



NIAS Area Studies EUROPE MONITOR

NIAS-STIR Programme



global
politics

Discourses | Trajectories | Forecasts



Meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs

3-4 IV 2024

Réunions des ministres des Affaires étrangères



Europe Monitor #32 | Vol. 04 | Issue 05 | May 2024
An area studies initiative of NIAS

75 YEARS OF NATO

About NIAS Global Politics

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

About NIAS Europe Studies

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

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

Editor

D Suba Chandran

Assistant Editor

Padmashree Anandhan

Editorial Team

Alka Bala

Rosemary Kurian



National Institute of
Advanced Studies
NIAS

About NIAS

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

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

About Europe Monitor

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

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

Europe Monitor

Europe Monitor # 32, Vol. 04, No. 5, May 2024



Image Source: US State Department

EM COMMENTS

25 Years of Euro: What lies ahead?

By Alka Bala

75 Years of NATO

By Padmashree Anandhan

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Visit to China

By Manoranjan Kumar

EM DAILY FOCUS



Source: EMMANUEL DUNAND / AFP, EPA-Yonhap, Wam.ae, Qilai Shen/Bloomberg, European Council

GERMANY

Legalises cannabis: Is it a step in the right direction?

SWITZERLAND

Climate inaction is violation of human rights rules ECHR

THE UK

Parliament approves the Bill to deport migrants to Rwanda

REGIONAL

European Parliament approves pact on Migration and Asylum reform: Three Implications

WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES



Source: facebook.com/ab3.army, Kremlin.ru, REUTERS/Marton Monus, Roman Chop/ABC News, AFP, Julia Nikhinson/Bloomberg

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 796 to Day 766 in four dimensions. First, The War on the Ground. Second, The Moscow View: Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war.

By Padmashree Anandhan and Rosemary Kurian

EM SHORT NOTES



Source: Jordan Pettitt/PA, Hungary Today, The Portugal News, Hungary Today, Peter Morrison/AP Photo/picture alliance, SAMEER AL-DOUMY/AFP

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

By Alka Bala, Rosemary Kurian and Padmashree Anandhan

COMMENT

25 Years of Euro: What lies ahead?

By Alka Bala

The rising inflation during the pandemic was also met with Europe's energy crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, forcing the European governments to balance inflation through gas subsidies and provide income support, often carried out through deficit financing.

01 January 2024, marked the 25 years of the Euro, Europe's common currency which stands as a symbol of European stability and unity. It was adopted on 01 January 1999 by 11 EU countries, who implemented a single monetary policy outlined by the European Central Bank (ECB). Celebrating 25 years of the Euro, Christine Lagarde, President of the ECB, stated the Euro's evolution has been "...from the dream of a few visionary founders to a currency used by 350 million people across 20 countries." The European Central Bank, wielded the euro's financial autonomy and general stability in the union, carrying responsibility for high risks and fruits of high rewards through greater economic integration.

How has the euro performed in the 25 years?

Monetary unification through a common currency was adopted to allow easier cross-border trade avoiding the price shocks and fluctuations caused by the changing exchange rates. In the first decade of the euro's adoption, 16 million jobs were created in the eurozone, achieving the promise of greater employment. European Central Bank succeeded in managing the overall inflation performance maintaining it under 2.1 per cent since 1991. The transparency in price stability also brought greater economic growth, jobs and economic benefits. However, the increased flow of capital was still into mostly non-tradeable sectors. The flow of capital between the high-income core countries and the low-income periphery countries within the eurozone paused during the recession and debt crisis in 2009.

Eurozone faced a sovereign debt crisis, financial sector crisis and an economic decline from 2009, as a consequence of the

global financial crisis in 2008. Eurozone countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, Ireland, and Greece suffered the most while the collective GDP had declined by four per cent in 2009. EU's efforts to overcome this included short-term measures such as bailouts for banks and engaging in long-term plans of initiating structural reforms, provision of safety nets and improving economic governance. However, these policy measures remained inadequate as they led to procyclical fiscal consolidation.

"The increased flow of capital was still into mostly non-tradeable sectors."

The recession killed the incentive to expand for higher-income eurozone countries. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic hit the eurozone economies during their slow recovery from the recession. This time, the response from the European Central Bank was prompt, through measures for fiscal relaxation and a balanced combination of national and regional initiatives. The pandemic also witnessed collective leadership, in contrast to the earlier fragmented response to the Great Recession. The increased policy response from national governments resulted in growing public debt, as seen in Italy and France, where the debt increased by 13 per cent and 15.5 per cent respectively. The rising inflation during the pandemic was also met with Europe's energy crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, forcing the European governments to balance inflation through gas subsidies and provide income support, often carried out through deficit financing.

Where does the euro stand currently as a global currency?

Internationally, the euro is considered to be the most important currency after the dollar. However, 2022 was highlighted as the “worst year in the euro’s history” as it lost 16 per cent of its value against the dollar, and was lowest at trade since December 2002. Europe’s macroeconomic challenges were faced because of its heavy energy dependency on Russia, the economic and production slowdown due to the Ukraine war, and increasing inflation and economic recession, ultimately leading to the euro’s decline against the dollar. The differences in policies between the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank (ECB) and the delay in hiking interests by the ECB led to the euro’s further decline. However, the euro’s devaluation has given it a competitive advantage, as exports increase and become cheaper.

ECB’s efforts to starkly increase interest have aided the euro’s recovery and a three per cent gain against the US dollar in 2023. Europe’s political and economic climate in 2024 appears volatile, as countries gear for European Parliament elections and several countries equip for presidential or Parliamentary elections at the national level. The election results would determine new policies regarding the euro, the EU budget and the financing of the green transition.

What lies ahead for the euro in the next 25 years?

Firstly, in the short term, the euro will have to navigate the energy price fluctuations due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Europe needs to diversify its markets as sanctions on Russia are likely to continue. As the EU diverts increased funding to begin its reconstruction efforts in Ukraine from late 2024/early 2025, avenues for market expansion should not be overshadowed. The disruptions in the global supply chain due to the spillover of the Israel- Palestine conflict in the Red Sea also has increased shipping costs for European firms. European firms are adjusting better with the delivery delays, to avoid supply shortages and production slowdowns witnessed during the pandemic.

Secondly, Structural and macroeconomic policy changes. The functioning of a stable single market requires the implementation of structural reforms. Policies should be implemented to achieve a banking and capital market union with strong market infrastructures. Europe can learn lessons from its past misallocation of capital into non-tradeable sectors and rather increase sectoral specialisation in its investments. The implementation of countercyclical macroeconomic policies and structural reforms would ensure the euro’s stability and growth, providing a long-term paradigm shift. These reforms must differ from the responses the ECB utilised to tackle unexpected financial shocks.

“The functioning of a stable single market requires the implementation of structural reforms.”

Thirdly, greater integration of the European Monetary Union’s fiscal and monetary governance. The complete separation between national banks and the European Central Bank was earlier considered essential to maintain the independence of the ECB and ensure that it is not coerced into adopting popular policies to avoid public discontent. However, this approach can no longer be pursued as external shocks such as the pandemic demanded fiscal and monetary responses at national and bloc levels. The challenges of fragmented responses from different countries during the financial crisis call for better stabilising measures at the national and the bloc levels. The establishment of Central Fiscal Capacity is voiced that would function solely during crises and external shocks. This would entail a common framework coordinated with national fiscal authorities and the ECB.

Fourthly, increased focus on the digitalisation of payments. The new EU industrial policy emphasizes the digitalisation of payment systems. The proposal for Central Bank Digital Currency, or a digital euro has been accelerated since

the COVID-19 pandemic, as the digital euro would complement cash payments and allow avenues to pay securely and more quickly. The digital euro is also expected to make European payments more competitive and innovative. The retail digital euro project for the use of private citizens is currently in its preparation stage with the digital euro rulebook, platform and infrastructure for the digital euro yet to be finalised. The governing council of the ECB would decide by the end of 2024, if a wholesale digital euro project, accessible to only financial institutions and certain non-financial institutions can be implemented. However, the digital euro has received political scepticism as certain countries view it to be a measure that violates privacy and increases surveillance.

Euro's experience as an international monetary experiment would need to undergo the mentioned policy reforms and structural changes to overcome the present challenges and future challenges of geopolitical tensions, digitalisation and green transition that await Europe in the 21st century.

Alka Bala is an undergraduate scholar at the Department of International Relations, Peace and Public Policy at St Joseph's University, Bangalore. Her areas of interest include Europe, maritime, climate change, and southeast Asia.

COMMENT

75 Years of NATO

By Padmashree Anandhan

Through the 75 years, the organisation continued to engage and adhere to collective security and deterrence. The principles and objectives in which the alliance was formed stand relevant today as the threat to European security exists through Russia.

On 04 April, NATO turned 75, becoming the oldest military alliance. On the same day, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General marking 75 years of NATO, stated that the US and Europe are "stronger and safer together." He said: "I don't believe in America alone just as I don't believe in Europe alone."

Marking the 75 years of NATO, the US President, Joe Biden released a statement mentioning how NATO is "larger, stronger, and more determined than ever before." He added: "Over the past three years, our NATO Allies have increased their own annual defense spending by almost \$80 billion. As our adversaries have plotted to break our remarkable unity, our democracies have stood unwavering." Germany's Defence Minister Boris Pistorius spoke on the challenge ahead for Germany: "The challenge of resetting the Bundeswehr for a new and old challenge that of defending the country and the alliance."

What is the background?

First, the formation of NATO in 1949, and its expansion since 1999. Established in 1949, its first secretary general Baron Hastings Ismay said its purpose was: "to keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." Beginning with 12 members, it has expanded to 32 stands sturdy for countries wanting to be part of the alliance. The first round of expansion began 25 years ago on 25 March 1999, toward the east with Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland joining NATO. Since then, it has continued to spread through the Baltic and Eastern Europe (2004: Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) to northern Europe – Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024).

Russia's blockade in the west and east Germany and the US entry became the starting point for the NATO alliance. NATO was formed to control the expanding Soviet sphere of influence and to serve as a military insurance to the Western European countries to achieve a larger component of peace in the region. Through the 75 years, the organisation continued to engage and adhere to collective security and deterrence. The principles and objectives in which the alliance was formed stand relevant today as the threat to European security exists through Russia. Due to this very threat, the formation of a military alliance gained significance (Article 5: an attack on a NATO member is considered an attack on all) as it has helped deter the war in Ukraine from expanding.

"These have been the major misses, revealing the alliance's dependency on the US military, the gap in the share of military expenditure across the members and the failure of the NATO-Russia Founding Act."

Second, the hits and misses of NATO during the last 75 years. The critical purpose of the NATO establishment was to contain the Soviet Union, which was achieved primarily with the fall of the USSR. The US contribution to NATO's defence expenditure share increased from 59 to nearly 64 per cent out of USD 471 billion and USD 721 billion between 1999 and 2004. Alongside the military boost, geographic enlargement

took place with the inclusion of 10 European countries from the Baltic and Eastern Europe, strengthening the alliance. It reached its peak in the last two decades, expanding to 32 member countries in southern and northern Europe (except the Balkans) but with an asymmetric defence contribution from the US. The alliance grew large geographically with increasing members but there was no equivalent share of the military matching the numbers. There was also a simultaneous degrading of relations with Russia after the 2008 announcement on providing scope for Georgia and Ukraine's membership in NATO, triggering war in Georgia, the Crimean annexation and the prolonged war of Ukraine. These have been the major misses, revealing the alliance's dependency on the US military, the gap in the share of military expenditure across the members and the failure of the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

Third, questions over cohesion. Since the NATO enlargement in the 1990s to include the Eastern European countries, there has been an increasing divide between the core Western and peripheral Eastern allies. Not until the 2016 Summit in Warsaw was there a special focus to securitise the eastern periphery of NATO following the Russian annexation of Crimea. Only after 2016, the heads of the NATO allies agree to launch NATO's forward presence in the northeast and southeast. Turkey and Hungary have attempted to push their national interest or bargain for Russia due to their long-standing relations over the alliance's progress. Across the Atlantic, the challenge posed by the Republicans in the US Congress tests the cohesion as all European members are now expected to raise their equal share of military expenditure to the NATO's target of two per cent.

Fourth, the Trump challenge for NATO. In February 2024, former US President Donald Trump's warning about the US quitting NATO is a challenge. Marching into the 75th year, Trump's statement echoed how European allies in NATO have over-

depended on the US for its military expenditure. Since 1949, the US has continued to be a host of major share of defence expenditure with more than 60 per cent. Except France, Italy, the UK and Germany, no other European allies have stepped up their contribution to NATO's arsenal. The unappealing factor was countries yet not meeting the NATO threshold (Two per cent of their GDP to defence expenditure) despite the war situation.

Fifth, new challenges. Achieving the larger peace in Europe may have been possible for Western Europe due to a stronger military presence while the eastern flank faces the Russian threat and many Eastern European countries still struggle to find their entry into NATO. The war in Ukraine has triggered the debate to fasten the inclusion of the countries in the queue but amid an imbalance over contribution towards NATO's defence, new memberships are expected to wait further. Lastly, after the Trump stir, the share of military expenditure by Europe will evolve as another challenge.

What does this mean?

First, NATO's success in expansion and its challenge. After the disintegration of the USSR, the continuity of NATO was objected to by Russia. The eastern challenge continues to remain. The recent additions of Finland and Sweden into NATO were one of the quickest. This was because of the geography combined military and high-end technology components which were advantageous for NATO.

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Georgia and Ukraine who are next in the line may not be a benefit but rather a spending for NATO. If it is Georgia and Ukraine, it is an additional sensitivity due to Russia's threat and extra work to ensure their political and economic systems meet the NATO conditions. Unless there is a peace settlement with Russia, Ukraine and Georgia will be a no-go area for NATO as it places the existing members under Russian threat.

COMMENT

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Visit to China

By Manoranjan Kumar

Since 1975, reforms to the Veil laws during the years 2014 to 2016 have helped transition the mentalities of society towards abortions, making it more liberal for women to choose.

On 16 April, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. During his three-day visit (13-16 April), he was accompanied by a delegation of German officials (including ministers of agriculture, environment, and transportation) and business leaders, and he also held talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang. He also visited the German companies with substantial investments in China, such as Bosch, engaging with trade representatives and officials in key industrial hubs such as Chongqing in southwest China, as well as Shanghai and Beijing.

On 16 April, President Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of "common ground" for working together in the long term with a strategic perspective. He said that "there is no fundamental conflict of interest between China and Germany and that both sides do not pose a security threat to each other. Mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Germany is not a 'risk' but a guarantee for the stability of relations and an opportunity to shape the future."

What is the background?

First, the Sino-German relations. Historically, Germany and China have maintained a robust and multifaceted relationship characterized by extensive trade ties, high-level diplomatic engagements, and cooperation in various fields. On the economic front, China is one of Germany's most important trading partners, with bilateral trade volumes reaching a significant level. In 2023, both nations exchanged EUR 254.1 billion worth of goods, making Germany China's biggest trading partner, the United States and the Netherlands. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), In 2022, China exported

USD 152 billion to Germany, including computers, electric vehicles, lithium batteries, textiles, and broadcasting equipment. During the last 27 years, the exports of China to Germany have increased at an annualized rate of 11.1 per cent, from USD 8.96 billion in 1995 to USD 152 billion in 2022. In the same year, Germany exported USD 109 billion to China; it included cars, motor vehicles, parts and accessories, and chemical products. During the last 27 years, Germany's exports to China have increased at an annualized rate of 10.9 per cent. The relationship also faced challenges, such as intellectual property rights, market access barriers, and concerns over fair trade practices, which have occasionally strained their ties. During the recent trip, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz advocated for the interests of German companies facing mounting challenges in competing within the Chinese market. He played a delicate balancing act as Berlin navigates between economic interests and geopolitical concerns.

Second, the European Union's position on China. The EU sees China as a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival. However, EU-China relations have become increasingly complex due to growing challenges. China's approach has shifted, becoming less open to the world and more repressive domestically while adopting a more assertive stance abroad. The recent trip marked the German Chancellor's first visit (overall second) to China following the EU's adoption of a "new strategy for China" last year. This strategy urged Germany to mitigate its reliance on Chinese goods. Additionally, Chancellor Scholz articulated the escalating concerns within the European Union regarding the influx of Chinese goods being sold at a loss, potentially transforming

the region into a dumping ground for such products. The European Commission is conducting multiple investigations into Chinese green technology exports, such as battery electric vehicles, which it contends have benefited from state subsidies. These probes aim to assess the potential adverse effects on local producers within the EU. China's manufacturing push in green sectors, including electric cars and solar panels, has sparked trade disputes with Europe and the US, where such industries also received government support. However, with 5,000 German companies active in the Chinese market, Germany would lose more than many of its European partners if Beijing retaliated against the European Union.

Third, the impact of the Russian-Ukraine war. Beijing's support for the Kremlin in the Ukraine war has severely affected the EU, including Germany. The spike in energy prices has hampered the German economy, and its weaknesses have exposed a reliance on China for growth. The war has impacted Germany's core interests, and indirectly, it has damaged the sanity of the entire world order.

What does it mean?

First, the economic interest is foremost for Germany. Despite the discussion on various issues between the two leaders during the

visit, Germany's priority is to protect its business interests in China. The anti-subsidy investigation by the European Commission on Chinese firms has worried Germany as their motor vehicle companies have heavily invested in China. German businesses will suffer the most if the EU imposes higher tariffs on Chinese exports and Beijing retaliates. The German economy is stumbling as last year it contracted 0.3 per cent, and the prediction for the current year could be better.

Second, the Chinese interests. The industrial and supply chains of China and Germany are deeply intertwined, and the markets of both countries are highly interdependent. So, Germany's commitment to China in the trade realm favours both. Beijing is actively seeking foreign investment to revitalize its economy, which a slowdown has hampered in the housing sector. This visit has reaffirmed the bilateral relations between the world's second and third-largest economies. Also, it gives China leverage to strengthen its influence in Europe, particularly amidst tensions with the United States.



Source: EMMANUEL DUNAND / AFP, EPA-Yonhap, Wam.ae, Qilai Shen/Bloomberg, European Council

GERMANY

Legalises cannabis: Is it a step in the right direction?

By Rosemary Kurian

What is the bill about?

On 23 February, the German Bundestag passed the cannabis decriminalisation bill that allows the recreational use of cannabis. The decriminalisation is part of a two-pronged approach towards marijuana consumption in Germany. It partially legalises the consumption and home cultivation of cannabis for adults alongside allowing non-profit “cannabis clubs” to supply up to 500 members in small quantities in two phases. The legislation bans consuming and advertising closer to schools and playgrounds to prevent impact on minors. Adults in Germany can possess 25 grams of cannabis in public and 50 grams privately, while also being able to cultivate up to three plants at their homes.

Why did Germany legalise cannabis consumption?

According to Karl Lauterbach, Germany’s Health Minister, it is aimed to reduce burden

on law enforcement and to prevent sale of contaminated cannabis, especially to children and young people in the black markets. The legislation is also expected to bring forth “health protection” at the centre of the German drug policy. It is also to reduce drug trafficking and ease it for medicinal use.

What are the opposition's concerns?

Criticisms have sparked over the impact it would have on young people. The normalisation of cannabis consumption and easier access to the product could lead to an increase in the use of the product, especially by youngsters. Law enforcement officials noted major concerns over the lack of clarity in the means to implement and regulate the restrictions suggested in the legislation. Concerns have been raised over costs to implement regulations like preventing cannabis consumption within a certain range of localities and timings of public consumption have not been clearly stated. There is a potential for giving amnesty to 200,000 cannabis-related offences causing a major administrative crisis. Health groups have also indicated on the effect on central

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

nervous system increasing the risk of psychosis and schizophrenia among the young.

How is use of cannabis viewed in Germany's neighbourhood?

Prior to Germany, Malta and Luxembourg introduced their liberal laws towards the recreational use of cannabis, in 2021 and 2023. The recreational use of marijuana is considered illegal for possession and consumption in most countries in the EU with few exceptions. In 2001, Portugal decriminalised cannabis, with its possession and consumption considered only an administrative offence and not a criminal one. Spain permits its personal use privately and within established 'cannabis social clubs' where it is collectively cultivated within prescribed limits. The Czech Republic is lenient towards the possession and use of small quantities of cannabis. The Netherlands has the reputation for relaxed policies on marijuana consumption. Its production and sale within the country is illegal, but small quantities in licenced "coffee shops" are ignored by the state. However, in recent years a stricter approach has been taken. For EU, the main concern has been in establishing commercial markets for cannabis, some countries opted to experiment with a non-profit model to forego restrictions. An alternative is the pilot programme approach which is under experiment Switzerland. It grants limited and regulated access to the sale of cannabis while monitoring potential health concerns among the public, to establish a safe and regulated cannabis market for recreational purposes.

Does legalising solve the problem?

The move is considered as a step to appease the younger voters ahead of elections. While the text explicitly speaks of protecting young people, statistically, they consume cannabis the most. If 8.8 per cent of individuals aged between 18-64 claim to have had marijuana in the last year, the number rises to 10 per cent between the age group of 12-18. While the aim is to shut down the black market for cannabis, there is a tendency for most crimes related to the sale of cannabis to go unnoticed with a blanket of immunity given the lack of clarity among law enforcement

and the judiciary.

Legalising does solve the problem in the face value but fails to protect the most 'at-risk' groups of people. Comparing with Germany's decriminalisation of prostitution in 2002, it was aimed to shut illegal brothels, create respect for sex workers and ensure social security. While these were achieved newer challenges emerged with more power to the owners of the prostitution and forcing many into the profession.

Both issues have similar conundrums of implementation. Since cannabis legalisation is taking place in a phased manner, initial observations would guide the future of its full-scale implementation. However, a pilot programme similar to the Swiss approach will help analyse health risks and the success of each phase would be a decider for the future of cannabis decriminalisation in Germany.

References

- Lili Bayer, "[Cannabis users celebrate relaxation of laws on personal use in Germany](#)", *The Guardian*, 01 April 2024
- Dario Sabaghi, "[Germany's Cannabis Legalization Plan Faces Criticism Within Government](#)," *Forbes*, 17 January 2024
- "[Germany legalises limited amounts of marijuana](#)," *Euronews*, 01 April 2024
- "[Germany gives controversial green light to cannabis](#)," *The Economic Times*, 01 April 2024
- Sarah Sinclair, "[Where Is Cannabis Legal In Europe? A Guide To The Latest Policy Changes](#)," *Forbes*, 31 January 2024
- "[Commission decides to partially register a European Citizens' Initiative on Cannabis](#)," *European Commission*, 06 February 2024
- Lauren Chadwick & Cornelia Trefflich, "[Germany is set to make cannabis legal. Where does the rest of Europe stand on marijuana use?](#)" *Euronews*, 18 August 2023
- "[Legal prostitution in Germany: A failure?](#)," *France 24 English (YouTube)*, 01 March 2024

SWITZERLAND

Climate inaction is violation of human rights rules ECHR

By Rosemary Kurian

What is the case?

On 09 April, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled against Switzerland for violating the human rights of its citizens by failing to sufficiently combat climate change. In a case filed by a group of thousands of elderly women claiming that their government's inaction was putting their lives at risk, the court ruled that Switzerland failed to comply with its own targets for cutting greenhouse emissions. Siofra O'Leary, the Court President, said that "The future generations are likely to bear an increasingly severe burden of the consequences of present failures to combat climate change."

The court ruled that Switzerland was in violation of Article 8 of the European Covenant of Human Rights of the "right to respect for private and family life", adding that climate protection is a human right. By extension, it concluded that states are obliged to protect their citizens from the harms of climate change, as signatories of the Human Rights Covenant.

Who are the Swiss women and what are their demands?

More than 2000 women over the age of 64 part of the KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz (Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland) filed a case against the government of Switzerland on 29 March 2023. The group was formed in 2016 with just 40 women aged 64 and over, to whom the Grand Chamber of the ECHR granted victim status after their case was won. Before approaching the ECHR, they approached Switzerland's Federal Court in 2016, which dismissed their case in 2020. They receive support from Greenpeace Switzerland, who have taken the responsibility of the costs of the legal initiative.

The KlimaSeniorinnen claimed that their state's inaction on increasing climate change was violating their human right to life. At the

ECHR, they argued that their age and gender made them especially vulnerable and more likely to die during the extreme heatwaves, citing a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Therefore, they demanded that Switzerland design climate policies to limit global warming to 1.5°C, as promised under the Paris Agreement.

What is the state of Switzerland's climate policies?

According to *Reuters*, the temperatures in Switzerland are increasing at twice the rate of the global average, with rapidly melting glaciers. Switzerland is signatory to the Paris Agreement, and has committed itself to cutting down greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030. It later proposed stronger measures to achieve this goal, which got rejected in 2021 by voters in a referendum, claiming it to be too burdensome. According to Andreas Zünd, the Swiss ECHR judge, the Paris Climate Agreement was decisive in the ruling, especially since Switzerland had ratified it.

The court instructed the state to find its own means "subject to democratic debate" to fulfil its commitments. Based on existing policies, it is predicted that Switzerland might fail to achieve its GHG targets by 2030, in addition its aim of achieving net zero by 2050 based on its nationally determined contribution as required under Article 4 of the Paris Agreement. It might have to reconsider the excise duty on liquid motor fuels, raising the levy on CO2 emissions from 2030, legislate post 2030 sector-specific climate policies, and implement restrictions on carbon emissions embedded in Swiss imports twice as high as domestic emissions. The verdict cannot be appealed and indicates the legal duty that Switzerland has towards its citizens by protecting them from climate change. Therefore, if the state fails to update its climate policies and bring down the emission rates and warming limit, it could provoke further litigation at a national level with potential financial penalties levied.

What does the ruling imply?

The ruling sets one of the first ever legal precedents on climate action, by establishing

binding rules for all 46 countries signatories to the European Convention on Human Rights. Ruth Delbaere, legal campaigns director at global civic movement Avaaz, noted that the verdict set a “blueprint for how to successfully sue your own government over climate failures”. Several other national courts are considering human rights-based cases under climate action, especially in Australia, Brazil, Peru and South Korea, with the Supreme Court of India recently ruling that citizens have the right to be protected from adverse effects of climate change.

The verdict can also be used to govern future cases at the ECHR, since six other cases on climate inaction have been kept on hold. A lawsuit has been filed against the Norwegian government for issuing new licences to explore oil and gas in the Barents Sea post 2035. A group of six Portuguese youngsters brought a case against 32 countries, thrown out as the ECHR stated that remedies at the national level need to be first exhausted. It also rejected a case brought by a former French mayor accusing that state inaction would cause his town to be submerged under the North Sea. The court stated that he failed to be a direct victim since he moved to Brussels. The argument for the above cases is similar to the case filed by the KlimaSeniorinnen, claiming that the civil and political rights guaranteed by the human rights convention was meaningless if the planet is uninhabitable.

References

- Alexandra Sharp, [“Swiss Women Win Landmark Climate Victory,”](#) *Foreign Policy*, 09 April 2024
- Gloria Dickie, Kate Abnett and Christian Levaux, [“Swiss women win landmark climate case at Europe top human rights court,”](#) *Reuters*, 10 April 2024
- [“Top European court hands Swiss women victory in landmark climate ruling,”](#) *Al Jazeera*, 09 April 2024
- [“Who are the elderly Swiss women behind the climate court case win?,”](#) *First post*, 10 April 2024
- [“KlimaSeniorinnen: Meet the older women suing Switzerland to demand climate action,”](#) *Reuters*, 09 April 2024
- [“Switzerland not complying with Paris](#)

[Climate Agreement, says Swiss ECHR judge”](#), *Swissinfo*, 12 April 2024

Cecile Mantovani and Gabrielle Tétrault-Farber, [“Switzerland underestimated elderly women in climate case, plaintiff says,”](#) *Reuters*, 12 April 2024

[“Switzerland: Climate Change Mitigation in Switzerland,”](#) *International Monetary Fund*, 07 June 2023

THE UK

Parliament approves the Bill to deport migrants to Rwanda

By Padmashree Anandhan

On 22 April, the UK Parliament approved the Bill to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda after a continued debate between the upper and lower houses. The Bill skipped its first hurdle with no interventions from the House of Lords, which earlier mandated modifications. In the last round of negotiations, the Bill's name was changed to the "Safety of Rwanda Bill." The government assured that it had already addressed the Supreme Court's concerns by signing a treaty with the Rwandans in December 2023.

Ahead of the vote, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak assured that the deportation flights would begin in the coming months. He added, "We are ready, plans are in place, and these flights will go, come what may." The vote was held as a response by the UK government to the Supreme Court's ruling that the deportation to Rwanda violated international law.

The Bill would request the court to reconsider Rwanda as a safe country and allow the UK the power to ignore international and human rights law. David Anderson, a barrister and member of the House of Lords, said: "You can't make a country safe just by saying it's safe."

On 23 April, in reaction to the policy, the UNHCR commissioner Filippo Grandi said: "...shift responsibility for refugee protection, undermining international cooperation and setting a worrying global precedent." The Council of Europe's commissioner for

Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, said: "...raises major issues about the human rights of asylum seekers and the rule of law more generally." He urged the UK government to "...refrain from removing people under the policy and reverse the bill's "effective infringement of judicial independence."

Issues at large

First, a brief on illegal immigration. According to a UK government report, as of 2023, the total number of irregular migrants entering was 52,530; 85 per cent had arrived only through small boats. Since 2020, migrants have been arriving at a higher rate due to the ease of COVID-19 restrictions. The number of illegally arriving people using small boats has only been increasing.

Second, the UK's Rwanda plan. In 2021, the government introduced a plan to restrict the entry of illegal migrants. Later, the Nationality and Borders Bill was adopted in 2021, declaring irregular entry of migrants into the UK as a criminal offence. During 2022-23, the move faced legal drawbacks when the deportation to Rwanda was opposed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and blocked by the UK Supreme Court. In 2024, the House of Lords negotiated with the UK government to form an independent monitoring group to examine if Rwanda was safe. The government's pursuit overrode this to have made the required modifications with a key aim to legalize the deportation plan.

Third, Tory's ceaseless efforts. Prime Minister Boris Johnson proposed the initial plan to prevent illegal migration. Introduced as a Nationality and Borders Bill in 2022, it was modified as an Illegal Migration Bill in 2023 when the first deportation was suspended by the European Court of Human Rights interim decision. This was possible when former home secretary Suella Braverman revived the Bill by allowing the removal of illegal asylum seekers to a "safe third country" without an option of re-entry into the UK. Following the UK Supreme Court decision block, the conservative party continues to push against the declaration of Rwanda as a safe country amid the legal challenges. The government's latest law

attempts to legislate away from the stated facts and declare Rwanda safe to send asylum seekers despite the 2023 ruling. The law obliges the UK courts and civil servants to "conclusively" treat Rwanda as safe. It directs the judges and immigration officials to consider the same while severely limiting access to appeals and remedies.

Fourth, national and international responses. At the international level, the government's move on the Rwanda plan is considered a "blatant disregard" of international laws and human rights, triggering international condemnation. Human rights activists have called the bill "inhuman" and impracticable. In the case of the legal critics, they have observed it as a corrosion of the UK's reputation for the rule of law. Within the UK and the Tories, a clear division has been visible between the left and right inside Tory, where the right group has strongly greenlighted for deportation. A moderate group within the party called the bill "went too far." Meanwhile, the Labour Party vowed to remove the law if it were adopted.

In perspective

First, Safety of Rwanda Bill a lone boat at sea. There are three real-time barriers to the continuity of the Bill. Although the UK government has overridden the Bill through the House of Lords to insist on reconsidering Rwanda as a safe place for reputation, the UK Supreme Court and the ECHR can pose legal barriers deterring from executing the plan. Legal challenges aside, the UK government's push is politically strong, while the financial cost budget of giving GBP 370 million over five years to Rwanda to prove it as a safe place remains in a grey zone. Lastly, migration has become a long-term component in winning votes for the Tories against the Labour Party in the upcoming elections. Labour Party's stance on scrapping the law, even if passed, places the existence of the long-battled Bill into an uncertain zone.

Second, the UK's undermining of human rights. The conservative party's relentless effort to reduce migrant entries and override the UK's Supreme Court rule will face legal challenges. Any deportation attempts are

likely to trigger further legal challenges, making it dubious for deporting large numbers of asylum seekers to Rwanda. Legal challenges are expected, especially in removing the individual removals. The rigor to legalize the plan indicates a desperate and divided Tory's trying hard to close the polling gap against the Labour Party.

REGIONAL

European Parliament approves pact on Migration and Asylum reform: Three Implications

By Padmashree Anandhan

What did the European Parliament do?

On 10 April, the European Parliament approved the landmark New Pact on Migration and Asylum reforming the EU's migration and asylum rules. The latest EU Asylum and Migration Pact aims to address the impact of migration faced by the EU through fastening the rejection and delegating the application screening process equally across members. The vote comes after continued debates between the conservatives and liberal lawmakers in the northern and southern Europe. As of 2023, the asylum applications had reached "seven-year high." In response to the vote, Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament said: "History made. We have delivered a robust legislative framework on how to deal with migration and asylum in the EU." Ursula Von Der Leyen, European Commission President stated that the pact would increase the efficiency of the application processing. Whereas Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor called the move as "historic and indispensable." He added: "...limits irregular migration and finally relieves the burden on the countries that are particularly badly affected."

Under the new changes, migrants who enter the EU illegally will undergo strict identity, health and security checks, including biometric readings of faces and fingerprints. Within seven days the migration governing authorities have to complete the process, assessing if the migrants should be granted or sent back origin country. However, in case of asylum-seekers from countries such as

Tunisian, Morocco and Bangladesh where many are overall rejected will be now "fast-tracked" in the "detention centres" near to the EU's external border to proceed with quick deportation. The main challenge in implementing the reform is over shared responsibility clause. The reform aims to alter the "Dublin-III" which decides a country's responsibility in application screening. Italy, Greece and Malta who have already flagged issues over difficulty in handling influx in asylum centres and have accused the neighbouring states for not helping in preventing such illegal entry of migrants. Under the reform, if any such member-state shows "unwilling or unable" to host a set of asylum seekers physically it shall be assisted financially or with personnel.

Why approve now?

The problem of migration has been long entailed debate for the EU but the past decade the negotiations have fast-tracked and more rapid since 2023. Key reason is to break the migration policy barrier ahead of the European Parliament elections June 2024. Along with the pressure of elections, thwarting the rise of far-right is another spooking factor for the Parliament and Council to finalise the texts and adopt the policy. The Parliament may have met the time factor but real task lies ahead in rebuilding the mutual trust between the EU member-states. In handling the asylum influx or implementation and responsibility sharing, Italy, France, Malta and Greece had earlier raised concerns over missing common migration management system. In December 2023, Hungary and Poland outrightly rejected the reform against the "constitutive elements" of the pact. While the European Parliament argues to overcome such political blocks and aims to address the migration through common approach and thereby bridging the trust between the member states. Common approach and a uniform migrations application processing procedure has been a long call amongst the EU states, but the reform not only standardises a common procedure, it majorly intends to stop the migration flows. It now expands the use of border control procedures and quicker assessment to remove the obstacles to deportation.

What does it imply for Europe?

First, extended delegation of power to member states through Asylum Procedures Regulation (APR). Under this regulation, the member states are allowed to expand the usage of border procedures to enable quick assessment of application which are “unfounded or inadmissible.” Such reduced discretion and permit for the states to use solidarity measures (EU states can choose between “relocation obligations or financial contribution.”) reduced the intervention of the European Parliament.

Second, low intensity obligations at national level. After the European Parliament approval, the commission’s implementation plan should be followed by the member-states national plan. It allows the state to opt a slower process to draft its implementation after taking account of its capacity, technical support and mainly its priorities. The push for an ownership at the national level, may seem to impose less obligation on the states

but it would also result in the Commission identification of “systemic weakness” helping it to finetune its approach to migration.

Third, shifting responsibilities to third countries. Taking the case of the UK which has delegated the asylum deportation to Rwanda. A similarity can be viewed among the northern and southern European countries and in future eastern European states can join along to prefer outsourcing the migration management to third countries over high deportation rate.

War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan and Rosemary Kurian



Source: facebook.com/ab3.army, Kremlin.ru, REUTERS/Marton Monus, Roman Chop/ABC News, AFP, Julia Nikhinson/Bloomberg

War in Ukraine: Day 796

NATO Secretary General recognizes the need to fasten the weapon delivery for Ukraine

War on the Ground:

On 29 April, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President during his meeting with Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, urged for "faster delivery" of weapon systems to strengthen the front line. He indicated how Russia has advanced due to the ammunition gap in Ukraine's armed forces and stressed on the high expectations for supplies from western allies. He added: "Today I don't see anything positive on this point yet. There are supplies, they have slightly begun, this process needs to be sped up."

On 29 April, Politico reported on Ukraine's forced retreat in three villages of Donetsk. The move comes as Russia's attacks intensify while Ukraine's military ammunition deters. In a statement, Oleksandr Syrskyi, Ukraine's

Armed Forces Commander stated that the forces had moved to west frontiers in Berdychi, Semenivka and Novomykhailivka to preserve the life and health of the troops as supplies dwindled.

On 29 April, Oleg Kiper, Governor of Odesa reported on the death of two following Russian missile strike. Posting a picture of damage to the building, he mentioned on serious injury of eight more people.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 29 April, Russia's defence ministry reported on the progress of the "Battlegroup South" on the frontline inflicting damages on Ukraine's brigades. In a statement, it confirmed on hitting 46th Air Mobile Brigade, 79th Air Assault Brigade near Krasnogorovka and Konstantinovka in Donetsk. According to the report, the attack resulted in destruction of 370 Ukrainian troops. Apart from this, Battlegroup Dnepr and Russian air defences claimed on

* 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.

targeting Ukrainian troops and destroying of unmanned aerial vehicles.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 29 April, Stoltenberg confirmed the lag in delivering the military aid of the alliance to Ukraine. He acknowledged the impact of the delay as a casual factor for “serious consequences” on ground. The statement comes as Stoltenberg visits Kyiv and held a meeting with Zelenskyy. He added: “The lack of ammunition has allowed the Russians to push forward along the front line. Lack of air defense has made it possible for more Russian missiles to hit their targets.”

On 29 April, Polish farmers who had protested for continued months at the Ukraine border crossing suspended the move. The reason behind the protest was due to the impact of cheaper Ukraine grain, the impact of unfair competition combined with government’s inaction. They withdrew the protests after talks with Czeslaw Siekierski, Agriculture Minister of Poland. Although the details of the negotiation was not disclosed, the result of suspension of protests by the farmer was hailed.

References

Martin Fornusek, "[Russian media: Russia's Krasnodar Krai oil refinery 'partially suspends' operations after drone attack,](#)" *The Kyiv Independent*, 27 April 2024
“[Ukraine updates: Russia 'massively' shells energy sites,](#)” *Deutsche Welle*, 27 April 2024
“[Drone raid on Russian energy infrastructure repelled,](#)” *RT*, 27 April 2024
“[Russia to tackle EU sanctions on LNG operations – Kremlin,](#)” *RT*, 27 April 2024
“[Russia destroys Ukrainian drone base – MOD](#)” *RT*, 28 April 2024
“[Exclusive: Half of Russia's payments to China made through middlemen, sources say,](#)” *Reuters*, 26 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 790

The US Senate approves USD 95 billion bill granting aid to Ukraine

War on the Ground:

On 23 April, Financial Times reported on Ukraine’s agricultural minister suspected for engaging in illegal acquisition of a state land

worth millions ahead of joining the government. According to Ukraine’s corruption agency, stated treatment of the minister under charge for illegal acquisition and land together worth more than EUR 10 million. He was suspected to be part of a group involved in misappropriation between 2017 and 2021. In response the minister assured to cooperate with the investigation and stressed that the events took place before his government position.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 23 April, Sergey Shoigu, Russia’s Defence Minister stated that Russia will reinforce its air defence by late 2024 through deployment of upgraded systems. He remarked that boosting anti-aircraft and anti-missile capabilities was the priority for Moscow. Shoigu also added the expected expansion of short-range and anti-aircraft Pantsir systems two fold due to its performance in the war. Russian troops are scheduled to get advanced S-500 systems and strategic anti-missile aircrafts.

On the same, Shoigu disclosed the number of military troops lost for Ukraine. He indicated that close to 500,000 troops Ukraine military had lost and Russian forces have been reportedly giving pressure on the frontline in attempt to push back the Ukrainian forces. On the US foreign bill Shoigu said: “he American authorities cynically state that Ukrainians will be dying in the fight with Russia for their interests.”

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 23 April, the US Senate approved the long hauled military aid to Ukraine through the USD 95 billion foreign aid bill. This means delivery of weapons and support to Ukraine and Israel worth billions. The bill was passed with a vote of 79:18 ratio. In a statement, Joe Biden, the US President assured to sign the bill into law on 24 April and reiterated how the bill will help meet his pledges to NATO and Ukraine. Passing of the bill becomes a significant step as Ukraine faces the crunch over air defence system and ammunition. Sen. Eric Schmitt (R-Mo.), one of the three lawmakers who voted against the bill said: “I think it’s an insult to the American people

the idea that, again, we're going to send another 60 billion to secure the borders of another country." While Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Senate Minority Leader said: "I think we've turned a corner on the isolationist movement."

On 23 April, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General proposed to create opportunities to improve support for Ukraine in "more robust and predictable" way. In a joint press held with Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister he said: "In NATO, we are now addressing how to put our support for Ukraine on a more robust and predictable footing, including with a multi-year financial commitment."

References

Bartosz Brzeziński, "Ukrainian agriculture minister under suspicion of orchestrating land-grab scheme," *Politico*, 23 April 2024
 "Russia to beef up air defense – Shoigu," *RT*, 23 April 2024
 "Ukraine has lost almost half a million troops – Moscow," *RT*, 23 April 2024
 Liz Goodwin and Abigail Hauslohner, "Senate passes Ukraine, Israel aid bill after months-long debate," *The Washington Post*, 23 April 2024
 "NATO preparing decisions for more robust support for Ukraine – Stoltenberg," *Ukrinform*, 23 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 789

War on the Ground:

On 22 April, Ukraine authorities in Odesa reported on an airstrike by Russia resulting in injury of nine and four children. In response, Ukraine's emergency services were triggered which found residential buildings to have been damaged. Whereas, Ukraine's southern command reported on shooting down 15 out of 16 Russian drones. It also recorded strikes and injury in southern Mykolaiv area.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 22 April, Russian officials in Belgorod reported on the death of 120 civilians due to Ukrainian strikes since February 2022. Vyacheslav Gladkov, Governor of Belgorod added that 651 had been injured and the area has been subject to frequent attacks

since 2023 especially by pro-Kyiv militias. He said: "The situation is extremely difficult. The attacks continue. People continue to die."

On 22 April, Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister warned over increasing support from the US, UK and France to Ukraine. He criticised them for stoking "strategic risks" which might lead to direct confrontation. He stated that the US and NATO had been aiming for "strategic defeat" on Russia and several risks were linked to pushing to a nuclear level threat.

On 22 April, Russian forces claimed on capturing a village, Novomykhailivka located 40 kilometres from the southwest of Donetsk. While Ukraine has not confirmed and the Ukraine's General Staff continue to claim its defence and Russia's advance attempts.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 22 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the upcoming vote in the US Senate on major aid package to Ukraine. According to the report, the vote is expected to be in favour as the House of Representatives approved the aid with two-party support. The aid includes military assistance and out of USD 95 billion, USD 61 billion will be allotted for Ukraine. In a phone conversation held between Joe Biden, the US President and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, Biden assured to send the assistance "quickly." While Zelenskyy indicated Ukraine's expectation for a speedy delivery and "powerful" shipment to boost its air defence, including long-range and artillery capabilities.

On 22 April, Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister is expected to pledge a massive military aid package for Ukraine in another effort to boost Ukraine's defence. This can be expected as Sunak is scheduled to meet leaders of Poland, Germany and NATO. According to the report, he can announce GBP 500 million as an additional military funding and largest donation of key equipment.

References

Ishaan Tharoor, "[Russia's deadly attacks see Ukraine call out a Western double standard](#)," *The Washington Post*, 18 April 2024

"[Russian MOD details long-range strikes on Ukraine](#)," *RT*, 19 April 2024

"[Russian strategic bomber crashes – MOD](#)," *RT*, 19 April 2024

"[No ceasefire with Ukraine even if talks start – Lavrov](#)," *RT*, 19 April 2024

Daria Tarasova-Markina, Antonia Mortensen, Christian Stern, Anna Chernova and Mariya Knight, "[Polish man charged in connection with alleged Russian plot to kill Ukraine leader Zelensky](#)," *CNN*, 19 April 2024

"[Ukraine war briefing: Donald Trump says survival of Ukraine important to the US](#)," *The Guardian*, 19 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 786

War on the Ground:

On 19 April, Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine's Prime Minister appreciated the progress on the aid package where the US officials in a meeting held assured to provide new set of weapons. However, this would be possible only after the vote in congress result positive for Ukraine. He also warned of a wake of third world war if Ukraine losses to Russia. On the same day, he thanked Germany for agreeing to send additional Patriot missile systems and vouched to demand for the same in the G7 meeting.

On 19 April, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President urged once again the west for air defence support after the massive casualty recorded in Chernihiv. He said: "This would not have happened if Ukraine had received sufficient air defence equipment and if the world's determination to resist Russian terror had been sufficient."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 19 April, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister stated that Russia has no plans on agreeing for a ceasefire even if negotiations start. He said: "We have said that we are ready for the negotiations, but – unlike the Istanbul story – we will not make any pauses in the fighting during the negotiations. The process must go on." Since the war began, Russia and Ukraine have not held any direct

talks but Russia has accused Ukraine for not agreeing to the progress pushed by Turkey and accused Zelenskyy for being the major obstacle to peace process.

On 19 April, *RT* reported on crash of a Tupolev- Tu-22M3 supersonic long-range bomber in Stravropol area. Reported by Russia's defence ministry, the incident was due to engine failure during a return after a combat mission. While the Ukrainian military claimed on engaging with TU-22 air defence systems.

On 19 April, Russia's defence ministry reported on total 34 long-range strikes on Ukraine in the past week targeting its energy industry, military facilities, air defence systems and fuel storages. In a statement the ministry said on its intention behind the attack to be: "...in response to attempts by the Kiev regime to cause damage to Russian energy and industrial sites."

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 19 April, Donald Trump, former US President, stated that Ukraine's survival in the war was important for the US. Citing the report in Reuters on shifting US tone ahead of elections over the delayed vote on USD 61 billion military aid, he stated that although the Ukraine's survival is key for the US but is more important to Europe. For the US he said it was important to "GET MOVING EUROPE." He did not approve on direct aid package to Ukraine but highlighted the European allies for not spending enough for Ukraine. The statement is seen as one of the first acknowledgement mentioning Ukraine's survival as part of the US interest.

On 19 April, two German-Russian citizens were arrested in southern Germany under suspicion of planning for sabotage attacks including on the US facilities. According to the officials, it was seen a serious effort to undermine the support to Ukraine. The suspects were predicted to be operating as spies for Russia. On the same day, a Polish man was arrested under charge of aiding Russian intelligence services to exterminate Ukraine's President. The suspect identified as Pawel K was blamed for sharing a pass airport security information to Russian

agents.

References

Ishaan Tharoor, "Russia's deadly attacks see Ukraine call out a Western double standard," *The Washington Post*, 18 April 2024

"Russian MOD details long-range strikes on Ukraine," *RT*, 19 April 2024

"Russian strategic bomber crashes – MOD," *RT*, 19 April 2024

"No ceasefire with Ukraine even if talks start – Lavrov," *RT*, 19 April 2024

Daria Tarasova-Markina, Antonia

Mortensen, Christian Stern, Anna Chernova and Mariya Knight, "Polish man charged in connection with alleged Russian plot to kill Ukraine leader Zelensky," *CNN*, 19 April 2024

"Ukraine war briefing: Donald Trump says survival of Ukraine important to the US," *The Guardian*, 19 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 785

War on the Ground:

On 18 April, Ukraine's military intelligence reported on the Ukrainian forces attack in a military airfield in Crimea destroying an equipment. According to the report, four S-400 surface-to-air-m missile launchers, three radar stations and an air-defence control point was "destroyed or critically damaged."

On 18 April, in his daily address, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President reported on the domestic defence production. He reported an increase in number in Bohdana howitzers producing 10 per month and positive result in arms production. He also thanked Robert Habeck, Vice-Chancellor of Germany for his visit to Ukraine and the country's support for Ukraine's defence.

On 18 April, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian troops shelling of Nikopol district using artillery and drones destroying infrastructure facility and agricultural company. The attack was recorded for 10 times and Dnipro district was also subject to attack as per the report.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 18 April, Russia's Parliament issued a statement against the stalled US package. It

stated that the stalled aid package will make no change to the front-line situation militarily. Dmitry Peskov, Russian Press Secretary said: "It won't in any way influence the development of the situation on the front ... which is very unfavorable for the Ukrainian side." The statement comes as the US congress about to hold voting this week and Ukraine continues to urge for immediate air defence support.

On 18 April, *RT* reported on Russia's release of a video striking at Ukraine's armed forces airbase in Dnepropetrovsk area. The video shows how MiG-29 fighters and transport aircraft targeted in the attacks by Russia using Iskander-M missile. Another footage revealed a direct attack on S-300 air defence system. The airbase is located 100 kilometres from the frontline in the south of Dnepr city.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 18 April, the EU organised the Ukraine's Future Summit 2024 in Brussels remarking the step to economic and political integrations of Ukraine into Europe. The summit is expected to bring all corporate leader together for collaboration with the EU companies to invest in Ukraine. Key focus is on Ukraine's economic sectors with aim to promote sustainable development and boost economic ties of Ukraine and the EU.

On 18 April, Olaf Scholz reiterated the call for more air defence and urged the EU leaders to send more Patriot missiles to Ukraine as it runs into exhaustion. He emphasised on the emergency requirement and the immediate need for action. Scholz added: "Now it is about doing it quickly and not at some point in the future." Similarly, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General called for "urgent, critical need for more air defense" for Ukraine. He also assured on working in gathering data on air defence systems to redeploy to Ukraine.

On 18 April, Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy called the EU member stated to sent anti-missile systems to Ukraine to boost its air defence against Russia. He warned over destruction

of Ukraine's electricity system and loss of power for homes, factories and online, if enough support not rendered.

References

"Zelensky: There are important results of our domestic defense production," *Ukrinform*, 18 April 2024
"Russians shell Nikopol district: agricultural company, infrastructure facility and power line damaged," *Ukrinform*, 18 April 2024
"Kremlin Says U.S. Aid for Ukraine Won't Change Military Situation," *The Moscow Times*, 18 April 2024
"WATCH Russian missiles strike Ukrainian airbase," *RT*, 18 April 2024
Briar Stewart, "NATO members to meet as Ukraine calls for 25 Patriot systems to defend against Russian attacks," *CBC*, 19 April 2024
"Ukraine has 'urgent need' for air defence, says NATO chief Stoltenberg," *France 24*, 18 April 2024
"Ukraine updates: Mood in Kyiv 'strong,' Habeck tells DW," *Deutsche Welle*, 18 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 784

Zelenskyy urge for air defence support after attack on Chernihiv

War on the Ground:

On 17 April, Ukraine's emergency services reported on an attack on social and civilian infrastructure in Chernihiv. A northern Ukrainian city, located 150 kilometres from Kyiv. According to the report, three missiles were reported to have hit the centre of the city, killing 17 and injuring several civilians.

On 17 April, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, continued to place demands for more air defence support from Western allies following the attack in Chernihiv. He reiterated the need for air defence equipment and how Ukraine could have deterred the attack if it had enough air power support. He added: "Ukraine requires immediate steps to strengthen its air defense."

On 17 April, Zelenskyy reported an overnight strike on Russia's military facility in Dzhankoi in Crimea. He appreciated the Ukraine Armed Forces (UAF) for carrying out precision strike and destroying Russian

equipment. Ukraine media sources reported on destruction of Russian S-300 missile defence system but casualties were not verified.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 17 April, Kursk region governor reported on 3000 strikes on 50 apartment buildings, 975 single-family homes and several social and cultural buildings. According to the report, Kursk region has been subject to regular attacks by UAF. In response, 19 Russian authorities are expected to evaluate the damage and proceed with providing settlements through tax benefits and subsidize utility bills.

On 17 April, Russian forces claimed on advancing in varied speeds in the "line of engagement" in the self-recognised Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) area. Fierce fight was observed in Avdeyevka axis and Chasiv Yar. According to DPR head Denis Pushlin, Ukrainian soldiers have held a "first-line defence" in Chasiv Yar but at the same time the Ukraine combat is reportedly suffering heavy casualties everyday.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 17 April, Switzerland government refused to not join the international task force for tracking Russian oligarchs' money. The Swiss Parliament in a vote held on joining the group, 80 voted against 101 and similarly in 2023 the government declined the invitation from G7. This comes as the conservative parties of Switzerland find the task force to be incompatible to its "traditional neutrality."

On 17 April, Boris Pistorius, Germany's Defence Minister and Annalena Baerbock, Germany's Foreign Minister requested the EU, NATO, and third countries to strengthen Ukraine's air defences. The initiative led by Germany aims to "actively" motivate several countries to deliver support in short term. This comes as Ukraine faces ammunition and air defence shortage caused from the blockade of the US military aid bill in the congress. In response, leaders of the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Denmark gave positive signal to help boost

the initiative.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 17 April, in response to Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor's visit to Beijing, Lin Jian, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson issues a statement indicating the need for "lot of work" ahead of Ukraine's peace summit. Jian said: "According to our understanding, the relevant meeting is still in preparation and there is still a lot of work to be done." He stressed on China's point to resolve conflicts through "diplomatic channels" and "political negotiations." The statement comes as Switzerland government announced to organise high-level peace conference on Ukraine.

References

Veronika Melkozerova, "[Zelenskyy says deadly strike 'wouldn't have happened' if West gave Ukraine more air defenses](#)," *Politico*, 17 April 2024
["At least 17 dead after three Russian missiles hit Chernihiv](#), *The Guardian*, 17 April 2024
["Almost 3,000 shots fired at Russia's Kursk Region during military operation](#)," *TASS*, 17 April 2024
["DPR leader reports heaviest fighting near Avdeyevka, Chasov Yar](#)," *TASS*, 17 April 2024
["Switzerland won't join G7 task force on Russian oligarch money](#)," *Swissinfo*, 17 April 2024
 Guy Chazan, Christopher Miller and Andy Bounds and Laura Dubois, "[Germany urges dozens of allies to send air defence systems to Ukraine](#)," *Financial Times*, 17 April 2024
["Ukraine updates: Deadly Russian strike hits Chernihiv](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 17 April 2024
["China Says 'Lot of Work to Be Done' Before Ukraine Peace Summit Takes Place](#)," *The Kyiv Post*, 17 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 783

War on the Ground:

On 16 April, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President announced the depletion of missiles in Ukraine's arsenal. He claimed that Russia's success in destroying the Trypilska power plant was due to Ukraine's poor air power. He said: "There were 11 missiles flying. We destroyed the first seven, and four (remaining) destroyed Trypilska. Why? Because there were zero missiles. We

ran out of missiles to defend Trypilska."

He also called its allies to showcase same "unity" for Ukraine similar to Israel. Indicating the countering of Iran's aerial attack on Israel, he called for "solidarity for Ukraine." Zelenskyy also highlighted how the European airspace could have been protected if enough protection and support had been given to Ukraine.

On 16 April, Ukraine's Farm Ministry reported on an expected decrease in Ukraine's grain harvest from 58 million tonnes in 2023 to 52 million metric tonnes in 2024. According to the ministry, in March, the sowing area for corn reduced to 3.868 from 4.043 million. It also predicts that farmer may also reduce further despite given incentive to increase sowing of wheat and soybeans. Till now 5.9 million tons of barley and 28.2 million tons of corn have been harvested.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 16 April, Russia's governor of Belgorod reported on Ukrainian forces attack using 12 munitions and four drones in Belgorod. According to the governor, the response exhausted firefighters in suppressing the fire and no casualties were reported. He observed that the Ukrainian attack have concentrated on private residencies and buildings.

On 16 April, Russia's battlegroup known as Dnepr claimed on shooting down 83 Ukrainian drones in Kherson in last 24 hours. According to the report: "Over the day, the enemy losses amounted to: up to 60 fighters, nine guns and mortars, two cars. Air defenses and electronic warfare systems suppressed."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 16 April, Mike Johnson, Speaker at the US House of Representatives announced that by 19 April, the Senate is expected to cast separate votes for aid to Ukraine and Israel. The move comes as pressure on the US increases to help prevent losses for Ukraine and Iran's latest missile attack. Johnson said: "They're watching to see if America will

stand up for its allies and in our own interest around the globe. And we will." According to him, the vote will take place in four separate bills since the White House considers a "standalone" bill would not support Israel nor Ukraine. On the same day, Llyod Austin, US Secretary of Defence held meeting with Boris Pistorius, German Defence Minister on Ukraine. During the discussion, they affirmed on continued "strong support" to Ukraine and Austin appreciated Germany's efforts in aiding Ukraine.

On 16 April, Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor as part of his visit to China, discussed on establishing peace in Ukraine with Xi Jinping, Chinese President. He said: "I have therefore asked President Xi to influence Russia so that Putin finally calls off his senseless campaign, withdraws his troops and ends this terrible war." In response to this, Xi demanded all the engaged parties to push towards restoration of peace and urged to not allow the situation to escalate. Xi also recalled all the support given for peace initiatives by China. This includes, recognition of an organisation of a "international peace conference" by Russian and Ukraine.

References

["Ukraine says it 'ran out of missiles' to stop Russian strike ruining power station," *Euractiv*, 17 April 2024](#)

["Ukrainian armed forces attack Belgorod Region with four drones over past day," *TASS*, 16 April 2024](#)

["Over 80 Ukrainian drones suppressed, downed in Kherson Region over day," *TASS*, 16 April 2024](#)

[Lisa Mascaro, "Facing a Republican revolt, House Speaker Johnson's plan for US aid to Ukraine, allies uncertain," *The Associated Press*, 17 April 2024](#)

["German chancellor urges Xi Jinping to press Russia to end Ukraine war, saying 'China's word carries weight'," *The Guardian*, 17 April 2024](#)

["Ukraine updates: Kyiv 'ran out' of missiles to defend plant," *Deutsche Welle*, 16 April 2024](#)

War in Ukraine: Day 778

The Three Seas Initiative group assures to increase sanctions on Russia.

War on the Ground:

On 11 April, in a board meeting with the governors, Rafael Mariano, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) raised concerns over increasing risk of a "nuclear accident." The statement comes after an attack was reported by Russia accusing Ukraine. He added: "The most recent attacks ... have shifted us into an acutely consequential juncture in this war."

On 11 April, Ukraine's parliament passed a new reform to mobilise more soldiers. It is considered controversial as it modifies the process of recruitment by easing for the government to recruit conscripts and prevent long-serving soldiers from being removed from the army. In the parliament, 283 deputies were in favour out of 450 members and the bill had been delayed for several months after attempts to decrease the effectiveness of the bill.

On 11 April, Zelenskyy reported on overnight drone and missile attacks by Russia close to 80 in number across Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, Kharkiv and Lviv. In response, air raid alert remained for five hours and hundreds of rescuers were alerted. He added: "For several hours, the Russian military attacked five regions of Ukraine, hitting critical infrastructure." Following this, Ukraine's energy company reported on attack on its power station and Lviv authorities confirmed on damage on distribution facility and electric substation.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 11 April, *RT* reported on Russia defence ministry claim on launching high-precision strikes on Ukraine's energy and oil facilities. The attacks were stated to be in response to Ukraine's strikes into Russian border and energy facilities. In a statement: The goals of the strike have been achieved. All facilities have been hit." According to the report, energy facilities in Odesa, Kharkov, Zaporizhzhia, Lviv, and Kyiv were affected.

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

On 11 April, in a meeting held between the members of the “Three Seas Initiative,” Gitanas Nausėda, Lithuania’s President pledged to “continue” support to Ukraine “with all means until victory.” The group is expected to play a key role in reconstruction process of Ukraine. In a joint declaration, they expressed their determination to add more pressure on Russia by increasing sanctions for effective implementation.

On 11 April, governments of Ukraine and Latvia signed a security deal for ten years. Under the deal, Kyiv will receive military support of 0.25 per cent of GDP. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President said: “Latvia has committed itself to support Ukraine for ten years in cyber defense, mine clearance and unmanned technology.”

References

“IAEA decries ‘dangerous’ Ukraine nuclear plant attacks,” *The Canberra Times*, 12 April 2024

“Ukraine and Latvia Signed a Security Agreement,” *President.gov.ua*, 11 April 2024

“Ukrainian parliament passes controversial conscription law as war effort struggles,” *Euronews*, 11 April 2024

“Russia conducts massive strike on Ukrainian energy infrastructure,” *RT*, 11 April 2024

“Joint Declaration of the Ninth Summit of the Three Seas Initiative,” *President.pl*, 11 April 2024

“Ukraine updates: Russia strikes infrastructure nationwide,” *Deutsche Welle*, 11 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 777

The UK and Ukraine sign defence pact

War on the Ground:

On 10 April, according to *Ukrainska Pravda*, the Ukrainian Air Force announced that 14 Shahed drones launched by Russia were shot down in Ukraine’s Mykolaiv and Odesa oblasts by anti-aircraft missile units and mobile fire groups. Russia launched 17 Shahed attack UAVs, an Iskander-M ballistic missile, and two Iskander-K cruise missiles into Ukraine, presumably from the Russian occupied territory of Crimea. On 09 April, Ukrainian forces destroyed two Kh-59

missiles targeting Odesa.

On 10 April, according to *Reuters*, Tobias Bilstrom, the Swedish Foreign Minister, stated the intention of Nordic and Baltic countries to support an increased role of NATO in assisting Ukraine against Russia. During a meeting between ministers of Nordic and Baltic countries in Sweden’s Gotland island, he added that eight states had agreed to assemble a group of experts that would support Ukraine’s bid to join the EU.

On 10 April, according to *The Kyiv Independent*, Ukraine’s Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, passed a bill permitting the conscription of citizens convicted of minor offences, in the first reading. Individuals convicted of serious crimes like murder, sexual violence or crimes against national security are not included. The bill, first submitted in March, aims to replenish the ranks of the armed forces amid war with Russia. Olena Vysotska, the Deputy Justice Minister, stated that the bill could recruit 50,000 individuals who have already served their sentence and 26,000 currently imprisoned. The bill needs to pass a second reading before being signed by the President into law.

**The Moscow View:
Claims by Russia**

On 10 April, according to *RT*, Roman Starovoyt, Governor of Kursk Region, announced that a Ukrainian explosive dropped via drone killed an adult and two children in the village of Apanasovka in Kursk. The village near the Russia-Ukraine border was targeted last month in a failed attempt by Ukraine-backed mercenaries to take over the territory. Ukrainian drone, missile and artillery attacks have increased in the past month over Russian villages in the border.

On 10 April, according to the *TASS*, the Russian Defence Ministry announced that Russia’s Southern Battlegroup destroyed Ukrainian militants in firing positions using “smart munitions” near Spornoye in the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR). Russian data recorders confirmed the destruction of the target where Ukrainian army positions

and few militants were stationed.

On 10 April, according to *TASS*, Maria Zakharova, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, stated that NATO is developing capabilities for cyberattacks and information operations against Russia. She added that NATO is building up its military capabilities and keeping an eye on the Russian information space" to launch potential cyber operations, using "a network of centres that sit along the perimeter of our (Russia) country's borders," stating about Estonia, Latvia and Finland. Zakharova stated the potential of NATO starting operations from Moldova and Georgia "to provide operational and technical support" to the cyber command groups. She accused western countries of using information and communication technologies to initiate hybrid warfare against Russia. She further accused them of employing Ukrainian hackers to carry out these cyberattacks.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 10 April, according to the *Financial Times*, the EU's General Court ruled in favour of billionaires Mikhail Fridman and Petr Aven by annulling their inclusion in the EU's sanctions list, citing insufficient evidence proving their involvement in backing Russia's war on Ukraine. It sets a potential precedent for similar appeals since the EU has targeted more than 1700 people and 400 entities that allegedly supported the Russian invasion. The decision applies to the period between February 2022 and March 2023, with subsequent periods requiring other legal proceedings. The lifting of sanctions requires a decision from EU states. The ruling by the General Court is subject to appeals. Aven and Fridman hold Latvian passports and live there.

On 10 April, according to *Swissinfo*, the EU's finance ministers will discuss an investment agenda and reform plans as submitted by Ukraine in a bid to seek funding. Ukraine's plan identifies 15 key areas and 69 plans, which will be discussed in Luxembourg. The EU's Ukraine Facility has a budget of EUR 50 billion over a period of 2024 to 2027, which will be granted in the form of grants and loans. The German government wants to aid

in the reconstruction of Ukraine through companies and private actors.

On 10 April, according to the Federal Department of Defence, Switzerland decided to participate in the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) after approval from the Swiss Federal Council. The aim of the initiative is to enhance cooperation on procurement projects, training and logistical aspects on ground-based air defence. The signing of the declaration of accession into the MoU by Switzerland still gives it the freedom to decide its extent of participation in the ESSI.

On 10 April, according to *GOV.UK*, the governments of the UK and Ukraine signed a new agreement to enhance cooperation in defence and industrial issues, with the UK offering 29 defence businesses to meet Ukrainian needs. It marks the largest trade mission from the UK to Ukraine, also offering the latter with long-term recovery plans and high-profile joint projects. The UK expressed its "unwavering commitment to Ukraine" against Putin's invasion, according to James Cartlidge, the UK's Minister for Defence Procurement. So far, it has provided Ukraine with GBP 12 billion in military, humanitarian and economic aid. The agreement comes after the signing of the UK-Ukraine Agreement on Security Cooperation between Rishi Sunak, the UK's Prime Minister, and Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's President, in January 2024 to mark the beginning of a 100-year partnership between the two countries.

On 10 April, according to NATO, in a joint statement by Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary-General, and Alexander Stubb, Finland's President, the leaders discussed the urgent need for NATO to support Ukraine with much-needed air defences, ammunition and economic aid. NATO is working on a package for Ukraine with "predictable robust support" against Russia. Finland has so far provided Ukraine with EUR two billion in military aid and signed a 10-year security agreement with them. They further defended Ukraine's right to defend itself and strike "legitimate military targets outside their own country", speaking of the attack on a Russian warship docked off

Kaliningrad.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 10 April, according to *Jiji Press News*, China stated that it would not take criticism due to its ties with Russia, responding to the US's warning that it would hold the former responsible for any gains made by Russia. Mao Ning, China's foreign ministry spokesperson, stated that they had the right to "engage in normal economic and trade cooperation" and would not like interference or accept criticism or pressure. China-Russia ties have ramped up since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has increased since the foreign ministers of the countries met to strengthen strategic cooperation. China has stated that it is neutral in the conflict, but has been criticised for not condemning Russia's offensive and continuing trade relations.

References

Iryna Balachuk, "Ukrainian Air Force destroys 14 Shaheds overnight", *Ukrainska Pravda*, 10 April 2024
 "Nordic, Baltic nations urge EU, NATO help for Ukraine", *Reuters*, 10 April 2024
 Martin Fornusek, "Parliament passes in 1st reading bill allowing military service of citizens convicted of minor offenses", *The Kyiv Independent*, 10 April 2024
 "Two Russian children killed in Ukrainian drone attack – governor", *RT*, 10 April 2024
 "Russian troops destroy Ukrainian militants with smart munitions near Spornoye in DPR", *TASS*, 10 April 2024
 "NATO building up capabilities to carry out cyberattacks against Russia — MFA", *TASS*, 10 April 2024
 Javier Espinoza, Henry Foy and Max Seddon, "EU court rules in favour of Russian oligarchs Fridman and Aven in blow to sanctions regime", *Financial Times*, 10 April 2024
 Maria Martinez, "EU finance ministers to discuss Ukraine reform plans, sources say", *Swissinfo*, 10 April 2024
 "Federal Council decides to join the European Sky Shield Initiative", *Federal Department of Defence*, 10 April 2024
 "UK and Ukraine sign new defence pact", *gov.uk*, 10 April 2024
 "Joint press conference by NATO Secretary

General Jens Stoltenberg with Alexander Stubb, President of Finland", *NATO*, 10 April 2024

"China rebuffs 'criticism or pressure' over ties with Russia", *Jiji Press News*, 10 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 776

US transfers seized weapons from Houthis to Ukraine

War on the Ground:

On 07 April, according to the *ABC News*, Rafael Mariano Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, condemned the drone attack on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine, targeting one of its six nuclear reactors. He stated on X that such attacks "significantly increase the risk of a major nuclear accident. Russia blames Ukraine for the attack on the nuclear plant controlled by Russia. No critical damage or casualties were reported by the plant staff, but later, Rusatom, the Russian state-owned nuclear agency, reported that three staff members were wounded.

On 09 April, the UN Human Rights Office noted a sharp increase in civilian casualties in Ukraine after Russia stepped up its attacks. In March, 57 children were reported killed or injured, double the number from February. A 20 per cent increase in killing or injury of civilians since February has been noted by the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission. Almost 93.5 per cent of the civilian casualties reported were noted in government-controlled areas.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 09 April, according to *RT*, Ukrainian shelling in the Russian village of Kilmovo in the Bryansk Region left two dead and three injured. Aleksandr Bogomaz, the Bryansk's Governor, noted that the attack by "Ukrainian terrorists" damaged several cars and set a house on fire, after attacking the central part of the village with at least 10 shells. Being a border region, Bryansk has been targeted with constant strikes by drones and missiles since mid-March.

On 09 April, according to *RT*, Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, called

President Volodymyr Zelensky's peace plan "divorced from reality." In a statement with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, he urged that plans to end the war must take into account Russia's security concerns.

Zelensky's plan was first presented in 2022, urging a complete withdrawal of Russian troops to maintain Ukraine's 1991 borders. Lavrov, instead, hailed the 12-point plan proposed by China as the "clearest" to date, taking into consideration "current events: and seeking to "eliminate root causes." During joint talks between Russia and China, Lavrov added that BRICS was aiding Russia to bypass Western sanctions, with Wang Yi offering solutions to the issue "within the framework of BRICS and within the SCO". Russia's diversification of trade post western sanctions have caused a surge in Russia-China trade reaching USD 240 billion last year.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 09 April, *The Washington Post* reported on the US transfer of weapons made by Iran to Ukraine. The weapons were seized between 2021 and 2023 from "stateless vessels" and was approved to be sent to Ukraine under the Justice Department civil forfeiture programme which is responsible in monitoring the military operations in Middle East especially against the Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The seized weapons include 5000 Kalashnikov rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and half a million rounds of ammunition. The move is observed as a significant move of the US to sustain its assistance despite the block in multibillion dollar aid remains at stake in Congress. Pentagon was found to be effective in tracing and blocking the shipment of Iran's arms to its proxies and redirecting to Ukraine.

On 09 April, according to Rheinmetall, the government of Germany ordered Rheinmetall to supply 20 additional Marder Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFVs) to Ukraine. Ukraine has already been supplied with the IFVs through direct deliveries and circular exchange programmes. Further, the 1A3 Marder IFV with integrated laser range finders to enable precision targeting, have also been ordered. The Marder IFV was

developed for the Bundeswehr, as one of the world's most efficient weapon systems, consistently modernised to improve its combat effectiveness.

On 09 April, according to *Financial Times*, David Cameron, the UK Foreign Secretary, met with Donald Trump, former US President, and stated that aiding Ukraine was "profoundly" in the interest of the US. Cameron is visiting the US to urge US Republicans to approve the USD 60 billion Ukraine aid in Congress. Cameron urged for a "secure and strong NATO, with full US and Atlantic support." Trump's campaign however indicated that they weren't convinced with Cameron, amid increasing doubts of the detrimental effect Trump victory would have over Ukraine aid and NATO.

References

["Drones attack the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant"](#), *ABC News*, 07 April, 2024
["UN records sharp rise in civilian deaths, injuries in Ukraine in March"](#), *Arab News*, 09 April 2024
["Woman and child killed in Ukrainian shelling of Russian border region – governor"](#), *RT*, 09 April 2024
["Zelensky's peace plan 'divorced from reality' – Lavrov"](#), *RT*, 09 April 2024
["BRICS helping Russia bypass Western sanctions – Lavrov"](#), *RT*, 09 April 2024
["Assistance for Ukraine unbroken: Rheinmetall delivers additional 20 Marder infantry fighting vehicles"](#), *Rheinmetall*, 09 April 2024
Alex Horton, ["U.S. sends Ukraine seized Iranian-made weapons"](#), *The Washington Post*, 09 April 2024
Felicia Schwartz and Lauren Fedor, ["David Cameron says Ukraine aid is in US interest after meeting Donald Trump"](#), *Financial Times*, 09 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 775

War on the Ground:

On 08 April, Ivan Federov Governor of Zaporizhzhia reported on a new set of strikes by Russia killing three people in the Pologivskiyi district (Located between Zaporizhzhia and Mariupol). According to him, 357 times the strikes were recorded in

last 24 hours. The same was confirmed by Ukraine's air force on Russia targeting critical infrastructure. It claimed on destroying 17 Shahed drones over Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kirovohrad, Khmelnytskyi and Zhytomyr. Alongside, Kh-59 guided air missiles were also claimed to be destroyed in Dnipropetrovsk. According to Oleh Kiper, Governor of Odesa, logistics and transport facilities such as gas station were also damaged.

On 08 April, Andriy Kovalenko, Ukraine's centre for countering disinformation head blamed Moscow for spearheading disinformation on the drone attack on Zaporizhzhia power plant. He claimed that Russia has intensified the "campaign of provocation and fakes" following the spread of rumour on Ukraine's attack on the plant.

On 08 April, German Galushchenko, Ukraine's energy minister reported on 80 per cent of conventional power plants and hydroelectric plants of Ukraine being damaged by Russia since the war began. Such frequent strikes have resulted in major power blackouts across Ukraine and the scale of such attack on energy infrastructure was observed to have increased since 2023 winter. He added: "We see that Russians modified the weapons," with more use of Shahed drones and missiles.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 08 April, the Russian military claimed on conducting a high-precision strike on Ukraine's "drone manufacturing and storage facility" in Zaporizhzhia. According to the report, the military targeted using Iskander tactical ballistic missile and in a video, released showed the incursion of the missile through the roof and destroying of the building. In a statement by the military it explained the reason for the attack as: "part of a wider series of strikes on Ukraine's "military-industrial complex, workshops producing weapons and UAVs...as well as energy facilities associated with such targets."

On 08 April, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister arrived in Beijing as part of the two-day visit to China. The discussion included

anti-terrorism cooperation through multilateral mechanisms, and common concerns over regional and international issues. Lavrov added: "Our [Russia-China] cooperation on counter-terrorism will continue, including within the framework of multilateral institutions." Along with this, Russia and China are expected to improve strategic cooperation. Liu Xianzhong, Director of the Department of Russian History and Culture at the Institute of Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies said: "...have been staunchly supporting each other in their efforts to champion their own national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 08 April, Janet Yellen, the US Treasury Secretary warned Chinese companies on exporting products to Russia which could be utilised in war in Ukraine. She stated that any transfer of money to Russia by banks to help the Russian defence industry will be under risk of being sanctioned by the US. She added: "I stressed that companies, including those in [China], must not provide material support for Russia's war and that they will face significant consequences if they do." According to the report in *Deutsche Welle*, China has become Russia's closest economic partner since the war, with an annual increase of 26 per cent (USD 240.2 billion) in the bilateral trade.

On 08 April, the EU agreed tighter restrictions on Ukrainian food imports. This includes a permit of duty-free access to Ukraine's agricultural produce excluding "poultry, eggs, sugar, corn, goats and honey" between "mid 2021 and end of 2023." Poland and France which had vouched for a excluding wheat from the being duty free was not added. Yet the primary agreement is yet to be approved which will be heard by EU ambassadors and European Parliament in the coming days.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

In response to the warning, Mao Ning, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman stressed that it was in China's interest to protect itself from "foreign interferences."

She added: "China-Russia relations should not be attacked or smeared, and the legitimate rights and interests of China and Chinese companies should not be harmed." She further stated that China and Russia's equation should be a subject for foreign intervention or restriction. According to Ning, China will continue to play a prominent role in vouching for a ceasefire and political settlement between Ukraine and Russia.

References

["Ukraine updates: More strikes reported near Zaporizhzhia," *Deutsche Welle*, 08 April 2024](#)

["WATCH Russian missile obliterate Ukrainian drone factory," *RT*, 08 April 2024](#)

["Russia, China to maintain anti-terrorism cooperation after Crocus tragedy — Lavrov," *TASS*, 09 April 2024](#)

["China to 'strengthen strategic cooperation' with Russia as Lavrov visits," *CNA*, 09 April 2024](#)

Zhang Yunbi ["Experts: Lavrov trip eyes global agenda," *China Daily*, 09 April 2024](#)

["China dismisses Washington's threat of 'consequences,'" *RT*, 08 April 2024](#)

War in Ukraine: Day 773 & 774

War on the Ground:

On 07 April, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President warned over the possibility of losing the war to Russia if the US Congress delays to approve the military aid to Ukraine. He said: "It is necessary to specifically tell Congress that if Congress does not help Ukraine, Ukraine will lose the war... if Ukraine loses the war, other states will be attacked."

On 06 April, The Guardian reported on record of deaths and injury after the Russian drone strike in Kharkiv. According to the report, six were killed and close to 10 were wounded. The attack was observed to have launched at Shevchenkivskiy, a city located in the northern Ukraine. As per the police records, an additional eight were hospitalised due to "Blast injuries and shrapnel wounds."

On 06 April, a drone attack was reported by the security ministry of the Transdnistria region. According to the report in *The*

Guardian, the ministry belongs to a separatist group and the drone had targeted its military facility. The group is expected to be operation in an area six kilometres inside from Ukraine border which has been fighting Russia from the frontline in the Moldova's east. In a statement the ministry said: "The target was a radar station, which suffered minor damage, but there were no casualties. An investigative team is working on the spot. A criminal case has been opened."

On 06 April, Oleksandr Syrskiy, Ukraine's Commander-in-chief denied the Russian claims on breaching Ukraine suburb town Chasiv Yar. He confirmed that Chasiv Yar still remains in Ukraine's control and Russia's efforts to breakthrough the area had failed. Chasiv Yar, is a town with high-level defence and Russia's advance in this area would be limitation as it borders Bakhmut which is in control of Russia, thereby making it easy for Russia to exercise control. On the same, Syrskiy also stressed on the increasing difficultness in the Bakhmut area due to constant offensive operations of Russian forces. He added: "Chasiv Yar remains under our control, all enemy attempts to break through to the settlement have failed."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 April, the *TASS* reported on a Ukrainian drone attack in the Russia's control area of Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. The attack resulted in damage of a truck near the station as per the report from the authorities. Following this, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed the detonation of the drone. In a report in *RT*, three employees in the canteen had died in the attack and the plant management blamed Ukraine for targeting the facility. Rafael Mariano Grossi, IAEA Director General called for restraint and urged to avoid such incidents for ensuring nuclear safety.

On 07 April, *RT* reported on Russian defence ministry claims on destroying an anti-aircraft system, radar and west supplied naval drones. According to the ministry, Ukraine had earlier claimed the sea-drones to be own-built but in the attack it was found to be "supplied by NATO countries." The

explosion was reported in Odesa's port. The ministry also claimed on destroying multiple aircraft systems, artillery and continuing combat in the frontline.

On 06 April, Russian foreign ministry called for an investigation following the drone attack in Transnistria's military facility. Maria Zakharova, Ministry's spokesperson called the event as a provocation with an aim to increase tension in the region and issues a warning of "dangerous consequences."

References

- ["Drones Target Russian Airfield Where Bombers Stationed As 4 Killed In Southern Ukraine," Rferl, 05 April 2024](#)
- ["Live blog: Russian strike kills four, wounds 20 in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia," TRT World, 05 April 2024](#)
- ["High Radiation Levels Prompt State Of Emergency In Russia's Khabarovsk," Rferl, 05 April 2024](#)
- ["Japan introduces news sanctions against Russia," CGTN, 05 April 2024](#)
- Sarah Haque and Lili Bayer, ["Russia-Ukraine war live: 20 members of Russian airfield personnel killed or injured in drone attack, Kyiv says – as it happened," The Guardian, 05 April 2024](#)

War in Ukraine: Day 772

Ukraine claims attack on Morozovsk air base

War on the Ground:

On 05 April, Ukrainian intelligence claimed on an operation focused on targeting the Morozovsk air base (300 kilometres from Ukraine). Although there were no reports confirming the staging of the attacks, Ukraine's security service and military claims on destroying of six Russian warplanes and damage of another eight. It also claimed on killing or injuring of 20 Russians. The base is expected to be a host for Russian tactical bombs which were used to fire at Ukraine's military and frontline cities.

On 05 April, *Reuters* reported on drone attacks in southern Ukraine areas of Zaporizhzhia and Odesa. All the 13 drones reported were shot down by Ukraine's air force which were launched towards the energy infrastructures. Oleh Syniehubov,

Governor of Kharkiv also reported on drone attacks and explosion in the area but no casualties were reported.

On 05 April, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry announced ban on 164 goods of Russia. This includes engine oil and optical equipment. Along with this, it imposed a export ban on items that will boost Russia's industrial base and additional revision of ban on Russia's non-industrial diamonds used in jewellery. The ban is expected to come into force from 10 May.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 05 April, the *TASS* reported on declaration of state of emergency in Khabarovsk city. The move comes after a "radiation source" was detected near power pylon close to 2.5 kilometres from the residential area. In response the areas will be monitored and investigation on the radiation will be carried for next two days.

On 05 April, Russian investigation revealed on finding "pro-Ukraine" data on one of the detained suspects from the Moscow attacks. Although the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility of the attack, Russia has continued to maintain a sceptical stand on involvement of Ukraine. On the statements received from the suspect it said: "...had confirmed all this in his statements...This data may indicate a link between the attack."

On 05 April, Russia's defence ministry officials reported on Ukraine to have targeted 40 drones in the border region of Rostov and claimed to have intercepted all. According to the report, the drones were launched towards a power substation but doubts have been raised if it had targeted towards military airfield as well.

References

- ["Drones Target Russian Airfield Where Bombers Stationed As 4 Killed In Southern Ukraine," Rferl, 05 April 2024](#)
- ["Live blog: Russian strike kills four, wounds 20 in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia," TRT World, 05 April 2024](#)
- ["High Radiation Levels Prompt State Of Emergency In Russia's Khabarovsk," Rferl, 05 April 2024](#)

"Japan introduces news sanctions against Russia," CGTN, 05 April 2024

Sarah Haque and Lili Bayer, "Russia-Ukraine war live: 20 members of Russian airfield personnel killed or injured in drone attack, Kyiv says – as it happened," The Guardian, 05 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 771

Ukraine and Russia claim drone attacks in Kharkiv

War on the Ground:

On 04 April, Oleh Synehubov, Kharkiv's regional governor reported on the death of four and injury of 12 after an overnight attack by Russia on Kharkiv. The Ukrainian forces claimed on shooting down 11 out of 20 combat drones targeted by Russia and one of such drone's debris resulted in damage of a residential building. Russian drones were also observed in Zmiivska area. Following the attack, 350,000 residents were subject to power cut in the Kharkiv and areas around. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President called the attack as "despicable and cynical" and criticised Russia for constant targeting of Ukraine's energy grid.

On 04 April, Petro Andryushchenko, Advisor to the Mayor of Mariupol reported in increased cases of Cholera among children. According to him, the government is attempting to shut places under "undeclared quarantine" but it has not been possible to apply. Rapid warming is predicted to be one of the causes for the spread of the disease and suggestion such as drinking of boil water, washing hands and avoiding swimming in the sea has been floated.

On 04 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported on a third of Ukraine to be under Russian mines which is required to be detected. This is needful as such mines cause harm for civilian life and many Ukrainian women had recently volunteered to take the task and engage in the "Mine Awareness and Assistance," as part of the mine action. According to a report in the United Nations, since the war began in 2022 there has been increased use of landmines additional to bombs and shells. It is expected to take more than 20 years to clear the agricultural land

and many women have been observed to take the efforts in "making safe ground."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 04 April, Russia's defence ministry claimed on carrying out high-precision strikes on ammunition depot, drone production site (Merafa Mechanical Plant) and the base where it claims to be for foreign mercenaries in Kharkiv area of Ukraine. It confirmed on taking down targets near Merafa town. In a statement: "Operational-tactical aviation, unmanned aerial vehicles, missile forces, and artillery" were involved in the attack."

04 April, Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian parliament called the current state of relation between Russia and NATO as "direct confrontation." He criticised the NATO for expanding its borders closer to Russia and involving in war in Ukraine. He added: "...our relations have now descended to the level of direct confrontation."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 04 April, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General marking 75 years of NATO, stated that the US and Europe is "stronger and safer together." He said: "I don't believe in America alone just as I don't believe in Europe alone." In his speech, he mentioned how NATO allies were of help after the 9/11 attack in 2001 for the US and how they continue to boost their efforts in adding armed forces and number of new soldiers from Norway and Denmark. Apart from this, Sweden and Lithuania has also agreed to restart its military service.

On 04 April, Finland's government announced the extension of the border closure with Russia for "an unspecified time." It also stated its decision to restrict the movement of people in Haapasari, Nuijamaa and Santio ports. Mari Rantanen, Finland's Interior Minister said: "Finnish authorities consider it to be a long-term situation. We have seen nothing this spring to suggest the situation has fundamentally changed."

References

Veronika Melkozerova, "Russian 'double strike' drone attack kills rescue workers in Kharkiv," *Politico*, 04 April 2024

"Mine Action Ukraine: Women leading efforts in making safe ground," *United Nations*, 04 April 2024

"Russia hits 'foreign mercenaries' base in Ukraine – MOD," *RT*, 04 April 2024

"NATO is an American tool for confrontation in Europe – Kremlin," *RT*, 04 April 2024

"Finnish-Russian border to remain closed for unspecified time," *ERR News*, 04 April 2024

Laura Gozzi, "Europe and US need each other, Nato chief Stoltenberg says," *BBC*, 04 April 2024

"Ukraine updates: Deadly drones strike Kharkiv residents," *Deutsche Welle*, 04 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 770

War on the Ground:

On 03 April, according to *Politico*, the US entrepreneur Elon Musk warned Ukraine that "...the longer the war goes on, the more territory Russia will gain," predicting the potential fall of Dnipro and Odesa. Musk's comments are similar to warnings made by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, urging for the passing of the US military aid to prevent Ukraine's retreat. Ukraine's high ranking military officials had warned of the grim picture within the Ukrainian military, which could worsen with elections set in the US and Europe. The future depends on where Russia decides to focus its next major offensive after weeks of surge in attacks, which could cause a collapse in the frontline.

On 03 April, according to *Euronews*, Ukraine lowered its age of conscription from 27 years to 25 to prepare its military forces ahead of a potential Russian offensive. Previous audit claimed that Ukraine needed 500,000 new recruits. This was proved wrong in a report by Oleksandr Syrskyi, the commander-in-chief of Ukraine's forces. Russia's Defence Ministry observed a surge in their conscription after the Moscow attack, with 16,000 new enlistments. Ukraine's conscription laws are a sensitive matter, with previous ones controversial in the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament. The interest in joining the military forces

have waned since the start of the war, but agreement to the war continues in Ukrainian public opinion.

On 03 April, according to *The Kyiv Independent*, Russia launched three S-300 anti-aircraft missiles and four Shahed drones overnight at Ukraine. The Ukrainian forces intercepted all the drones, which were fired from Russia's Primorsko-Akhtarsk, according to Ukraine's military forces. The drones were shot down over the Khmelnytskyi, Zhytomyr, Kirovohrad, and Cherkasy regions. Russia has increased its missile and drone attacks in recent weeks, especially targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 03 April, according to *RT*, the Russian Defence Ministry reported an influx of volunteers willing to sign up into the defence forces, with several willing to join the war against Ukraine. Interest to join the armed forces surged after the terrorist attack in Moscow and Russia's claim that Ukraine is responsible. More than 100,000 people have registered to become contract soldiers since January 2024. Approximately 1,700 volunteers register at recruitment centres every day. In December 2023, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, announced that since around 500,000 troops had contracts with the Defence Ministry to serve in the armed forces, he did not plan to announce a second round of mobilisation.

On 03 April, according to *RT*, Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, stated that the Washington Post's claim that Russia had been alerted about the Crocus City terrorist attack in Moscow by the US is a "hoax." The paper claimed that US officials alerted Russia with a "high degree of specificity" two weeks before the attack. Zakharova claimed that Russia was now "accustomed to American misinformation," and urged the US to offer "factual material" on the same. White House had earlier stated that it had shared data to their Russian counterparts, when the latter claimed that "the information was too general." Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, earlier accused the US of trying to

clear Ukraine of any responsibility with the attack.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 03 April, according to NATO, Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels to mark the 75th anniversary of NATO agreed on planning for a greater role of NATO to aid Ukraine against Russia. In the meeting in preparation for the Washington Summit in July, Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary General of NATO, stated that Ukraine isn't running out of courage but "out of ammunition". He added that Ukraine can "rely on NATO support now and for a long haul." The ministers further discussed the security threats in NATO's southern neighbourhood, including terrorism, considering concrete proposals to combat them. The NATO-Ukraine Council is due to meet this week with various Foreign Ministers including Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister. The ministers of NATO will also meet with their Indo-Pacific partners and the European Union to discuss political cooperation especially in their implications in the Russia-Ukraine war.

On 03 April, according to *Swissinfo*, Alexander Stubb, Finland's President, signed a 10-year security cooperation deal with Ukraine in Kyiv, becoming the eighth NATO member committing to a long-term security pact with Ukraine. Zelensky believes that Russia plans to mobilise 300,000 troops for a new offensive against Ukraine, a claim that Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesperson, claimed as untrue. Stubb further promised Ukraine EUR 188 million worth of additional military aid including air defence systems and ammunition, not just for it to defend itself, but "for Ukraine to win this war."

References

Jamie Dettmer, "[Ukraine is at great risk of its front lines collapsing](#)", *Politico*, 03 April 2024
"[Ukraine lowers conscription age as Russia gears up for possible offensive](#)", *Euronews*, 03 April 2024
Abbey Fenbert, "[Air Force: Ukraine downs 4 out of 4 Shahed drones launched overnight](#)", *The Kyiv Independent*, 03 April 2024
"[Russian army has recruited 100,000 so far](#)

[this year – MOD](#)", *RT*, 03 April 2024

"[Moscow responds to claims US warned it about possible terrorist target](#)", *RT*, 03 April 2024

Anna Voitenko, "[Finland signs Ukraine security deal, Zelenskiy warns of Russia troop plans](#)", *Swissinfo*, 03 April 2024

"[Foreign Ministers agree to move forward with planning for a greater NATO role in coordinating aid to Ukraine](#)", *NATO*, 03 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 768

Reuters reports on Iran's warning to Moscow ahead of IS attacks

War on the Ground:

On 01 April, according to *RFERL*, sources suggested that Iran had warned Russia prior to the Crocus City Hall bombing in Moscow that killed at least 144 concertgoers on 22 March. The unnamed source suggested that based on the information acquired "during those arrested in connection with deadly bombings in Iran," Moscow had been warned. The attack was the deadliest attack targeting Moscow in 20 years, claimed by the Islamic State. Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin spokesperson, stated that he had no information about Iranian reports warning of the attack, and Iran hasn't commented on the matter yet.

On 01 April, according to *Ukrinform*, Russia carried out a strike in the Ukrainian town of Vovchansk in the Kharkiv region, injuring one. The head of the Kharkiv Regional Military Administration noted that "a 27-year-old woman was hospitalised with shrapnel injuries" after Russian strikes struck residential buildings in Vovchansk.

On 02 April, according to *CNN*, Ukrainian AI-powered drones are targeting the Russian oil and gas industry, which has been Russia's biggest source of revenue since the war began. The long-range Ukrainian drones that use AI have shown capabilities of basic navigation of avoiding jamming. With the help of the drone's sensors, precision of attack is maintained. Noah Sylvia, a research analyst at the UK-based Royal United Services, noted that such drones have "machine vision," a form of AI that enables the model to be trained to "identify geography and target it is navigating

to...completely autonomous” without the need for additional communication. Ukraine has been using drones since its war began with Russia. Their drone industry has become full fledged with a significant technological edge over Russia, enabling it to carry out high precision attacks. Sources suggest that Ukrainian drones are targetting Russian distillation units that processes crude oil into its derivatives, instead of storage facilities, which could have a great impact on the Russian economy. Additional sources suggest that the US had instructed Ukraine to refrain from targetting Russian export energy infrastructure in exchange for aid, to prevent “a massive energy crisis.” However, since the aid is at an impasse in the US Congress, the deal falls short.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 01 April, according to *RT*, a Ukrainian strike in the Russian border region of Belgorod injured at least nine people. Of the major artillery and drone attacks launched by Ukraine, 36 aerial targets had been intercepted, noted Vyacheslav Gladkov, Belgorod’s Governor. The attack damaged several residential buildings, high-rise buildings, a local school and three vehicles, according to Gladkov. Belgorod among other Russian regions bordering Ukraine are subjected to frequent drone and artillery attacks by Ukrainian forces, which escalated last month.

On 01 April, according to *RT*, Konstantin Gavrillov, the head of Russia’s delegation at the Vienna talks on military security and arms control, stated that the state of relations between Russia and NATO is currently “something more than a Cold War.” When asked to comment on Emmanuel Macron, the French President’s comments that NATO “cannot exclude” the possibility of NATO troops being sent to aid Ukraine, he answered that if NATO tries to test Russia’s strength, “we are ready for any turn of events”. He added that the warnings unleashed by NATO leaders including Joe Biden, the US President, that Russia will attack NATO states after Ukraine, is diversionary in nature, to divert the “attention of taxpayers from the senseless

pumping of their money” into Ukraine to “warm up the public opinion in favour of reviving defence industries in their countries”. His comment was similar to Vladimir Putin, the Russian President’s statement last week stating that NATO’s warning of a Russian attack “is utter nonsense and intimidation of their own population just to beat the money out of them”. Gavrillov pointed out that NATO’s Strategic Concept adopted in 2022 labelled Russia as “the most significant and direct threat”.

On 01 April, according to *RT*, Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) confirmed that the four militants captured in Dagestan earlier had “direct involvement” in financing and providing equipment for the Crocus City Hall terrorist attack in Moscow. They were allegedly planning a mass casualty attack in Russia’s Kaspisk and then escape Russia. Around 12 people have been detained in Russia in connection to the Moscow terror attack, including the four alleged gunmen. Eight of them, if found guilty, will face life imprisonment on charges of terrorism. While the Afghanistan branch of the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attack, Aleksandr Bortnikov, the FSB’s head, suspects a link between the US, the UK, and Ukraine with the crime. Further, Russia’s Investigative Committee reported that they found “substantial evidence” linking the suspects to Ukrainian nationalists, claiming that “significant sums of money” in the form of cryptocurrency had been sent to them from Ukraine.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 01 April, according to *France 24*, Stephane Sejourne, France’s Foreign Minister told his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi that France is “expecting that China will send very clear messages to Russia” on the latter’s war in Ukraine. China is a neutral party to the war in Ukraine, but has come considerably close to Russia since the war began. Meanwhile, France has become a staunch ally of Ukraine, with Emmanuel Macron, the French President, even considering the sending of French troops to aid Ukraine. France “is determined to maintain a close dialogue with China”,

Sejourne added, stating that “there will be no security for Europeans if there is no peace in accordance with international law”. Sejourne met with Li Qiang, the Chinese Premier, to discuss the “global situations that are fracturing and dividing the world today,” pointing at the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Li welcomed the dialogue from France, hailing their shared “spirit of independence and autonomy.”

On 01 April, *Financial Times* reported on an interview of Armin Papperger, Germany’s military contractor Rheinmetall, head. According to the report, he demanded the European countries to prioritise on specialising defence groups to challenge the US competitors over their preference for national target. Since the stalling of military aid from the US, EU leader have continued to push for defence cooperation and the arm companies have put forth against each other while the military budgets have remained in control of an individual country or national level. EU’s rush to accumulate and gather army troops has been an advantage for such companies to build infantry vehicles, combat drones and smoothbore gun. Although other military contractors in Germany have complained, Rheinmetall have achieved to meet the production demand.

References

[“Iran Alerted Russia Before Moscow Attack, Sources Say”](#), *RFERL*, 01 April 2024

[“Woman injured in Vovchansk as Russia shells town on Monday”](#), *Ukrinform*, 01 April 2024

[“At least nine wounded by Ukrainian strikes on Russian region – governor”](#), *RT*, 01 April 2024

Vasco Cotovio, Clare Sebastian and Alegra Goodwin, [“Ukraine’s AI-enabled drones are trying to disrupt Russia’s energy industry. So far, it’s working”](#), *CNN*, 02 April 2024

[“Russia-NATO relations worse than during Cold War – Moscow”](#), *RT*, 01 April 2024

[“Recently detained militants linked to Moscow terror attack – FSB”](#), *RT*, 01 April 2024

[“France expects ‘clear messages’ from China to Russia over Ukraine war”](#), *France 24*, 01 April 2024

Patricia Nilsson, [“Rheinmetall chief urges Europe to build defence tech](#)

[champions”](#), *Financial Times*, 01 April 2024

War in Ukraine: Day 766 & 767

Two years of Bucha

War on the Ground:

On 31 March, according to *The Kyiv Independent* Zelenskyy commemorated the second anniversary of the liberation of Bucha. He stated that “...this is a war to prevent anyone from daring to become a beast towards others,” at a flag raising ceremony conducted at the Memorial to the Defenders of the Bucha Community. He was joined by other Ukrainian officials, including Andriy Yermak, Head of the President’s Office, Denys Shmyhal, the Prime Minister, Rustem Umerov, the Defence Minister, Oleksandr Syskyi, the Commander-in-chief, Ruslan Stefanchuk, the Parliament Speaker, and Ihor Klymenkom the Interior Minister. The suburb of Bucha near Kyiv was occupied by Russian troops soon after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but a mid-March counterattack by Ukrainian troops liberated the suburb. However, post liberation, mass graves and proof of Russian war crimes were discovered, making Bucha a symbol of atrocities committed by Russia. According to the Office of the Prosecutor General, 1,400 civilians were killed in Bucha.

On 31 March, according to *Al Jazeera*, Russia escalated its strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, killing two people. One attack was in the Lviv region where a building caught fire, killing one. According to Ukrainian energy operator DTEK, 170,000 homes have been suffering from power outages. Several thousands are suffering from power outages in the Odesa region of Ukraine. Following a Russian shelling last week, the largest power plant in the northeast Kharkiv region, the Zmiiv Thermal Power Plant, was completely destroyed post Russian shelling. In his Easter message, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President, urged the country to persevere through defence and aversion to death.

On 31 March, according to *The Kyiv Independent*, Zelenskyy wished Ukrainians following the Georgian calendar on account of Easter. He stated that the day must remind everyone that they “will not allow darkness to win.” Easter was celebrated by

Ukraine's Catholic, Protestant and Greek Orthodox Christians on 31 March, while the Orthodox Christians will observe Easter on 5 May. He stated that "there is not a day or night when Russian terror does not try to break our lives," pointing at the Russian attack on the night of Easter using 11 Shahed drones, 14 cruise missiles, a Kh-59 guided missile, and an Iskander-M ballistic missile.

On 30 March, according to RFERL, Zelenskyy stated that if the US fails to support Ukraine with military aid, the former's forces will be forced to retreat "in small steps". In an interview with *The Washington Post*, Zelensky stated that the lack of American support would mean "no air defence, no Patriot missiles, no jammers for electronic warfare, (and) no 155-mm artillery rounds". He added that if the frontline remains stable, Ukrainian forces could train new brigades to prepare for a counteroffensive. However, if Russia breaches the front line, Ukraine's major cities will be under threat. Zelensky has been conducting rounds of interviews with the western media to urge the US Congress into approving the "critically important" aid for Ukraine. The Senate had last month passed USD 60 billion as part of a supplementary spending bill as aid, however, Mike Johnson, the Republican US House Speaker, failed to bring the bill up for vote in the House with a slim Republican majority, who rather wanted spending on US border security. Russia has launched multiple attacks targetting Ukrainian energy grid, causing widespread destruction and disruption of key services for civilians.

On 30 March, *Reuters* reported on Zelenskyy report on massive missile and drone attack by Russia on Ukraine's thermal and hydro power plants in the central and western Ukraine. Stressing on the attacks, he demanded for more air defences from the west citing the increasing damage to critical infrastructure. On the same, Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine's Prime Minister confirmed on the damages of six energy facilities. He said: "Again, the attack was directed both against electricity generation facilities and against its distribution system."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 31 March, according to *CGTN*, Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, signed a decree ordering a routine spring-time conscription campaign. He called upon 150,000 citizens for their statutory military service, according to a Kremlin document.

On 31 March, according to the *TASS*, Vyacheslav Gladkov, the Governor of the Belgorod Region Region of Russia announced that a Ukrainian shelling attack that hit "the village of Dunaika in the Graivoron district" caused the death of a woman. He added that damage due to the attack was caused to four houses, one auxiliary structure, three cars, as well as a gas pipeline and a power transmission line, causing various disruptions for civilians.

On 31 March, according to *Sputnik*, Russia carried out a strike using long-range precision weapons and unmanned aerial vehicles, on targets within the Ukrainian energy infrastructure and facilities of gas production. The Russian Defence Ministry announced that the strike had caused disruption of "enterprises of the defence industry on the production and repair of weapons, military equipment and ammunition" in Ukraine, hitting all intended targets. The Ministry listed the losses faced by Ukraine, that included "300 servicepeople, two armored combat vehicles, two light vehicles, as well as a reconnaissance and electronic warfare station" in the Avdeyevka and Kupyansk regions. Further, nine counterattacks from Ukraine were repelled in the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). The Ministry listed out the losses faced by Ukraine in the vicinity of the DPR and Kherson regions.

On 31 March, according to *TASS*, Russia's National Antiterrorism Committee (NAC) announced that three militants accused of plotting attacks in Dagestan in southern Russia had been detained, from Makhachkala and Kaspiysk. The NAC's investigation discovered automatic weapons and a home-made explosive device. They noted that during the counter-terrorism operation, no civilian or law enforcement personnel had been harmed.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 29 March, *France 24* reported on the interview of Sébastien Lecornu, France's Defence Minister. Lecornu announced the government's decision to supply old armoured vehicles and new surface to air missiles to Ukraine. The move comes as Ukraine faces increased strikes from Russia in its western (Lviv) and northeastern region. He added: "We are also developing remotely operated munitions in a very short timeframe, to deliver them to Ukraine starting this summer."

On 29 March, *Politico* reported on Romanian government report on discovery of debris from a drone crash on an island in Danube River located near the Ukraine border. In a statement, Romania's defence ministry stated on identifying fragments which is expected to be from a drone in an agricultural field in the Great Brăila Island. According to Marcel Ciolacu, Romania's Prime Minister, it was a first occurrence and no casualties were recorded.

On 29 March, *Anadolu Agency* reported on Donald Tusk, Poland's Prime Minister interview comment on warning of a "new era of war." He stated that it was a critical moment after World War II and the coming two years would be a decider. Tusk stressed on the continuity of support to Ukraine and need for the "strong alliance with the US." On the agricultural dispute he raised concerns over his need to prioritise Poland's "fundamental interest." He added: "...I argued that the idea of free trade with Ukraine needs to be remodeled. I want a fair agreement with Ukraine on this matter."

References

Pavel Polityuk, "[Ukraine says Russian drone, missile attacks damage power facilities](#)," *Reuters*, 30 March 2024
"[Two killed as Russia escalates attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure](#)," *Reuters*, 31 March 2024
"[Zelensky on Easter Sunday: 'There's no night or day when Russian terror doesn't attempt to ruin our lives'](#)," *The Kyiv Independent*, 31 March 2024
Nate Ostiller, "[Zelensky commemorates 2nd anniversary of liberation of Bucha](#)," *The Kyiv*

Independent, 31 March 2024

"[Putin signs decree on spring military conscription](#)," *CGTN*, 31 March 2024

"[Woman killed in village in Belgorod Region as result of Ukraine's shelling attack](#)," *TASS*, 31 March 2024

"[Russian Aerospace Forces Hits Ukrainian Energy Facilities, Gas Infrastructure](#)," *Sputnik*, 31 March 2024

"[Three militants detained in counter-terrorist operation in southern Russia — NAC](#)," *TASS*, 31 March 2024

"[Ukrainian Forces Will Have To Retreat Without U.S. Aid, Zelenskiy Says](#)," *RFERL*, 30 March 2024

"[France to deliver old armoured vehicles, new missiles to Ukraine](#)," *France 24*, 31 March 2024

CLAUDIA CHIAPPA, "[NATO's Romania finds likely drone debris on its land near Ukraine border](#)," *Politico*, 29 March 2024

Jo Harper, "[Polish PM warns of new era of war: 'Next 2 years deciding everything'](#)," *Anadolu Agency*, 29 March 2024

EM Short Notes*

By Alka Bala, Rosemary Kurian and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Jordan Pettitt/PA, Hungary Today, The Portugal News, Hungary Today, Peter Morrison/AP Photo/picture alliance, SAMEER AL-DOUMY/AFP

BELGIUM

Brussels mayor orders shutting of right-wing led conference

On 17 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Brussels city authorities ordered the shutdown of a right-wing conference called “national conservatism” or NatCon, to “ensure public security.” Organisers stated that the authorities did not shut the gathering but didn’t allow people to continue to enter the building. The event was slated to be attended by key far-right political figures of Europe, including Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orban, former Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, far-right French politician Eric Zemmour, and conservative German Catholic Cardinal Gerhard Müller expressing the common theme of euroscepticism. Emir Kir, the mayor of Brussels, stated that the far-right was “not welcome” in Brussels, an opinion that the event’s organisers aim to challenge in court. Europe’s far-right is expected to gain

ground in the upcoming June elections of the EU. (“[Brussels authorities order shutdown of right-wing gathering](#)”, *Deutsche Welle*, 17 April 2024)

CROATIA

Parliamentary elections: Plenkovic’s ruling HDZ party wins

On 17 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the win of Andrej Plenkovic of the conservative Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) won the parliamentary elections with 60 seats, but did not claim a majority in the 151-seat assembly. This would follow potentially tough coalition negotiations by Plenkovic to form a majority. If neither party forms a government within sixty days, it would prompt new elections. According to *The Morning Express*, Croatia’s parliamentary elections will be a face off between President Zoran Milanovic of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP), a pro-Russian leader and Plenkovic’s ruling HDZ. Milanovic has created an image as a right-wing populist leader who made a surprise

* EM Short Notes are notes published along with Daily Focus on Europe, every evening by the NIAS Europe Monitor team. The short notes provide a brief overview of the latest developments in Europe and provides the sources from which they are compiled. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read them every day.

announcement of his intention to contest a month before the election. Croatia's elections were due this autumn, but observers believe that due to Plenkovic's narrow backing in the Parliament, he wanted a snap election to avoid the threat of further drop in popularity. According to the *Friedrich Naumann Foundation*, Milanovic scheduled surprise elections to make voting difficult for those Croats living in the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are traditionally conservative and supporters of Plenkovic's HDZ, to "break the supremacy of the HDZ." The HDZ has been in power for almost 10 years and is known to be susceptible to corruption. Even Plenkovic, who had donned a "spotless vest" so far, made blunders by electing an Attorney General with links to criminals. ("Croatia's parliamentary elections: Milanovic and Plenkovic face-off," *The Morning Express*, 17 April 2024; Dusan Dinic, "King Kong vs. Godzilla – the Croatian way," *Friedrich Naumann Foundation*, 16 April 2024; "Croatia: Ruling conservatives win elections without majority," *Deutsche Welle*, 18 April 2024)

CYPRUS

New wave of migrants enter through southeastern coast

On 01 April, *Xinhua* reported on the problem faced by Cyprus over the wave of immigrants from Syria. In the last 24 hours, close to seven small boats were reportedly transported 500 Syrian immigrants crossing into Cyprus's southeastern coast. Rescue operations were triggered amid the concern of overcrowded vessels. The migrants are expected to originate from Lebanon which is 200 kilometres from Cyprus and becomes the second occurrence since 13 January. Konstantinos Ioannou, Cyprus Interior Minister highlighted the increasing concern over influx of Syrian due to high number of hostilities in Gaza. He urged the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the Frontex to intervene to help control the migrant boat entry. ("Fresh surge of Syrian immigrants hits Cyprus," *Xinhua*, 02 April 2024)

FRANCE

President opens discussion on use of nuclear weapons for common European defence

On 28 April, in an interview, the French President, Emmanuel Macron, expressed that France was ready to contribute more to the EU's common defence strategy. Macron pushed for a "European Dimension" but also maintained role of France. The debate comes at the light of the EU elections in June 2024 and highlights Macron's agenda to include sharing of France's anti-missile defence, long range capabilities and nuclear weapons for a more "credible" European Defence. This was criticised by the opposition member parties. The right-wing party LR Leader, Francois-Xavier Bellamy, described the comments as "exceptionally serious." Whereas the Far-left French lawmaker Bastien Lachaud said France's nuclear deterrent "cannot be shared."

Politico reports the changing trend in naval combat

On 10 April, *Politico* reported on the French navy's shift in training from policing operations to gird. This comes as Rear Admiral Jacques Mallard, the commander of France's carrier battle group says as a preparation against war. The navy's mission have focused till now on blocking drug traffickers, combat illegal fishing and launching inflatable boats and detaining criminals. According to him the naval combat is shaping towards war, he added: "...we feel threatened on a more regular basis ... We now train for other missions, in particular what we call high-intensity warfare." In the EU, France has been the only country with functional nuclear-powered aircraft carrier and it also hosts a battle group of nuclear submarines, frigates and Rafale fighter jets. This is expected to start mission in Mediterranean Sea which is seen as a adaptive move of the west as war in Gaza and Ukraine spill into Black Sea and Red Sea. (Laura Kayali, "France prepares for naval warfare against an enemy that 'wants to destroy us'," *Politico*, 10 April 2024)

French assembly approves bill to reduce wastage from fast-fashion

On 08 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the French National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, approved the fast-fashion bill unanimously, especially targeting fast-fashion enterprises like Shein and the online platform Temu, both Chinese manufacturers. Major companies with a certain per day production are required to indicate the environmental impact of their products and urge recycling among customers on their websites, else face a fine up to EUR 15,000. The government is planning to ban publicity for fast-fashion by 2025 with a penalty of up to EUR 100,000. The bill will become law only after approval from the French Senate. Several experts on sustainable fashion welcomed the bill as the victory of a “cultural battle” that addressed “an environmental, social and cultural disaster”. However, others argue that those who can’t afford fashion could be adversely affected, stating that the thresholds shouldn’t be too low. The implications of the bill depends on the threshold set by the government.

French company ramps up production to meet demand of military drone radar

On 08 April, according to *Politico*, the French defence equipment manufacturer Thales, which Emmanuel Macron, France’s President, listed as one having significantly ramped up manufacturing, is planning to further expand production. Thales manufactures the high-demand radar system, which is capable of detecting air threats and identifying fighter jets, helicopters and missiles. Located in Limours, the company’s radar can differentiate drones from birds and its GM400 Alpha can detect aircrafts 500 kilometres away. The company is jointly controlled by the French state and fighter jet manufacturer Dassault Aviation, and is the leading radar manufacturer in Europe. The beginning of the war in Ukraine has prompted the French government to urge increased manufacture of defence equipment that is cheaper and faster.

Thales is expected to double its production of its radars but faces logistical challenges.

Macron acknowledges French failure to stop Rwanda Genocide on its 30th anniversary

On 05 April, *Politico* reported that on the 30th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide, French President Emmanuel Macron acknowledged France’s failure to stop the Rwanda genocide. Macron in a video message stated that “France, which could have stopped the genocide with its Western and African allies, did not have the will to do so.” The Rwandan genocide resulted in the ethnic cleansing of members of the Tutsi minority by Hutu militants between April and July 1994, killing 800,000 people. Macron was invited to Rwanda to commemorate the anniversary, however, was instead represented by Stéphane Séjourné, French Foreign Affairs Minister and Rwandan- born Hervé Berville, Secretary of State for the Sea. Earlier in 2021, Macron had visited the Kigali Genocide Memorial honouring victims in Rwanda, and had acknowledged France’s “responsibilities” but had also stated that the country “was not an accomplice” to the violence. (Seb Starcevic, “[Macron to acknowledge France’s failure to stop Rwanda genocide](#)”, *Politico*, 05 April 2024)

Attal introduces reform to the unemployment insurance system

On 29 March, according to *Le Monde*, Gabriel Attal, the Prime Minister of France, introduced reforms to the unemployment insurance system. The announcement marks reforms in the system for the third time in the last three years. The newest reforms focus on three aspects; firstly, reducing the period of unemployment benefits, which is currently 18 months. Secondly, revising the duration taken for compensation to claimants, and thirdly decreasing the level of benefits. Although the first two aspects have been welcomed, they have been criticised by labour unions since the implementation of the reforms comes during a tumultuous economic climate. The unions believe that the new measures would have negative implications

for the unemployed. The government's arguments for quick re-employment of the workers have been met with unions' efforts, which focus on giving protection to the unemployed and interests of the companies they represent. Efforts for reform in the unemployment system have been initiated since 2017, however, the government should gauge the impact of the previous reforms before urgently implementing the new reforms. ("The heavy toll imposed on France's unemployed," *Le Monde*, 29 March 2024)

FINLAND

Government announces steps to decrease deficit with the EU

On 17 April, according to the *Helsinki Times*, the Finnish government announced the ruling coalition's agreement to a government spending cut worth EUR 1.6 billion and tax increases worth EUR 1.4 billion. After a two-day framework session convened to discuss means to avoid triggering the excessive deficit procedure of the EU, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's government made the announcement, calling them "necessary." They have decided to increase the general value added tax by 1.5 per cent to 25.5 percent, which could lead to an inflation on several products and services, a step that could be implemented as soon as this year, according to Rikka Purra, Finland's Minister of Finance. ("Finnish government unveils €1.6bn in new spending cuts, €1.4bn in new tax hikes," *Helsinki Times*, 17 April 2024)

Helsinki to host Tall Ships Races while promoting Baltic Sea preservation

On 16 April, according to the *Helsinki Times*, Finland will host its annual Tall Ships Races, a sailing event featuring large traditional sailing vessels, from 04 to 07 July in the capital city of Helsinki. The event that takes place in the Baltic Sea will partner with the John Nurminen Foundation, an organisation focussed on the preservation of the Baltic Sea, as its charity partner. The event will attract around 500,000 visitors to the city,

and will promote fundraising for the protection of the Baltic Sea for visiting businesses. Annamari Arrakoski-Engardt, CEO of the John Nurminen Foundation, noted that the "Baltic Sea suffers from eutrophication," which they aim to prevent through donations. ("Helsinki to host the Tall Ships Races in July 2024 with a focus on Baltic Sea conservation," *Helsinki Times*, 16 April 2024)

Finland observes increased rates of elder employment, especially among women

On 16 April, according to the *Helsinki Times*, Finland improved its rate of elder employment, especially among women. Being historically behind fellow Nordic states in elder employment, Anna Sutela, a senior researcher at the Statistics Centre, observed that recent years have showcased significant progress, especially among women aged 50-59, with a less favourable situation for men. Sutela noted that the possible reasons for the improvement could include "...reforms in the pension system, workplace development programs, the education system, something else, or all of these combined." ("Finland catches up in elder employment, especially among women," *Helsinki Times*, 16 April 2024)

GEORGIA

Parliament passes the media bill in the first reading

On 17 April, large number of protestors gathered in Tbilisi after the lawmakers passed a bill considered controversial imposing control on media and non-commercial organisations. The bill mandates such organisations which receive more than 20 per cent of funding from foreign entity to register and therefore categorised as "foreign agents." In the parliament, the bill was passed in the first reading with 83 in favour from the member of Georgian Dream party while opposition parliamentarians refrained from voting. The protests and objection from the opposition come as they consider the bill to limit freedom and functioning of civil society and media organisations and create a block towards the country entry into the EU.

Josep Borell, EU foreign policy representative warned: “The final adoption of this legislation would negatively impact Georgia's progress on its EU path.”

(“[Georgia: Lawmakers pass 'foreign agent' law in first reading](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 18 April 2024)

Police clear protesters against controversial ‘foreign agent’ bill

On 17 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Georgia’s riot police cleared protesters outside the parliament building in Tbilisi protesting the controversial “foreign agents” bill. They used pepper spray against the thousands protesting and kept water cannons on standby, detaining 11. The bill, brought by the ruling Georgian Dream party, stipulates that non-commercial organisations receiving 20 per cent or more of their funding from abroad will have to register as “pursuing interests of a foreign power”, dubbed as a Russian-styled bill. The ruling party holds a massive majority without needing opposition to support, with the bill receiving 78 votes in favour and only 25 against. (“[Georgia: Riot police clear 'foreign agents' bill protesters](#)”, *Deutsche Welle*, 17 April 2024)

Protestors take to streets against controversial “foreign agent” bill

On 08 April, according to *Politico*, several demonstrators gathered in the streets of Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital, after the passing of the first stage of the controversial bill that brands civil society groups as “foreign agents”. Several groups have termed the law akin to Putin’s Russia, which aims to crack down on freedom of speech and funding for civil society groups. A version of the bill was dropped in March 2023 after a public outcry and international condemnation, which was brought back on agenda by the ruling Georgian Dream party, without changes made to the text. Under the law, organisations that receive more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad will be labelled as those with foreign influence, leading to considerable administrative rules and substantial fines. Humanitarian organisations could also face the risk of being slapped with the label. The proposal

has created strained relations with the EU, with Josep Borrell, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs, noting that its “chilling effect” will have “negative consequences for the many Georgians benefiting from their (civil society) work”. He added that the law was “incompatible with EU values and standards”.

GERMANY

Government rebukes Gaza ‘genocide’ claims at ICJ

On 09 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Germany presented its defence against Nicaragua’s charges of German involvement in ‘genocide’ in Gaza through its sale of weapons to Israel. Tania von Uslar-Gleichen, head of Germany’s legal team remarked that Nicaragua’s charges ignore “facts and the law,” lacked evidence and jurisdiction and dismissed it for having a one-sided view of the Israel-Hamas war. The German legal team also highlighted how the export of arms to Israel had been Nicaragua as deliberately misrepresented. Christian Tams of the legal team confirmed that each arms export license is assessed on a case-by-case basis and is checked for risks. According to the legal team, artillery shells and munitions have not been exported to Israel since October 2023. On Nicaragua’s claims for Germany to resume its UNRWA aid, Germany highlighted that it had already resumed its funding and remains as the largest individual donor of humanitarian aid to Palestinians. The German legal team also highlighted that Germany cannot be charged with ‘genocide’ until the courts determine whether Israel is breaching the Genocide Convention. The court is expected to take weeks to rule its preliminary decision, whereas the case regarding Israel’s actions in Genocide could take years for the final ruling. (“[Germany presents defence at ICJ over Gaza 'genocide' claim](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 09 April 2024)

Interior Minister Faeser promises consequences and effective prevention for violent crimes

On 09 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Nancy Faeser, German Interior Minister stated that Germany continues to be “one of

the safest countries in the world,” as annual police statistics indicated Germany reached the highest crime levels since 2016.

According to the report, 5.94 million crimes were reported in 2023. Crime increased by 5.5 per cent, violent crime increased by 8.6 per cent, and bodily harm increased by 7.4 per cent. Faeser called for “zero tolerance” and “vigorous policing, swift trials, meaningful sentencing and tangible punishments” to ensure quick consequences for the crimes. The rise in youth crime was attributed to the pandemic and associated social upheaval. The crime related to drugs had uptick by 30 per cent, Faeser indicated that the German government had already established agreements with Brazil, Peru, Columbia and Ecuador for cooperation on its war on drugs. ([“Germany: Minister demands 'zero tolerance' for violent crime,” Deutsche Welle, 09 April 2024](#))

Intelligence chief warns about rising far-right extremists with licenced arms

On 05 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, a large number of far-right extremists and supporters of the Reichbürger group, still have permission to own weapons. Reichbürger group refers to a far-right radical movement that rejects the legality of the Federal State of Germany. According to the Interior Ministry, in 2023 about 1561 extremists and some 500 Reichsbürger possessed arms licenses. Martina Renner, a parliamentarian from the Left Party stated that “It is not announcements that are needed but concrete action by the authorities against Nazis and Reichsbürger.” She urged the government to pursue measures regarding weapons law. Nancy Faeser, Germany’s Interior Minister has announced regarding strengthening of laws around weapons licenses. However, amid discussions to develop new legal reforms, the Free Democrats Party voice for rigorous implementation of existing reform. ([“Germany: Many far-right extremists licensed to own arms,” Deutsche Welle, 05 April 2024](#))

Germany launches “war-ready” military reforms with emphasis on cyber-warfare

On 04 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Boris Pistorius, German Defense Minister plans to introduce military reforms and restructure the command structure. Reforms include, the establishment of a new branch focusing exclusively on cyber-warfare and will work in coordination with the army, air force and the navy. The new Cyber and Information Domann Service would focus on preventing and working against cyberattacks, protecting electronic infrastructure, and preventing disinformation and other hybrid threats. The change in the structure includes the oversight of all four branches under a new central command, which would be the unified point of contact for NATO. Pistorious stated that the German military, Bundeswehr would require an additional EUR 6.5 million in its budget for 2025 to implement these reforms. ([“Germany launches military reform with new command structure,” Deutsche Welle, 05 April 2024](#))

Government moves ahead to legalise recreational cannabis

On 01 April, according to *Times Malta*, Germany became the largest EU country to legalise recreational cannabis, allowing adults, over 18 to carry up to 25 grams of dried cannabis and grow up to three marijuana plants at home. The law became effective on 01 April, and from 01 July, it would be allowed for people to legally purchase weed through “cannabis clubs” in the country. Although the government believes that the new law would help curb and contain the black market for cannabis, the decision has drawn flak from health specialists. Cannabis use among young adults, who are more susceptible to health risks, also increases the risks of damage to the central nervous system, and risks of developing psychosis and schizophrenia. Karl Lauterbach, German Health Minister indicated that cannabis consumption could be “dangerous”, especially for young people. The government had stated that cannabis would be banned within 100 meters of

schools, kindergartens and playgrounds. Friedrich Merz, Conservative opposition leader stated his intention to “immediately” repeal the law if his party won the elections in 2025. ([“Germany gives controversial green light to cannabis,” Times Malta](#), 01 April 2024)

German soccer federation recalls jerseys numbered 44, over Nazi symbolism

On 01 April, according to *Le Monde*, the German soccer federation and Adidas recall the sale of jerseys numbered 44 due to its resemblance with the Nazi Party’s SS paramilitary unit’s logo. The federation expressed that “None of the parties involved saw any proximity to Nazi symbolism in the development process of the jersey design,” and it is now working with its partner 11teamsports to develop an alternative design for the number four. Nazi Party’s Schutzstaffel group, which used the symbol SS was involved in carrying out mass killings in the concentration camps during World War II. Oliver Brüggem, Adidas spokesperson stated that the company stood for “...diversity and inclusion, and as a company, we actively campaign against xenophobia, antisemitism, violence and hatred in all forms.” Germany is scheduled to host the European Championship from 14 June to July 14. ([“Germany recalls soccer jerseys with number 44 due to associations with Nazi symbols,” Le Monde](#), 01 April 2024)

GREECE

Sand clouds spread across Athens trigger warning

On 24 April, the *BBC* reported on spread of an orange haze over Athens due movement of clouds containing dust from Sahara desert. It is observed one of the worst scenarios since 2018 for Greece and has been witnessing similar events in late March and early April. According to the weather service, the skies are expected to clear soon but the air quality was deteriorated in many parts of Greece. The citizens were asked to limit spending their time outdoors and mandated to wear masks and avoid physical exercise until the dust is

cleared. Every year, the Sahara released 60 to 200 million tonnes of mineral dust and most of it can descend faster via small particles reaching farther areas. ([“Greece: Orange Sahara dust haze descends over Athens,” BBC](#), 24 April 2024)

Greek journalists declare 24-hour strike demanding higher wages

On 16 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Greece’s Journalists’ Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (ESIEA) declared a 24-hour strike protesting low wages amid inflation. No news was carried on radio, and internet news portal for the day until 5 a.m. on Wednesday, citing “anarchic working conditions and very low pay”. The inflation is noted to be around 37 per cent over the last two years with salaries “not sufficient to cover their basic family and personal needs”. Another day-long strike has been planned by the General Confederation of the Workers of Greece (GSEE) by stopping public transport a day after the ESIEA’s strike. (Richard Connor, [“Greek journalists launch 24-hour strike over low wages,” Deutsche Welle](#), 16 April 2024)

Government declares “high risk” alert amid early wildfires

On 07 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the wildfire season in Greece started earlier than usual after a record warm winter, after at least 70 forest fires were reported. Several regions have been declared as “high-risk,” the second-highest kind, as the level of wildfire alert. Most of the fires except for the one on the island of Crete were brought under control. Strong winds up to 60 kph are expected till 09 April especially in Athens, the Cyclades islands and Crete, which could make “the situation extremely dangerous for the outbreak of fires,” according to Greece’s Civil Protection Ministry. The wildfire could be a result of five weeks of no rain in Greece, leading to dry conditions favourable to forest fires. Several experts have stated that the wildfire season in Greece, set to begin in May will instead begin progressively earlier due to the human-led phenomenon of climate change.

HUNGARY

Agricultural minister calls EU to adopt modern agricultural policies

On 10 April, in a press conference, István Nagy, Hungary's agricultural minister mentioned the change in community's interest in the coming European Parliament election. He cited the Brussels agricultural policy as a threat to the farmers and food-security across Europe. He pushed for modern, competitive agricultural policies and promotion of value-added sectors to increase investments, and resources. He assured Hungary's decision to allot subsidies and ensure equitable opportunities to ease the farmer situation. (["Brussels' Agricultural Policy a Threat to European Food-Security, States Minister," Hungary Today](#), 10 April 2024)

Prime Minister Orban's rival garners mass support

On 06 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, tens of thousands of people rallied in Budapest to the parliament building demanding resignation of the Viktor Orban, Prime Minister. Peter Magyar, who was closely associated with Orban's government launched a political movement against him alleging corruption and cronyism. Magyar addressed the crowd and stated how his movement would unite political opposition and the citizens unhappy with Orban's rule for 14 years. He promised to build a new Hungary step-by-step. Magyar was closely associated with the ruling Fidesz party and was married to Judit Varga, Orban's former Justice Minister. Earlier this year, Orban was hit with a child sex abuse scandal, which led to the resignation of former President Katalin Novak and Judit Varga's resignation. Orban has also been accused by the EU of controlling the media, and elections and eroding the rule of law in the country. According to a study by pollster Median, Magyar's movement has reached up to 68 per cent of voters, out of which 13 per cent of voters have indicated the intention to support him.

KOSOVO

Kosovo Statistics Agency began its first census in ten years; Serb parties

call for boycott

On 05 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Kosovo began its first nationwide census in the last ten years. The census would also include a survey of the ethnic Serb minority residing in the north. Albin Kurti, Kosovo's Prime Minister had earlier urged the Serb minority to participate in the census. The census has been opposed by four Serb parties, including the Srpska Lista. Kosovo is dominated by the majority Albanian population, however, in the northern municipalities, Serbs are in the majority. The last population census in Kosovo was held in 2011 by the Kosovo Statistics Agency (ASK) and ended with a population count of 1.8 million people. The census would allow the government to tally the number of people, their households, education and employment to make plans for policies. ASK aims to conduct the census in six weeks, between 5 April and 17 May. The cost of carrying out the census is estimated to be 13 million dollars and has been funded by Eurostat, the World Bank and UN organisations. (["Kosovo begins first census in over 10 years," Deutsche Welle](#), 05 April 2024)

ITALY

Prime Minister Meloni to run for European Election in June

On 28 April, the Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni announced her candidacy at a party event at Pescara, Italy, for the European Elections as the lead candidate of her ruling party Brothers of Italy. Her move of using her popularity to boost chances of their party to win is for a greater goal of pushing the left to the opposition so that the centre-right will rule Europe. Meloni's party already tops the latest polls in Italy, and is predicted to get 27.2 percent of the vote. Both Elly Schlein, leader of the PD, and Antonio Tajani, the current foreign minister who is from the conservative Forza Italia party, have entered the race for the European Parliament.

Energy Minister says Italy not affected by the sanctions on Russian gas

On 26 April, Gilberto Pichetto Fratin, Italian

Energy Minister explained Italy's steps into diversification so that Italy "has no reason to oppose a process of new sanctions" on Russian LNG. as prepares to host climate talks by G7 ministers in Turin, Fratin claims that "Italy is right now in a condition to even do without Russian gas altogether." Italy, once seen heavily reliant on Russian gas, has swiftly diversified after the 2022 Ukraine invasion through an Algerian pipeline and LNG imports. While Italy's import of Russian gas fell under five per cent in 2023 from 43 per cent in 2020. The EU has imposed 13 packages of measures against Moscow since Vladimir Putin, Russian President move against Ukraine, but the bloc has refrained till now from targeting Russia's gas sector. The Italian government intends to invest in Africa to turn Italy into an energy transit hub between Africa and Europe. While there are accusations on Meloni's government for not taking the environment seriously, Pichetto Fratin argues that the government's target is to generate nearly two-thirds of its electricity from renewable energy sources by the end of the decade.

IRELAND

Simon Harris becomes Ireland's youngest Prime Minister

On 09 April, Ireland's Parliament voted for Simon Harris, aged 37 become the youngest Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland. Harris, former health and higher education minister received 88 votes in favour with 69 against in the parliament. Harris, leader of the Fine Gael party, replaces former Prime Minister Leo Varadkar. Harris would lead a coalition government and would face an election within a year against the left-wing opposition led by Republican Sinn Fein. According to the polling data Harris lags behind Sinn Fein with 21 per cent of votes whereas Finn leads with 26 per cent. Harris is due to announce a cabinet reshuffle of Fine Gael members and is not likely to include the foreign or finance ministries. ("Ireland: Simon Harris elected new prime minister," *Deutsche Welle*, 10 April 2024)

Restoring duty on fuel would push more 'fuel tourism' in Northern

Ireland

On 01 April, the *BBC* reported that according to the Irish Road Haulage Association (IRHA), the restoration of excise duty on fuel would push for greater movement to Northern Ireland to purchase petrol and diesel. On Monday, the price of petrol and diesel increased by four per cent per litre and three per cent per litre respectively. Ger Hyland, President of IRHA stated that "fuel tourism" would have an impact on the Irish economy. He indicated the rise in fuel prices would prove difficult for Irish industries to compete with other companies in mainland Europe. He also stated that since hauliers operated in a "low margin" industry, there would be a rise in price for the consumers. The decision to restore excise duty was made in October 2022. ("Fuel tourism' to NI could follow Irish duty move," *BBC*, 01 April 2024)

LATVIA

Eurostat reveals Latvia among the lowest hourly labour costs

On 31 March, *Eng.lsm.lv* reported on the 2023 data revealed by Eurostat which indicated hourly labour costs in the EU at EUR 31.8 and EUR 35.6 in the euro area. However, despite such high numbers, hourly labour costs in Bulgaria and Latvia range from EUR 9.3 to EUR 13.5 respectively. In Luxembourg, the hourly wages were reported to be as high as 53.9 per cent. These varying figures reflect the income gaps within the EU member states. ("Latvia's labor costs lowest among Baltic states," *Eng.lsm.lv*, 31 March 2024)

LITHUANIA

Germany sends the first soldiers part of its permanent Lithuania force

On 08 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Germany sent the first group of soldiers who will be part of its permanent military base in Lithuania with 5000 troops by 2027, in an effort to prevent further attacks from Russia. An advance staff of 20 members is planned to set up the base, with the brigade named as Panzerbrigade 45. Boris Pistorius, the German Defence Minister marked the first time they have "permanently stationed such a unit outside Germany." Dmitry

Peskov, Kremlin spokesperson, stated that the move could only escalate tensions.

NORWAY

Sami activists protest demanding government to remove wind turbines

On 09 April, Sami activists gathered in protest to government's failure to continue the wind turbines remain installed in the grazing land of the Sami group despite the Supreme Court decision. The protestors occupied the entrances of the Oil and Energy Ministry and also blocked the entrances of other ministries throughout 2023. This led to imposition of fines on denying to evacuate on police orders after continuous four days. The group also refused to pay fines but the court rules in favour of the protestors criticising the police for deciding to physically carry out the protestors. The protests emerge as the Norwegian Supreme Court declared the installation of wind turbines to be in violation of Sami's human rights. ("Sami demonstrators cleared in court," *NewsinEnglish*, 09 April 2024)

Government plans to double its defence budget by 2036

On 05 April, according to *Politico*, Norway announced a proposal to increase their defence spending in the next 12 years by 600 billion kroner (EUR 51 billion). Anne Marie Aanerud, the Norwegian Deputy Defence Minister, during the Norwegian-American Defence Conference in Washington, cited the need for "major investments" in Norwegian forces. Norway aims to increase its spending to 1.6 trillion kroner by 2036 for boosting its industry to support the armed forces. A major chunk of the spending will go to the navy, which would add at least five frigates with anti-submarine helicopters, five submarines, 10 large and 18 small vessels. It will further spend in upgrading its long-range air defence systems and increase surveillance with more satellites, vessels and drones.

POLAND

President Duda meets Trump to discuss on Ukraine and NATO

defence budget

On 17 April, Andrzej Duda, Poland's President held a meeting with Donald Trump, former US President on the NATO spending and global issues. In the meeting, Duda suggested on raising the defence expenditure threshold from two to three per cent of GDP, as this would align with Trump's earlier accusation on European members not meeting the contribution limit. They also discussed on the conflict in Ukraine, Israel and on topics in achieving world peace. For Trump, this will be a second meeting after hosting Viktor Orban, Hungary's Prime Minister in March. After the meeting, Trump said: "He's done a fantastic job and he's my friend...We're behind Poland all the way." ("Poland's Duda meets 'friend' Donald Trump in New York," *Deutsche Welle*, 18 April 2024)

Voting in the local elections act as a test for Tusk

On 07 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, voters cast ballots in the local elections across Poland. The elections would act as a test of support for Prime Minister Donald Tusk's pro-European policy. The parties leading the election race include Tusk's Civic Coalition and the conservative nationalist party of Law and Justice Party (PiS), which had governed Poland for the last eight years. According to Poland's election commission, voter turnout at 1500 GMT stood at 39.4 per cent. The polls indicated 33.7 per cent votes for the PiS and 31.9 per cent for Civic Coalition Party. Third Way Party and the Left which make up the other governing coalition parties, gained 13.5 per cent and 6.8 per cent of votes respectively. The elections act as a test for Tusk's liberal pro-European government, which has focused on reversing changes brought in by the PiS in the judicial system and media. Tusk had warned that winning of Civic Coalition is essential to prevent Poland from slipping back into nationalist rule. Around 190,000 candidates are contesting for positions as mayors and councillors.

PORTUGAL

Government denies to pay reparations to their former colonies

On 27 April, the Lisbon government stated that it seeks to "deepen mutual relations, respect for historical truth and increasingly intense and close cooperation, based on reconciliation of brotherly peoples." However, stressing that it had no plan to pay reparations for trans-Atlantic slavery and colonialism. This was stated as a response to President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who said Portugal could find ways to compensate its former colonies. The Lisbon Government led by Luis Montenegro, the leader of Portugal's center-right Democratic Alliance who won the elections in March. Over five centuries passed during Portugal's colonial era, six million Africans were forced to travel across the Atlantic by Portuguese ships between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to be sold into slavery. While the president believes that Lisbon had an obligation for reparations, the government said that Portugal maintained "truly excellent" relations with its former colonies, including financial and economic cooperation.

RUSSIA

Deputy Defence Minister detained on bribery charges

On 24 April, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the arrest of Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Timur Ivanov under suspicion of bribery. The investigative committee confirmed on taking Ivanov into custody to carry out investigation and is predicted to have taken RUB one million as bribe. This means 15 years of prison if found guilty. Ivanov was posted a one of the deputy defence minister's in 2016 and monitored property management, housing and medical support for military and construction facilities. He was said to be in charge of few construction projects in Ma riupol and has been subject to sanctions from the US and the EU in 2022. ("[Russia: Top military official arrested for bribery](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 April 2024)

Announces to withdraw its forces from Nagorno-Karabakh

On 17 April, according to *Politico*, Russia announced a complete withdrawal of its forces from Nagorno-Karabakh, directing all its resources to fight its war on Ukraine. After six months of an Armenian forced exodus from Azerbaijan's Karabakh region, the Russian announcement was made, as confirmed by Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin Press Secretary. Russia stationed 1960 soldiers with hundreds of units of armoured personnel and military equipment to monitor the 2020 ceasefire between the two countries, due to a war that followed the fall of the USSR. Russian forces did not act when Azerbaijan launched its attack against Armenians in the unrecognised republic, causing a major humanitarian crisis and forced fleeing of Armenians. This growing rift between Armenia and Russia has prompted the former to push for a closer integration with the EU. (Gabriel Gavin, "[Russia announces total withdrawal of troops from Nagorno-Karabakh](#)," *Politico*, 17 April 2024)

Russia's 'meat grinder' strategy is increasingly killing its soldiers

On 17 April, according to the *BBC*, more than 50,000 Russian soldiers were killed in the war on Ukraine. The death toll increased by at least 25 per cent after Russia initiated its 'meat grinder' strategy in the war's second year, sending waves of soldiers to overwhelm Ukrainian forces and expose their defences. *BBC* recorded death toll is eight times higher than Russia's public acknowledgment of the same, last made in September 2022. Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesperson, stated that giving such data was the "exclusive prerogative of the Ministry of Defence." The numbers do not include the militants in the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). Prison recruits are key in Russia's meat grinder tactics, like prison inmates who fought on behalf of the Russian government as part of the Wagner group's private army, which recruited from prisons until the souring of relations with Kremlin. (Olga Ivshina, Becky Dale & Kirstie Brewer, "[Russia's meat grinder soldiers - 50,000 confirmed dead](#)", *BBC*, 17 April 2024)

Government's counter-terrorism efforts spark concerns for migrants

On 09 April, *Politico* reported that Putin's failure to prevent the terror attacks by Tajik militants in Moscow had led to domestic targeting of migrants, central Asians and non-white Russians. Since the Islamic Group claimed responsibility for the Crocus City Hall attacks which killed 143, Russian police have carried out raids in migrant dormitories, and mass searches and have expelled 466 individuals for violating migration laws. Authorities from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have issued statements for their Russian-residing citizens to refrain from engaging in mass events. Victoria Maladaeva, President of the Indigenous of Russia Foundation stated "The wave of xenophobia [after the attack] is very tangible for indigenous peoples." On 26 March, Igor Krasnov Russia's Prosecutor General reported to Putin that crime committed by foreign nations in Russia had spiked to 75 per cent in 2023, without providing adequate evidence. However, this contradicts the data provided by the Russian Interior Ministry which indicated the crime rates by foreign nationals falling by 7 per cent. Increasing xenophobia after the attacks is spiking anxiety and fear among the non-Slavic communities. (Denis Leven, "Russia's migrants and ethnic minorities shiver at new Putin terror crackdown," *Politico*, 09 April 2024)

Thousands evacuated from Orsk city as floods aggravate

On 06 April, the *BBC* reported the evacuation of more than 1100 residents in the Orsk district of Russia. The rise of water in the Ural River due to the melting of ice had called for an emergency in the entire region of Orenburg. According to officials, "10,000 residents may be in the flooding zone and up to 4,000 houses could be inundated." Russian Emergencies Ministry stated that work on the dam rupture in Orsk was continuing. Vasily Kozupitsa, Mayor of Orsk warned about the "worsening situation" as the old town city is flooded and could be potentially cut off from the rest of the city. Orsk which has a population of 230,000 people is moving its residents to

nearby schools. Regions of Orsk, Orenburg, Urals regions and parts of Kazakhstan have been suffering from floods in recent days. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kazakh President stated the calamity to be the worst natural disaster for 80 years. ("Thousands evacuated as Orsk dam burst worsens Russia floods," *BBC*, 06 April 2024)

Putin calls for countering illegal immigration

On 02 April, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President demanded the law enforcement agencies to counter illegal immigration and organised crime. He pointed to the increasing unauthorised migration leading to extremism and criminality especially operating in the borders. He said: "I ask you to pay special attention to such priorities as ensuring public order, combating extremism, and suppressing illegal migration." Since the attack in the Crocus concert hall, Russia's security agency has been tasked to trace the responsible parties behind the attack. ("Putin orders crackdown on illegal immigration," *RT*, 02 April 2024)

SLOVAKIA

Pro-Russian Pellegrini emerge victorious in the Presidential run-off

On 06 April, according to *Politico*, Peter Pellegrini, the Speaker of the Parliament won the runoff Presidential elections against Ivan Korčok, a pro-West career diplomat. Pellegrini's victory allows Prime Minister Robert Fico's ruling coalition absolute control over the legislative and executive organs of the government. Pellegrini who won with 53 per cent of the votes, said: "...this victory is an enormous vindication for me." The reasons behind Pellegrini's victory was due to social media campaign, pledges to increase the pension and bonus for police and firefighters. Korčok who had received 47 per cent of the votes in the runoff elections, which was five per cent more votes than Pellegrini condemned the aggressive election campaign led by the competitor. Pellegrini accused Korčok of being "a war-monger who unhesitatingly supports everything the West tells him, including dragging Slovakia into [the Russia-Ukraine] war." The

opposition held the stance in support for Kyiv, while Pellegrini favours the role of the state and accused of sending Slovakian soldiers to fight in Ukraine. In Slovakia, the power of the President is limited to appointing ambassadors, returning legislation and granting amnesties. However, Pellegrini being an ally of Fico, is observed to be benefit the Direction – Slovak Social Democracy party's pro-Russian policies and agenda to modify penal code and control of media.

Environment Ministry proposes law to shoot brown bear within 500 metres

On 03 April, Environment Ministry of Slovakia announced on a draft constitutional law to be soon presented in the parliament to allow shooting of bears which pose danger. The law will grant permit for hunters to shoot down bears nearing the human settlements. Under the current rules, bears can be killed only if “driven away” from the area or into the forest, but as per new norm, it can be shot within 500 metres of the village. This comes after a woman was killed in March after being chased by a bear. Tomáš Taraba, Environment Minister from the far-right Slovak National Party pushed forth the draft at the national and regional levels to reduce the protection status of the brown bear. (Louise Guillot And Karl Mathiesen, [“Slovakia proposes law allowing bears to be shot near villages,” Politico](#), 03 April 2024)

SWEDEN

Parliament formulates age limit from 18 to 16 for changing gender legally

On 18 April, Sweden’s parliament passed a law reducing the age limit for people to change their legal gender from 18 to 16. The law was favoured with 234 votes and 94 against. Sweden became the first country to legalise gender transition in 1972. The recent move sparked debate but critics call for more research. At present Sweden needs doctor’s diagnosis of gender dysphoria to permit change their gender legally. Under the latest norm, coming into force from 2025 would ease the process through short consultation along with approval from the

National Board of Health and Welfare. While the new law is a boon, it mandates those under 18 to acquire approval from parents or guardian before changing their gender legally. Johan Hultberg of the ruling Moderate Party said: “The great majority of Swedes will never notice that the law has changed, but for a number of transgender people the new law makes a large and important difference.” (Francesca Gillett, [“Sweden passes law lowering age to change legal gender from 18 to 16,” BBC](#), 18 April 2024)

SWITZERLAND

ECHR finds the government to be disregarding climate policies risking right to life

On 09 April, European Court of Human Rights ruled in favour of a group of 2,000 Swiss women aged above 64 over climate change suit. The ruling is key to assert to what extent the European countries have violated the human rights of the people by not opting measures to address the climate change. The Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz (Association of Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland), the Swiss women group accused the government for its insufficient climate policies which have restricted guarantees and bars the citizen right to life. The lawsuit was joined by senior women between 55 and above who are under risk of dying from heat-related illness which are higher in number than older men. According to the court, it found the Swiss government not meeting the Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It also condemned the government for not considering the available evidence relating to climate change. This becomes a landmark event as ECHR has never intervened directly on climate change issue earlier. (Jacob Knutson, [“Swiss women win landmark climate change ruling,” Axios](#), 09 April 2024)

Bern and Zurich pledge to reinforce integration of migrants

On 08 April, according to *Swissinfo*, Swiss cities such as Bern, Zurich and Geneva are taking welcoming measures to integrate migrants and refugees into the cities. Zurich

offered to accommodate more refugees than what was allocated to them by the federal and cantonal governments. Bern announced itself as a “safe harbour” for refugees, whereas in 2017 and 2018, Geneva provided permits for undocumented migrants. International cities have launched a Call to Local Action, supported by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to implement the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. Zurich has also joined this initiative and aims to improve municipal public services for irregular migrants. It has already been successful in guaranteeing healthcare to all, even to non-health insurance holders. Zurich aims to launch the Züri City Card in 2026, which would allow all residents to open a bank account or purchase a mobile subscription.

Alps witness rise in temperatures

On 07 April, according to *Swissinfo*, the northern side of the Alps witnessed temperatures above 25 degrees Celsius, earlier than usual. Several weather stations witnessed the warmest April this year. Basel was the warmest with 28.8 degrees Celsius in the afternoon, due to the southwest wind. The Interlaken region observed a four degree rise in temperature in the beginning of April compared to previous years. Weather forecasts expect this “heatwave” to pass by Tuesday. (“[April heatwave sets Swiss temperature records](#),” *Swissinfo*, 07 April 2024)

FSO reports women continue being under-represented in Swiss academia

On 28 March, *Swissinfo.ch* reported an increase in the number of female teaching staff comprising professors and other teachers, however, this progress has been slow. According to data from the Federal Statistics Office (FSO), the number of female staff increased from 24.3 per cent in 2012 to 30.1 per cent in 2022. In Switzerland, women account for only 24 per cent of the top professorships in 12 universities, however, this remains lower than the EU average which is 26 per cent. Within

academia, there remains severe underrepresentation in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and maths), whereas women are reported to be over-represented in the field of life sciences. Switzerland’s structural social issues such as the limited provision of childcare services, force women to leave their careers for familial responsibilities. Based on a report by Andrea Zimmermann, a gender expert from the University of Basel, structural barriers and gender bias in recruitment, funding and promotion limit women from further climbing up the ladder in academia. (Simon Bradley, “[Progress towards gender equality in Swiss academia remains slow](#),” *Swissinfo.ch*, 28 March 2024)

Orlando Bassi company takes over global wig markets

On 30 March, according to *Swissinfo.ch*, a wig-producing company based in Bali, led by a Swiss national Orlando Bassi, takes over the global market for wigs. His creations are demanded by Hollywood and Broadway productions, for judges and barristers in the United Kingdom and Australia. Manufacturing of wigs is based in Bali Indonesia, however it’s shipped via Buchs in Switzerland. The mark of ‘Made in Switzerland’, adds the promise of quality worldwide. The pandemic forced Bassi to shift production for the entertainment industry to the production of “street-style wigs”, which are used as fashion accessories. Post-pandemic, the focus has shifted back to the film industry. (Janine Gloor, “[How Swiss-designed wigs make their way from Bali to the big screen](#),” *Swissinfo.ch*, 30 March 2024)

THE NETHERLANDS

Dutch authorities detain Greta Thunberg at a protest against fuel subsidies

On 06 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg was arrested by the Dutch authorities twice as she joined demonstrators from Extinction Rebellion to block a motorway in Hague. According to a spokesperson of Extinction Rebellion, “Thunberg had been held for several hours before being released

in the evening.” The demonstration was against the Dutch fossil fuel subsidies. Dutch police announced that more than 400 people were arrested as they ignored the orders to disperse. Extinction Rebellion stated its intention to continue the protests until the government stops using public funds to subsidise the gas and oil industry. The protests come before the debate in the Dutch government on fossil fuel subsidies which is scheduled in June. (“Climate activist Greta Thunberg arrested in the Netherlands,” *Deutsche Welle*, 06 April 2024)

THE UK

Rwanda Policy a threat to Ireland’s immigration issues says Irish Prime Minister

On 25 April, Simon Harris, Irish Prime Minister asked Helen McEntee, Ireland’s justice minister to bring legislation to cabinet to enable asylum seekers to be sent back to the UK. After the MPs and peers approved of the UK’s Rwanda Policy and laws that ensured the safety of third world countries, over 500 migrants crossed the English Channel in two days. McEntee testified before a committee of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) earlier this week that there has been an increase in the number of individuals entering the Republic of Ireland from Northern Ireland across the land border, accounting for 80 per cent of all asylum seekers. Micheál Martin Deputy Prime Minister criticised UK’s policy as it raises fears among the migrants and thereby leading to immigration problems in the neighbouring states. As a response to this, Ms. McEntee stated that “My focus as minister for justice is making sure that we have an effective immigration structure and system.”

Ireland government projects a budget surplus

On 24 April, the *BBC* reported on Irish government statement on its expectation for a budget surplus of more than EUR eight billion in 2024. This equals three per cent of the national income and will be a continuous third year for the government to have acquired more in tax than spending.

Ireland is currently placed in an unusual position to “run surpluses” as it began processing its sovereign wealth fund through windfall tax. The objective to launch a fund with assets worth EUR 100 billion by mid of 2030s. According to Michael McGrath, Irish Finance Minister: “I would caution that this surplus is heavily dependent on volatile 'windfall' corporate tax receipts which have grown from €4bn to €24bn in the space of a decade.” (John Campbell, “Ireland forecasts budget surplus of more than €8bn,” *BBC*, 24 April 2024)

Parliament approves Rwanda plan to deport migrants

On 22 April, the UK Parliament approved the Rwanda plan to deport asylum seekers after a continued debate between the upper and lower houses. The bill skipped its first hurdle with no interventions from the House of Lords which earlier mandated modifications. Ahead of the vote, Rishi Sunak, UK Prime Minister assured to begin the deportation flights in the coming months. He added: “We are ready, plans are in place and these flights will go, come what may.” The vote held was a response of the UK government to the ruling given by the Supreme Court which found the deportation to Rwanda as a violation of international law. The bill would be a request to the court to reconsider Rwanda as a safe country and to allow UK the power to ignore the international and human rights law. In a statement, Council of Europe called: “The UK to abandon the plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, calling it an “infringement of judicial independence.” (“Rwanda plan: UK Parliament passes migrant deportation bill,” *Deutsche Welle*, 22 April 2024)

German Government urges UK to step up its defence

On 23 April, *Politico* reported on German government demand to the UK to increase its defence spending. The statement comes as Sunak is scheduled to visit Germany. Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor and Sunak are expected to discuss on defence spending after years of “real-term cuts.” The push for military spending has become intense since

war in Ukraine and the NATO defence target was raised to two per cent. Till now Sunak has assured to boost the defence spending GDP to 2.5 per cent which is GBP nine billion but there has been no plan proposed to achieve this yet. Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, chair of the Bundestag's defence committee said: "If Europe wants to be resilient on its own, the advance of Russia must also be stopped by Europe together with our partners. We need the British on board for this and with significantly more commitment." (Stefan Boscia, Gordon Repinski, Esther Webber, Henry Donovan And James Angelos, "Germany urges UK's Rishi Sunak to spend big on defense," *Politico*, 23 April 2024)

Two men charged spying for China

On 22 April, UK's Crown Prosecution Service reported on charging two men who were found breaking the UK's Official Secrets Act. According to the report, the two were doing on behalf of China and will now be charged for providing prejudicial information and will appear at Westminster Magistrates Court on 26 April. Dominic Murphy, Head of the Counter Terrorism Command at the Metropolitan Police said: "This has been an extremely complex investigation into what are very serious allegations." This has raised alert on Chinese spying activity and the UK government stated that it was being targeted by the Chinese intelligence. ("UK police charge 2 with spying for China," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 April 2024)

Sunak faces opposition on historic tobacco ban bill

On 16 April, according to *Politico*, Rishi Sunak, the UK's Prime Minister, wishes to ban smoking among British youngsters, passing the legislation in the House of Commons. Sunak expressed his plan last year, recommending a phased, generational ban on smoking, which, if passed, will become the first of its kind in the world. The legislation is facing considerable opposition from Sunak's own party, who claim that Sunak is trying to build his legacy amid a failing image. The policy will make the sale of tobacco products illegal to those born

after 01 January 2009. During the vote, 59 Tory MPs voted against the legislation citing "significant concerns", and at least six members in Sunak's government voted against his proposition, with more than 100 Tory abstentions. Sunak's predecessors opposed the bill, with former Prime Minister Liz Truss calling it "un-Conservative" and Boris Johnson posing a rhetorical question "The party of Winston Churchill wants to ban [cigars]?" (Andrew McDonald, "Britain's Conservatives just agreed the world's toughest smoking ban. Tory MPs hate it", 16 April 2024)

Separate UK and EU systems for carbon-heavy import worry Northern Ireland

On 07 April, Northern Ireland is in another post-Brexit row, as the EU and the UK decided to develop separate systems to tax carbon-heavy imports. According to experts for Northern Ireland, this would disrupt trade, increase business costs and could even lead to job losses. The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), is the import tax to be levied on carbon-intensive products from high-carbon emitting industries such as steel and cement. EU's CBAM is presently in its transitional phase and will be fully implemented by 2026, whereas the UK government plans to introduce its CBAM only in 2027. Currently, the carbon price rates for the EU stand at 56 GBP, for the UK it stands at 40 GBP. EU fears that unless the UK implements its own CBAM aligning the prices with the EU, post-2026, Northern Ireland could become the point of entry for high-carbon goods to enter the EU bloc by paying a lower carbon tax, or no tax at all. EU might aim to extend and apply its carbon tax to the rest of the UK and Northern Ireland, which means that the latter would have to face compliance costs in its trade of carbon goods with the Republic of Ireland.

Government justifies quitting EU's Erasmus+ student exchange scheme

On 03 April, according to *Politico*, the UK quit the EU's Erasmus+ student exchange scheme as the membership was too expensive to justify, owing to Brit's poor foreign language skills. Nick Leake, a

diplomat at the UK mission stated that lesser participation by the UK students in the scheme owing to language learning had forced the UK to pay EUR 300 million more each year into the program, than what it receives back. Although youth organisations have pushed the UK to rejoin the scheme, Leake's statement at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) meeting in Brussels stated "The interests of the U.K. taxpayer is why we decided not to participate in Erasmus+." Maurizio Cuttin, British Youth Council's ambassador to the European Youth Forum expressed the decision as a "devastating loss of exchange and educational opportunities for young people on both sides of the Channel." Turing, UK's study abroad scheme, was indicated to not have achieved its target of reaching 35,000 students but only reached 20,000 students. 80 per cent of universities also complained about the difficulties in the application process. (Jon Stone, "[UK quit Erasmus because of Brits' poor language skills](#)," *Politico*, 03 April 2024)

Bidding begins for government funds for zero-emission international shipping routes

On 05 April, Lord Davies UK's Maritime Minister began the bidding process to reach the 1.5 million GBP required to develop zero-emission international shipping routes from the UK. The project is aimed at providing cleaner journeys for passengers and goods, generating employment and economic growth. The latest round of the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition aims at the creation of 'green corridors', the development of infrastructure and requirements such as green fuel and charging systems. The project would connect the shipping routes between the UK and Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and Ireland. Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition was first announced in 2023 during London International Shipping Week. Ireland and the Netherlands will provide funding for their organisations to run the project, whereas Denmark and Norway will contribute through access to information and facilitate collaboration. ("[New green international shipping routes](#)

[backed by government funding](#)," *Government of UK*, 05 April 2024)

Supreme Court justices call ban on weapon sale to Israel

On 04 April, the *BBC* reported on three former Supreme Court justices move to join with 600 legal experts to demand the UK government to end the sale of weapons to Israel. According to the report, the UK sales is lower compared to Germany, Italy and the US but the justices argue that a ban would add diplomatic and political pressure on Israel. This is mainly due to the conflict in Gaza is under international scrutiny. Since 2008, the UK has licenced arms to Israel for GBP 574 million but such export licences cannot be granted if the weapons were used in violation of international humanitarian law. (Emily Atkinson & Adam Durbin, "[Arms sales to Israel: Top judges urge UK to halt weapons trade](#)," *BBC*, 04 April 2024)

Polling indicates less than 100 seats for Conservatives in 2024 elections

On 31 March, *Politico* reported the results of polling which indicated less than 100 seats, approximately 98 seats for the Conservative Party led by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. According to the *Sunday Times* report, the Labour Party led by Keir Starmer is predicted to have a landslide victory and gain 468 seats. According to the report, Nigel Farage's ring-wing populist party, Reform UK is predicted to win seven seats, with 8.5 per cent, and Liberal Democrats Party would win 22 seats. In Wales and Scotland, it was revealed that the Conservative Party would win zero seats. The poll was conducted by the Survation agency, on behalf of the Best for Britain campaign considering a sample of 15,000 voters. ("[UK Conservatives polling below 100 seats, survey shows](#)," *Politico*, 31 March 2024)

TURKEY

Erdogan visit to Iraq seeks to ban PKK presence; Aims to forge cooperation

On 22 April, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's President visited Iraq after 2011.

The reason behind the visit is to forge cooperation to fight against Kurdish PKK militants in northern Iraq. The relations between both are fluctuating since Turkey's cross-border operations targeting PKK militants which Iraq observes as violations of sovereignty. In the joint conference with Shia al-Sudani, Iraqi Prime Minister, Erdogan affirmed to end the problem of the PKK presence in Iraq soon. Both leaders also agreed on a "Joint approach to security challenges" and a "strategic agreement" to source water. They also signed a framework agreement to collaborate on security, energy and economic cooperation. (["Turkey's Erdogan makes rare visit to Iraq," Deutsche Welle, 22 April 2024](#))

Opposition Mayor Imamolu secures elections in Istanbul and Ankara

On 01 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Mayor Ekrem Imamolu of the Republican People's Party (CHP) won the Municipal elections against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). According to Anadolu, the state news agency, CHP secured victory in the capital city of Ankara and other major cities such as Izmir and Antalya. According to Berk Esen, a political scientist at Sabanci University remarked this election was "The biggest election defeat of Erdogan's career." According to the preliminary election results, the CHP was reported to be ahead of its rival AKP in 36 provinces out of 81. CHP accumulated 37.32 per cent of the votes whereas AKP had 35.78 per cent. Post elections defeat, Erdogan remarked: "We will honestly assess the results of the elections ... and courageously exercise self-criticism." Earlier, 70-year-old Erdogan had stated that this election would be his last. Erdogan has been the Prime Minister since 2003 and held the Presidential post in 2014. (["Turkish opposition surges in local polls blow to Erdogan," Deutsche Welle, 01 April 2024](#))

Election showdown begins between President Erdoğan and Istanbul mayor Imamolu

On 31 March, *Euractiv* reported on the nationwide municipal elections, where

President Tayyip Erdoğan of the Justice and Development Party (AK) party has claimed to regain control from his rival Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamolu of the opposition People's Republican Party. The voting took place on Sunday, indicating chances for an Imamolu win as the voters expect a political change due to the inefficient government performance and economic inflation. Erdoğan aims to win Istanbul and the capital Ankara. The collapse of the opposition alliance last year, increased Erdoğan's chances for victory. However, the increased support for the Islamist New Welfare Party, for its stance against Israel and the disgruntled sentiments over the AK Party's Islamic-rooted handling of the economy also works against Erdoğan. Earlier in the 2019 elections, Erdoğan was defeated by Imamolu. (["Turkey local election: Erdoğan battles key rival," Euractiv, 31 March 2024](#))

REGIONAL

ACEA reports lag in pace of Electric car charging stations with increased electric cars

On 29 April, a report by European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) said that since 2017, sales of electric vehicles (EVs) have increased three times faster than the number of EV charging stations installed across the EU member states. According to the European Climate Law, adopted in 2021, which aims for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050, sets the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030. In a press release, ACEA Director General Sigrid de Vrie said: "We need mass-market adoption of electric cars in all EU countries to achieve Europe's ambitious CO2-reduction targets." The ACEA report claims that the EU will need to install 22,000 points every week — eight times the current rate. The study also stated that the development of EV infrastructure was essential to encouraging more individuals to purchase electric vehicles, which is necessary to meet the European Union's 2050 carbon neutrality goal.

EU approves new reform to control excess deficit among the member states

On 23 April, the EU approved a reform on its budgetary rules which governs the spending. The negotiation has continued for two years and the rules are yet to be recognised. Latest rules mandate a limit of 60 per cent of GDP which a state cannot exceed and it also rules the public deficit to be under three per cent. Those countries having debt above 90 per cent of GDP will be demanded to decrease by one per cent every year and 0.5 per cent between 60 and 90 threshold. The new reform would make it challenging for the EU Commission to start procedures on countries with excess deficits. It will also allow member states to ask for discussion with commission if it has excessive debt. Paolo Gentiloni, EU's economy commissioner stated that the latest rules were more credible, growth oriented and flexible to implement. ("EU lawmakers approve overhaul of budget rules," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 April 2024)

IEA predicts peak in EV sales in China and Europe

On 23 April, the International Energy Agency (IEA) reported on 2024 to become a record year for sale of electric vehicles (EV) with China on the lead. It estimated 17 million car sales to occur in 2024 compared to 14 million in 2023 and one in five cars sold at the global level is expected to be an EV. Fatih Birol, IEA Director said: "The wave of investment in battery manufacturing suggests the EV supply chain is advancing to meet automakers' ambitious plans for expansion." In China the sale is expected to hit 45 per cent and 25 per cent in Europe and 11 per cent in the US. It also expects a six-fold expansion of charging networks by 2035. ("Electric cars sales expected to rise to new record in 2024," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 April 2024)

TikTok submit report for mental health risk assessment

On 23 April, TikTok company submitted its risk assessment report to the European Commission within the 24-hour deadline. The same was confirmed by the

Commission spokesperson and the assessment of the report will begin for deciding on future steps. This will involve investigation of addictiveness and mental health risks over the reward scheme offered by the company for children. Thierry Breton, European Commission said: "With an endless stream of short and fast-paced videos, TikTok offers fun and a sense of connection beyond your immediate circle." In a statement, the company stated that its rewards scheme was not provided for minors and imposes a daily limit on the videos that can be viewed to avail the reward. ("TikTok meets EU deadline over reward-to-watch feature," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 April 2024)

European Commission gives deadline for TikTok to share data on mental health risk

On 22 April, the European Commission announced a 24-hour deadline for TikTok to send the assessment of probable health risks associated with the app and on failure it will face a "daily fine." The move comes as the social media company failed to give information in early April. The TikTok Lite, a condensed version was launched in France and Spain in March and was optimised for slow internet connection and less storage. This allowed user over 18 age to earn points to later redeem as gift vouchers. According to the Commission, it probes to know the mental health risk of this scheme. On failure of the company to give the information, will be subject to fine of one per cent of its annual revenue. ("EU sets TikTok ultimatum over 'addictive' new app feature," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 April 2024)

Europe recorded the warmest in three years reports Copernicus

On 22 April, Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) released a report indicating Europe to have witnessed the peak temperature with warmest three years since 2020 and ranked 10th warmest since 2007. It found a record number of largest wildfires, severe marine heatwaves and devastating floods. According to the report, one-third of Europe experienced "high flood threshold" impacting more than 1.6 million

people. While weather and climate related events for resulted in damage of EUR 13.4 billion. Celeste Saulo, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said: "The climate crisis is the biggest challenge of our generation. The cost of climate action may seem high, but the cost of inaction is much higher." Due to the rising temperatures and longing heat stress, the report estimates higher risk of health conditions such as exhaustion and heatstroke. ("Copernicus report shows year of weather extremes in Europe," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 April 2024)

European Commission proposes free movement deal to the UK

On 18 April, the European Commission proposed a free movement deal to the UK to make it easy for younger people between 18 and 30 aged. The UK which already holds few schemes with non-EU countries for such movement for two-years span but it has also expressed openness to extend into other EU member countries over an EU-wide scheme. In response, the UK government stated its readiness for a country-to-country deal applied across the EU bloc while the opposition group Labour party stated that it had no plans for a "youth mobility scheme." The deal was proposed to especially reduce immigration control imposed on younger one moving between the UK and the EU. Immigration between the two decreased after the freedom of movement rules came to an end in 2021 resulting in EU citizens to apply for visa to study or work in the UK. (Paul Seddon, "EU proposes some free movement for UK young people," *BBC*, 18 April 2024)

Debate over abortion laws spark between Spain and Italy leaders

On 18 April, the *BBC* reported on emergence of a clash between Spain and Italy over Italy's right-wing coalition permitting anti-abortion groups into abortion clinics. According to the report, the lower house of the parliament is expected to pass the bill. Ana Redondo, Spain's Equality Minister sparked a debate with Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister. Redondo argued on allowing "organised harassment" in abortion clinics as "undermining a right

recognised by the law." While Meloni countered saying: "Several times I've listened to foreign ministers talk about internal Italian matters without knowing the full facts." In Italy, abortion was legalised since 1978 carried out in the first 90 days of pregnancy. This is also known as Law 194. However, access to abortion has been challenging as high number of medical professional close to 63 per cent fall under "conscientious objectors," refusing to perform the operation. (Laura Gozzi, "Spain and Italy clash over abortion laws," *BBC*, 18 April 2024)

EU Summit commences with discussions on Russia-Ukraine, Iran-Israel conflicts

On 17 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the 27 EU leaders attending the EU Summit in Brussels discussed the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, and the Iran-Israel tensions as part of Israel's war against Hamas. Originally meant to discuss the state of economic competitiveness in Europe, the two-day summit will urge "all parties (in the Middle East) to exercise utmost restraint." Josep Borrell, the EU's top diplomat, stated that the EU would consider furthering sanctions against, with French President Emmanuel Macron adding that the bloc's "duty is to expand these sanctions," particularly targeting entities involved in drone and missile production. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's President, will join the summit through video conference primarily to urge his European partners to provide the required air defence systems against Russian attacks. Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission President, stated that the bloc was facing threats from a "new league of authoritarians" for which they must take the "next leap forward" on "defence and security." ("EU summit updates: Leaders to discuss Middle East, Ukraine," *Deutsche Welle*, 17 April 2024)

EU threatens to take Germany to court if it fails to change new gas tax

On 11 April, according to *Politico*, the EU plans on taking Germany to court if it fails to call back its controversial gas law that puts a levy on all gas leaving the country.

Germany's neighbouring countries have expressed concerns that the levy violates EU law on gas storage and of the single market. Germany is using the law to plug an EUR 10 billion black hole in its budget and has so far gained EUR 1 billion. But the EU fears that the measure would drive up gas prices, thereby incentivising states to opt for cheaper Russian gas and ruin the EU's energy diversification plan. The European Commission expressed its concerns to Germany and warned that if the law wasn't taken back or the levy reduced, it would initiate an "infringement procedure" which comprises financial penalties, after enough compliance requests are offered, following which the case could be moved to court. (Victor Jack and Julia Wacket, "[EU gears up to sue Germany if it doesn't change divisive gas tax](#)", *Politico*, 11 April 2024)

EU plans to invest EUR 3.5 billion for ocean protection

On 16 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the European Union pledged EUR 3.5 billion for the protection of the world's oceans and to promote sustainability through initiatives in 2024. The initiatives were announced during the "Our Ocean" conference in Greece, by Virginijus Sinkevicius, the European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries. The conference aims to support 14 investments and one reform targeting sustainable fisheries in Portugal, Poland, Greece and Cyprus worth EUR 1.9 billion. An additional EUR 980 million will be allotted for investments against marine pollution in Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Italy and Spain, under the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility. ("[EU pledges €3.5 billion to protect world's oceans](#)", *Deutsche Welle*, 16 April 2024)

Russian threats on Finland's NATO accession appear unsuccessful

On 08 April, according to *Politico*, Russian threats over Finland's NATO accession and subsequent stationing of Russian troops on Finland's border as attempts for intimidation are likely to be unsuccessful. Russia would require a large number of troops, which it does not currently have at

its disposal if it aims to avenge Finland's NATO accession. According to Major General Pekka Tovery, former Finnish Military Intelligence Chief and Finnish Parliament member, "The Russians won't have the resources to build infrastructure, produce new heavy weaponry and recruit considerable numbers of forces to our border before the 2030s." He also indicated how Finland's operation environment requires special training and equipment which Russia lacks. Russia also struggles with mobilising recruits to fight in Ukraine and has ordered to increase in its armed forces to a total of 1.32 million by 2026 from the present 1.15 million. Given Russia's struggle with its armed forces, a threat over Finland's NATO accession does not hold real consequences, at least in the short run.

Apple revises rules in favour of music apps outside App Store after EU antitrust decision

On 06 April, according to *Politico*, Apple agreed to allow music-streaming apps within the EU to inform their users of alternatives for payment outside of the iOS App Store. Regulators of antitrust laws found that Apple's rules prevented alternative apps like Spotify from informing iOS users of alternative modes of subscriptions, often cheaper, available outside the App Store, which the EU termed as "anti-steering provisions". EU regulators called Apple's regulations "abusive", fining it with more than EUR 1.8 billion in March for potentially increasing subscription prices. While Apple earlier decided to appeal the EU's decision citing lack of "credible evidence of consumer harm", it later updated its guidelines to allow music apps to inform users of their subscription/music purchase options. In the new rules for App Store, Apple has however included a 27 per cent "commission" if the music purchase was made within seven days of accessing the link provided by the company. The EU is "currently assessing" Apple's level of compliance to its decision. (Tommaso Lecca, "[Apple allows music apps to offer payments outside App Store in the EU](#)", *Politico*, 06 April 2024)

Von der Leyen appoints senior officials to lead her campaign

On 05 April, according to *Politico*, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, picked Björn Seibert, her head of Cabinet, to lead her campaign in the bid for a second term in the position. Alexander Winterstein, a senior civil servant at the communications directorate-general of the Commission, was announced as her campaign spokesperson. Winterstein's promotion to his current position was announced during the European People's Party's gathering in Romania to endorse von der Leyen, raising questions from journalists. Eric Mamer, the Commission's spokesperson, called the promotion "totally normal". Seibert and Winterstein will be taking unpaid leave from their current positions until the elections on June 6 to work on the campaign. Von der Leyen will continue in her current role while running for re-election, albeit separating her campaign appearances with her day-to-day appearances. (Eddy Wax, Pierre Ngendakumana, "Von der Leyen picks campaign team for run at second term as EU Commission chief," 05 April 2024)

EU's measure to ease Ukrainian truckers' access sparks furor

On 02 April, according to *Politico*, the EU plans on extending the access for Ukrainian and Moldovan truckers into the bloc, causing anger among EU truckers. The earlier measure that allowed Ukrainian shippers to transport cargo into the EU didn't allow Ukrainian truckers to transport these goods within the EU. Truckers from Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania had earlier blocked road crossings connecting Ukraine with their countries as a mark of protests against EU policy. They suggested that Ukrainian truckers failed to follow the rules, and instead of the policy helping Ukraine's economy during the war, "Ukrainian trucking companies have gone into cross-trading and cabotage services, undermining EU companies" by providing services at cheaper rates, according to Jan Buczek, President of the Polish Association for International Road Carriers. The EU took

some concerns into account, suggesting to suspend the agreement given a national road transport market faces major disturbances, as a safeguard. (Jeremy van der Haegen and Wojciech Kosci, "There's a fight looming over EU plans to extend access to the bloc for Ukrainian truckers," *Politico*, 02 April 2024)

NATO Secretary General proposed a EUR 100 billion military aid to Ukraine

On 03 April, in the meeting with the NATO foreign ministers, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General proposed for a new approach toward aiding Ukraine. He pitched an idea of funding EUR 100 billion as military aid to Ukraine over five year period to shift more responsibility on NATO to gather support. He said: "We must ensure reliable and predictable security assistance to Ukraine for the long haul...so that we rely less on voluntary contributions and more on NATO commitments. Less on short-term offers and more on multi-year pledges." The statement comes as the US delays over the USD 60 billion military aid to Ukraine and Stoltenberg mentioned the delay in decision to result in consequences on the ground. On the same, ministers from Poland and Germany expressed support to the long-term support and the proposal. (Stuart Lau And Aitor Hernández-Morales, "NATO ministers' doubts, fears and eye-rolls over €100B Ukraine plan," *Politico*, 03 April 2024)

European Commission to investigate solar panel manufactures of China in Romania

On 03 April, the European Commission launched an investigation into China's solar panel manufacturers who are suspected of "undercutting local suppliers." A 110-megawatt solar farm in Romania called Enevo Group which comes under the EU modernization fund is on suspect of receiving subsidies from China, breaching EU's policy of fair competition. According to Thierry Breton, EU's Internal Market Commissioner, the investigation aims to secure Europe's economic security and competitiveness by making companies

follow the single market regulations in a competitive and fair manner. Along with the Romanian farm, Longi Green Energy Technology owned by China and subsidised by Germany has also come under enquiry. In the investigation, the Commission will examine the economic operators to find if there was any benefit drawn to attain the public contracts in the EU. The market regulations of the EU mandate the companies to notify the Commission if their tender value goes up more than EUR 250 million and had also received foreign contribution close to EUR four million in last three years. ("EU investigates Chinese solar firms over unfair subsidies," *Deutsche Welle*, 04 March 2024)

Eurozone inflation rates increase slower than expected

On 03 April, the annual rate of inflation of countries using Euro decreased in faster rate than predicted in March. According to the report in *Deutsche Welle* the Eurozone consumer prices increased by only 2.4 per cent less than 2.6 per cent in February. Germany recorded an annual rate of inflation in March of 2.2 per cent reduced from 2.7 per cent in February. Experts from the European Central Bank stated that despite the fluctuations in the inflation rate, they do not expect the interest rate to fall. However, increasing the interest can slow down the economic growth which makes the government to expect the ECB to declare the win over inflation soon. ("Eurozone inflation drops faster than predicted in March," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 April 2024)

Belarus and Russia develop action plan to implement scientific and technological development

On 29 March, according to *BelTA*, Belarus and Russia are developing an action plan for scientific and technological development. Valery Falkov, Russian Minister of Science and Higher Education stated the intention to continue "systemic integration work for the sake of forming the common educational space and the unified scientific and technological space of the Union State of Belarus and Russia" while acknowledging

the significant role played by the Kurchatov Institute and other academic institutes in both the countries. He also highlighted the major areas of focus such as genome research, biotechnologies, nuclear medicine, resource-saving power engineering, and high-tech agribusiness. As approved on 29 January 2024, in a session of the Supreme State Council of the Union State of Belarus and Russia in St.Petersburg, this strategy will be continued till 2035. ("Action plan in pipeline to implement Belarus-Russia R&D development strategy," *BelTA*, 29 March 2024)

Venice Commission makes recommendations to Hungary's 2023 Protection of National Sovereignty Act

On 26 March, according to *Hungary Today*, the Venice Commission's analysis of Hungary's Act stated the existing legislation is not focused on recognising the concept of national sovereignty but rather aims at combating only certain hybrid political threats. The recommendations recognised the necessity of protecting electoral processes not only from foreign interference but also from increasing efforts by national governments to deal with hybrid threats. Venice Commission recognised the increasing role played by lobbyist groups and private sponsors in manipulating the political process under the veil of campaigns geared for "strengthening democracies" or "free speech." These also distort democratic values comparatively more than external autocratic government interference. The Commission's fears over the Office for the Protection of Sovereignty encroaching on constitutional bodies were met with arguments that the Office only carries monitoring and advisory powers. The Venice Commission also indicated their fears of possible politicisation of the Office and the broad scope of the law, which is not just limited to "electoral context." The Commission also highlighted how the Office would be able to interfere with the privacy without any review mechanism. (Dániel Deme, "The Venice Commission is ill-equipped to recognise the current hybrid

political threats," *Hungary Today*, 26 March 2024)

INTERNATIONAL

European Commission to investigation Chinese medical device procurement

On 23 April, the European Commission announced launch of an investigation into Chinese "public procurement of medical devices." The move comes as concern grew over China's priority over local suppliers under "Buy China" policy. Similarly, the Commission also opened an investigation on two Chinese solar panel manufacturers under suspicion of being recipient of subsidies from Beijing. According to EU official journal, China was observed to be imposing conditions "...leading to abnormally low bids that cannot be sustained by profit-oriented companies." Such measures had imposed significant disadvantage on "economic operators." In the investigation, if evidence of unfair treatment was found can result in limiting Chinese firms access to the "public procurement market." ("EU launches probe into Chinese medical procurement," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 April 2023)

Burkina Faso expels three French diplomats

On 18 April, Burkina Faso Foreign Ministry announced on expelling three French diplomats under subversive activities. The three expelled were declared "persona non grata" and asked to exit in 48 hours. According to the French government there were no evidence to expel and allegations were observed to be "unfounded." Earlier, on 01 December, four French officials were detained, charged and imprisoned under the charge of being intelligence agents. Since September 2022 coup led by Captain Ibrahim Traore, the country has distanced from France. ("Burkina Faso expels three French diplomats for 'subversive activities'," *Le Monde*, 18 April 2024)

ECHR upholds the failure of national governments to meet climate targets as violation of human rights

On 09 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, judges of the European Court of Human Rights delivered judgment on climate change cases focusing on making national governments reach their Paris Climate Agreement obligations to cut carbon emissions. One of the cases filed by Swiss Senior Women for Climate Protection, an elderly Swiss women's group stated that the government's failure to meet emissions requirements violated their human rights. The court agreed to the claim and also stated that "there had been critical gaps in the process of putting in place the relevant domestic regulatory framework." Christina Voigt, a law professor at the University of Oslo highlighted the significance of the judgement, "It's the first authoritative judgement we have from a supranational court that directly links human rights violations to insufficient or non-ambitious action on climate change." Cordelia Bahr, the Swiss association's lawyer stated that the court had recognised climate protection as a human right. However, the case filed by Portuguese youth claiming that rising temperatures were a threat to their right to life and forcing 32 European governments to take action towards climate change was dismissed. The court's dismissal was on the basis that it had no territorial jurisdiction over the mentioned countries, which comprised of EU countries, Norway, Turkey, Switzerland, UK and Russia. ("Climate: ECHR judges side with Swiss group in rights ruling," *Deutsche Welle*, 09 April 2024)

West agrees on IOC's decision to allow Russian athletes to compete in Paris Games

On 09 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the UK, France, Germany and the US accepted the plan by the International Olympic Committee to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete in the Paris Games, which is scheduled to take place in July and August. The committee's decision entailed that athletes could compete as neutrals if they did not publicly support the invasion of Ukraine and if they were not linked to the military. Earlier British had maintained that allowing Russians and Belarusians to participate in Paris was "not

credible.” Russians would be represented as neutrals, without representing their flags, national anthems or uniforms. Ukraine’s stance of boycotting the Paris Games, if the Russians participate has now been subdued. The guidelines issued by the International Olympic Committee stated that Ukrainian and Russian athletes should not shake hands or stand next to each other. (Mark Meadows, “IOC wins as top Western nations agree to Russians in Paris,” *Deutsche Welle*, 09 April 2024)

China and Russia to boost ties and Eurasian Security

On 09 April, Sergei Lavrov Russian Foreign Minister and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi held bilateral talks to “strengthen strategic cooperation” between their countries. According to the RIA Novosti news agency, both countries would “provide each other with strong support.” The meeting was held in China as Lavrov arrived for a two-day visit. They also focus on boosting their Eurasian security to counter US and Western influence and hope to include “other like-minded countries” in this dialogue. Wang stated that NATO should not limit its activities to the Asia Pacific and stated that Russia and China should “oppose hegemonism and power politics, oppose the monopoly of international affairs by a few countries.” Wang also expressed his praise for Vladimir Putin, the Russian President by stating that “China will support Russia’s stable development under the leadership of Putin.” China and Russia have been following a “no-limits” partnership since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. (“China and Russia agree to boost ties in opposition to West,” *Deutsche Welle*, 09 April 2024)

Germany’s supply of weapons to Israel accused of breaching UN genocide convention

On 09 April, the *BBC* reported on Nicaragua’s appeal to halt the sale of German weapons to Israel as Germany also faces accusations of breaching the UN genocide convention and ending the funding of the UN’s aid agency. Germany rejects the accusation and is set to present

its defence in the International Court of Justice on Tuesday. Nicaragua stated that Germany’s arms sales, mostly comprising of air defence systems and communication equipment to Israel increased tenfold in 2023 compared to 2022, amounting to USD 326.5 million. Germany had also ceased funding the UN’s Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), over allegations that some of its staff were involved in the attacks on Israel on 07 October. Along with a halt in weapons supply to Israel, Nicaragua also wants Germany to resume its funding of the aid agency. Wolfgang Buechner, a German government spokesperson dismissing these claims stated, “We note Nicaragua’s lawsuit and we deny the allegations as unjustified.”

US and EU put pressure on China to contribute funds for climate change

On 08 April, according to *Politico*, western governments increasingly mount pressure on China to commit funding for poorer countries to adapt to climate change. Beijing is not subjected to pay under the 1992 UN Climate Treaty. The Chinese taxpayers, exempted from paying for climate causes have grown wealthier over the last three decades whereas China has become the third largest contributor to climate change after the US and the EU. John Kerry, US climate envoy stated that the upcoming COP would focus largely on finance and would deal with the expansion of the donor base. The EU signalled that they are expecting “much greater transparency” from China regarding its funding to poorer nations. Although China had made a voluntary pledge of USD three billion to a China South-South Climate Cooperation Fund, however, the exact amount disbursed is still unclear. In March, foreign ministers from all EU countries stated that “all countries should contribute to the new climate finance goal according to their financial capabilities, including emerging economies.” According to the Western nations, along with China, they also expect wealthy Gulf countries to contribute to the climate causes.

Slovak Prime Minister seeks to improve ties with Vietnam

On 05 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, Robert Fico, Slovakia's Prime Minister seeks to reshape his foreign policy and plans to improve ties with Communist states like Vietnam. Although the countries were historically close, relations deteriorated after the abduction of Tr̃nh Xuan Thanh, a Vietnamese fugitive in Berlin whom Vietnamese secret service agents abducted. This was followed by the expulsion of Vietnamese diplomats from Germany. Slovak who got re-elected in October, is in his third term and is set to follow a "sovereign Slovak foreign policy." In January, Fico met with Pham Minh Chinh, the Vietnamese Prime Minister at the World Economic Forum. He also met Lubos Blaha, the deputy speaker of the Slovak National Council and Nguyen Tuan, the Vietnamese Ambassador. Fico's foreign policy has drifted away from the West, received criticism from the EU as the country vowed not to arm Ukraine, and has called for a negotiated peace between Russia and Ukraine. (David Hutt, "Vietnam-Slovakia ties to improve, thanks to new Slovak PM," *Deutsche Welle*, 05 April 2024)

EU and US pledge 290 million USD for Armenia's "resilience and growth"

On 05 April, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the EU and the US pledged to send a financial grant package of 290 million USD to Armenia over the next four years to boost "resilience and growth." The EU chief, Ursula von der Leyen, Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State and Nikol Pashinyan, the Armenian Prime Minister met in Brussels on Friday for the meeting. Von der Leyen stated that "Europe and Armenia share a long and common history and the time has come to write now a new chapter." Blinken promised that the US would provide Armenia with 65 million USD this year to boost economic support, and it would "continue to support the 100,000

ethnic Armenians displaced from the Nagorno-Karabakh region." Armenia used to observe Russia as its closest ally and has now shifted towards the West, post Moscow's failure to intervene in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Russia criticised the meeting, whereas Turkey which backs Azerbaijan stated that "the neutral approach that should be the basis for the solution of the complex problems of the region." ("EU and US pledge fresh financial support for Armenia," *Deutsche Welle*, 05 April 2024)

China invested company raises security concerns in Poland's port

On 03 April, *Politico* reported on increased security concerns over a Hong Kong based company in Poland's Gdynia port. The concerns come as its located close to a dock which was earlier involved in loading and unloading the US and NATO military aid for Ukraine. According to the Polish authorities, the Gdynia Container Terminal (GCT) has been under surveillance while it faces pressure to declare it as critical infrastructure. The GCT known for full-service and heavy-lift handling expands to 20 hectares with 600 metres in the Baltic Sea port. Therefore, the concerns are not only limited to proximity of NATO but also Polish military assets. Marek Biernacki, an MP with the Third Way party said: "The committee has prepared an opinion to the prime minister indicating that there is a lack of a legal environment for large investments that should be protected as part of critical infrastructure." If declared so, the Chinese investment company would have to report to the government on its security operations. (Jeremy Van Der Haegen And Wojciech Kość, "Chinese presence in a Polish port triggers security fears," *Politico*, 03 April 2024)

About the authors



Alka Bala

Ms Bala is an undergraduate student at the Department of International Relations, Peace and Public Policy, St. Joseph's University, Bangalore. Her research interests include social, economic and migration policies in Europe, developments in maritime security and climate change.



Padmashree Anandhan

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



Rosemary Kurian

Ms Kurian is an Undergraduate Scholar under the Department of International Relations, Peace and Public Policy at St Joseph's University, Bangalore. Her areas of interest include climate change, and populism and policy governance.

NIAS Europe Monitor

Our recent publications

<https://globalpolitics.in/europe/>

