourth Ukraine-Nordic Summit in Reykjavik](#)," *President of Ukraine*, 28 October 2024)

### **Ukrainians in Switzerland torn between going to war or living at home**

On 21 October, [swissinfo.ch](#) informed about the mass mobilization law passed in Ukraine and its impact on the Ukrainian men living abroad in Switzerland. Due to a shortage of soldiers, the Government of Ukraine started the recall of Ukrainians living outside Ukraine to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The mobilization law applied to Ukrainians who received special S status from Switzerland after the Russian invasion and those who left Ukraine before the

Russian annexation of Crimea as well. All Ukrainian men between the ages of 18 and 60 are supposed to comply with the new law. In case they fail to comply with the law, they can face a fine and criminal charges. Maksym, a Ukrainian man living and working in Switzerland stated the Ukrainian government was trying to make life abroad hard for Ukrainian men who had not registered for military service. According to Maksym, high levels of corruption prevalent within the Ukrainian government and lack of adequate weapons for soldiers on the front lines reduced the motivation of young men to go fight. Dmytro, another Ukrainian man working and living in Switzerland stated Ukrainians who had lived abroad for years did not feel motivated to defend the country, and the government could not force them to return. Dmytro stated a fundamental reason behind the lack of motivation was that the Ukrainian government failed over the years to build a country or values to defend. (Elena Servettaz, ["Go to war or stay put? Ukrainian men in Switzerland face fresh dilemmas,"](#) *swissinfo.ch*, 21 October 2024)

## REGIONAL

### **EU imposes duties on Chinese car manufacturers benefitting from subsidies**

On 29 October, *Politico* reported that the EU was going ahead with plans to impose duties on unfairly subsidized Chinese car manufacturers. According to the EU, manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (EVs) like BYD and SAIC received benefits like cash and discounts from the Government of the People's Republic of China. The European Commission imposed duties on Chinese car manufacturers, based on the levels of subsidies they benefitted from and how cooperative they were with the Commission investigation. However, the duties are opposed by the car industry in countries like Germany, which fear a loss from the trade war. Additionally, Europe lagged behind China in terms of EVs and needed to reduce business costs across the EU electric vehicle value chain to compete. The Chinese government has also rejected the EU investigation findings and stated that no

subsidies were offered. Despite these challenges, the EU investigation is significant for it shows that Europe is concerned with its industrial and economic future. (Koen Verhelst, Jordyn Dahl and Camille Gijs, ["EU-China staring match on EV duties will continue-even after they take effect,"](#) *Politico*, 29 October 2024)

### **European mountain stream temperatures witness rise**

On 29 October, *swissinfo.ch* reported on a study by the Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research (SLF) showed that water temperatures in European mountain streams were increasing. The SLF stated that the warmer air caused by climate change was responsible for the warmer water bodies. Amber van Hamel, a hydrologist for the SLF informed that less snowfall in winter due to climate change caused less cool meltwater to reach the rivers in the spring and summer. Additionally, higher water temperatures lead to reductions in water quality, causing problems for the supply of clean drinking water. The SLF report also informed that ecological tipping points were likely as a result of the extreme water temperatures. For instance, the mortality rate for trout fish increased at temperatures above 23 degrees Celsius. (["Water temperatures are rising in European mountain streams,"](#) *swissinfo.ch*, 29 October 2024)

### **Arctic Reflections team aims to safeguard Arctic Sea ice**

On 25 October, *European Commission* reported on the Arctic Reflections project from the Netherlands aimed at protecting ice in the Arctic Sea through a combination of smart technology, indigenous collaboration and a focus upon sustainability. In order to protect the sea ice from melting, Arctic Reflections and its partners BlueInvest pump seawater into the sea ice. This allows the sea ice to freeze rapidly, and create a thicker ice layer. The Arctic Reflections team uses a interdisciplinary approach, with collaborations from Cambridge University, Delft University of Technology, and the UNIS Research Centre at Svalbard. The

partnership with BlueInvest was also beneficial, with a refined business model emphasizing government funding and new opportunities provided through the coach network of BlueInvest. The team is also using a science-driven approach, with field tests being conducted to ensure an effective solution with minimal damage caused to the local ecosystems. Additionally, the team is involving local indigenous voices in the climate dialogue. Tom Meijeraan, the co-founder of Arctic Reflections stated all the Arctic Reflections projects were rooted in science and all the data was made public to stimulate fact-based discussions. ("Protecting the Arctic sea ice with Arctic Reflections and BlueInvest," European Commission, 25 October 2024)

### **EU to release recovery grants to Slovakia after dispute resolution**

On 24 October, an article in *Politico* informed the EU that EUR 799 million in grants would be provided to Slovakia. The payment is scheduled to be from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) worth EUR 800 billion. The European Commission had previously stated the grants would be blocked to Slovakia, due to the policies followed by Robert Fico, the Prime Minister of Slovakia. The government of Fico made attempts to control the public media, abolished the office of the special prosecutor and took a pro-Russia stance. The Commission viewed these methods as eroding the existing rule of law standards in Slovakia. Additionally, the Commission faced pressure to ensure that the money of taxpayers was spent effectively after an increase in the number of fraud investigations related to the recovery fund of the EU. Veerle Nuyts, a spokesperson for the Commission stated that some of the concerns of the Commission were alleviated through recent efforts by the Slovak Parliament. However, Nuyts also stated there were some pending issues and ongoing discussions with Slovakia. (Elisa Braun, "EU to release €799M to Slovakia after rule-of-law dispute," Politico, 24 October 2024)

### **Investigation into misuse of EU funds remains caught up in bureaucratic wrangle**

On 23 October, *Politico* reported on an investigation by the EU into the failure of a EUR 46 million waste treatment plant project in Cyprus remained caught up in a bureaucratic gridlock. The plant was run by Medcon & DB Technologies J.V., a Cypriot-Canadian jointly run waste contractor which faces accusations from the Government of Cyprus of failing to meet the terms of its contract while operating the plant. The EU Anti-Fraud Office or OLAF was responsible for the investigation into the plant. After its investigation, OLAF sent a report to the Directorate-General for Regional Development (DG REGIO), and concluded that DG REGIO had the authority to grant Medcon access to its report. However, DG REGIO argued to the contrary that it was the responsibility of member states to handle cases related to budget implementation. With little clarity over who is supposed to handle the procedures, Medcon stated the situation challenged the effectiveness of EU inter-institutional collaboration, and the will to follow through a completed investigation and apportion responsibility for acts of fraud. Balazs Ujvari, the European Commission spokesperson for budget stated the European Commission was ultimately responsible for executing the EU budget, while EU member states were primarily responsible for the sound management of EU funds. (Marianne Gros, "Brussels ducks responsibility for Cyprus waste scandal," Politico, 23 October 2024)

### **Agriculture ministers refuse CAP spending reform**

On 22 October, *Politico* reported that agriculture ministers from EU member states had pushed back on changing the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) followed by the EU. All the EU member states except Romania agreed that the CAP still had strategic importance. The Romanian opposition stems out of problems with the unequal distribution of subsidies. The agriculture ministers stated the EU farm budget must continue to exist and remain

an independent policy in terms of farm subsidies. The assertion comes amidst plans by the EU to merge the CAP and 500 other programmes into one single programme which will determine spending on sectors such as farm subsidies and social housing. Additionally, payouts will be conditional on reforms like organic farming carried out by countries. Istvan Nagy, the Minister of Agriculture of Hungary stated that changing the support and financing for the CAP would damage the livelihood of farmers and food security. Nagy also expressed concerns that the farm budget would be used to finance other objectives. Janusz Wojciechowski, the European Commissioner for Agriculture also supported keeping the CAP at the centre. However, divisions persist between the agriculture ministers over providing equal subsidies. Countries like Italy are reluctant over equal subsidies since they will have to reduce their share of the budget. (Paula Andres and Bartosz Brzezinski, "[EU farm ministers reject push to reform CAP spending](#)," *Politico*, 22 October 2024)

### **UK and Germany defence ministers state Europe must be responsible for its own security**

On 23 October, *Politico* reported on John Healey, the Secretary of State for Defence of the UK and Boris Pistorius, the Federal Minister of Defence of Germany stated that Europe needed to take greater measures to ensure its security. Healey and Pistorius made the comments while signing a new defence agreement between the Government of the UK and the Federal Government of Germany. The agreement covers areas like joint missile development, extra exercises in the Baltic and hosting rights for submarine-fighting planes in Scotland. It comes amidst fears in Europe over the potential implications of the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency. Trump had stated he would encourage Russia to attack NATO member states not contributing enough to the alliance, and has refused to commit support for Ukraine in the war against Russia. Healey informed doubts over the extent of the role of the US in Europe meant Europe needed to take

greater initiative and leadership within the NATO alliance. He also stated the defence pact sent a strong message to Europe's adversaries. Pistorius informed the agreement would lead to more security in Europe. (Andrew McDonald, "[UK and Germany: Europe must take responsibility for its own security](#)," *Politico*, 23 October 2024)

### **Moldova votes to join EU**

On 21 October, an article in *Politico* informed Moldova had voted in favour of joining the EU. According to the results of a referendum on changing the Moldovan constitution to include EU membership, 50.3 per cent of voters supported changing the constitution while 49.7 per cent opposed it. The referendum results have provided the Government of Moldova with the power to include EU membership in the Moldovan constitution, and improved the chances of quick Moldovan accession to the EU. The referendum witnessed a total turnout of 99.2 per cent. The victory for the "yes" camp was also due to overwhelming support from the diaspora, since it had been trailing to the "no" camp before the ballots from Moldovans living abroad were counted. Siegfried Muresan, a Member of the European Parliament from Romania and the Chair of the liaison committee on Moldovan accession to the EU stated the victory of the yes camp was a defeat for Russia and a victory for the people of the Republic of Moldova. Muresan also informed the EU would provide all required support for the EU accession process of Moldova. Maia Sandu, the President of Moldova stated "foreign forces" used cash and propaganda to influence the referendum results, which led to gains for the "no" camp. (Gabriel Gavin, "[Moldova votes yes to joining EU by tiny margin](#)," *Politico*, 21 October 2024)

### **European Council meeting concludes in support of delivery of air defences to Ukraine**

On 17 October, the *European Council* reported on the conclusions from a meeting of EU leaders. One key conclusion from the meeting was that EU leaders



reiterated their commitment to a comprehensive and lasting peace in Ukraine, in line with the UN Charter and the support of the Ukrainian government. Additionally, EU leaders also requested the Council to accelerate the delivery of air defence systems, missiles and ammunition systems to Ukraine and increase support for the defence industry of Ukraine. The leaders also welcomed the sanctioning of a loan and a loan cooperation mechanism for the support of Ukraine. The need for fair sharing and solidarity with G7 partners was also stressed upon. EU leaders also condemned Russian attacks upon the energy and civilian infrastructure of Ukraine and called for further action to integrate the energy systems of Ukraine and the EU. Another key conclusion from the meeting was the decision to continue with sanctions upon Russia and ensure the more effective enforcement of the same. The EU also stated its commitment towards imposing new sanctions and import tariffs on Russian and Belarussian products. EU leaders also stressed upon the need to ensure accountability for human rights violations committed by Russia. ([European Council, 17 October 2024](#), *European Council*, 17 October 2024)

### **European failure to develop technology poses challenge says former chairperson of Munich Security Conference**

On 21 October, Wolfgang Ischinger, a veteran German diplomat and the former chairperson of the Munich Security Conference (MSC) stated the European failure to develop world-class technologies was the biggest long-term challenge to its future security. Ischinger stated in an interview that Europe suffered from a technological gap with China and the US, and meeting this gap needed to be at the top of the agenda. Ischinger also expressed doubts that the fragmented capital market and EU institutions could meet the challenge, despite plans by Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission to improve the usage of technology in the European defence industry, The Munich Security Conference

itself has tried to put technology at the forefront of weapons usage by the military, inviting top executives from technology conglomerates such as Microsoft and Facebook to promote the greater usage of technology for providing security and improving the military. (Laurens Cerulus, ["Europe's tech gap is a major security problem, Ischinger says"](#), *Politico*, 21 October 2024)

### **Scholz and Erdogan meet to advance defence cooperation amid differences**

On 19 October, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's President and Olaf Scholz, German Chancellors held a meeting in Istanbul on Scholz's arrival. The visit marked the first since March 2022 amid differences over the war in Gaza, migration and bilateral issues. The talks focused on improving defence, migration and trade relations. Between Germany and Turkey, the largest Turkish diaspora of three million is hosted by Germany and has raised concerns over human rights and democracy recently. Followed by the Israel-Hamas war, the clash between both leaders grew. However, the meeting succeeded in agreeing to remove restrictions on defence sales to Turkey by Germany. This comes as Turkey wishes to purchase 40 Eurofighter Typhoons. Erdogan said: "We wish to leave behind the past difficulties in the context of the supply of defence industry products and develop our cooperation." While Scholz said: "Turkey is a member of NATO and that's why we always take decisions that lead to concrete deliveries." (["At odds over Middle East conflict, German and Turkish leaders cooperate on defence"](#), *France 24*, 19 October 2024)

### **Report on Europe's upcoming challenges to address water insecurity**

On 15 October, the European Environment Agency published a report on Europe's water resilience. The report suggested that Europe's water availability is under pressure and sustainable freshwater supplies need to be built. The water planning policy in Europe will affect at least

30 per cent of the population and 20 per cent of European territory. The deadline set by the Water Framework Directive (WFD) for European rivers, lakes, transitional, coastal and groundwaters to meet 'good status' was 2015. It is far from being met. Only 37 per cent of Europe's surface water has reached the 'good status' while only 29 per cent achieved a 'good chemical status.' Europe's water continues to be impacted by chemicals. In September, the Oder river in Poland suffered major pollution resulting in the death of several aquatic animals. Groundwater makes up to two thirds of the EU's drinking water. The EU Member States report that 77 per cent of groundwater body area is in good chemical status. Meanwhile, surface water is widely affected by mercury. The report concludes that urgent policy action is required to keep the supply of drinking water going in Europe. (["Europe's state of water 2024: the need for improved water resilience," European Environment Agency, 15 October 2024](#))

### **Georgia Dream party's pro-Russia stance can jeopardise its EU membership**

On 14 October, the European Union warned the government of Georgia before its national elections over the pro-Russia stance that the ruling party is taking. The government introduced 'anti-LGBTQ+' propaganda laws which align with Russian laws. Georgia was granted the EU membership candidate status in December 2023. The EU leaders have prepared a draft for the summit scheduled on 17 and 18 October. The draft also mentions, "the bloc "reaffirms the Union's readiness to support the Georgian people on their European path" but also "reiterates its serious concern regarding the course of action taken by the Georgian authorities." The national elections in Georgia are due on 26 October. The country is divided between pro-West and pro-Russian parties. The EU draft also stated that it expects the Georgian national elections to be free and fair. (["EU leaders set to tell Georgia its EU path is at risk as election looms," Reuters, 14 October 2024](#))

### **EU warns the government against suspending right to asylum**

On 14 October, the European Union told the Polish government that suspending the right to asylum would go against the EU provision and the international law on right to asylum. On 12 October, Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland, informed the press that he will unveil the new regulations for the right to asylum on 15 October. The government justified the new regulations as the influx of migrants from Belarus has exponentially increased and it is necessary to combat it. Right to asylum has been recognised under the 1951 Refugee Convention. It is also included in the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights which is legally binding for all EU members. The right does not guarantee provision of asylum. However, it requires that the government to evaluate the application and reject or accept it on credible reasons. Under the principle of non-refoulement in the international law, countries cannot deport an individual to a place where they are prone to persecution and torture. During his press conference, Tusk said, "We will not implement European ideas if we are sure that they threaten our security," indicating an anti-EU stance. (Jorge Liboreiro, ["Suspending the right to asylum goes against EU law, Brussels tells Warsaw," Euronews, 14 October 2024](#))

### **Turkey and Serbia to jointly produce drones**

On 13 October, Aleksander Vucic, the President of Serbia, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President of Turkey, said that the two governments are considering plans to manufacture and produce military drones together. The plan comes after Turkey made a sale of unmanned aircrafts to Kosovo which sparked anger in Serbia. After the delivery of unmanned aircrafts, Serbia abandoned the purchase of Bayraktar military drones from Turkey. During the press conference Vucic said, "The Turkish military industry is significantly stronger than ours." Erdogan is on a visit to friendly Balkan countries and has visited Albania as well. In Albania as well, he announced that Turkey will be

donating Bayraktar military drones to Albania. The number was unspecified. Even Bosnia has expressed its interest in procuring the drones. Meanwhile, even NATO-member Romania has already incorporated Bayraktar TB2 UAVs into its military inventory. Serbia is also building deterrence. It has recently procured 12 Rafale jet fighters from France for USD three billion. The sale was controversial since Serbia has supported Russia through the war as Serbia refused to impose economic sanctions on Russia even after pressure from the EU. (Dusan Stojanovic, ["Turkey and Serbia suggest they might jointly produce military drones,"](#) *The Associated Press*, 13 October 2024)

### **UK needs to be clear about "resetting ties" with the EU, says Sandro Gozi**

On 13 October, Sandro Gozi, the chair of the EU's delegation to the EU-UK Parliamentary partnership assembly said that the UK needs to be clear about what it means by 'resetting' ties with the EU. Gozi is a member of France's Democratic Movement party and is allied with Emmanuel Macron, the President of France. He said that he is hoping for more cooperation on foreign policy and security, the green transition and artificial intelligence. David Lammy, foreign minister of the UK, will be attending the EU's foreign council meeting on 14 October. This is the first time a Labour minister will be meeting all EU ministers together. Lammy will also be holding bilateral talks with Josep Borell, the chair of the EU's foreign ministers' meeting. Lammy has also proposed a detailed plan for cooperation in security and foreign policy. The plan addresses issues like climate change, energy crisis, pandemics and irregular migration. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the EU, said that the UK's willingness to compromise on the youth mobility agreement will be the litmus test for further cooperation. (Jennifer Rankin, ["UK government must say what Brussels 'reset' means, says EU delegation head,"](#) 13 October 2024)

### **Deutsche Welle analyses failures of Berlin Process over EU enlargement**

On 10 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the lethargic progress of the Berlin Process. The Berlin Process was launched in 2014 by Angela Merkel, former chancellor of the Federation of Germany. Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia signed three agreements in November 2022 on recognition of ID cards, university degrees and some professional qualifications. However, the implementation has been halted since then. The Berlin Process aimed to bring Balkan nations closer to the EU. The EU has also paused its enlargement policy since then. This year, the Balkan nations signed the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), an agreement to create a common market among the countries to bring them closer to the EU through single market cooperation mechanisms. (Anila, Shuka, ["The Berlin Process: 10 years of hope and disillusionment,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 11 October 2024)

### **Parliament wary of cooperation between right and far-right parties**

On 11 October, *Daily Sabah* published an article on rising cooperation between right and far-right parties in the EU parliament. The centre-left parties perceive this as a threat. Recently, the parties united in the parliament to recognise Venezuela's opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia as president following the country's disputed election. The cooperation, therefore, is apparent. Few parliamentarians are also calling the cooperation an "institutional majority." (["EU parliament establishment wary of growing far-right cooperation,"](#) *Daily Sabah*, 11 October 2024)

### **ESA launches Hera spacecraft towards an asteroid**

On 09 October, the European Space Agency launched Hera spacecraft to investigate a cosmic crash. The spacecraft was launched by SpaceX from Cape Canaveral. The mission will cost the ESA around USD 400 million. Hera is the size of a small car and is carrying scientific equipment. It will swing around Mars in 2025 for a gravity boost. Its destination is Dimorphous where it is estimated to reach by 2026. The asteroid

will be 120 million miles from Earth by then. It is controlled by a flight team based in Germany. Hera will survey the asteroid for six months. Two cubesats will pop out from Hera to carry out drone-like inspections. The Cubesats will attempt to land on the moonlet once their survey is complete. (["Europe's Hera spacecraft blasts off to investigate asteroid already rammed by NASA," France24](#), 09 October 2024)

### **Hungarian PM Orban delivers speech in the EU parliament**

On 09 October, Viktor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungary, delivered his speech in the EU parliament. The speech highlighted Hungarian interests in the EU. Members of the European Parliament from left-wing parties boycotted his speech. Ale Daniel Freund, MEP from the Greens Party in Germany said, "Orbán has turned Hungary into the most corrupt country in the European Union." Several MEPs also criticised Hungary's migration policy. Meanwhile, he was praised by right-wing parties like Patriots for Europe and other right-wing groups like European Conservatives and Reformists and Europe of Sovereign Nations. Jorge Buxadé Villalba, MEP from the Spanish party Vox, called Orbán's speech "a breath of fresh air." (Vincenzo Genovese, ["Viktor Orbán splits the European Parliament with presidential speech," Euronews](#), 09 October 2024)

### **Unclear stance persists over climate financing**

On 08 October, *Politico* reported that the EU was unclear about the funding levels it was willing to contribute towards climate commitments. Finance ministers from across the EU approved funding for climate action but did not reveal the amounts of cash they were willing to contribute, ahead of the COP29 summit in November. The EU officials stated this was a deliberate negotiating tactic for the EU to make the precise amount of funding dependent on expansions in the group of donors. The make-up of the donor base and the overall structure of the funding target will also determine the final number related to funding. A statement by the EU acknowledged that developed countries

must take the lead in providing climate financing, but also informed the precise amounts provided for climate financing by everyone including developing countries need to be reported. Industrialized countries, including from the EU had stated the position that developing economies like China with high levels of emissions must also contribute towards climate financing. (Zia Weise, ["The EU's \(vague\) climate aid stance: Want more money? Get more donors," Politico](#), 08 October 2024)

### **British PM Starmer meets EU President Von der Leyen**

On 03 October, Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK, met Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the EU, for the first time since assuming office. Starmer said that his main objective is to rebuild ties after Brexit. The main issues addressed were irregular migration, energy security, defence cooperation and climate change. According to the BBC, the EU still struggles with the aftermath of Brexit. Negotiations following Brexit also involved time and resources. However, the relations have steadily improved since the war in Ukraine started. The Interior Ministries of France and Germany have urged the EU to conclude a formal agreement with the UK on irregular migration. Starmer also emphasised on removing trade barriers between the EU and the UK. The UK has asked for freedom of movement of foods and drinks. Meanwhile, EU members have urged for rights for fishing in the British waters. (Katya Adler, ["PM goes to Brussels as he eyes closer UK-EU co-operation," BBC](#), 03 October 2024)

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Scholz and Modi hold meeting before business conference**

On 25 October, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of Germany, and Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India meeting before their co-chairing of Intergovernmental Consultations (IGC) between India and Germany. Scholz informed Germany wanted to use the IGC to improve cooperation with India on defence and military matters. He also urged the

swift conclusion of free trade talks between the EU and India. Scholz and Modi also inaugurated the 18th Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business (APK). Additionally, the German Chancellor is scheduled to visit Goa where ships from the German Navy will make a pre-scheduled port call as part of German deployment in the Indo-Pacific. (Dharvi Vaid, "[Germany's Scholz, India's Modi meets in New Delhi.](#)" *Deutsche Welle*, 25 October 2024)

### **Dispute between EU and Azerbaijan over human rights escalates**

On 23 October, *Politico* reported that a dispute between the EU and the Government of Azerbaijan over matters of human rights had escalated. The present dispute began after Nicolas Schmit, the European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights stated the COP29 climate conference scheduled in Azerbaijan next month must be an opportunity for Azerbaijan to show its commitment towards international human rights obligations. Schmit also demanded the release of political prisoners in Azerbaijan like Gubad Ibadoghlu and Bahruz Samadov. Meanwhile, some Members of the European Parliament demanded the EU scrap an energy deal signed with Azerbaijan, alleging that it allowed Russia to launder its fossil fuels through Azerbaijan. In response, Hikmet Hajiyev, the Head of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration of Azerbaijan accused the European Commission and European Parliament of being influenced by the government of Azerbaijan's rival Armenia. Hajiyev accused the Government of Armenia of carrying out a PR and lobbying campaign against Azerbaijan. He also stated the EU needed to deal with human rights abuses within the bloc rather than preaching to others. (Gabriel Gavin, "[Azerbaijan, EU human rights feud escalates as COP29 looms.](#)" *Politico*, 23 October 2024)

### **US ambassador to NATO expresses concerns over EU protectionism**

On 22 October, *Politico* reported on Julianne Smith, the US Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(NATO) statement on concerns over the buy local policy of the EU vis a vis the purchase of weapons. According to Smith, the EU needed to focus on the cheapest way to get weapons in the shortest timeline possible rather than focusing on having only European weapons. Smith stated that countries needed to be allowed to buy weapons from wherever they wanted, including outside the EU. Smith also expressed her view that this type of protectionism would not help ensure large levels of weapons purchases to countries in trouble spots such as Ukraine. Smith also informed the US would continue to provide support to NATO, irrespective of the result of the presidential election. However, she also stated the US would not provide NATO membership for Ukraine immediately. (Stuart Lau, "[US envoy to NATO questions EU's 'buy local' strategy on weapons.](#)" *Politico*, 22 October 2024)

### **China and the Vatican agree to extend agreement on the appointment of bishops**

On 22 October, an article in *Deutsche Welle* informed the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Holy See of the Vatican City had agreed to extend by four years a deal on the appointment of Catholic bishops in China. The deal provides officials from the Communist Party of China (CPC) possible inputs into bishops appointed by Pope Francis, Sovereign of the Vatican City State and Head of the Catholic Church. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Vatican City State stated the agreement showed how both sides remained committed to improving relations and dialogue. However, the agreement has been criticized by a section of Catholics for providing the Chinese government with too much influence and power. The Vatican believes only the Pope can appoint bishops, while the Chinese government is of the view that it should have control over the naming of bishops due to national sovereignty. ("[China and Vatican agree to extend controversial bishops deal.](#)" *Deutsche Welle*, 22 October 2024)

### **First 400 migrants destined for Italy arrive in Albania**

On 14 October, the first batch of migrants arrived in Albania. There are a total of 400 migrants and all of them are males. Recently, both countries announced that two migration centres are operational under the deal signed between Italy and Albania. Under the deal, migrants without a visa will be held in migration centres in Albania until their visa is being processed. Based on the results of the visa application, they will either be taken to Italy or be deported back to their home countries. The centres will be run and administered by Italian authorities however, the external security will be provided by Albanian security forces. All costs of running the migration centres will be met by Italy. Albania's desire to join the EU has been used as a bargaining chip by Italy. Italy has promised to support Albania's membership in the EU in return. Only men will be brought to these centres while their families will remain in Italy during that time. On 14 October, a refugee boat arrived on the Italian coast. The boat had 16 men onboard, out of them 10 were Bangladeshis and six were Egyptians. (Angela Giuffrida, "[Italy sends first asylum seekers to Albania under controversial pact](#)," *The Guardian*, 14 October 2024)

### **China imposes tax on European brandy**

On 08 October, China announced new tariffs on brandy imported from the EU. France has strongly criticised this move since French brandy manufacturers like Hennessy and Remy Martin. The owners of the two companies have said that these tariffs might be catastrophic for the industry. China's commerce ministry has provided the justification that the imports are proving to be detrimental for its own brandy industry. The EU countries have called the tariffs as a tactic to get back at EU imposed tariffs on Chinese EVs. Sophie Primas, the Trade Minister of France, called it a "retaliatory measure" by China. She called it a contradiction to rules of international trade. France accounts for 99 per cent of the Brandy exported to China.

(Tom Espiner, "[China hits back at EU with brandy tax](#)," *BBC*, 08 October 2024)

## **CLIMATE**

### **UN warns world heading towards climate catastrophes Paris commitments fall short**

On 24 October, *Politico* reported that the UN had urged governments worldwide to take stronger action against climate change. A new report released by the UN informed current government policies and actions would lead to a global warming increase of 2.6 to 3.1 degrees Celsius this century. The report warned that even under best-case scenarios, there was zero chance of the temperature increase being limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius as was agreed upon in the Paris climate agreement of 2015. Inger Andersen, the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme warned that the Paris commitments would effectively be dead if countries did not properly implement them. Andersen also demanded that countries make stronger plans to combat climate change known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), and provide greater funding for measures to combat climate change. Additionally, she informed that a minimum increase of six times in investment, reform of the global financial architecture and strong action from the private sector was required to substantially reduce emissions. Another key point mentioned in the report was that industrialized countries such as the G20 needed to take the lead in increasing climate action. The G20 which includes historically industrialized countries like the US and Germany alongside newly industrialized countries like China, India and Saudi Arabia was responsible for 77 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2023. In contrast, the entire African Union accounted for just six per cent. Progress amongst the G20 is mixed, the EU is scheduled to meet its climate targets but other countries are not. (Zia Weise, Lucia Mackenzie, Julia Vadler and Giovanna Coi, "[World on track for catastrophic 3 degrees Celsius warming](#)," UN warns, *Politico*, 24 October 2024)

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