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EU PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS



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D Suba Chandran

Assistant Editor

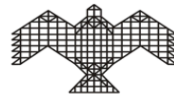
Padmashree Anandhan

Editorial Team

Shilpa Joseph

Neha Tresa George

Govind Anoop



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Europe Monitor

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WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES



Source: Reuters, CNN/Reuters, President.gov.in, European Union, ASSOCIATED PRESS/picture alliance, Institute for the Study of War

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 856 to Day 829 in four dimensions. First, The War on the Ground. Second, The Moscow View: Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: Implications of the war in Ukraine.

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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.

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ISSUE BRIEF

France: Rise of Far-right triggers political crisis

Padmashree Anandhan,
Research Associate, NIAS

Introduction

During 06 and 09 June, the tenth European Parliament elections voting was held in France. In this total, 81 members competed in the European Parliament for 720 seats. The voting was held by proportional representation with a closed list which means candidates would be elected as per their pre-stated position on the list. For example, if a party wins six seats, the first six candidates can take the seats while in the open list, a voter can vote for an individual candidate from the party's list. For 2024, there were 38 lists with 3,078 candidates battling for 81 seats.

In the held elections, the right-wing Rassemblement National (RN) won the majority with 31.4 per cent, followed by French President, Emmanuel Macron's *Besoin d'Europe* alliance, 14.6 per cent and the centre-left *Réveiller l'Europe* alliance with 13.8 per cent. As a result, Macron announced the dissolution of the National Assembly, triggering early legislative elections.

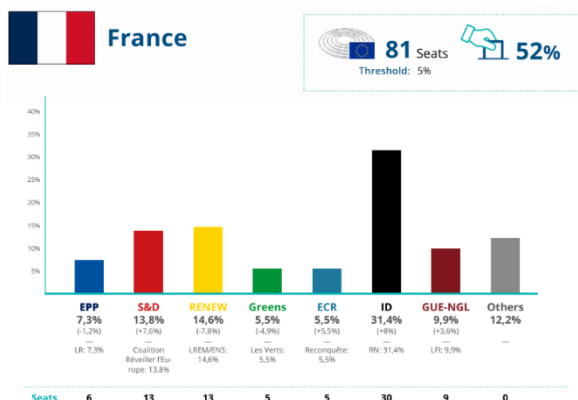


Image Source: *KAS Europe*

Profile of the lead candidates

For the major parties, most of the lead candidates were incumbent members of the Parliament, which includes:

Valérie Hayer from Renaissance). She is the President of Renew Europe in the European Parliament and joined Macron's Party in 2017 for his first presidential campaign. In the 2019 elections, she won 23 seats (22.42 per cent) out of 705 seats.

François-Xavier Bellamy from Les Républicains, joined the party in 2019. He won eight seats (8.48 per cent) in the 2019 elections which was reduced from 20 seats in the 2014 elections. He supports the movement against same-sex marriage.

Jordan Bardella representing RN, became a member of the European Parliament (MEP) in 2009. He won 23 seats (23.34 per cent) in the 2019 elections and does not support the European energy market and migration.

Raphaël Glucksmann from the Socialists-Place Publique, is the founder of Place Publique and won six (6.19 per cent) seats in the 2019 elections. His priorities include military aid to Ukraine, developing the EU defence, taxing the wealthy and phasing out fossil fuels.

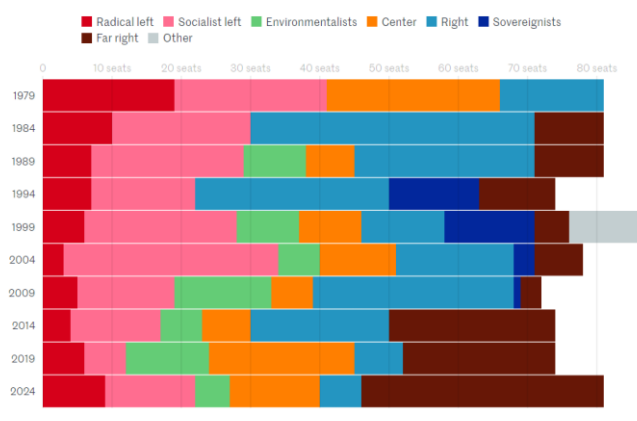
Manon Aubry from the La France Insoumise party won six (6.31 per cent) seats and aimed to create a united left wing but was denied.

Marie Toussaint from the Greens, became the MEP in 2019 with 13 seats (13.48 per cent). She is well known for suing the French state to respect climate commitments in 2019. She pledges to "save the climate and face the social emergency" and bring new models.

How they voted

The RN party polled for the first time in 93 per cent of 35,000 French communities which is 80 per cent of the parliamentary constituencies. It superseded the ruling coalition of Macron by 2:1 ratio across France and secured votes beyond the

Mediterranean coast and northern Rust belt in 7:1 ratio. Majority of votes for RN came from rural area, big cities while suburbs continued to vote for Macron’s allies, left-wing showcasing the rural-urban divide. Another key trend in the election was higher the abstention provided better result for RN. However, there was no clarity on how the higher turnout converted into voter support, but historically, many voters who chose to tactically avoid or vote against the far right had weakened.



Source: Europa.eu

RN party has traditionally outsourced in areas with lower levels of income and education. This was due to the change in its agenda which focused more on mainstream concerns such as high inflation and falling living standards which helped broaden its voter base.

Performance of major parties in the last three-year EU Parliamentary elections

Major Parties & EP seats	2019 (74)	2014 (74)	2009 (72)
Renaissance (Renew) - Centre/Liberal	21	7	6
Les Républicains (EPP) - Right wing	7	20	29
Rassemblement National (ID) - Far Right	22	24	3
Socialists - Place publique (S&D)	6	13	14
La France Insoumise (GUE/NGL) - Radical Left	6	4	5
Greens (Greens)	12	6	14

Image: The table indicates all the major parties which competed and seats won in the last three-year elections.

First, increasing voter turnout. From 2000 to 2024, the voter turnout across Europe witnessed a gradual increase from 40.6 per cent to 51.5 per cent. The increase has been possible due to the 2019 electoral reform which modified the number of constituencies. Earlier, European elections in France were previously divided into eight regional electoral constituencies, the voting system now only comprises a single national constituency. This has allowed voters to better identify candidates and the issues at stake.

Second, apart from the conversion of voter abstentions, there is a breakthrough with a clear shift of votes to far-right as the right-wing declines since 2014. The socialist remains one of the consistent parties holding more than 10 seats on average. The Greens witnessed a falling curve of votes while the Centre except for 1979 and 2019 has not outperformed.

Third, the far-right vote in the previous EU election gained but the seats lost resulted from higher unemployment, low life expectancy but the group made it through the threshold via large welfare payments.

Fourth, influence of income groups. the strengths of the far-right group rooted from town which had less than 100,000, less education levels compared to the suburbs. 40 per cent on an average was taken by RN. While Macron’s centre party earned votes from pro-business and pro-wealth policies began to diminish as the discontent of the working population spread over high tax rates.

Issues in voting

Pessimistic towards economy

A survey showed that the French are very pessimistic about the future, with 64 per cent of respondents predicting the worsening of the European economy in the coming months. Including 35 per cent indicated, it will worsen significantly. Additionally, 55 per cent of those recorded deterioration of the EU's place on the international stage. This increased by 11 points compared with the June 2022 survey. The French see the EU, as more of a strength than a weakness in scientific and technological innovation (62 per cent against 22 per cent) or "peace in Europe" (54 per cent against 31 per cent). Many were found to be sceptical about the EU's role amid economic challenges (37 per cent against 42 per cent). They neither seem hopeful about its role in the fight against discrimination or social issues.

Battle against Far-right and the pro-European flag

The Renaissance (Renew) party headed by Macron visibly criticised the far-right and called it to be incoherent in its politics. This was a similar trend after his two presidential wins and the 2019 European elections. During one of his campaign, Macron said: "Let's act, let's do, let's change our habits, and demonstrate that we can change things and people's everyday lives." Macron placed his support for the European project at the heart of Macron's political offering. Since his rise in politics in 2017. Support for the EU has long provided the sharpest contrast with the far-right. For these reasons, the president has lately doubled down on his pro-Europeanism, pushing for EU solutions to domestic policy questions, from immigration to climate to energy. Even amid a difficult domestic situation, this has been Macron's default option. This can be seen in his response to recent farmer protests where Macron pointed to the EU's common agricultural policy and trade policy as a remedy to the crisis.

Adopting a French way to address immigration

RN and several competing parties, Socialists - Place publique, La France Insoumise, and Les Républicains focused majorly on

Migration. They stressed reducing the number of immigrants and tightening rules. They pledged to make an individual solution criticising the EU's Migration Pact. One of the MEP said: "The asylum and migration pact does not allow us to provide a solution to better protect our borders."

Vouching for the youth

Promoting youth in leadership is another leading campaign of Macron's party where he showcased having a prime minister and foreign minister between the ages of 34 and 38. It was one of the youngest ever in the Fifth Republic. Apart from the Renaissance, the Left, Left-Wing and the Socialists targeted the youth and absentee voters to push their support. Valérie Hayer said: "I call upon the young people of France: I see the risk of abstention, don't let anyone decide your future for you."

Pro-Ukraine approach

Macron maintained his pro-enlargement, pro-Ukraine approach which helped in making him appear the clearest choice for those who want to vote against the far-right. He also reasserted France's support for EU enlargement which he has stressed earlier in May 2023. In his first strip to Ukraine as minister said: "...is and will remain France's priority." He affirmed the same through his visit to Germany and Poland showcasing France's interest close cooperation between Paris, Berlin, and Warsaw.

Targeting Macron and Renaissance

RN party and Le Pen during their campaigns strived to focus away from being Eurosceptic and pitched broad as a defender of family incomes, jobs and French identity. Le Pen, called Macron a president "under siege," highlighted the criticism he received from the farmers and protests against his unpopular reforms. Bardella also focused his campaign, on targeting Macron.

Broadened into mainstream concerns

The key issues focused on by the party would be crime and immigrants. The RN took a hard stance on law and order and crime rates. Housing construction and reduction of long commutes were among other issues targeting the worker community who have faced fuel price hikes

in the past two years. Having household spending power was one of the priorities listed by Bardella followed by RN pledges to slash VAT on electricity, heating oil, and petrol and the revision of 2024 budget also helped in gaining more votes.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

1. Weakening of the presidency

France along with Germany are two critical players in EU decision making. Both being plunged into internal political chaos the impasse could last for months impairing its EU equation. Macron has held the largest presence on the European front in terms of trade, industrial defence plan and striving for strategic autonomy for the EU. The loss in the EU elections would mean more distraction into domestic issues and a fragmented parliament. This is likely to disturb the stability to the French leadership and political landscape.

2. Lot of checks and balances for France and the EU

The French system is modelled in a way where the influence of the far-right can be checked off through the Senate, Macron, the French administration and the 2027 presidential elections. The decision remains between the teaming of mainstream and left parties against far-right. Although, this may be far from possible for 2027. French political landscape is expected to be divided and a hard task pushing France, the EU and the international towards a deterring trend.

This would be mainly due to the weakening of Macron's position making it challenging for France to be an "ambitious player" in the EU. Henceforth the worry in the EU will be on the impact of French politics on Council of the EU policies.

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ISSUE BRIEF

Germany: Rise of Far-Right questions the survival of the left-leaning coalition

*Neha Tresa George,
Research Assistant, NIAS*

Introduction

On 09 June, the EU election in Germany for the Members of Parliament (MEPs) took place. The voters who are either Germans or EU citizens over the age of 16 and are enrolled in the electoral register were allowed to vote. The system of postal voting is also possible for the active participation of citizens abroad. The number of Parliament Members representing Germany is 96 out of the 720 members which was the same as in the 2019 elections. Under the law prescribed in the EU, Germany follows the proportional representation system. The members are elected based on Land lists of candidates, which are nominations of parties or political associations for election in land or several Lander. Since the EU elections of 2014, there has been no restrictive clause or threshold for political parties to be elected to the European Parliament. The country does not follow the system of compulsory voting. The EU elections of 2024 were the first to be held after the Social Democratic Party (SPD) led by Olaf Scholz defeated the Christian Democrats (CDU-CSU) led by Angela Merkel.

How they voted

In the election polls, the conservative opposition Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) led by Manfred Weber gained the overall majority by achieving 30 per cent of the votes. The Far-Right Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party led by Maximilian Krah came second with 15.9 per cent votes mostly topping the eastern German states.

Meanwhile, the parties of Far-Left Social Democrats (SPD), neoliberal Free Democrats (FDP) and GRUNE (Greens) comprising the current coalition faced a bitter defeat with 13.9 per cent, 5.2 per cent and 11.9 per cent respectively. The candidates of SPD, FDP and the Greens were Katarina Barley, M A Strack Zimmerman and Terry Rientke respectively. The country's new populist party

disintegrated from DIE LINK, Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) founded by Sahra Wagenknecht attained 6.2 per cent votes. The party combines the economic policies of left-wing along with the cultural views of the right-wing. Germany had a historic voter turnout of 64.78 per cent.

The governing coalition of SPD, FDP and the GRUNE parties led by Olaf Scholz; the Chancellor of Germany performed poorly in the elections with the surveys showing three-quarters of Germans disappointed with the work of the government. The SPD Party of which Scholz is a part, called the election result a "bitter defeat" citing the party's worst outcome ever in more than 130 years. The three-party coalition failed to acknowledge the issues of the country as its economy, which is the biggest in Europe struggles to generate growth. Despite several demands from the opposition, Scholz had ruled out the possibility of a snap election. Steffen Hebestraat, the German spokesman said, "The election date is next fall as planned, and we plan to follow that through." Thus, Germany rejected to follow the path of France where Emmanuel Macron, the French President called immediately for a snap election due to his party's defeat. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German President warned the people against the dangers of socialism and hate by highlighting the brutality of National Socialists.

Performance in the last three EU elections

2019: In the EU elections, the majority votes was polled by the CDU/CSU party with 28.9 per cent although they lost five seats compared to the election of 2014. The GRUNE came second securing 20.5 per cent followed by the SPD and AfD with 15.8 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. The FDP party came sixth with 5.4 per cent preceded by the DIE LINKE (The Left) which attained 5.5 per cent. The election acted as a test to

examine the support of Far-Rights in the country due to the AfD party entering the parliament with a third place in the 2017 Federal election. However, their performance did not result in any shift to the power dynamics although they gained four seats more than the previous election. The voter turnout in the country was 61.38 per cent showing a sudden increase of over 13 per cent.

2014: The elections saw the victory of CDU/CSU with 35.3 per cent of votes claiming the majority despite losing eight seats from the previous election. It was followed by the SPD party with 27.3 per cent and the GRUNE with 10.7 per cent. The fourth position was attained by the DIE LINKE party with 7.4 per cent while the AfD and FDP only got 7.1 per cent and 3.4 per cent respectively. The election marked the end of electoral threshold of 5 per cent required to be met by the parties along with the reduction of seats from 99 to 96 under the Lisbon Treaty. The previous electoral thresholds of five per cent and three per cent were rendered “unconstitutional” and “illegal” by the Constitutional court’s ruling. This gave opportunities for representation to the smaller parties. It was also the first election after the formation of AfD, a political party in the right-wing spectrum. The voter turnout for the election was 48 per cent with not much improvement from the previous election in 2009.

2009: In the elections, the CDU party won the majority with an overall share of 30 per cent votes although it lost six seats from the previous election. The party was followed by the SPD with 20.8 per cent and GRUNEN with 12 per cent. The FDP came in fourth position with 11 per cent of votes and DIE LINK in the fifth with seven per cent votes. The parties competed for 99 seats in the EU and were required to meet the five per cent election threshold. The major six parties that were represented in the national parliament or Bundestag entered the European Parliament by crossing the threshold. The voter turnout was just 43.3 per cent indicating the lower voter turnout in the case of EU elections.

Some of the trends from the last three elections;

First, CDU/CSU has been winning the election although by losing a considerable number of seats with each election. The Conservative party has maintained their majority till now.

Second, the increase in voter turnout with each election indicates awareness among German citizens of the importance of the EU elections. According to a survey conducted by the German Economic Institute (IW) in 2024, some 62 per cent of Germans considered the EU election as “important.”

Third, the GRUNE and SPD failed to maintain their position in the 2024 election as they had been gaining second or third majority till the elections in 2019. The result was the result of growing dissatisfaction among the citizens.

Issues in voting

During the election campaigns in Germany for the EU elections, there seemed to be a shift in the political landscape as the Far-Rights were expected to gain more votes. All the major parties like the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Free Democratic Party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU) launched their election campaigns in late April, before the elections.

Domestic issues were in the limelight

The governing coalition led by Olaf Scholz faced several disputes over areas in economy, social welfare and military support for Ukraine with disagreements with the three parties. Meanwhile, the ruling which declared the government's special funding plan for climate and energy programmes unlawful was still looming over the upcoming state budget of 2025. There were also disagreements amongst them over the special purpose funds whereby the SPD and Greens demand them for future investments in contrast to the Liberals deeming substantial cuts in the welfare state.

Economic environment and competitiveness

AS one of the largest economies in the EU, the economic factor and general competitiveness was a key factor in deciding the voters behaviour. With the increasing

sanctions on Moscow due to the Ukraine crisis, Germany saw an upsurge in the domestic energy prices due to investments in renewable energy infrastructure and expensive LNG imports from the United States. The structural issues faced by the country like demographic decline, a shortage of skilled labour, derailed infrastructure, ineffective digitalisation along with regulatory hurdles were detrimental to the general competitiveness of the country. In short, the declining economy of Germany affects the entire EU market.

Concern for a global security- Ukraine crisis

Most of the parties campaigned for a more robust European security and a concrete defence strategy. The conflict over the delivery of Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine was in the spotlight of the Germany's foreign policy discourse. It has also led to internal and cross-party issues as the German parties failed to reach a consensus on how to balance between strengthening Ukraine's defence capacities and at the same time avoiding a more extensive engagement. Members of the FDP party and the Greens criticised Scholz's stance on weapon deliveries citing that hesitation could also lead to possible escalation.

Political scandals caused by AfD

Although the Far-Right party were met with various political scandals concerning espionage and corruption, it topped the election results in the eastern German states

and secured their historic win of a second position in the country.

One of the remarkable things was their increased voter per cent from the young generation.

Leading candidate Maximilian Krah was under pressure as investigator due to the arrest of one of his parliamentary assistants on charges of espionage. Jian G. stands accused of a serious case of espionage on behalf of a foreign secret service as he was described by the federal prosecutor's office as an "employee of a Chinese secret service." Despite these accusations, the AfD leadership duo, Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla reaffirmed their support for Krah but indicated their plans to minimise his public presence at party rallies. Campaign posters bearing his face and details of his candidature would also be withheld.

Conclusion

The German voters opted for an alternative solution by choosing the conservatives and Far-Rights due to the growing dissatisfaction against the governing coalition of liberals and Greens. The current status-quo of Germany led by the coalition was faced with an economic decline, disagreements over migration, defence and devoid of a strong foreign policy. Germany did not opt for a snap election as demanded by the opposition.

ISSUE BRIEF

Belgium: Extremist parties see narrow win

*Vetriselvi Baskaran,
Research Assistant, NIAS*

Introduction

On 09 June, Belgium held its 10th European Parliament elections to elect the Belgian delegation. On 13 June, according to the primary results, the far-right parties made the biggest gains. Vlaams Belang (alliance with far-right Identity and Democrats, ID party) won three seats and N-VA (alliance with European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), right-wing party) won three seats.

Election process

Belgium's voting process is complex and requires citizens to vote at least three times on 09 June for the regional, national, and European Parliaments. Belgium is one of four EU member states that allows 16 and 17-year-olds to vote in the European elections and one of the few countries with compulsory attendance, meaning every eligible citizen must turn up and enter a polling booth. Non-voting citizens can face fines between EUR 40 and 80, and repeat offenders risk losing their citizenship. Voting takes place either on paper or electronically, with all polling stations in Brussels being electronic. In Wallonia, voting is always done on paper due to digital voting being considered insecure and too expensive. Votes can be cast for one or more candidates or the party itself. The top candidates are the top politicians in their party, while the last candidate is a "popular politician" who contributes to their party's success. Only parties that receive at least 5 per cent of the votes cast can form a government.

How they voted

The European Council allocated an additional seat for Belgium for 2024 in the June 2023 report, prompted by the demographic changes. This makes the total seats 22 for Belgium. This makes eight seats for the French-speaking, one for the German-speaking, and 13 for the Dutch. The seats were attributed according to the D'Hondt

method. Belgium also holds the rotating Presidency 2024.

According to the Election Europeanness, the Dutch-speaking electoral college, Vlaams Belang has an alliance with Identity and Democrats (ID) secured 22.94 per cent of votes, and the New Flemish Alliance with ECR secured 22.09 per cent votes secured three seats in the European parliament. The third strongest party is the French-speaking Movement Réformateur (MR) Party in the Wallonia region, gaining 34 per cent of the votes and increasing its representatives from two to three states.

Performance in the last three EU elections

In the 2019 European Parliament election in Belgium, the Socialist Party (PS) emerged as the top vote-getter, securing 16.6 per cent of the vote and 4 seats. The Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA) followed closely with 14.6 per cent of the vote and 3 seats. The Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams (CD&V) and Mouvement Réformateur (MR) parties also performed well, each capturing 12.3 per cent and 11.8 per cent of the vote respectively, and 3 seats each. The Green party Groen received 11.7 per cent of the vote and two seats, while the far-right Vlaams Belang (VB) party secured 11.6 per cent of the vote and three seats.

In the 2014 European Parliament election, the nationalist N-VA party dominated the results, winning 26.7 per cent of the vote and four seats. The PS came in second with 19.3 per cent of the vote and five seats, followed by the CD&V and MR parties with 15.6 per cent and 14.5 per cent of the vote respectively, each winning four seats. The Green party Groen received 5.5 per cent of the vote and one seat, while the Vlaams Belang party garnered 6.7 per cent of the vote and one seat.

The 2009 European Parliament election saw the PS emerge as the top vote-getter,

securing 19.0 per cent of the vote and four seats. The CD&V and N-VA parties tied for second place, receiving 14.4 per cent of the vote and three seats. The MR party closely followed with 14.2 per cent of the vote and three seats. The far-right Vlaams Belang party received 12.1 per cent of the vote and two seats, while the Groen party captured 7.4 per cent and two seats.

From the voting trends of the last three EU elections in Belgium, the nationalist or right-wing party N-VA has seen a significant decline in support, going from 26.7 per cent of the vote in 2014 to just 14.6 per cent in 2019. In contrast, the left-wing PS party has maintained relatively stable support over the period, ranging from 16.6 per cent to 19.3 per cent of the vote. The centre-right CD & V and MR parties have also remained competitive, though with some fluctuations in their vote share over the last three European Parliament elections in Belgium. One of the more notable trends has been the steady increase in support for the Green party Groen, which has risen from 5.5 per cent of the vote in 2014 to 11.7 per cent in 2019, however, it fell short in the 2024 elections. Meanwhile, the far-right Vlaams Belang party has seen some variation in its level of support. Still, it continues to be a significant force in Belgian politics, securing over 11 per cent of the vote in the most recent 2019 election. Overall, the political landscape in Belgium for European Parliament elections appears to be quite fragmented, with no single party dominating the results in recent years. However, this year witnessed a massive shift to the right-wing parties and the conservative-liberal MR party gained mass support.

Issues in voting

Regional differences

The European Parliament elections in Belgium have significant regional differences: Belgium is divided into three constituencies for the European Parliament elections: the Dutch-speaking constituency (13 seats), the French-speaking constituency (eight seats), and the German-speaking constituency (one seat). The Dutch-speaking constituency covers the Flanders region and Brussels voters who choose to vote for Dutch-speaking candidates. The French-

speaking constituency covers the Wallonia region and Brussels voters who choose to vote for French-speaking candidates. The German-speaking constituency covers the small German-speaking community. The constituencies use different voting systems. The Dutch and French-speaking constituencies use party-list proportional representation, while the German-speaking constituency has a single member elected through a non-proportional system. Additionally, voting is compulsory for Belgian citizens aged 16 and over, but optional for EU citizens residing in Belgium. The election campaigns were also exclusively dominated by national issues which differ in every district. These regional differences significantly resulted in the voting.

Decline of Greens

The Greens in Belgium suffered significant losses in the 2024 European Parliament elections. In the Dutch-speaking constituency, the Greens (Groen) only won one seat, down from two seats in 2019. Similarly, in the French-speaking constituency, the Greens (Ecolo) also only won one seat, down from two seats in 2019. Overall, the Belgian Greens lost a total of two seats in the European Parliament, going from four seats down to two seats. The main reasons for the Greens' decline in Belgium include a few key factors. First, the Greens were criticized for mismanaging policies, such as the "Good Move" mobility plan in Brussels, which hurt their reputation among voters. Additionally, voter priorities shifted away from climate change and environmental issues towards concerns over the cost of living and security, which worked against the Greens. The global trend of declining Green party support was also seen in Belgium, mirroring losses for Greens in other European countries like Germany and France. Finally, the personalization of politics in Belgium, with voters favoring well-known personalities like former Prime Minister Sophie Wilmès, also contributed to the Greens' decline.

Voter turnout and abstention

Belgium faced challenges with voter turnout and abstention in the 2024 European Parliament elections. Voting is compulsory

for Belgian citizens aged 16 and over, but the abstention rate appeared slightly higher compared to previous elections, amounting to up to 13 per cent. The 2019 EU elections saw 88.38 per cent voter turnout, however, it was reduced to 87.8 per cent. Since 2010, there has been a declining trend in the voter turnout rate. This compulsory voting system, combined with simultaneous national and regional elections, made Belgium a "least-likely case" to find strong effects of EU issues on voting behavior at the national level. However, the simultaneous elections divided the attention of parties, media, and voters across the different electoral levels, with national and regional issues often overshadowing European ones.

Social and economic crisis

A broader social and economic crisis influenced the 2024 European Parliament elections in Belgium. The cost-of-living crisis and concerns over rising inflation and energy prices were major issues for Belgian voters. According to the International Monetary Fund, it is estimated that the economic growth is likely to decelerate and inflation which was lower in 2023 is anticipated to pick up in 2024. The fiscal deficit would remain high and the overall deficit will go up about five and a half per cent in the upcoming years. Socially, this shifted priorities away from environmental and climate change issues, which had previously been a strength for the Greens. Security concerns, including the wars in Gaza and Ukraine and the energy crisis, also became more salient for voters compared to the 2019 elections. This dynamic worked against the Greens, whose platform was more focused on environmental and social issues.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

1. Shift to the right wing

The elections in Belgium saw a significant shift towards right-wing and nationalist parties. This was seen as a rejection of the previous centre-right coalition led by Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, whose liberal OpenVLD party lost the elections. In the southern region of Wallonia and Brussels, the liberal MR party defeated the Socialists who had a firm grip on power. This shows people's need for change and reform. The

shift in voting depicts people aligning with right-wing ideologies. The right-wing parties' campaigns were centred around aggressive social media advertising and a focus on engaging younger voters through viral, "storytelling" content achieved the anticipated success. The Belgium winners, N-VA, MR, and the VB campaigned for economic reform by shifting their focus from climate change and other interests focussed by the Greens, who faced a sharp decline.

2. Protests following the EU election results

More than 4500 people marched through Brussels protesting against the political right and racism. The demonstration was organized by the Anti-fascist Coordination of Belgium (CAB) which brought together around 20 social movements and organizations. This is the second such march in the Belgian capital denouncing the far-right since the EU elections on June 9th which saw right and far-right parties winning big. It is to show that the rise of the far-right was not "inevitable" and that it was important to confront it by building social and democratic alternatives.

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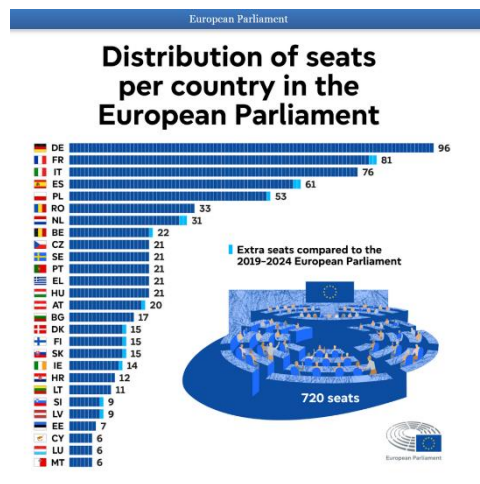
ISSUE BRIEF

Poland: Tusk's centrist coalition wins narrowly; Far-right gains ground

Ayan Datta,
Research Intern, NIAS

Introduction

On 09 June, Poland held its elections for the European Parliament. Poland is the fifth largest contributor of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). For 2024, Poland elected 53 MEPs, one more than in the 2019 elections, because the UK's seats were redistributed among EU member-states after Brexit. Poland acceded to the EU in 2003 and has held EU Parliament elections since 2004. For election purposes, the country is divided into 13 constituencies. Based on geographic trends in the past ten years' voting behaviour, these constituencies can be classified as belonging to eastern and western regions.



Since 2009 Poland's two established parties have dominated in EU elections: the right-wing Law and Justice and the centrist Civic Platform. The Law and Justice party is part of the European Conservatives (ECR) group because of their shared Euroscepticism and right-wing values. Civic Platform is aligned with the European People's Party (EPP) group at the European Parliament because of their shared centrist policies and support for European integration. Multiple minor parties play an active role in the political process, including the agrarian Polish

People's Party, left-wing parties like the Democratic Left Alliance and Labour Union, and the far-right Confederation. However,

the Polish elections reflect a strong two-party dominant system led by the

established parties, with minor parties struggling to gain ground.

Poland's National Election Commission is responsible for conducting the EU parliament elections. The voting follows a proportional representation system with open lists and preferential voting. Voters can choose specific candidates from their preferred party lists. Polish citizens over 18 years old and EU citizens over 21 residing in Poland are eligible to vote in the elections. As per EU rules, all parties are subject to a six per cent threshold for securing seats in the EU Parliament.

How they voted

Voter turnouts saw a slight drop compared to the EU 2019 elections. In 2019 Poland saw a record-high turnout of 45.7 per cent whereas in 2024 the rate reduced to 40.7 per cent. The decline in voter participation can be attributed to the lack of intense campaigning by the two major parties and apathy towards EU politics among younger voters. Indeed, only 25 per cent of the eligible voters between ages 18-29 showed up to a polling booth. However, around half of all eligible citizens above 50 cast their votes. Voter fatigue was another reason for the low turnout, as Poland completed its local elections in April.

The election revealed multiple demographic trends. According to exit polls, the Confederation, a coalition of far-right parties including Coalition for the Renewal of the

Republic (KORWiN), National Movement, and Confederation of the Polish Crown, was the most popular party among young voters. 30 per cent of Poles aged between 18-29 years supported preferred the far-right coalition, the Confederation's focus on cultural and religious nationalism, small government, opposition to established parties, and distrust of immigrants. However, voters above 30 strongly supported the two established parties. Civic Platform was massively popular among middle-aged voters, with around 30 to 40 per cent between the ages of 30 and 50 considering it their preferred choice. These voters favoured the party's focus on improving Poland's position within the EU, supporting Ukraine's efforts against Russia, and socio-economic reforms in Poland. The 50-to-59-year-old demographic was split between the right and the centre, with Civic Platform and Law and Justice enjoying 40 per cent support among this age group.

The election outcomes reaffirmed the continuing geographic divide between the East and West. Eastern Poland, with its agricultural economy and devoutly religious population, preferred the right wing. Law and Justice won 10 out of 18 seats in the eastern districts. Warsaw, and western Poland, with their urban societies and industrially advanced economies, preferred Civic Platform. The party won 15 out of the 35 seats in these two regions. The far-right Confederation gained seats from both regions. However, because of its low overall popularity, it received very few seats and could not break the geographic divide.

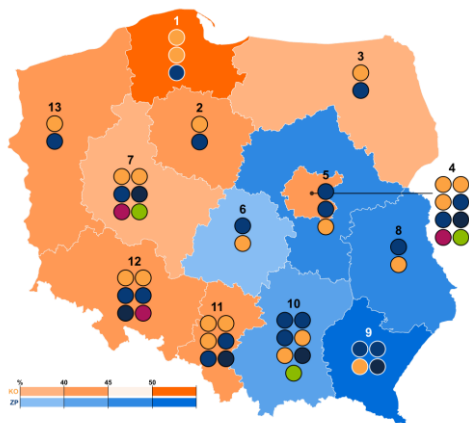


Image source: Civic Coalition (centrist) in orange. Law and Justice (right-wing) in blue.

Led by the current Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, Civic Platform won a narrow victory in the elections. The party contested as the leaders of a larger centrist coalition called the Civic Coalition. The Tusk-led coalition secured 23 of Poland's 53 seats and 37 per cent votes. Civic Coalition's victory reflected growing support among the electorate for the rule of law, strong ties with the EU, and liberal economic policies. Law and Justice, led by *Jarosław Kaczyński*, followed closely behind with 20 seats and 36.16 per cent votes. This was the first time in ten years that Law and Justice did not win a Polish election. The party's vote share fell by over ten per cent compared to the previous EU Parliament elections of 2019. The decline in Law and Justice's popularity reflected growing disapproval among the electorate for their Eurosceptic vision and conservative policies on social issues like abortion.

The Left alliance secured three seats and a 12 per cent vote share among the minor parties. The far-right coalition Confederation was the surprise performer in the polls. Led by Janusz Ryszard Korwin-Mikke, Confederation crossed the six per cent threshold for the first time since its founding. The alliance secured three seats and 12.1 per cent votes. Although it received significant support from the youth, it failed to upset the country's two-party dominant system because of the low participation of young voters. Confederation gained ground, but there was no far-right shift among the electorate.

Civic Coalition strengthened the EPP with 23 seats at the level of European parliament groups, while Law and Justice strengthened the ECR with 20 seats. The three Left MEPs aligned with the S&D Group, reflecting their shared socialist values.

Performance of major parties in the past three EU parliament elections

2009: Civic Platform wins comfortably, Law and Justice's Eurosceptic agenda fails

In the past ten years, EU parliament elections in Poland reflected varying levels of participation from the electorate and reinforced the dominance of established parties. The 2009 elections saw a low voter turnout of 24.5 per cent. Civic Platform

secured a comfortable victory, winning 25 out of Poland's 51 seats and 44 per cent votes. Poland joined the EU in 2003, and this was the country's second EU parliament election. Victory for Civic Platform reflected support for Poland's growing role within the EU and the economic benefits of EU membership. The results also reflected the public's disapproval of Law and Justice's Euroscepticism, its claims about the loss of Poland's sovereignty, and its criticism of the EU's economic policies. Law and Justice had a distant second-place finish, with 15 seats and a 27 per cent vote share. The left-wing coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance and Labour Union secured third place with seven seats and 12.34 per cent votes. The agrarian Polish People's Party, which mainly represented the interests of the eastern region's agrarian classes, finished fourth with three seats and 7.04 per cent. The party's popularity reflected concerns among Polish farmers about the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and debates on agricultural subsidies.

Out of Poland's 52 seats in the European Parliament, the EPP group secured 28. Of these, 25 were from Civic Platform and three from the Polish People's Party. The ECR group secured 15 seats, all from Law and Justice. The S&D group secured seven seats from the Democratic Left Alliance-Labour Union coalition.

2014: Civic Platform wins narrowly; electorate divided on integration, Ukraine conflict and rule of law

In the 2014 elections, the trend of low voter turnouts continued. Only 23 per cent of the eligible voters participated. Civic Platform emerged victorious by a narrow margin, securing 19 out of Poland's 52 seats and 32 per cent votes. Close behind was Law and Justice, with 18 seats and 31 per cent votes. The results reflected a divide within the electorate on several issues, including European integration versus Euroscepticism, the conflict in Ukraine, energy dependency on Russia, and judicial independence in Poland. The leftist coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance and Labour Union finished third with five seats and 9.44 per cent votes. The Polish People's Party secured

four seats and 6.80 per cent votes, narrowly crossing the seat threshold.

Out of Poland's 52 seats in the EU parliament, the EPP group secured 23. Of these, 19 seats were from Civic Platform and four from the Polish People's Party. The ECR group secured 22 seats: 18 from Law and Justice and one from a minor far-right party, Right Wing of the Republic. The Democratic Left Alliance-Labour Union coalition strengthened the S&D group with five seats.

2019: United Right coalition secures massive victory amid record-high turnout

In 2019, EU Parliament elections in Poland saw a record-high voter turnout of 45.7 per cent, indicating increased electorate engagement with EU issues and institutions. Law and Justice contested the election as part of a coalition of right-wing parties called the United Right. The right-wing alliance secured a decisive victory, securing 27 out of 52 seats and a 45 per cent vote share. This was the highest vote share of any party in Polish elections. The same year, the European Commission launched infringement procedures against Poland on the rule of law issue. The right-wing's victory reflected concerns among the electorate about the EU's role in Poland's domestic politics. Civic Platform finished second with 12 seats and around 21 per cent of the votes. The results once again reflected the divide between pro-European and Eurosceptic voters. The leftist coalition, New Left finished third with five seats.

The United Right contributed to the ECR group's tally of 27 out of 52 seats from Poland. The EPP group secured 16 seats: 12 from Civic Platform and five from minor right-wing parties. The S&D group gained seven seats: five from the New Left and two from the leftist coalition party, the Democratic Left Alliance-Labour Union.

In ten years of EU Parliament elections in Poland (2009, 2014, and 2019), certain common trends emerged. Voter turnout remained low (below 50 per cent) in all three elections. In 2009 and 2014, the turnout was around 23 per cent. However, in 2019, voter participation saw a significant to 45.70 per cent, indicating heightened

engagement. Civic Platform and Law and Justice remained the dominant parties. While the Civic Coalition led the polls in 2009 and 2014, Law and Justice dominated in 2019. Minor parties, like the Democratic Left Alliance-Labour Union coalition and the Polish People's parties, remained a consistent, though relatively small, presence.

Issues in voting

Immigration and border control

The 2024 European Parliament elections in Poland involved multiple issues that mobilised voters. Immigration via Belarus and strengthening the Polish-Belorussian border became a pressing issue in the polls. Since 2021, Belarus and Russia have coordinated to send thousands of migrants into Poland through the Polish-Belorussian border. Migrants and Belarus border guards killed multiple Polish soldiers in skirmishes. Civic Platform and Law and Justice made migration a significant election issue. Since Tusk became Poland's Prime Minister in December 2023, Law and Justice leaders accused him of being soft on immigration. Law and Justice leaders argued that after coming to power, Tusk would introduce an EU-backed system to relocate illegal migrants in Europe and normalise the migrants' legal status.

However, during his EU election campaign, Tusk and his party prioritised immigration and border controls. In January 2024, Tusk rejected the EU's relocation scheme, stating, "The position of the Polish government [is that] we will not accept any forced mechanism... We will not accept a single migrant." In February 2024, Prime Minister Tusk stated the "brutal truth" that "the survival of Western civilisation" depended on stopping "uncontrolled migration." He added "The first and most important task of the Polish state when it comes to the situation at the border is to protect the border, including from illegal migration." Tusk promised to "fill the gaps and holes" in border policy created by the preceding Law and Justice government, including corruption in the country's visa regime and the dysfunctional border fence. Tusk's emphasis on controlling migration expanded his support base beyond traditional centrist voters. According to polling data from

Politico, Tusk's uncompromising stance on immigration might have gained him the support of right-wing voters who would otherwise have voted for Law and Justice or Confederation.

The war in Ukraine

Following Russia's invasion in 2022, the war in Ukraine became a crucial issue in the elections. The Law and Justice Party initially supported Ukraine's right to self-defence and supplied it with weapons and humanitarian aid. However, in September 2023, Poland's Law and Justice Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki stated that Poland would not provide any further weapons to Ukraine. However, the Ukrainian cause was popular in Poland. According to the European Commission, 60 per cent of Poles support Ukrainian refugees. Around 70 per cent support closer ties between NATO and Ukraine. Tusk tapped into the pro-Ukrainian sentiment ignored by Law and Justice and resumed military engagement with Ukraine. In January 2024, in a meeting with Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's President, he announced a defence package from Poland, plans for joint production of weapons, increased Ukraine's capabilities using "Polish equipment and weapons systems", and a loan.

Tusk also appealed to Poles who were afraid of Russian aggression. According to the European Commission, 50 per cent of Poles think Russia would attack Poland without provocation. In May 2024, Tusk announced a USD 2.5 billion project to reinforce Poland's borders with Russia and Belarus. According to the *BBC*, Tusk appealed to Poles who feared Russian aggression and supported Ukraine. Such appeals together with his firm position on migration from Belarus, explain why Civic Platform's vote share increased from 21 per cent in 2019 to over 37 per cent in 2024.

Abortion rights

The issue of abortion rights was significant in the elections, particularly for liberal-minded voters. Poland has stringent abortion laws. Under Poland's previous Law and Justice government, abortions were allowed only if the pregnancy resulted from a crime like rape or incest or if the mother's

life or health were threatened. As part of his campaign, in January 2024, Tusk promised to relax Poland's abortion laws and give women the right to safe abortion until the 12th week of pregnancy. Abortion rights were important for liberal voters who protested the Law and Justice Party abortion policies multiple times. Tusk's promises helped him gain young and liberal voters, contributing to his vote share.

Judicial independence and the rule of law

Poland's dispute with the EU over judicial reforms and the rule of law also influenced public opinion in the run-up to the elections, though to a lesser extent than the previously stated issues. In 2016, the then-ruling Law and Justice government introduced reforms to the country's highest constitutional court, called the Constitutional Tribunal, giving the government powers to appoint members of the Tribunal. In 2021, the European Commission took action against the Polish government by starting an infringement procedure against it for violating the rule of law and froze EU funds to Poland. Before the 2024 elections, Law and Justice defended the reforms and mobilised their supporters by framing the dispute as an attempt by the EU to interfere in Polish politics. However, Civic Platform opposed the judicial reforms, emphasising the need to align Polish laws with EU standards and uphold judicial independence. After coming to power in 2023, Tusk's party passed a bill to reverse the reforms. In 2024, the Commission released 137 billion Euros of frozen funds for Poland. Tusk's decision strengthened his support among pro-European and liberal voters by emphasising his commitment to integration with the EU.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

1. First, the parties' agendas in the EU parliament

Two major parties will highlight different issues in the EU Parliament. As part of the centrist EPP, Civic Platform is expected to advance policies that strengthen Poland's integration into the EU regimes. The party will push for greater economic integration among member states by supporting the EU single market and tax policy harmonisation. It will promote liberal economic policies encouraging entrepreneurship, innovation,

and competitiveness. Given Tusk's efforts to resolve the rule of law dispute, his party is likely to promote judicial independence and greater monitoring of EU treaty violations, ensuring that member states align their national laws with EU standards.

As the runners-up of the 2024 elections, Law and Justice will use its position in the EU parliament to strengthen and expand its support base. As part of the ECR, it will advance policies that will help it regain its influence among conservative and Eurosceptic voters. In the EU Parliament, Law and Justice will oppose policies for EU integration and advance member states' national sovereignty. It will advocate for a limited role of the EU in member-states' domestic affairs. The party will also promote social policies that encourage traditional family values and oppose liberal policies on abortion and LGBTQ+ rights.

2. The Poland-EU equation in the coming years

In the near future, Poland's relationship with the EU will likely be marked by multiple trends and policy directions. With Civic Platform Leader Tusk as Prime Minister, the coming years will be a marked departure from the conflictual state of EU-Poland ties during the previous Law and Justice government's tenure. As part of the EPP, Tusk's party will foster Poland's integration into the EU's political and economic regimes. He is expected to align Poland's domestic policies more closely with EU standards. Poland will move closer to accepting the European Green Deal and gradually transition from fossil fuels. In foreign policy, Tusk's party will support the EU's stance on assisting Ukraine through military, economic, and diplomatic means. However, the Civic coalition will be reluctant to support the EU's directives on migration, especially the EU's refugee relocation plan, which Tusk will resist because Poland conflicts with Belarus over the latter's weaponisation of immigrants.

3. The effects of the new EU-Poland equation on domestic affairs

The Civic Coalition's rise will lead to greater EU-Poland alignment and cooperation. However, given that its victory margin was

extremely thin, the party will balance the aspirations of its pro-European support base with those of the conservative and Eurosceptic voters. Civic Platform will manage EU funds carefully, considering the political divide between the eastern and western regions. On agricultural policy, the party will have to balance its preference for free trade and the EU's Common Agricultural Policy with Polish farmers' preferences for state protection and subsidies. With Law and Justice continuing as a significant opposition force, Civic Platform will continue facing internal debates on EU-related issues, particularly of national sovereignty versus EU integration.

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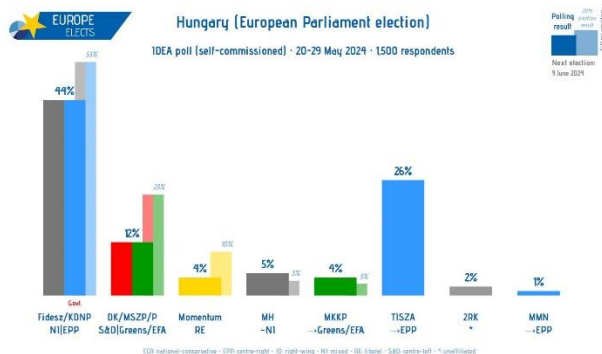
ISSUE BRIEF

Hungary: Right Wing wins; Support shifts to Centre

Govind Anoop,
Undergraduate Student, St Joseph's University, Bangalore

Introduction

The incumbent Viktor Orban's Fidesz party won the overall vote with 11 seats out of 21 but only secured 44 per cent of the votes, an eight per cent drop from the 52 per cent they earned in the 2014 and 2019 European Parliament elections. This was the worst result for the 5-time Hungarian leader, who has been incumbent since the country joined the EU and the result comes just weeks before the country is set to take their 6-month EU Presidency from 1 July. The result comes along with the rise of an alternate leader in Peter Magyar, whose centre-right Tisza secured almost 30 per cent of the votes, allowing them to be the leading opposition party with a vote share three times bigger than the previous opposition alliance. This secures Magyar's position as a direct competitor and alternative to Orban's reign in the 2026 Hungarian parliamentary elections. The loss in support comes in contrast with the victories secured by Orban's ideological allies Giorgia Meloni of Italy and Marine Le Pen of France.



Performance of major parties in the past two EU parliament elections

Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz)

The party is led by its five-time Prime Minister Viktor Orban and follows right-wing, nationalist and populist policies and has been described as Eurosceptic as seen in its departure from the European People's Party group in 2021. As defined by the duration of his leadership, Orban has

maintained a strong hold on Hungary's political landscape. In the 2014 European Parliament elections, they secured 12 seats and 51.48 per cent of the vote and in the 2019 parliamentary elections, they secured another majority with 13 out of 22 seats and 52.56 per cent of the votes. They continued to dominate the political scene through to 2023, leveraging their control over media and state resources, to the point that studies have identified that Fidesz is in control of 70-80 per cent of the media in Hungary. While popular among many for their nationalist policies and economic stability, Fidesz faced criticism for perceived corruption and autocratic governance especially since COVID-19. As a result of this and Magyar's rise as an alternate, while the Fidesz party did win in the 2024 elections, they lost support, only securing 11 seats and 44 per cent of the votes.

Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)

While the MSZP has various leaders, their most significant one is Bertalan Tóth. The party has positioned themselves as Center-left and social-democratic. While MSZP has been a powerhouse in Hungarian politics, it has been struggling to regain its former influence. While they managed to secure two seats and 10 per cent of the votes in 2014, in the 2019 parliamentary elections, they only managed to secure a single seat with 6.68 per cent of the votes, showing a significant decline from their past strength. The party has less support from the public, as it seen as weak due to internal divisions and a lack of strong leadership, all of which result in its inability to challenge Orban and the Fidesz party as seen in its performance in 2024, where it only secured two seats and eight per cent of the votes.

Democratic Coalition (DK)

Led by Ferenc Gyurcsány (Ferens yorkshian), the Democratic Coalition (DK) has shown itself as a Center-left to left-wing, pro-European party. The party was formed in

2010 as a breakaway from the MSZP and DK has emerged as a significant opposition force. In their inaugural 2014 European Parliament elections, they secured two seats and almost 10 per cent of the votes and saw improvement in 2019, securing four out of Hungary's 21 seats and 16 per cent of the votes. They have been growing in influence, positioning themselves as a key pro-European voice in contrast with Orban's anti-EU policies. While gaining support, especially among liberal and pro-European voters, DK is also polarizing due to Gyurcsány's (yorkshan) controversial political past during his Prime Ministership from 2004-2009, where he allegedly gave false statements about the state of Hungary's economy. However, in 2024, the party only secured eight per cent of the seats and two seats, as a result of the public favouring other opposition parties.

TISZA (Respect & Freedom Party)

After breaking ties with the Fidesz party, Peter Magyar joined the relatively small Respect & Freedom party and by forming several alliances, he transformed the party into the leading opposition which pushed for anti-corruption and pro-transparency. He evidenced the various corruption scandals Orban's Government was accused of and promised himself to be a transparent and open leader. Magyar's party is newly established, so it has not yet participated in any of the European Parliamentary elections in 2024. However, seen as a fresh and promising alternative to the established parties, with the potential to attract voters dissatisfied with both the ruling party and traditional opposition, the Respect & Freedom party won seven seats and 30 per cent of the votes, emerging as a clear opposition to the dominance of the Fidesz party and Magyar positioning himself as a direct alternative to Viktor Orban.

Issues in voting

Exposure of corruption

Magyar, a former associate of Orban's reign had played the role of a whistleblower and gave details into incidents of corruption under the latter's governance, which includes his ex-wife and former Law Minister Judit Varga and former president Kaitlyn Novak's presidential pardon to

Endre Konya, who was found guilty of covering up incidents of child molestation and his testification to the case involving bribery charges against the President of the Court Bailiffs and the former Secretary of State for Justice.

Effective and Energetic campaign

Magyar orchestrated Hungary's largest anti-government demonstrations since Orban's comeback in 2010 with a furious campaign. As a former government insider, he exposed corruption within the prime minister's self-described illiberal government by focusing on scandals involving the ruling party and the economic vulnerabilities that have been present since 2020.

Anti-Governmental sentiments

Non-liberal rule from Orban since Covid-19 and a promise to move away from the current Government's perceived authoritarian leadership from Magyar swayed minds. This was especially evidenced by the State TV election debate, the first in 18 years, where Magyar promised himself as an alternate and more democratic form of leadership to the people of Hungary. Freezing of funds: In 2021, Hungary saw a majority of its EU funds frozen due to Hungary's law deficits. While 10 billion of the 30 billion was released by the European Commission, Magyar promises to regain the entirety of the funds for Hungary

Fidesz has been extremely Anti-immigration and has opposed EU's asylum friendly policies as evidenced by Orban's campaign and his clashes with the EU over the Granada Declaration. The migration policy of the Fidesz party is marked by stringent regulation and a firm opposition to immigration, especially from non-European nations. Fidesz, who prioritizes both cultural preservation and national security, has put in place measures like border fencing and stringent asylum processes to deter illegal immigration. The party advances the idea that Hungary faces challenges related to its economy, society, and security from unchecked migration. Additionally, Fidesz's policy includes advertisements that emphasize the possible risks posed by immigration, which resonates with a sizable segment of the voters in Hungary that places

a high value on cultural identity and national sovereignty. An essential component of Fidesz's political agenda has been this strategy.

Hungary's EU elections in 2024 were greatly affected by the Russia-Ukraine war, which also heightened discussions about foreign policy and national security. Concerns about regional stability were heightened by the war, which affected voter priorities toward defense and adherence to EU policy. As a result of criticism of Fidesz, the ruling party in Hungary, for its long-standing relations to Russia, opposition parties have emphasized the importance of deeper EU integration and solidarity with Ukraine. Public opinion was also influenced by the conflict's economic effects, which included inflation and disruptions to the oil supply. Consequently, there was an increase in voter participation in the elections, and the key themes influencing the electoral landscape were national security and EU ties.

However, most voters, including Fidesz supporters and opposers, want the country to stay in the EU as a member but the split comes in deciding what each voter wants from the Union. While some voters want more co-operation with EU, others wish for Hungary to establish its sovereignty and interact with the EU as a separate organisation.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

In the aftermath of the European Elections, Fidesz remains the dominant force in Hungarian politics, although facing increasing criticism and a stronger and more united opposition. The traditional left-wing parties, MSZP and DK, struggled but showing signs of resurgence, particularly DK. Meanwhile, emerging figures like Magyar and the TISZA party are beginning to disrupt the political landscape, offering new choices for voters. The Members of the European Parliament of the TISZA party have also agreed to sit with the Centre Right European People's Party, of which Orban was ejected in 2021. The demography of voters for the EU Parliamentary elections in Hungary shows a mix of ages, education levels, and socio-economic backgrounds, reflecting diverse opinions on the EU. Younger voters,

often with more progressive and pro-EU views, contrast with older voters who prioritise national sovereignty. Education plays a role, with more educated individuals typically supporting the EU, while those with lower education levels might lean towards euroscepticism. Urban areas like Budapest tend to favour pro-EU policies due to greater exposure to EU benefits, while rural regions, facing economic challenges, often support nationalist parties. Wealthier citizens, benefiting from EU integration, generally back EU membership, while economically disadvantaged groups may prefer Eurosceptic agendas. The Voting was also influenced by gender, since more and more women support social concerns that conform to EU norms. Generational political beliefs in Hungary are shaped by its history, which includes its communist past and its transition to democracy. Traditional and social media have a big influence on voter behaviour as well. In conclusion, the Hungarian electorate in 2024 illustrates the continuous discussion about Hungary's place in the EU, reflecting a complicated combination of age, education, location, socioeconomic level, gender, and historical experiences.

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ISSUE BRIEF

Immigration Backlash Fuels Far-Right Surge in Italy's EU Vote

Sayeka Ghosh,
Research Assistant, NIAS

Introduction

In the 2024 European Parliament elections in Italy, voters turned out in significant numbers, reflecting the growing importance of EU-level politics in the national consciousness. The election saw a marked shift towards right-wing and Eurosceptic parties, with immigration emerging as a central issue that galvanised the electorate. Italy's electoral system for European Parliament elections follows a proportional representation model with preferential voting. The country is divided into five constituencies: Northwest, Northeast, Centre, South, and Islands. Voters can express up to three preferences within the list of their chosen party, provided that if they express more than one preference, the choices must be for candidates of different genders. The voting process took place over two days, allowing for greater nationwide participation.

In terms of turnout, there was a notable increase compared to previous European elections. While the 2019 elections saw a turnout of 54.5 per cent, the 2024 elections witnessed a surge to approximately 62 per cent. This increase in voter participation can be attributed to factors like heightened political tensions surrounding immigration issues, growing concerns about Italy's role in the EU, and intensive campaigning by various political parties.

How they voted

The voting demographics revealed interesting patterns. There was a significant mobilisation of younger voters, particularly in the 18-30 age group, who showed increased engagement with EU-level politics. This demographic was split between far-right parties appealing to nationalist sentiments and more progressive, pro-EU parties emphasising climate change and social issues. Older voters, particularly those over 65, tended to favour more established parties, both on the centre-right and centre-left. However, there was also a noticeable

shift among this demographic towards

parties with stronger stances on immigration control.

Geographically, the vote highlighted the continuing divide between northern and southern Italy. Northern regions, particularly those with strong manufacturing and export-oriented economies, showed stronger support for right-wing and Eurosceptic parties. These parties campaigned on platforms of protecting Italian economic interests within the EU and stricter immigration controls. Southern regions, while also showing increased support for right-wing parties, maintained significant backing for centre-left and populist parties that promised to address economic disparities and unemployment through EU funding and programmes.

Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia - FdI) was led by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The party emerged as the clear winner, securing 28.5 per cent of the vote and 22 seats in the European Parliament. The party League (Lega) led by Matteo Salvini, lost some ground compared to previous elections but still managed to capture 17.8 per cent of the vote and 14 seats. Democratic Party (Partito Democratico - PD), the main centre-left opposition party received 18.2 per cent of the vote, which equals 14 seats. Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle - M5S), the anti-establishment party continued its decline, securing only 12.5 per cent of the vote and 9 seats. Forza Italia (FI), the centre-right party of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi obtained 7.2 per cent of the vote and 5 seats. The party Action-Italia Viva is the centrist coalition that received 6.8 per cent of the vote, gaining 5 seats. Green Europe (Europa Verde) also known as the environmentalist party secured 3.5 per cent of the vote and 2 seats. Other various smaller parties collectively received the remaining 5.5 per cent of the vote but did not meet the threshold for seat allocation.

Performance in the last three elections

The European Parliament elections in Italy over the past decade have witnessed significant shifts in the political landscape, reflecting changing national sentiments and broader European trends. In 2009, the political landscape was dominated by Silvio Berlusconi's People of Freedom (Pdl) party, which secured a commanding victory with 35.26 per cent of the vote. The centre-left Democratic Party (PD) trailed behind with 26.13 per cent, while the anti-immigration Northern League, then a regional party and Berlusconi's ally, performed strongly with 10.2 per cent. This election reinforced Berlusconi's political dominance and signalled growing support for right-wing policies, particularly on issues like immigration.

The 2014 election marked a dramatic reversal. The Democratic Party, under the leadership of Matteo Renzi, achieved a historic victory, securing an unprecedented 40.8 per cent of the vote. This marked the zenith of centre-left politics in recent Italian history. The anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) made its debut in European elections, capturing 21.2 per cent of the vote, reflecting growing disillusionment with traditional politics. Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the successor to the Pdl, managed to secure 16.8 per cent, while the right-wing Northern League obtained only 6.2 per cent. This election seemed to indicate a shift towards more progressive, pro-EU politics in Italy.

However, the 2019 election saw another seismic shift in Italian politics. The League rebranded as a national right-wing party under Matteo Salvini's leadership, surged to first place with 34.3 per cent of the vote, capitalising on anti-immigration sentiment and Euroscepticism. The Democratic Party, despite losing significant ground, maintained second position with 22.7 per cent. The Five Star Movement experienced a notable decline, falling to 17.1 per cent. Forza Italia continued its downward trend, securing only 8.8 per cent. Notably, the far-right Brothers of Italy party began its ascent, obtaining 6.4 per cent. This election marked a clear swing back towards right-wing, Eurosceptic politics, setting the stage for the further rise

of far-right parties in subsequent years.

This evolution over the three elections reflects the volatility of Italian politics and the broader European trend of traditional parties losing ground to more extreme or anti-establishment movements. The rise of far-right parties, particularly on the issue of immigration, has been a consistent theme, while the centre-left has struggled to maintain its once-dominant position. The decline of the Five Star Movement illustrates the challenges faced by anti-establishment parties once they enter the realm of governance. Italy's complex relationship with the European Union has remained a central theme throughout these elections, with parties across the spectrum offering varying visions of Italy's place in Europe.

Issues in voting

The 2024 European Parliament elections in Italy were characterised by various pressing issues that shaped the political discourse and influenced voter decisions. Different parties focused on specific topics to appeal to their base and attract new supporters. The complexity of these issues and their perceived impact on Italian society played a crucial role in determining the election outcome.

Immigration emerged as the dominant issue of the campaign, particularly benefiting right-wing and far-right parties. The Brothers of Italy, which secured the largest share of votes, centred its campaign on a hardline anti-immigration stance. They promised to drastically reduce incoming migration flows, arguing that uncontrolled immigration was putting a strain on Italy's social services and changing the cultural fabric of the country. The party proposed stricter border controls, faster deportation processes for illegal immigrants, and a renegotiation of EU migration policies to ensure a more equitable distribution of asylum seekers across member states.

The Lega, while no longer the leading party, maintained a strong position by focusing on similar anti-immigration rhetoric. They emphasised the need to protect Italian identity and prioritise the needs of Italian citizens over those of immigrants. Both these

parties successfully tapped into growing public concerns about integration, crime rates, and the perceived economic impact of immigration, particularly in regions experiencing high unemployment.

Economic issues and Italy's relationship with the EU formed another crucial aspect of the campaign. The ongoing debate about Italy's economic policies within the constraints of EU fiscal rules was a key focus. Right-wing parties, including the Brothers of Italy and the Lega, advocated for greater economic sovereignty and less EU interference in national fiscal policies. They promised to challenge EU budget constraints and push for policies that would prioritise Italian economic interests, even if they conflicted with EU regulations.

On the other hand, the Democratic Party and the new centrist coalition positioned themselves as responsible pro-EU voices. They emphasised the importance of Italy's place within the EU for economic stability and growth. These parties focused on reforming EU institutions from within, promising to work towards a more flexible interpretation of fiscal rules while maintaining Italy's commitment to the European project. They highlighted the benefits of EU membership, including access to the single market and EU funds for development and infrastructure projects. The issue of youth unemployment and brain drain continued to be a significant concern, particularly in southern Italy. The Five Star Movement, despite its overall decline, tried to maintain relevance by focusing on these issues. They proposed ambitious job creation programmes, investments in education and vocational training, and initiatives to encourage young Italians to stay in the country or return from abroad. The party also emphasised its commitment to fighting corruption and promoting transparency in governance, themes that had previously resonated with younger voters.

Climate change and environmental protection gained prominence in this election, particularly among urban and younger voters. Green parties and left-wing coalitions made this a central part of their campaign, proposing ambitious targets for

reducing carbon emissions, investing in renewable energy, and promoting sustainable urban development. They argued that Italy could become a leader in green technology and sustainable tourism, creating new jobs while addressing environmental concerns. This focus helped these parties to improve their performance compared to previous elections, especially in major cities and among more educated voters.

The question of national sovereignty versus European integration was a recurring theme across party lines. While right-wing parties framed this in terms of protecting Italian interests against EU overreach, pro-EU parties emphasised the need for Italy to have a strong voice within EU institutions to shape policies favourable to Italian interests. This debate touched on various aspects, from economic policy to defence and foreign affairs.

The role of Italy in EU foreign policy, particularly regarding relations with Russia and China, was another point of contention. Right-wing parties generally advocated for a more independent foreign policy, often expressing scepticism towards EU sanctions on Russia and calling for more balanced economic relations with China. Pro-EU parties, in contrast, emphasised the importance of a united European front in dealing with global powers and maintaining strong transatlantic ties.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath continued to influence the political discourse. Parties across the spectrum addressed the ongoing economic recovery, with debates focusing on how to best utilise EU recovery funds. Right-wing parties criticised the perceived inefficiencies in fund distribution and called for more national control over recovery strategies. Centre-left and centrist parties emphasised the need for continued European cooperation in health policy and economic recovery, pointing to the success of joint vaccine procurement and the establishment of the recovery fund as examples of effective EU action.

Digital transformation and technological sovereignty emerged as new themes in this

election. Parties discussed Italy's position in the growing competition between the US and China in areas like 5G networks, artificial intelligence, and data protection. There were calls for greater European autonomy in key technological sectors, with different parties offering varying approaches to achieve this goal.

The issue of democratic backsliding in some EU member states and its implications for the future of the Union also featured in the campaign. Pro-EU parties emphasised the need to protect democratic values and the rule of law across the bloc, while Eurosceptic parties framed this as unwarranted interference in national affairs.

Regional disparities within Italy, particularly the enduring North-South divide, remained a significant issue. Southern Italian voters were particularly receptive to promises of increased EU funding for infrastructure and development projects. Parties across the spectrum offered different visions for addressing these disparities, ranging from greater autonomy for prosperous northern regions to increased centralised efforts to boost the southern economy.

The ageing population and the sustainability of the pension system was another topic that resonated with older voters. Different parties proposed various reforms to address this challenge, from raising the retirement age to increasing immigration to support the workforce. Lastly, cultural and social issues played a role in the campaign, albeit to a lesser extent than economic and immigration concerns. Debates around LGBTQ+ rights, gender equality, and the role of the Catholic Church in public life helped to differentiate parties along socially conservative and progressive lines.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

The 2024 European Parliament elections in Italy, characterised by the surge of far-right parties fueled by an immigration backlash, mark a significant turning point in Italian politics. This shift reflects broader trends across Europe, where concerns about immigration, national identity, and economic insecurity have bolstered support for populist and Eurosceptic movements. The success of the Brothers of Italy, building on

the earlier rise of the League, signals a potential long-term realignment of Italian politics towards the right. However, the volatility observed in recent elections suggests that this trend is not irreversible.

Several factors will likely play crucial roles in the future elections. The ability of far-right parties to maintain their appeal beyond the immigration issue will be critical, particularly as they face the challenges of governance. The response of centre-left and moderate parties in addressing voter concerns about immigration, economic stability, and Italy's relationship with the EU will be equally important. The ongoing impact of global events, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its economic repercussions, will continue to shape voter priorities. Additionally, the evolution of the Five Star Movement's position and the potential emergence of new political forces could further alter the landscape.

Climate change and environmental issues, which gained traction in the 2024 election, may become increasingly central to future campaigns, especially among younger voters. The north-south divide within Italy and the broader question of regional disparities will likely remain significant factors. Furthermore, the EU's ability to address member states' concerns about sovereignty and economic policy will influence Italian attitudes towards European integration.

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ISSUE BRIEF

Portugal: Democrats win over socialists by a thin margin

Shilpa Joseph,
Research Intern, NIAS

Introduction

Portugal joined the EU in 1986 and has been a part of the Schengen area since 1995. Portugal covers 21 of the total 750 seats in the European Parliament (EP) for which elections occur every five years using the proportional representation method. The recent EP elections on 09 June 2024, saw 36.5 per cent of eligible voters cast their vote, which was 5.7 per cent higher than the previous year's turnout. The EP elections occurred three months after Portugal's legislative elections, which saw a narrow win for the Democratic Alliance (AD). However, in the EP elections, the Socialist Party (PS) won 8 seats with 32.1 per cent of votes against a tough fight by AD who won 7 with 31.12 per cent. The PS led by Marta Temido belongs to the Socialist and Democrats (S&D) group, whereas the AD, led by Sebastião Bugalho comes under the European People's Party (EPP). The right-wing party, Chega (CH), from the Identity and Democracy (ID) group which gained major traction before the election and won nearly 18 per cent votes in the legislative elections, did not perform as expected in the EP elections winning only two seats. However, this was their first time winning MEP seats in the parliament winning 9.79 per cent votes. Another newcomer that gathered 9.07 per cent votes to come to the fourth position was the Iniciativa Liberal (IL) party, belonging to the Renew Europe group. Two other parties including Bloco de Esquerda (BE) and the coalition, Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU) won one seat each contributing two seats in total for the GUE/NGL group. Compared to the previous election, there has been substantial changes in the list of political parties contesting and their popular support. While People-Animals-Nature (PAN) and People's Party (CDS) lost its earlier seats, new parties such as CH and IL gained momentum in 2024.

Performance of major parties in the last three-year EU Parliamentary elections

2009: The sixth EP elections, held on 07

June 2009 had a voter turnout of 36.77 per cent. The Social Democratic Party (PSD), a liberal-conservative political party won 31.7 per cent of votes and eight MEPs to become the biggest national party for the first time since 1989. The Socialist Party (PS), the social-democratic national party came second with only 26.5 per cent votes compared to the previous elections, when it won 44.5 per cent, losing five MEP seats in the parliament. The Left Bloc (BE), a left-wing populist, democratic socialist political party gained a greater foothold and won 10.7 per cent compared to 4.9 per cent in the previous elections. The other parties involved were the coalition of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Ecologist Party-The Greens (PEV) and PEV named The Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU) and The CDS – People's Party, a conservative Christian Democratic party winning two seats each. In 2009, the EPP comprised of PSD and CSD shared ten MEP seats, with eight won by the Social Democrats. The national party PS, belonging to the S&D won seven seats. The Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) won the rest of the seats sharing between the Left Bloc (BE) and the coalition (CDU).

2014: The national parties that took part included PS which won the highest share of 34.01 per cent of the votes and the Portugal Alliance (AP) which was a coalition of PSD and CDS, which came out as the second largest with 29.95 per cent. The PSD went through a sharp decline in support in the 2014 elections after it was the largest party on its own in 2009. The PS won against the coalition by a small margin of 4 per cent. The third largest was a coalition of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Ecologist Party-The Greens (PEV) named The Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU)

winning 13.71 per cent votes. In 2014, the European Council decided that 12 member states would each lose one seat, and Germany would lose three seats to accommodate Croatia's MEPs. After the reallocation, out of the 21 MEP seats in Portugal, S&D, comprising the PS, won the maximum of eight seats and the EPP, which includes the coalition (AP) won seven seats. The GUE/NGL group stood third with 4 seats shared by the national parties, Bloco de Esquerda, the Left Bloc (BE) and the CDU coalition. The liberal group, ALDE won two seats under Partido da Terra or the Earth Party (MPT).

2019: The eighth European parliamentary witnessed a 30.75 per cent voter turnout which was the least since the first elections. The PS won 35.88 per cent of votes and the PSD (now out of the coalition) came second at 23.56 per cent. The other significant national parties include the Left Bloc (BE), the CDU coalition and the CDS People's Party. The elections saw a new party, People-Animals-Nature (PAN) gaining an MEP seat with 5.1 per cent votes representing the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) group. The CDS People's Party which ran alongside PSD in the previous elections, dropped significantly to just 6.2 per cent votes by contesting as a standalone party. The 2019 election saw a surge in the number of voters after changes in the automatic registration of all Portuguese citizens, both inside and overseas, were implemented. Among the political groups in the European Parliament, the S&D won nine seats, the EPP won seven, GUE/NGL won four and the Greens/EFA won one seat.

While there is heavy contestation between the Socialists and the Democrats, there were uprisings of the far right and the far left ideas in the last few years. New parties with specific concerns have emerged but failed to last.

Issues in voting

Partido Socialista - Socialist Party (PS Portugal) highlighted a set of priorities for the elections. With a fundamental focus on the rule of law of the EU based on democratic values and fundamental rights as the cornerstone. Gender rights, reproductive

rights, and women's upliftment were major themes. The party supported migration on a humanistic stance promoted regular and safe migration channels and also welcomed refugees giving them international protection status. This was a part of the social and territorial convergence to further European integration as a part of the social cohesion policy. The third priority was developing a green, circular and digital EU. By emphasising the European Ecological Pact, the party aims to promote energy interconnection between the member states to form an Energy Union. Similarly, they campaign for the Open Strategic Autonomy of the EU by improving the economy with prosperity and competitive growth. Additionally, PS focussed on Europe's energy sovereignty and carbon neutrality by 2050. The EU will be enlarged with the accession of new candidate states such as Ukraine, Moldova, and the western Balkan states, following reforms in the EU mechanisms to adapt for a smooth transition after the inclusions. They also highlighted the EU's role in the world as a global geopolitical actor promoting multilateralism and with increased responsibility over its own defences.

Democratic Alliance: This party highlights the transatlantic bond and aims for geopolitical cooperation and commitment to NATO, with strong ties with the US, UK and Canada. The AD calls for an improved security and defence system and the strengthening of the Europol for Human resources. On migration, the party advocates for safe borders with fair and judicious admission. They aim at combatting illegal immigration networks by strengthening the EU borders, to make Portugal, a major contributor to the Frontex. International cooperation with third-world countries is also seen as a means to mitigate the migration crisis. They promote the enlargement of the EU, where the new candidates are supposed to make institutional reforms that adhere to the EU's rule of law. Portugal's inclusion into the digital single market, creation of wealth, reduction of public debt, and adoption of a European competitiveness strategy are the economic focus points. The party looks at the huge potential of the Exclusive Economic

Zone in Portugal, which is 20 times that of the continental territory and plans to improve jobs and the economy including coastal fishing.

CHEGA: The right-wing party defends an idea of Europe of Nations, emphasising national self-determination and Portuguese national interest. The party differentiated migrants with economic interests and refugees from war, calling for stringent measures to combat illegal migration into Portugal more than the other member states. Deportation of illegal immigrants, strengthening of Frontex, and adoption of strategies like the Rwanda Policy are advocated. The party strongly believes that European Defense must be complementary to NATO, however, Europe must be able to defend itself, and cannot be dependent on the United States and its calculations of national interest. They also focus on the economic exploitation of marine resources, safeguarding sustainable practices to guarantee the preservation of species and the long-term health of marine ecosystems. The rural world, agriculture, fishing, farmers

and fishermen will be the target of the revaluation in the European Parliament according to the party.

IL: The party considers Europe based on liberal values of the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, uplifting the individual, political, economic, and social freedoms and the freedom of movement. Economic growth and prosperity are planned to be achieved by rejecting bureaucracy, and European taxes, and promoting tax competition between countries and regions. Another major economic goal includes Interconnect physical infrastructure - energy, telecommunications, communication routes, logistics - and legal infrastructure on a European scale, with investments favouring PPPs. the party deals with migration and asylum policy based on liberal values. Similar to the AD, IL defends investing in Europe's greater strategic autonomy in Security & Defence. The party calls for greater growth of Portugal through the Europe framework.

EM Daily Focus*



Source: PM Office/Vivien Cher Benko/Handout via REUTERS, Kremlin.ru, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Radovan Stoklasa/TASR/AP

RUSSIA

Dagestan: Terror attacks expose Russia's vulnerabilities

By Padmashree Anandhan

In the news

On 23 June, gunfire and intense fighting took place in an Orthodox church and Jewish synagogue in central Derbent and Makhachkala, the capital of the Republic of Dagestan, with 40 held hostage. According to the Interfax media, Russian security services blocked the perpetrators using military hardware and personnel carriers. The regional interior ministry confirmed the death of an orthodox priest, 20 others, including policemen and the injury of 46 C

On the same day, TASS reported that the suspects of the attack were identified as "militants" with "foreign" weapons and members of "international terrorist organisation."

On 23 June, the Russian Investigative Committee launched an investigation into the attacks, and the Russian National Antiterrorism Committee began a counter-terrorism operation in Dagestan.

On 24 June, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, said: "Everything possible must be done to prevent even the possibility of radicalization of religious life, to exclude any forms of extremism and ethnic enmity."

On 24 June, The Washington Post reported on Russia's lawmakers blaming Ukraine and NATO for the attacks. It mentioned reports from pro-Russian media, Al-Azaim, which linked the attacks to have been carried out by the Islamic State.

Issues at large

First, a brief background to Dagestan's geography, demography and politics. The terror attacks, explosions and Russian troop special operations are not new in Dagestan. The republic is in Russia's north Caucasus on the western shores of the Caspian Sea. 95

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per cent of the population belongs to 30 ethnic groups. According to Russian government statistics, the communities are Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The region is home to most Muslims and various Islamic religious practices. Among them, Judaism is a long-stood religion with Persian-speaking Mountain Jews. The Caucasus was merged into the Russian empire during the nineteenth century alongside the rise of Muslim and Jewish resentment towards Tsarist, Soviet and Russian rule. It witnessed two Chechnya wars with Russians and separatists between 1994-1996 and 1999-2000, respectively. Following the defeat of Chechen insurgents, the Islamist group has been a persisting challenge for Russia.

Second, a profile of the recent attacks in Russia. Russia has faced terrorism for the past 30 years; the latest being the Crocus City Hall attack in March. Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) summoned 11 suspects until now to court. In the past 20 years, terrorism across Russia aggravated from small-scale to major attacks, resulting in several deaths. Several attacks have been linked to extremists and radical Islamic movements. Since 1991, Chechen radicals have carried out several outrages. In the First Chechen War, the radicals frequently took hostage. This remained the common tactic. Russia tackled it through counterattacks and arrests. Between 1995 and 2006, extremists led by Shamil Basayev carried out the biggest terrorist attacks. Russia thwarted it through special operations and the execution of the terrorists. Although terrorist attacks continued in the form of explosions in trains, streets and air and captivating hostages, Russia used its special forces and emergency operations to release the hostages. Until 2013, the terrorist attacks by Chechen group continued, killing and injuring more than 1000. The attacks and Chechen wars came to an end when Umarov (the Chechen terrorist leader who created the Caucasus Emirate Jihadist organisation) was eliminated. Later, the Islamists who disbanded from the Caucasus Emirate became part of the Islamic State.

Third, ISIS-K and Russia. The ISIS-K (Islamic State – Khorasan), formed in 2014, consists of ousted members of the Pakistani Taliban.

Its network expands to Central Asia, Russia, and Chechnya, with terrorism spreading into Iran, Turkey and Russia. The triggering factor for ISIS has been Russia's invasion of Afghanistan and Syria (Support to the Assad regime), which helped them fight steadily against ISIS.

In perspective

First, Russia's vulnerability to terrorist attacks. At the periphery, Russia fights its geopolitical war against Ukraine while the inside remains vulnerable to terrorist attacks. It's a 30-year struggle for Russia against the Chechen, followed by the ISIS group, which exposes the loopholes, making it a softer target for ISIS compared to the US or Europe. One of the possibilities could be from the entry of nationals or Russians from Central Asia, especially Tajikistan, which has been home to suspects.

Second, ISIS is against Russia's role in Middle-East and Muslim repression. On withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan, its activities increased, leaving Russia as the major player in the Middle East and the sole target for ISIS. Apart from this, Russia's strong security stance and repressive approach in Dagestan (Southern periphery) towards the Muslims after the Chechen wars also serves as another trigger.

Putin in North Korea: Signs Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

By Padmashree Anandhan and Sayeka Gosh

On 17 June, ahead of the visit Russia's President Vladimir Putin revealed the goals of his visit to North Korea. He assured to develop trade and security arrangements with North Korea avoiding west's pressure. The visit was aimed to bring "more democracy and stability to international relations." Putin also pledged to increase "people to people interaction, academic mobility and cultural exchanges" to boost confidence and mutual understanding. Putin's visit marks his first trip to North Korea after 2000. North Korea leader ahead of Putin's arrival expressed: "Full support and solidarity with the struggles of the Russian government, military and the

people.”

What is the visit about?

On 19 June, Putin's visit to Pyongyang is hailed as an occasion to reinforce the long-standing friendship and strategic partnership between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Russian Federation. Two leaders began their negotiations on issues over foreign policy and formation of a multipolar world. During the discussion, Putin revealed the preparation of a “fundamental document” which would lay groundwork for their long-term relations. The discussion lasting more than an hour ended in two leaders signing of Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. This would mean the replacement of earlier signed documents in 1961 and 2000. According to Russian presidential foreign policy aide Yury Ushakov, the new agreement aims to “promote stability in northeastern Asia” and boost military cooperation between Russia and North Korea mainly addressing the recent “security issues.” Following the signing of the document, Putin said: “This is a truly breakthrough document, reflecting the desire of the two countries not to rest on their laurels, but to raise our relations to a new qualitative level.” Whereas Kim called it “peaceful and defensive” and added: “I have no doubt that it will become a driving force in accelerating the creation of a new multipolar world.”

What are the achievements?

The main outcome of the negotiations was signing of the Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which was viewed as an exchange of assistance in a scenario of aggression against them. The treaty does not only seal strategic partnership under aggressive situation, it also opens possibility for military-technological cooperation. Putin, who warned against the “indefinite restrictions” imposed by UN Security Council on North Korea and criticised the increasing US military infrastructure in the region vowed to send weapons and strive for “a just and democratic world order.”

The treaty emphasizes on three key factors. One, tactical cooperation to maintain close communication, strengthen defence capabilities and to provide military and

other assistance “with all means” in an armed invasion. Two, conduct economic cooperation by creating favourable conditions, promotion of inter-regional investments and businesses and mutual protection of investment in line with 1996 intergovernmental agreement. Three, opting joint measures to ensure regional and global peace and stability by extending comprehensive bilateral relations.

Apart from the treaty, Russia and North Korea signed two additional agreements for construction of “a border road bridge across the Tumannaya River,” (The river flows in northeast Asia between the border of China and North Korea in the upper and runs between Russia in the lower before entering Sea of Japan). Another deal ensures cooperation in healthcare, medical education and science.

A key achievement is the symbolic victory and reaffirmation of the “invincibility and durability” of the DPRK-Russia friendship. This would be a significant achievement for North Korea, as it seeks to strengthen its military capabilities and leverage in international affairs through closer defence cooperation with Russia.

What is the Russian objective?

The visit showcased Putin’s drive to garner support from North Korea for its policies towards Ukraine invasion. Largely it highlighted gathering partner against the west and symbol against imperialist policy. At the same time, Putin referring to massive changes in Pyongyang since his visit in 2000 indicates as a potential place for infrastructure and economic collaboration.

Russia’s key interest remain in North Korea’s military assets and viewing it as a potential to develop cooperation in the fields of economy, law enforcement, security, foreign policy structures and exchange between public organisations. This could result in increased cooperation over weapons production to help Russian in return it could improve North Korea’s nuclear and missile programme.

Second, it also sets forth for long-term

Russian-Korean ties deepening relations into political, security, trade and cultural spheres.

Third, it refurbishes the (Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance) 1961 and) 2000 signed bilateral agreements with North Korea laying path to increase trade further. As per 2023, the trade turnover for Russia had increased nine times and 54 per cent growth recorded till now in 2024.

Fourth, this provides an opportunity to collaborate in the interest of the third-party actors such as China. The visit involved interaction on strategic project to modernize a railway connection involving Russian railways. This benefits China, as mass amount of coal is shipped through Khasan-Rajin railway.

Overall, in comparison to earlier existed Russia-North Korea bilateral partnership, the visit furthers the collaboration into a strategic partnership expanding into newer sectors such as agriculture, solidifies the existed agreements with critical importance given to boost to military and trade cooperation. Depending on North Korea's defence and economic ability to cope with Russian demand given the war in Ukraine and Russia's deftness to stand up in the international forum and strengthen North Korea's economy, the strategic partnership will see a breakthrough.

What is North Korea's objective?

The primary objective is to solidify their alliance and deepen cooperation across various domains, including security, military, and economic spheres. As stated by the Korean Central News Agency (KNCA) of DPRK, the significance of this visit is "reliably promoting the strategic and future-oriented development of the DPRK-Russia relations," which have endured through generations and are now entering a "new comprehensive development" phase. This objective aligns with North Korea's aspiration to challenge the existing global order and promote a "multi-polar world," where it can assert greater influence alongside major powers like Russia. While the focus is primarily on security and

strategic cooperation, the objective of the visit is to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries. This could reduce the economic strain on North Korea caused by international sanctions and aid in its pursuit of becoming a "powerful country." Additionally, by hosting a high-profile visit from the Russian president and showcasing their strengthening ties, North Korea aims to project an image of power and influence on the global stage. This visit is portrayed as an opportunity for North Korea to assert its position and challenge the existing global order, particularly in the context of its nuclear and missile programs, which have raised concerns in the West.

Overall, Putin's visit was a triumph for North Korea, providing a platform to advance its strategic objectives, bolster its military capabilities, and solidify its partnership with a major power like Russia. This visit is presented as a pivotal step towards achieving North Korea's aspirations of becoming a formidable force in the international arena while defying the pressures and sanctions imposed by the global community.

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UKRAINE

Peace Summit: 78 countries sign communique

By Govind Anoop

What happened at the summit?

Between 15-16 June, Switzerland played host to a Summit on Peace in Ukraine led by its namesake at Bürgenstock. The Summit was hosted at the request of the latter and aimed at bringing the heads of state of over 90 countries together to develop a common understanding of the steps required to be taken for a “just and lasting peace” in Ukraine. The Summit had the following goals:

First, to provide a platform to ensure dialogue that can result in a clear path toward peace in Ukraine.

Second, to result in a common understanding from all countries of the framework required to reach the previous goal.

Third, to define a roadmap that can involve both Russia and Ukraine in the process of achieving peace.

Who were the participants to the summit?

While Russia and China were not present in the summit. According to the joint communique: “We reaffirm our commitment to refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, the principles of sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all states, including Ukraine.” The signatories included all the EU member states and the United States along with nations such as Ghana, Kenya, Argentina, Colombia, the Philippines, Qatar and Guatemala.

However, there were abstentions, with major diplomatic countries such as India, South Africa and Mexico choosing not to sign the communique despite having attended the talk. They showed their reluctance by choosing to not send their premiers to the talks.

What were the conditions kept by Putin?

On 12 June, a day before the summit, Moscow revealed their peace plan, which involves Ukraine giving up large parts of their territory and giving up on their plans to join the Western military alliance NATO. In military terms, Russian President Vladimir Putin demanded a complete withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, after which he assured to order a ceasefire and begin negotiations. He also listed the lifting of Western sanctions as a condition for peace negotiations. Ukraine dismissed the terms and criticised the statement as a method to prevent “leaders and countries” from attending the Summit.

What is Ukraine's position in the Summit?

Kiev accused Moscow and Beijing of pressuring their allied nations to boycott the talks as well, which was denied by the latter. When asked about the nations choosing not to sign the statement, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy instead chose to focus on the fact that over 90 countries affirmed their support for Ukraine’s cause and peace. Zelenskyy hailed the Summit as the “First steps toward peace” and that Ukraine was already in talks with some countries to host a second peace summit.

What was the outcome of the Summit?

The Summit came to the following agreements upon conclusion:

First, the use and installation of any form of nuclear energy must be “safe, secured, safeguarded and environmentally sound”. Ukrainian power plants are to be operated under the full sovereign control of Ukraine and any threat or use of nuclear weapons in the context of the conflict is inadmissible.

Second, food Security must not be used as a weapon in any manner and Ukrainian agricultural products are to be securely and freely provided. Any attack on merchant ships in ports and along the routes of Black and Azov seas, which includes civilian ports and infrastructure has been deemed unacceptable.

Third, all Prisoners of War are to be released in an exchange which is also party to the return of the displaced and deported Ukrainian children and other Ukrainian civilians.

The United Nations charter is to serve as a basis to achieve comprehensive and permanent peace in Ukraine. While Ukraine's western allies dismissed the plan, they are convinced that Russia needs to be involved in order for progress towards peace to occur. However, the support Ukraine received at the Summit was a far cry from the 141 calling for Russian troops to leave Ukraine in March 2022 at the U.N General Assembly, showing signs of war fatigue, hesitancy to irritate Russia and a preference to maintain relations with Russia, its ally China and the Western powers that support Ukraine.

Russia deemed the Summit a sham and Putin slammed it, describing the Summit as a form of campaign for the leaders of the European Members who were affected by the recent election results and criticised them for using the conflict to gain votes. China questioned the legitimacy of the peace talks when one of the parties was absent at the conference. They also stated that due to Russia's absence, the Summit had transformed into

an echo chamber of Ukrainian support and thus, was not going to result in tangible conclusions. The premiers of Turkey and Saudi Arabia shared China's sentiments.

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War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan, Neha Tresa George and Shilpa Joseph



Source: Reuters, CNN/Reuters, President.gov.in, European Union, ASSOCIATED PRESS/picture alliance, Institute for the Study of War.

War in Ukraine: Day 856

Russian Defence Ministry claims advance in south Donetsk

War on the Ground

On 28 June, *Swissinfo.ch* reported on the exchange of ten civilians between Ukraine and Russia. Those held captive by Russia and Belarus were civilians. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President thanked the team which brought back the detainees and the Vatican. Among the exchanged, Nariman Dzhelyal, deputy head of the assembly of the ethnic Crimean Tatar community along with two eastern rite Catholic priests and two other civilians were held in charge of espionage. Dmytro Lubinets, Ukraine's Parliamentary Commissioner for human rights called the exchange as a "historic return."

On 28 June, *Militaryni* reported on the drone strike by Ukraine on an oil depot in the Tambov Oblast region of Russia. According

to Maxim Yegorov, the drone allegedly struck the oil depot in the Michurinsky municipal district of the Tambov region. The small fire caused by the attack was controlled with the help of 11 fire crews. Yegorov also added that there were zero casualties and the residents were being evacuated. Earlier, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President noted that Ukraine's Security Service had struck more than 30 Russian oil refineries, terminals and oil depots.

On 28 June, *Daily News* reported on Kyiv's attempt to push for a no-fly zone in western Ukraine by pushing the Western countries to deploy air defence systems along their borders. Oleksiy Goncharenko, a member of the Ukrainian Parliament suggested NATO to deploy air defence missiles along the borders of Poland and Romania to protect industry, energy infrastructure and civilians of western Ukraine. He also added that it would help to secure the borders of Romania

* 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.

and Poland. Dmytro Kuleba, Ukrainian Foreign Minister had earlier argued that no agreement stood between Ukraine's partners to shoot down the Russian missiles over their territory.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 28 June, the *TASS* reported on the Russian troops' advances in the south Donetsk area with tanks such as T-80BVM and T-90 Proryv tanks. According to the Ministry of the Defence of the Russian Federation: "Russian troops are now actively advancing in the south Donetsk direction almost along the entire frontline and modern tanks are playing an important role in that." It was also reported on the crews of T-80BVM and T-90 Proryv tanks of Russia's Battlegroup East destroying the Ukrainian army strongholds at Ugledar in the south Donetsk region. The tanks were constructed to operate under conditions of heavy fire. The T-80BVM was upgraded recently based on the experience of special military operations carried out in Ukraine.

On 28 June, *RT* reported on Andrey Belousov, Russian Defence Minister's order to the Russian military to prepare to counter the West engagement. This comes against the backdrop of NATO's increasing support to Ukraine in the conflict. According to the statement of the military, the increased number of drones flying over the Black Sea was observed as aerial observation. Russia views such drones as a possibility of confrontation of the West with the Russian military in the airspace. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation added that it would hold NATO members responsible for such events.

On 28 June, the *TASS* reported on the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from strategically important areas near the city of Toretsk in the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). Igor Kimakovskiy, the advisor to the head of DPR said that the Russian troops were pushing the Ukrainian army from numerous strategic locations in the Donetsk sector of frontline. He also added that the Ukrainian army lost numerous troops in that region.

On 28 June, the *TASS* reported on the attack of Ukrainian drones in the three districts of the Kursk region. They used 32 UAVs containing electronic warfare systems to attack the villages of Tyotkino, Veseloye and Khodeikovo, Zarya farmstead of the Glushkovo district, the village of Nikolayevo-Daryino of the Sudzha district, and the village of Lokot in the Rylsk district. Alexey Smirnov, Governor of the Kursk region said that 32 drones and the electronic warfare systems were destroyed on 27 June. He added that no casualties had occurred. He also noted that the attack from Ukrainian drones and shelling resulted in the damage of buildings, cars and settlements in the Korenova, Sudzha, Glushkova and Belovskoye districts.

On 28 June, *RFERL* reported on Putin's statement on the production of banned short and intermediate long-range missiles. At a session of the Security Council in Moscow, he said Russia should consider producing the missiles that were banned under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty signed between the Soviet Union and the United States in 1987. He added that decisions should be taken on where to deploy them for the sake of their security. The INF Treaty banned the production, testing, and deployment of land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres. Both countries withdrew from it in 2019, blaming each other for breaching the treaty.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 28 June, *Swissinfo.ch* reported on the reinforcement of the Belarusian border with Ukraine over a security incident. According to the border service of Belarus, the military staff had to shoot down a Quadro copter since it had illegally crossed the border to collect information about the Belarusian border infrastructure. Earlier the border service also found a homemade bomb in the same area and cited the presence of a unit of pro-Ukrainian Russian fighters in a Ukrainian region bordering Belarus. The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Belarus issued images of Belarusian Polonez multiple rocket systems deployed along the border to which Ukraine did not comment.

On 27 June, *Reuters* reported on Russia's plan to lower the level of its diplomatic relations with the West due to the increased involvement of the US in the war in Ukraine. According to Sergei Ryabkov, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister the possibility of severing relations with the West was being studied, although no decision was made. Russia considers the war as an extended struggle with the US which seemed to ignore its interests after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Moscow accused the US of the recent attacks in Crimea carried out by Ukraine with US-supplied weapons. In response, Russia carried out nuclear drills practising the launch of weapons within striking distance from the US. It also signed a mutual defence pact with North Korea earlier this month. The escalating tensions between both countries showcase hostile conditions.

On 27 June, *France24* reported on Jordan Bardella, leader of the French Far-Right National Rally party's pledge to support Ukraine and prevent a possible escalation with Russia in a televised debate for the French snap elections. During the debate with Gabriel Attal, France's Prime Minister and Olivier Faure (socialist leader), he criticised Emmanuel Macron, France's President for refusing to rule out the possibility of deployment of French troops inside Ukrainian territory. He said: "If I am prime minister tomorrow, French soldiers will not be sent to Ukraine." Bardella also stated his stance against providing longer-range missiles to Ukraine which he believes could hit Russia. Gabriel Attal indicated the possibility of deepened division in the government if the National Rally (Far-Right) wins.

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War in Ukraine: Day 855

EU signs security agreement with Ukraine

War on the Ground

On 27 June, *Ukrinform* reported on Donald Tusk, the Polish Prime Minister's statement on a security agreement with Kiev. In a statement to the Polish journalists before a meeting of the European Council, he said, "We are finalising the preparation of a security agreement with Ukraine." He also had an important meeting with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President before the European Council meeting. According to him, it was an important day for both Poland and Ukraine. He also highlighted the new priorities of EU policies which focussed on security, the fight against illegal migration, and the protection of the EU's external borders with Russia and Belarus by investing in their strengthening. He also believes these policies would pave the way for effective security of the Polish border.

On 27 June, *President of Ukraine* reported on the meeting of Zelenskyy with Gitanas Nausėda, the President of Lithuania and Kaja Kallas, the Prime Minister of Estonia. The meeting focussed on the importance of the EU's decision to open up the negotiations on Ukraine's formal accession to the bloc. They also discussed the war on the ground, defence necessities of Ukraine and the implementation of the Czech initiative to buy shells for the Ukrainian troops. Zelenskyy

cited Ukraine's need for seven additional systems to increase the air fence and long-range capabilities. Nauseda and Kallas promised their active involvement in the implementation of the Peace Formula. They also agreed to encourage other members to join the Joint Communiqué on a Peace Framework. They also discussed the NATO summit and agreed to pass decisions on a strong defence support for Ukraine.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 27 June, *RT* reported that Russian forces had targeted Ukrainian air bases that were set to equip the fighter jets supplied by the West and the US-designed F-16s. The group strike launched by Russia included long-range sea-based weapons, the Kinzhal hypersonic missile, and unmanned aerial vehicles to attack the airfield infrastructure of Ukraine according to the Ministry of the Defence of the Russian Federation. Although the ministry did not reveal the number or location of the airfields that were targeted, it added that "the goal of the strike had been achieved." This came after the US, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands vowed to provide Ukraine with 60 F-16s by the end of the year. However, the deliveries had been held back as the Ukrainian pilots were only completing their training by the end of the year. Moreover, Ukraine faces a lack of maintenance crews to service the jets. Jake Sullivan, US National Security Adviser, had highlighted earlier that the F-16s would be based in Ukraine only, under a recently signed ten-year security agreement between Washington and Kiev.

On 27 June, the *TASS* reported that Russian forces repelled the Ukrainian army personnel who were trying to dig in and get better positions near Belogorovka in the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR). According to Andrey Marochko, their presence was revealed through aerial reconnaissance. They were found to be wearing chevrons of the Ukrainian army's 3rd assault brigade. Joint strikes against the Ukrainians were delivered by the Artillery and UAV teams. They had to retreat from the area after suffering casualties.

On 27 June, the *TASS* reported on Russia's battlegroup that caused 190 casualties in the

Ukrainian army in the Kharkiv area. According to the Ministry of the Defence of the Russian Federation, the northern battlegroup of Russia inflicted injuries and damage to manpower and equipment of the Ukrainian army's 42nd and 57th mechanised, 113th, 125th and 127th territorial defence brigades in areas near Volchansk, Neskuchnoye and Liptyy in the Kharkiv Region. The attack affected 190 personnel including four armoured vehicles, three motor vehicles, two UK-made 155mm FH70 howitzers and three 122mm D-30 howitzers. Russia's southern Battlegroup also improved their frontline positions and caused over 640 casualties to the Ukrainian army.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

The EU signed a security agreement with Ukraine. It pledges to deliver weapons, military training and aid to give Kyiv. The agreement outlines EU's commitment to help Ukraine in nine areas of security and defence policy. This includes "arms deliveries, military training, defence industry cooperation and demining."

According to the agreement, in the situation of "future aggression," Ukraine can consult within 24 hours on Kyiv's needs and determine next steps in line with the commitments. The document forms part of a broader effort by Ukrainian allied to prove their assurance to Kyiv. Although, there is no instant prospect of Ukraine joining the EU or NATO. Till now, the US, UK, France and Germany have secured the pact with Kyiv.

According to the EU, its commitments will continue "as Ukraine pursues its European path" and will be reviewed in 10 years. However, it did not provide details on the value or quantity of future assistance. It noted the EU's agreed EUR five billion to a fund for Ukraine military aid in 2024.

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War in Ukraine: Day 853

EU launches accession talks with Ukraine and Moldova

War on the Ground

On 25 June, Ukraine's air force reported that Ukraine shot down about 86 per cent of the 2,277 Shahed attack drones launched by Russia since 2024. The Ukrainian defence forces' mobile groups were instrumental in this mission as they went to firing positions almost every night and shot down Russian UAVs with all the weapons they had. Currently, their system has been modified with night vision devices, thermal imagers, optics, laser pointers, searchlights, electronic warfare equipment, software, and off-road vehicles. This would help the Ukrainian soldiers to destroy the Russian targets more efficiently. Earlier their system was equipped with small arms, anti-aircraft guns, and man-portable air defence systems in service. Lieutenant General Mykola Oleshchuk, Commander of the Air Force thanked the mobile firing groups for their efficient work. He also thanked the charitable foundations, local communities, volunteers and activists, Ukrainians and the international community who contributed for increasing their capabilities.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 25 June, *RT* reported on Moscow's response to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) decision to issue arrest warrants against two prime Russian defence officials. Moscow framed the institution as a “mere tool of the West's hybrid war efforts.” The ICC issued arrest warrants against Sergey Shoigu, ex-Russian Defence Minister

and Valery Gerasimov, the current chief of the General Staff in conviction of carrying out “alleged international crimes” during the conflict in Ukraine. Russia's Security Council condemned it as “void” and indicated that its jurisdiction did not extend to Russia. The accusations against them ranged from committing “international crimes,” namely “directing attacks at civilian objects,” as well as “causing excessive incidental harm to civilians.” Earlier, the ICC also targeted two top Russian military commanders, Lieutenant-General Sergey Kobylash of the Long-Range Aviation fleet and Admiral Viktor Sokolov of the Black Sea fleet on charges of air strikes against Ukrainian infrastructure. It had also issued an arrest warrant last year for Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, condemning him for “unlawful deportation” of Ukrainian children.

On 25 June, *RT* reported on Putin's statement about his proposed ceasefire conditions. According to him: “Russia's offer for a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine conflict is a realistic way to end the hostilities, but the West is simply ignoring it.” Earlier this month, Putin promised a ceasefire if Ukraine refused to seek NATO membership and withdrew its troops from all Russian-claimed territories which Kyiv immediately rejected. In an international forum organised by Russia this week, Yury Ashakov, Putin's foreign policy aide and a diplomat called on the participants of the forum to examine the proposal thoughtfully and rationally while condemning that the West wanted to keep fighting with Russia. He also added that Russia was offering a chance for the peaceful settlement of the conflict and a solution for the loss of lives. He also cited the Sevastopol strikes carried out by the Ukrainian forces that injured over 150 people and killed four, as the “west-spurred military frenzy.” Moscow claimed that the US was directly involved in the attacks as Ukraine had used the US-supplied ATACMS missiles with cluster munition warheads. Some Russian officials also argue that the American military specialists had been directly involved.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 25 June, *Le Monde* reported on the EU launch of accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova which aimed at signalling confidence in Ukraine. This will mark the start for screening the country's laws and its adherence to EU standards. In response, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President said: "We will never be derailed from our path to a united Europe and to our common home of all European nations." Earlier in 2023, Ursula Von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission issued a statement regarding the accession of Moldova into the EU. She talked about the annual report of the Commission on the enlargement of the bloc and its assessment of Moldova's progress as a candidate. Her speech vouching Moldova in 2023 highlighted five points: First, The unprecedented financial support to Moldova. The leader promised the country an additional EUR 143 million apart from the EUR 1.2 billion which came in October 2021. The additional funding would go to the poor households in Moldova faced with high energy prices. Second, the EU's Economic and Investment Plan. EUR 900 million had been invested in various Moldovan businesses and infrastructure in a bid to increase competitiveness, improve energy efficiency and lower the energy bills for citizens. For example, the Trans-European Network for Transport. Third, the package of support measures promised in May. The EU had been attempting to make Moldova stronger against the security threats. The armed forces were supplied with EUR 87 million worth of European Peace Facility support. The country is set to become one of the main beneficiaries of the EU's Peace Facility. Fourth, the fully operational EU Partnership mission to Moldova. As part of securing energy security, the country had been made a part of the EU's joint gas purchase platform allowing it to secure supplies and negotiate decent prices. Von der Leyen regards Moldova as a crucial ally in the bloc's fight against various threats. Fifth, the plan to reduce roaming charges between the EU and Moldova for easy travel. It aimed to bring people together by easing the travel experiences and cost. The Union was also planning to waive the fees for EU programs like the Horizon Europe and Union's Civil Protection Mechanism which

were research initiatives.

On 26 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Russia's ban on 81 EU news sources from 25 countries since its broadcasters were banned in the bloc. Moscow accused these media sites of "systematically distributing inaccurate information" about the Russian "special military operation" that was carried out in Ukraine. French news agency AFP, Germany's Der Spiegel, Spain's El Pais, and state broadcasters from Austria, Ireland and Italy along with Politico were among the Western media sites banned by the Kremlin. Russia, it was a criminal offense to call the conflict a war or invasion. The country has already shut down most independent media within its territories that were critical of Putin. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation confirmed that the move was in response to the banning of what Brussels called "Kremlin-linked propaganda networks," from being aired in the bloc. Russia condemned the decision to be "politically motivated." It has also added that the ban would only be lifted if the EU reversed its decision on the ban on Russian outlets.

On 24 June, *swissinfo.ch* reported on the arrival of the approved artillery shells on the front lines of Ukrainian units from Washington. Since the conflict started in February 2022, there has been an increase in the demand for ammunition. The fresh arrival of weapons was due to the US Congress's approval of USD 61 billion aid package. According to the Ukrainian soldiers, they had been forced to limit their use of 155 mm rounds against the Russians. According to them, there was 'shell hunger'. They also highlighted the problem of the limited number of soldiers to fight. The country has launched a major mobilisation drive to replenish the depleted forces. The soldiers condemn Russia's visit to North Korea and its recent diplomatic cooperation with China. They firmly believed that their forces would prevail over the Russian troops.

The Global Fallouts Responses of the US and Europe

On 25 June, the *Global Times* reported that China was urging the EU to lift the sanctions imposed on the Chinese companies over

allegations of its links to Russia. The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China said that the normal China-Russia cooperation does not affect any third party. It also pledged to take necessary counter-measures to protect the Chinese firms. This came amidst the protectionist measures taken against Chinese companies and products. According to media reports, the EU imposed sanctions on 19 Chinese businesses accusing it of "supporting Russia's military-industrial complex" in the Ukraine conflict. These companies would face restrictions on the sales of "dual-use goods and technology." The bloc has planned for a heavy burden of additional tariffs on the Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) also. On the EU's action, Mao Ning, spokeswoman and deputy director of information at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented that China had always opposed unilateral sanctions without any basis in the international law. If accelerated, the current situation could lead to a deteriorating China-EU economic and trade relations.

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War in Ukraine: Day 852

Emergency declared in Sevastopol

War on the Ground

On 24 June, *Kyiv Post* reported on the attack

of a Russian cruise missile on a warehouse in the port city of Odesa causing a massive fire. From the beginning of the attack in 2022, the south-eastern port of Odesa had faced repeated missile and drone strikes from Russia. According to the Ukrainian Air Force: "Russian occupants attacked the Odesa region with two cruise missiles. One of them was eliminated." In the attack, three men were wounded, and the fire had spread over 3,000 square metres. Oleg Kiper, the region's Governor confirmed that the rescuers were working to curb the fire from spreading to the entire building. Russians were also reportedly attacking through guided aerial bombs in the Ukrainian-controlled areas of the southern region which resulted in serious injury of a 40-year-old man. Two people were also killed in the north-eastern region of Kharkiv when their car hit a Russian anti-tank mine near Lyptsi.

On 24 June, *RFERL* reported on the Russian missile attack targeting the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine. The strike led to the death of four people and injury of 34. Vadym Filashki, the governor of the region said that two-Islander M-missiles damaged a home and 16 others in the town of Pokrovsk. According to FilashkiL "This is one of the largest hostile attacks on civilians in recent times. Its final consequences are yet to be determined." Another person was also killed in a Russian shelling in the Donetsk region, earlier that day.

On 24 June, Volodymyr Zelenskyy introduced Colonel Oleksii Morozov, the new Head of the Department of State Protection to the staff of the Department. The main duty of the new Head is to ensure that only patriotic specialists work in the institution. The President said that the new Head also has the responsibility to modernise its structure and operations to secure to the needs of wartime along with new approaches. This also involves the improvement of material and technical, and training bases of the Department along with a modern specialised Centre for Training. The newly appointed Head also thanked the President for his enduring trust and asked those present to support the transformation of the Department through his proposed implementations.

The Moscow View

Claims by Russia

On 24 June, the *TASS* reported on the declaration of a region-wide emergency in Sevastopol in the wake of Crimean attacks by the Ukrainian forces. Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Governor of the region, issued instructions in the decree of the state of emergency. It came against the backdrop of Ukrainian attack on the civilian infrastructure in Sevastopol using western weapons like the ATACMS tactical missiles equipped with cluster munitions. According to the reports, four people, including two children, were killed in the attack, with over 150 others being injured. Vladimir Putin, Russia's President offered his condolences to the lost lives with 24 June declared as a day of mourning. The Russian Investigative Committee has launched a criminal probe designating it as a terrorist attack.

On 24 June, *POLITICO* reported on Moscow's warnings to the US on its alleged involvement in the deadly strikes on Russian-occupied Crimea. Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the President of the Russian Federation, "The involvement of the United States of America in hostilities, direct involvement in hostilities that result in the death of Russian civilians, this, of course, cannot but have consequences." Moscow claims to have found out the use of five Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) missiles donated to Ukraine by the US in the attack. Ukraine was trying to resist the advancing Russian troops mainly through the western weapons. The US agreed to deliver long range weapons like the ATACMS earlier this year along with its approval to use the western supplied weapons to hit targets inside Russia and the territories claimed by it. In the earlier week, Ukrainian forces also hit a military radar station in Crimea which was used for deep space surveillance.

The West View

Responses of the US and Europe

On 24 June, European Commission announced 14th package of sanctions on Russia. This includes restrictive measures against 69 individuals and 47 entities which were responsible for threatening the territorial integrity and sovereignty of

Ukraine. Particularly this targets business persons, propagandists, public figures and judiciary, person responsible for deportation of children from Ukraine. According to the European Commission, in the listed companies, few had actively engaged in circumventing EU sanctions via financial transactions and had delivered prohibited EU goods such as weapons and ammunitions from North Korea to Russia. The sanctioned companies also include, military and defence industry companies which provides vital dual-use technologies used in battlefield and "companies transporting weapons and military personnel. The move comes as part of the 17 and 18 April, European Council support to Ukraine and decision to weaken Russia's ability to continue war.

On 24 June, *Reuters* reported on the Pentagon, the US's Department of Defence's response to Kremlin's accusations of its alleged involvement in the attack on Crimea. Since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, tensions between the West and Russia reached its peak due to the War in Ukraine. According to Major Charlie Dietz, a Pentagon spokesperson, "Ukraine makes its own targeting decisions and conducts its own military operations." He also offered his condolences to the lost lives of civilian people including the thousands of Ukrainians. The Kremlin directly blamed the US for the attacks as they found out the involvement of US-made ATACMS.

On 24 June, *POLITICO* reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President was expected to attend the European Council which was scheduled to be held in Brussels on Thursday. The President's Office had not confirmed his travel due to security reasons. Zelenskyy's visit could be indicative of the several European initiatives on Ukraine as the accession talks were to commence on Tuesday. According to Zelenskyy, "The EU has already approved the negotiating framework for Ukraine, and we expect the actual start of negotiations on June 25 — the Ukrainian Government delegation will be in Brussels for that." He also added that Ukraine had been moving forward this for this historic event. The EU and Ukraine are set to sign a security pact at the summit.

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War in Ukraine: Days 850 and 851

Russia attacks nine settlements in Zaporizhzhia

War on the Ground

On 24 June, *Ukrinform* reported on Russia's attack on Ukraine's southeastern Zaporizhzhia, targeting nine settlements. According to Ivan Fedorov, the regional governor of Zaporizhzhia, an airstrike in the Polohy district resulted in the injury of an 87-year-old woman. The report said that the Russian troops carried out airstrikes on Verkhnia Tersa and Kamianske along with 193 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) attacking Huliaipole, Levadne, Robotyne, Mala Tokmachka, Malynivka, and Novoandriivka. While, Mala Tokmachka, Robotyne, Levadne, and Novoandriivka were hit by Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) attacks, around 294 artillery strikes were launched on Orikhiv, Huliaipole, Mala Tokmachka, Novoandriivka, Robotyne, Levadne, and Malynivka.

On 24 June, *Ukrinform* reported on Russia's attack in the Obukhiv district of the Kyiv region damaging 72 private houses and eight apartment blocks. The damage was caused due to the fragments of Russian missiles over the area according to Ruslan Kravchenko, head of the region's military administration. The missile strikes also resulted in the damage of hospital buildings and 13 other buildings, including a utility company, a driving school, a pharmacy, a gas station, a grocery store, an employment centre, a hotel, a medical centre, several businesses, and a car wash. Kravchenko confirmed that the population was provided with all the required aid as the representatives of the Kyiv regional military administration and the local community was helping to process information about people's necessities. He also added that The Global Empowerment Mission (GEM) and the Andrii Zasukha Charitable Foundation had joined in the restoration of damaged structures.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 23 June, at least four people including two children were found to be dead in a Ukrainian missile attack on the Crimean Peninsula of Russia. Initially, Mikhail Razvozhay, the Governor of Sevastopol said that all the required ambulances were sent to the area of Uchkuduk, the northern part of the port city on the Black Sea.

According to the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, the attack resulted in the injury of 124 people including 27 children. Maria Lvova-Belova, Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights also added that five children were in serious condition. The Ministry of the Defence of the Russian Federation confirmed that the attack involved the usage of several US-made ATACMS long-range missiles armed with cluster munitions, which are banned in more than 100 countries. Russian troops were able to destroy four of them although the fifth attained damage from fire, leading it to change its course and detonate over the city. The disintegrated cluster munitions falling over the city resulted in various casualties according to the military.

On 22 June, *RT* reported on the alleged training provided by the US to train Ukraine's neo-Nazi Azov Brigade before the US State Department lifted its ban on military assistance to the unit. This came against the backdrop of the US State Department's announcement that the Azov Brigade was not involved in any human rights violations and would be eligible to receive American military aid. The photograph of Andrey 'Spyder' Ignatyuk, receiving a certificate for the completion of a training course organised by US Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) was posted on his social media account. However, a certificate handed to him by an American soldier was dated December 2023. The caption under the picture also highlighted that the course focused on "civil-military cooperation," along with instructors from other European nations. Another photo also showed a large group of American, Polish, and Ukrainian troops holding each other's national flags, along with the flag of the Azov Brigade. Both the Pentagon and the Azov Brigade declined to comment on the report published concerning the photo.

The West View

Responses of the US and Europe

On 23 June, *the Associated Press* reported on Ukraine's attempt to persuade the US to grant permission for the use of American-made ATACMS long-range missiles for deep strikes into Russia. Although the US permitted Ukraine to use Western weapons for cross-border attacks in late May, it did not authorise to strike 200 miles into Russia or the use of long-range weapons. According to the three unnamed US officials interviewed by *DEFE News*, Biden did not allow the use of ATACMS missiles with a range of up to 300km to strike inside Russian territory. An artillery commander of Ukraine said, "If the US were to reverse this policy, Kiev could target [Russian] brigade command points and the entire northern grouping, because they are located 100 to 150 kilometres from the front line." The Ukrainian officials were hoping to convince the US to reverse their policy as they found it difficult to strike back with the opposite territory actively advancing their troops. Putin warned the West threatening to arm North Korea thus reflecting Western long-

range weapons deliveries to Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 847

France approves joint venture to deliver military gear to Ukraine

War on the Ground

On 19 June, Ukraine's Defence Industry and Thales, a French defence company, signed two agreements under the approval of the French Armed Forces Ministry and Ukraine's Strategic Industries Ministry. The Agreement includes a joint venture in Ukraine to deliver more military gear such as electronic warfare, radars and air defence systems. Thales also agreed to provide maintenance, testing and training in electronic warfare to the Ukrainian military. A third agreement was signed between Thales and Ukraine-based company FRDM. The deal looks at co-developing and manufacturing "An unmanned aircraft system capable of carrying and releasing munitions." France has backed Ukraine ever since Russia's invasion in February 2022 and has also established intentions to send military instructors to Ukraine to bolster its defence.

On 19 June, Russian forces increased the intensity of their attacks near Toretsk, a frontline town in Donetsk which is the eastern region of Ukraine. This has come after months of relative non-violence in the region. Ukrainian forces are reported to be overwhelmed and outgunned and are struggling to hold back the Kremlin's forces. Despite the advances of Moscow's troops, the Ukrainian frontlines have remained relatively stable until now. Both Ministries confirmed the events and residents have reported that they have been forced to take

shelter in basements due to projectiles straying their way. Vadym Filashkin, head of the region, had reported that the increase in assault resulted in the death of one person and the wounding of another. 21 residential buildings were also damaged. Chasiv Yar has been a perpetual target for Russian forces due to its strategic hilltop position north of Toretsk which would allow them to capture civilian hubs in Donetsk.

On 19 June, energy infrastructure in central Ukraine received damage from Russian drone attacks resulting in the injury of two people in Lviv. Emergency services have been deployed in the area and repairs to the electrical equipment were underway as per the reports from Ukraine's energy ministry. Maksym Kozytzkyi, regional governor of Lviv stated that five drones were launched by Russian forces to attack the region which borders NATO member Poland. While all five drones were destroyed by Ukrainian air defence, the debris that occurred had caused the injuries. Ukraine's air force reported that over six Ukrainian regions, 19 out of the 21 drones that were launched by Russia were destroyed.

On 19 June, the Security Service of Ukraine reported that it had stopped attempts by Russian intelligence to gather information on the defences of Kharkiv. Reports have suggested that Russia was preparing new missile and drone strikes into the northern areas of the city. To gather intelligence an informant, who was a supporter of Russian imperialism and lived in the region, was established through a dating chat in Telegram, where a female contact from the Russian Intelligence Service, posed as a citizen and promised the resident of Kharkiv a romantic relationship. As per her instructions, the man secretly scouted and recorded the locations with the highest concentration of personnel from the Defence Forces. He was caught by SSU officers while he was photographing the transport of Ukrainian soldiers. They also seized the phone the man used to communicate with the Russian contact and charged him under Part 2 of Article 114-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine which does not allow the unauthorised spreading of information regarding Ukraine's military and he faces up

to 8 years in prison.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 19 June, Russian Military sentenced four people under the case of the Murder of Arsen Pavlov, also known as his nom-de-guerre, 'Motorola.' He was killed in October 2016 by a powerful explosive device planted over an elevator cabin in his apartment block in Donetsk. The Russian prosecutor labelled them as "SBU-created terrorist cell," along with several other cases against them. The Russian tribunal life sentenced Aleksandr Pogorelov. While the other three were given prison terms ranging between 12 and 17 years. Although all four have pleaded not guilty during the trial: "Overall I do not disclaim my actions, but I don't consider myself guilty, since I committed no crime on Russian territory." When the two Donbass republics split from Ukraine, the US backed an armed coup in Kiev in 2014.

On 19 June, following the visit to North Korea, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President stated that North Korea had all the right to defend its sovereignty against the US. During the visit to North Korea Putin and Kim signed a strategic partnership for future cooperation in all aspects from cultural and tourist ties, to trade, economic relations and security. Putin called it a breakthrough. He also said: "The document on comprehensive partnership that we have signed today provides, among other things, for mutual aid in case of aggression against one of the participants." Earlier, Putin warned the West over donating weapons to Ukraine for this war, to which Russia does not rule out the development of military cooperation with North Korea under the document signed. Putin said: "The two countries are on the same page in supporting a more just and democratic multipolar world."

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 19 June, Jordan Bardella, the leader of the far-right French National Rally party, stated that Ukraine would receive his support if he was elected prime minister but ruled out supplying it with long-range weapons or French troops. This comes after National

Rally's lead in the current polls for the snap elections Emmanuel Macron, President of France, called for after the defeat in the elections for the European Parliament. Bardella said: "My position has not changed, and that is to support Ukraine by providing defence equipment, ammunition, operational logistical support, and defensive weaponry to enable Ukraine to protect itself to hold the front.... I don't plan to send, especially, long-range missiles or other weapons that will allow Ukraine to strike the Russian territory." France had sent Ukraine long-range missiles to target Russian military targets in occupied Crimea and earlier in June, Macron had announced that France was finalising a coalition for countries to send military instructors to Ukraine which comes into conflict with Bardella's promises. However, Bardella also insisted that he does not intend to go ahead with some of the controversial foreign policy positions that the Far-right had pushed for, which included a reconciliation with France.

On 19 June, *Euronews* reported that the European Commission has chosen to reverse its preferential trade scheme which was requested by Poland and France and involved a lack of tariffs and quotas for Ukraine's exports after imports of eggs and sugar from Ukraine reached an all-time high. In force since 6 June, the new free-trade scheme had included an automatic safeguard mechanism intended to protect specific domestic sectors considered 'sensitive' which includes eggs, poultry, sugar, oats and honey from increased imports arising as a result of lifting quotas and tariffs. An emergency brake limit exists in case the imports of these commodities exceed the arithmetic mean of quantities imported between 01 July 2021 and 31 December 2023. For now, only eggs have triggered the brake limit but sugar is expected to do so in the coming days. Ukraine has recently set an export record of 108,000 tonnes of sugar in May, 65 per cent of which has been directed at the EU.

On 19 June, Ukraine and the EU finished their negotiations on a bilateral security agreement, which is to be signed soon. The Office of the President of Ukraine announced that Ihor Zhovkva, Deputy Chairman of

Ukraine's Security Council and Charles Fries, Deputy Secretary General for Peace, Security and Defence, European External Action Service. EU ambassadors have already reached an agreement and the deal is expected to be finalised by the end of June. The draft agreement states that the EU will continue to provide military aid to Ukraine, assist with military training, counter hybrid and cyber threats together and assist the Ukrainian Government with recovery. Unlike NATO's collective deal, this deal is a pledge to provide Ukraine with weapons and other aid to improve security to counter future invasions.

On 19 June, *The New York Times* reported on Vladimir Putin, President of Russia and Kim Jong-un, Supreme Leader of North Korea, meeting on revival of a mutual defence pledge that traces back to the Cold War era. The leaders also vowed solidarity against the US. While the text of the treaty has not been released yet, Putin said that the pact would call upon both nations to help one another in the event of "aggression" against either country. Kim said that the "treaty" has now improved the two countries' relation to an "alliance." The pledge could result in North Korea giving even more support to Russia in its invasion of Ukraine and Russia helping North Korea in developing its military capabilities which include nuclear weapons, missiles and submarines, both being developments that can cause worry for the US and its Asian allies, especially South Korea. The agreement comes after North Korea provided ballistic missiles and over 11,000 containers of ammunition to aid Russia in its war against Ukraine. The UN sanctions on North Korea, which prohibit the transfer of arms or military technology to or from the nation, received criticism from Putin, who added that North Korea has the right to defend itself. Putin called the treaty reminiscent of the 1961 treaty of friendship and mutual assistance between Pyongyang and Moscow which dictates that both countries were to, "immediately extend military and other assistance" with all means in the case one of them finds themselves in a conflict. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the treaty became defunct. The US warned that this could endanger peace and stability in the

Korean Peninsula and further the invasion of the people of Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 845

NATO reveals 17.9 per cent increase in defence expenditure for 2024

War on the Ground

On 17 June, *Ukrinform* reported that the consumers in six regions in Ukraine remain without power supply due to the increasing hostilities in war and particularly targeting the energy grids. According to the Ukraine's Ministry of Energy, consumers in Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Sumy, Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Kherson remained without electricity mainly due to shelling. Moreover, an overhead powerline in the Dnipropetrovsk region was disconnected due to unauthorised actions. Technological reasons in the Odesa region resulted in power cutoff for 1,736

customers. On 16 June, power companies supplied power to the regions of Kherson and Kharkiv affected by the unfavourable weather conditions. It was later restored to the regions of Donetsk, Sumy and Zaporizhzhia. Ukraine now faces power cuts every day from ten to fourteen hours. The situation is predicted to remain worse in the upcoming months.

On 17 June, *Reuters* reported on the failure to reach agreement in the meeting held between Ukraine and its international bondholders to cut its debt to finance. This means Ukraine would see USD 23 billion sovereign default later in 2024. Although both sides seem distant in reaching an agreement, Serhiy Marchenko, Ukraine's Finance Minister said that his team will continue conversing with a select group of larger creditors like money managers who deal with pension and investment funds. One of the upcoming problems will be the government's lack of time as the two-year debt freeze will end by August, pushing Ukraine on the verge of default again. This can be resolved only through IMF's USD 15.6 billion support program and the G7 countries' USD 50 million from the frozen Russian assets. Ukraine's proposal to the creditors was to slash the value of their bonds by up to 60 per cent. Meanwhile, the creditor committee in return proposed for cuts over 22 per cent. This divide in the agreement resonates with the uncertainty in the war and how much debt Ukraine will carry forward. If Kyiv does not manage to cut its debt level, the IMF might come under pressure to halt its crucial financial program for the country.

On 17 June, *Ukrinform* reported on damage on civilian infrastructure facility by the Russian forces in the Poltava district resulting in casualties. Filip Pronin, head of the regional military administration said: "According to tentative reports, the enemy hit a civilian infrastructure facility in the Poltava Oblast. There are casualties, people may remain under the rubble." The incoming reports from the ground were being verified. As per earlier reports by *Ukrinform*, the Russian strike in the Myrhorod (city in Poltava Oblast) resulted in one injury.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 18 June, *The Moscow Times* reported on Kremlin's statement on how the Ukraine Peace Summit held in Switzerland had "zero" results. Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the President of the Russian Federation said: "If we talk about the results of this meeting, then they come down to zero." Although 90 countries gathered to support Ukraine's territorial integrity, the prime question of ending the war remained unanswered. The summit's final communique was not signed by all the countries including Saudi Arabia, India and the United Arab Emirates. Peskov added that these countries understood the lack of perspective in any discussion without the presence of Russia thus citing their exclusion from the summit. He also added that Putin was still "open to dialogue and discussion." Previously, Putin said Russia would commence the peace talks only if Ukraine gave up four of its regions and surrender.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 17 June, NATO published its defence expenditure of NATO Countries report for 2014-2024. The expenditure represents the payment by a national government or planned for the fiscal year to meet the armed forces needs. The graphs showcasing the defence expenditure indicate a new high of 17.9 per cent with more than 20 NATO allies meeting the two per cent defence budget. According to the report, the equipment expenditure increased from 16.4 in 2023 to 36.9 in 2024.

On 18 June, *POLITICO* reported on 23 out of 32 NATO allies reaching the two per cent defence spending target. According to the latest NATO report, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Turkey reached the target for the first time. Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary-General said: "Across Europe and Canada, NATO allies are, this year, increasing defence spending by 18 percent. That's the biggest increase in decades." This portrayed their shared responsibility to protect the countries in the NATO alliance. The non-US allies also met the target for the first time, since NATO was looking forward to highlight the share of

defence expenditure as proof to the US critics. As per the report, Poland tops the chart at 4.12 per cent, followed by Estonia at 3.43 per cent, the U.S. at 3.38 per cent, Latvia at 3.15 per cent and Greece at 3.08 per cent. While, Canada, Belgium, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Spain were listed among the lowest spenders.

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War in Ukraine: Days 843 and 844 **Switzerland Peace Summit 2024**

War on the Ground

On 16 June, the official website of the *President of Ukraine* reported on Zelenskyy's statement to the media representatives following the Peace Summit. At first, he thanked all the participants of the first Peace Summit who united themselves to join the cause of peace. He believed that to be a way of 'responding to Russia's invasion not only with a full-scale defence of human life but also full-scale diplomacy.' Next, he mentioned the three challenges which were analysed in detail at the First Peace Summit-nuclear safety, food security and the release of prisoners and deportees, including thousands of children abducted by Russia. According to his statements, the countries agreed to work at the level of advisers and ministers in the format of special meetings under the leadership or co-leadership of countries. He also revealed the preliminary agreements with France, Czechia, Türkiye,

Kenya, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Norway, Poland, Canada, Qatar, Chile, Ghana, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom – to host the work of the groups. He concluded by encouraging the countries to make the action plans ready for the commencement of the second Peace Summit.

On 15 June, *President of Ukraine* published on Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, meeting with Kamala Harris, US Vice President at the Global Peace Summit held in Switzerland. Zelenskyy thanked Joe Biden, President of the US for the bilateral security agreement signed as part of the G7 and the US Congress for approving an assistance package for Ukraine, earlier this year. Zelenskyy said: "Putin is trying to expand the war and make it more bloody. But together with America and all our partners, we protect the lives of our people and open up new opportunities for diplomacy." He also thanked Kamala Harris for attending the Peace Summit and suggested seeking 'real peace through diplomacy.' The leaders discussed the dynamics of the supply of weapons from the announced aid packages, the construction of brigades, the progress of the situation especially in the Kharkiv region, and the progress of the implementation of agreements on additional Patriot systems. Harris expressed the US's unwavering support to democratic nations and discontent with dictatorships. She also announced USD 1.5 billion aid for the humanitarian and energy needs of Ukraine.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 16 June, *RT* reported that twelve countries including Armenia, Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the UAE, and organisations such as the UN and OSCE refused to sign the final communique of the Swiss Peace Conference. Meanwhile, 79 countries including Hungary, Serbia, Argentina, Türkiye, and Georgia approved the document joining Ukraine. However, according to a draft, it accused Russia for causing "large-scale human suffering and destruction" and "creating risks and crises with global repercussions" in Ukraine. It also called for the territorial integrity of Ukraine

and the restoration of control over the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and access to sea ports in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. It demanded for full exchange of the prisoners of war and displaced Ukrainian children. Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia said earlier that any peaceful resolution of the conflict would require Russia's participation. Russia expressed its discontent with the meeting by saying that it would not have attended even if invited due to the exclusive emphasis on Ukraine.

On 16 June, *RT* reported on the death of Nikita Tsitsagi, a Russian photographer from a drone strike in the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). According to News.ru, a Russian publication, the correspondent was killed in an attack by Ukrainian drones in the area of the Nikolsky Monastery in the Donbas city of Ugledar, where he was filming a report. The incident was confirmed by Tsitsagi's colleagues who were working in the area and local operational services. The reporter used to collaborate with Russian media outlets like the TASS and Lenta.ru. In 2023, he also received the 'Editorial Board' journalistic award for a report on the Ukraine conflict and its repercussions in the Russian border town of Shebekino in the Belgorod Region. Earlier this week, Valery Kozhin, another photojournalist of NTV died from wounds suffered from a Ukrainian drone attack on Gorlovka, also in the Donetsk People's Republic. According to the statements of Vladimir Putin at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) earlier this month, at least 30 Russian journalists had lost their lives since the Ukraine conflict started in 2022. Moscow continues to accuse Ukraine of their attacks on the Russian journalists reporting from the frontline. Maria Zakharova, Russian Foreign Ministry, spokesperson criticised the international human rights organisations for remaining silent and becoming Ukraine's allies.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 16 June, *whitehouse.gov* reported on the remarks made by Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor of the US during the Global Peace Summit. At first, he thanked Amherd

and Zelenskyy for hosting the summit and gathering 100 countries and organisations that showcased their deep support for just peace. He also referred to the summit as having the core foundation of 'just peace' in accordance with the United Nations charter and the principles of International Law. He saw the summit as the platform created for Ukraine to negotiate and secure its territorial integrity and peace. He also stressed on the steps to ensure food security, nuclear security, and, of course, the return of abducted children. He criticised Putin's vision for peace which was announced a couple of days before and stated that it defied the UN's charter and its basic morality. This was because of Putin's claims on Ukraine to give up the territory currently occupied by Russia and additional sovereignty to start peace negotiations and a possible ceasefire. He concluded by saying that the vision of peace put forward at the summit was rooted in the principles of safety. He also stated the US's support to Ukraine until it gains peace and security.

On 16 June, the press release of the European Council highlighted the common vision laid down in the Joint Communiqué on the Peace Framework adopted at the Peace Summit in Ukraine. The summit which was based on the previous discussions of Ukraine's Peace Formula and other peace proposals was in line with the International Law and the UN Charter. The common vision was on the following key aspects: First, safe, secure and environmentally sound usage of nuclear energy and installations. The Ukrainian power plants like the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant should be under full sovereign control of Ukraine and in line with the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) principles and its supervision. Any threat or use of nuclear weapons against Ukraine was unjustifiable. Second, uninterrupted manufacturing and supply of food products leading to global food security. Attacks on merchant ships and civilian ports were unacceptable as food security must not be weaponised leading to the safe supply of Ukrainian agricultural products to the needed countries. Third, release of the unlawfully displaced children and civilians from Russia and the complete exchange of prisoners of war.

On 15 June, *Euronews* reported on Sweden government accusing Russian military aircraft for violating its airspace at the east of Gotland. According to the report of Jonas Wikman, Commander of the Swedish Air Force: "The Russian act is unacceptable and shows a lack of respect for our territorial integrity." Sweden joined NATO in March as its 32nd member ending the decades-long post World War II neutrality. Amid the growing security concerns in Europe since Russia's Ukraine invasion in 2022, Sweden along with Finland who joined NATO in 2023 ended their military neutrality which was a key characteristic of the Nordic states' Cold war foreign diplomacy.

On 15 June, *Euronews*, reported on the massive security arrangements by Switzerland government ahead of the Global Peace Summit at the Luxury Bürgenstock resort near Lucerne. The Hotel had hosted multiple high-level political meetings and peace talks in the past. Its 'isolated mountaintop location' provided an extra layer of security. The security had tightened as soldiers took positions at multiple checkpoints leading to the hotel. According to Viola Amherd, up to 4000 soldiers had been deployed to protect more than 50 heads of state. She also added, "An event on this scale requires comprehensive protective measures." Around six kilometres of fencing and eight kilometres of barbed wire had been installed around the perimeter. In addition to this, a temporary helicopter had been set up in the field for the transfer of different delegations. The Swiss National Cyber Security Centre was expecting cyberattacks as the first wave of distributed denial-of-service attacks (DDoS) on government websites began last week. These attacks aimed to overload the websites with a large number of requests such that they cannot be handled by a single organisation causing the website and computer system to crash.

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War in Ukraine: Day 842

Putin lists the terms and conditions for a ceasefire

War on the Ground

On 14 June, *Ukrinform* reported on Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President's response to Vladimir Putin, Russian President ceasefire conditions. He was unwilling to trust and stated that Putin would not stop the offensive even if a ceasefire was agreed upon. He said: "He will not stop. It is the same thing that Hitler used to do. [...] This is why we should not trust these messages."

On 13 June, *The Daily Star* reported that Ukrainian forces were fighting to defend Ivanivske near Chasiv Yar, a strategic hilltop settlement whose capture would give Russia a stronghold in the eastern Donetsk region and leverage for more assaults on the civilian hubs in the industrial region. In a briefing for journalists, the Ukrainian military said, "Two combat engagements continue near Ivanivske. The situation is very tense." The announcement came as Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended the G7 summit in Italy urging the world leaders for more aid to combat the Russian troops. A military press officer said that although Russia was failing to gain control of the

Chasiv Yar, defending the area was extremely hard.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 14 June, *RT* reported on Putin listing the terms and conditions for a ceasefire and peaceful reconciliation at a meeting with Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister, and other senior Russian diplomats. Putin said: "Our side will order a ceasefire and start negotiations the minute Kyiv declares that it is prepared to take this decision and starts the actual withdrawal of troops from those regions, and also formally informs us that it no longer plans to join NATO." Moscow rejected Kyiv's claims of sovereignty over five formerly Ukrainian regions, four of which voted to join Russia in 2022. Although, tension continues in the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics and Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Regions. Putin also condemned the Western nations for allegedly holding back Kyiv from peace talks with Moscow. He also added that Moscow would not accept a frozen conflict as the full resolution of the invasion would only be complete if Kyiv recognised the new regions and Crimea as part of Russia. He also condemned the G7 summit framing the event as a means of distraction from the "true roots" of conflict. He also predicted a pan-European security system for all the nations on the continent noting that Moscow had sought this for years.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 14 June, the Swiss government reported receiving 100 guests for the upcoming peace summit. The government aims to begin the peace process and lay out ideas for the next step. In a statement released by The Federal Council of Switzerland: "...this summit, Switzerland is providing a platform for discussion where all states present can contribute their ideas and visions for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine." Apart from this, it will also be the first time a high-level discussion revolves around negotiating the inclusion of Russia in the next steps. Switzerland intends to continue the practice of promoting dialogue.

On 14 June, on the second day of the

meeting, NATO defence ministers in Brussels agreed on greater aid for Ukraine at the top of the agenda. Earlier, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General said the plan was to: "Address how to further strengthen our deterrence on defence. Ministers will discuss a new defence industrial pledge to scale up military production and solidify long-term cooperation with our industry." Previously, the NATO countries supported Ukraine through an informal US-led group, the Ukraine Defense Contact Group. At present responsibilities could be handed over to the formal structures of NATO which has a long-standing aim for the member countries to spend two per cent of their GDP on defence. Although only a few members met the target, Hanno Pevkur, Estonian Defence Minister, proposed a target of 2.5 per cent to be spent as Estonia is currently spending more than three per cent. He proposed this by referring to Russia's nine per cent spending on defence for the year in the light of the invasion.

On 13 June, according to the Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands, the country announced the shipment of the 152-mm shells to Ukraine which cost more than EUR 350 million. The new dispatching came under the funding of the International Fund for Ukraine (IFU). IFU is an additional defence mechanism for Ukraine led by the Ministry of Defence, UK with participation from countries Australia, Denmark, Iceland, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Iceland, Lithuania, and Sweden. These countries contributed over a billion euros to the IFU along with the Netherlands contributing EUR 125 million. Although the Ministry did not reveal the exact number and delivery time of 152-mm shells due to security reasons, they said that this was one of the IFU's largest orders from the international arms industry. Under the Czech initiative, Ukraine will receive 50,000-100,000 large-calibre artillery shells a month.

On 13 June, the UK announced new sanctions on Russia which targeted the country's vessels in the shadow fleet, suppliers supporting Russian military productions, and key financial institutions. The sanctions were announced while Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of the UK attended the

G7 summit in Italy and coordinated the aid for Ukraine along with the other G7 leaders. The UK has also committed to provide EUR 242 million in bilateral assistance to Ukraine. The sanctions will aim at cutting down Russia's ability to fund and equip its war machine as it targets oil exports which remains the most critical revenue source for the war. Tax on oil production collected by the Kremlin in 2023 amounted to 8.9 trillion Rubles or 31 per cent of Russia's total federal revenues. The sanctions target suppliers of munitions, machine tools, microelectronics, and logistics to Russia's military, including entities based in China, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, and Türkiye, along with ships that transport military goods from North Korea to Russia. As a coordinated action with the US, the new package also slams down the Moscow Stock Exchange. Since February 2022, the sanctions have cost Russia over USD 400 billion worth of assets and revenues. There has been a 99 per cent fall in Russian imports into the UK, and a 73 per cent fall in UK exports to Russia.

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War in Ukraine: Day 841

Biden and Zelenskyy sign 10-point security agreement

War on the Ground

On 12 June, *France 24* reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian President made an unexpected visit to the Red Sea city of Jeddah and met Saudi de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. As a part of a series of visits he made to rally diplomatic support and attendance

for the Swiss peace summit, he visited Saudi Arabia, which is yet to confirm its participation for the summit. Saudi Arabia has a strong oil diplomacy with Russia but also maintains a neutral stance, offering to be a peaceful mediator in the war. In August 2023, the country hosted talks on the war with participants from 40 countries except Russia. Earlier in February, Zelenskyy visited the prince to endorse his peace plan and discuss a potential exchange of prisoners of war.

On 13 June, *The Guardian* published analytical research on the climate cost of Russia's war in Ukraine. The study showed that the first two years of the war emitted more annual greenhouse gas than the emissions generated individually by 175 countries. According to the report, 175 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆) were generated. A new report by the Initiative on Greenhouse Gas Accounting of War (IGGAW) and the UN General Assembly claimed that Russia owed USD 32 billion as a climate reparations bill in the two years of war. The majority of warfare emissions come in three parts including military activity, with Russian troops using fuel accounting for 35mt CO₂, the single greatest source of greenhouse gases. Other sources include manufacturing carbon-intensive explosives, ammunition, and defence walls, as well as fuel used by allies. One-third parts come from the reconstruction of damaged structures, with the carbon impact varying depending on the use of traditional or modern techniques. The final third is generated by fires, strikes on energy infrastructure, and displacement of nearly seven million Ukrainians and Russians. Over 40 per cent of Ukraine's 4,216 fire trucks and one million hectares of scorched fields and forests due to military causes also added to the issue. Russia's targeting of the energy infrastructure like the destruction of the Nord Stream 2 pipelines generated major leaks of potent greenhouse gases.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 12 June, *CNA* reported on North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressing his view on Russia as "an invisible comrade-in-arms,"

that in a message to Vladimir Putin, Russian President. This comes as Putin is expected to visit North Korea between 19 and 20 June. Russia government has expressed willingness to foster cooperation with North Korea in all areas. In September 2023, Kim travelled to Russia's Far East where Putin promised to help him build satellites. Following this, the US and South Korea accused Kim of shipping weapons and supporting Russia's war against Ukraine in exchange for technological aid with its own nuclear and missile programs.

On 13 June, the Bank of Russia (CBR) YUAN will be the new benchmark for other currencies including EURO AND USD for the Moscow Exchanges (MOEX). This has come after US sanctions that prompted the MOEX to suspend trading with the USD AND EURO. But the over-the-counter market will continue. The Bank of Russia also said: "The yuan/ruble exchange rate ... will become a reference point for market participants. The share of the yuan in Moscow Exchange trading in May was 54%...Thus, the yuan has already become the main currency in exchange trading." According to the regulators the share for USD and EURO has declined due to the war, and western sanctions and also since more trade happens with the East so there we could see an increase in CNY and other friendly countries' currency. Putin also addressed this issue last week at the session at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum that the shares of payment for Russian exports in those unfriendly countries' currencies have been decreased to half. According to MOEX, the suspension of trading in dollar and euro affects foreign and precious metals trade as well as stock and money trading on Russia's public trading markets. Except for dollars and euros, all other financial instruments remain operational. The derivatives market has also been unaffected by these changes, with trade going on as usual.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 13 June, according to *The Washington Post*, the US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan spoke about plans ahead of the G7 meeting in Italy, to sign a 10-year security agreement with Ukraine, that commits to a

wide range of military assistance for a long term. Hoping to work beyond political divisions within the US, the deal seeks to bind upcoming US administrations to support Ukraine, even if Donald Trump wins the November election. However, since it is not a treaty or ratified by Congress, it could be withdrawn in the future. The agreement comes after months of negotiations, which was then put on hold during delaying approval of new funding in the Congress until April 2024. The pact does not commit Washington to provide troops for Ukraine's defence, unlike NATO's one-for-all agreements. However, it commits the US to hold high-level consultations with Kyiv within 24 hours if Ukraine is attacked again, and promises to work with Congress to implement security agreements.

On 13 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg claimed that they were finding ways to counter Russian attempts at sabotaging the alliance. His statement came after Poland, Germany, the UK and the Czech Republic reported incidents of Russian interference in the form of arson, cyber attacks and disinformation in recent weeks. Andris Spridis, the Latvian Defense Minister said: "Latvia, of course, is in the front line and we have been facing hybrid attacks for some time, cyber-attacks, the weaponization of illegal migration." Earlier in May 2024, Poland detained a man suspected of acquiring images of Ukrainian military vehicles and also accused three men of arson on Russian intelligence orders. German construction workers found explosives near a NATO pipeline, suggesting Russia is open to such sabotage. NATO officials suggested that Russia uses disruption to pressure Ukraine to halt weapons supplies, but Stoltenberg has promised to continue supporting Ukraine despite Russia's actions. NATO plans to implement tighter restrictions on Russian intelligence personnel across the alliance, strengthen closer intelligence sharing, and strengthen the protection of vital infrastructure in the upcoming two-day meeting of Defence Ministers in Brussels.

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Ukraine: Day 840

Russia strikes in Kryvyi Rih kills nine

War on the Ground

On 12 June, *Kyiv Post* reported on a Russian strike in Kryvyi Rih resulting in death of eight and injury of 21. Kryvyi Rih, a town with a population of about 635,000 before the invasion has been subject to repeated targets by Russian forces. In response, Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for more air defence support: "Modern air defence systems are able to provide maximum protection of people, our cities, and our positions. And we need them as much as possible."

On 12 June, Ukraine's air forces claimed on shooting down 29 out of 30 missiles using US supplied anti-aircraft missiles in an overnight attack in Kyiv. The attacks were followed by explosions injuring one civilian from debris. According to the report in *The New York Times*, it was a Russian tactic of combining several types of weapons, including drones and cruise missiles to overload Ukraine's air defences. Russia had launched three ballistic missiles, including the Iskander and two Kinzhal or dagger missiles. While Ukrainian and western officials claim on Patriot interceptors to be

only defence against such missiles. According to the report, Ukraine operated using variety of western short- and medium-range air defence systems in addition to the long-range US Patriot systems and the French and Italian SAMP/T long-range systems. These include US Hawk missiles, a newly developed German system called IRIS-T, and NASAMS launchers, a joint American-Norwegian project.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 12 June, *CNA* reported on North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressing his view on Russia as “an invisible comrade-in-arms,” that in a message to Vladimir Putin, Russian President. This comes as Putin is expected to visit North Korea between 19 and 20 June. Russia government has expressed willingness to foster cooperation with North Korea in all areas. In September 2023, Kim travelled to Russia's Far East where Putin promised to help him build satellites. Following this, the US and South Korea accused Kim of shipping weapons and supporting Russia's war against Ukraine in exchange for technological aid with its own nuclear and missile programs.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 12 June, *Politico* reported on Viktor Orban, the Hungarian Prime Minister claim on not being part of NATO's plan to help Ukraine. As a part of NATO countries framing a plan in coordinating security assistance to Ukraine, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary-General said: "I'm glad that today the Prime Minister and I have agreed on modalities for Hungary's non-participation in NATO support for Ukraine." According to the deal, Hungarian personnel or funds will not participate in NATO's efforts. However, Hungary pledged to meet all of its NATO commitments.

On 11 June, during a visit to a military base in Ukraine, Boris Pistorius, the German Defence Minister announced a new military aid package for Ukraine, which will include Patriot missiles and other weapons. At Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, a military base where Ukrainian soldiers are being trained to operate Patriot systems, he assured

Zelenskyy a package of 100 guided missiles for the Patriot system. As a part of the German-Danish-Dutch-Netherlands-Norway cooperation, Ukraine already possess 32 missiles, while another 68 will be delivered in the coming weeks. Pistorius claimed that anti-tank weapons, components for artillery ammunition, several thousand attack drones and anti-drone equipment, and small arms, including sniper rifles, would be sent after Rustem Umerov, the Ukrainian Defence Minister requested for them. He also added that Ukrainian soldiers learn very quickly and that Germany has already trained a third group of Patriot operators.

On 11 June, Joe Biden, US President approved the deployment of another Patriot missile system to Ukraine after series of meetings. The Patriot is one of the US' best air-defence weapons including a powerful radar system and mobile launchers that fire missiles at incoming projectiles, but is also very scarce in the US arsenal. It is the most expensive single weapon system supplied to Ukraine by the US, costing approximately USD 1.1 billion. Among the US allies, two countries have sent the system to Ukraine, including Poland, which will send the second in the upcoming weeks. While there were internal debates in the US regarding the demand for the Patriots to maintain their combat readiness, they hoped that the European powers would send more. Lloyd J Austin III, US Defence Secretary appealed to the European allies stating: “I have talked to the leaders of several countries, encouraging them to give up more capability.” Moving any more Patriot batteries seemed risky for the US, given the rising tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the regional threat in the Middle East. Other batteries protecting bases and troops in the US, including in Hawaii, were deemed too far away for homeland defence. Ukraine's request for more Patriots has been met with Germany deploying one system, with a second expected by June, and the Netherlands deploying a Dutch-American battery.

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War in Ukraine: Day 839

European Commission guarantees EUR 1.4 billion in Ukraine's Recovery Conference

War on the Ground

On 11 June, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian President participation in the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024 in Berlin. During the conference he held meeting with Olaf Scholz, the German Chancellor. The Conference aimed to address Ukraine's ongoing reconstruction needs, focusing primarily on energy infrastructure. Zelenskyy said: "In the face of Russia's air terror, urgent solutions for Ukraine's energy sector will be our top priority."

On 11 June, at the Ukraine Recovery Conference, the Ukrainian Ministry of Economy presented the Ukraine Investment Guide which highlighted the government's priority sectors for processing industry development, addressing export logistics bottlenecks and increasing value. It provided an overview of key sectors like energy, infrastructure, agrifood, green steel, pharmacy, medicine, critical materials, and IT and an outline of the investment landscape in Ukraine. The document included 95 investment projects worth more than USD 27 billion in different sectors of the economy. According to the delegates, Ukraine needed investments or technology transfers worth USD 10-30 billion per year over the next decade, to catch up with EU

countries in terms of GDP per capita. They also noted that investing in Ukraine now was strategically beneficial due to significant opportunities and high returns for reconstruction with international support. Additionally, Ukraine's progress toward the EU accession aligned its standards with the European market, enhancing investment prospects. The ministers encouraged the participants to invest in the country's recovery and economic growth by addressing the risks involved. The conference also highlighted Ukraine's efforts in the process. The Ukrainian government was assisting investors by analysing business cases, providing data, and working with experts to make investment decisions. They claimed to establish recovery and development initiatives with international financial institutions and insurance companies to reduce investment risks. Ukraine also offered incentives for large investments, including tax and customs benefits, subsidies, and simplified access to infrastructure and utilities.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 10 June, Russia's defence ministry claimed on seizing control of another village in southern part of eastern Ukraine. The village located in Donetsk is partially occupied by Ukraine and according to the report, Russian troops continue to advance further into the settlement of Staromaiorske. In July 2023, Ukrainian troops had captured back the village during its counteroffensive but it gained only limited success. Staromaiorske which is located on southwestern of the Donetsk region experience fierce fighting at present.

On 10 June, *YonhapNews* reported on the upcoming visit of Vladimir Putin, the Russian President's plan to North Korea and Vietnam was confirmed by the Russian Ambassador to North Korea Alexander Matsegora. After 24 years, Putin is expected to visit North Korea to strengthen military ties and cooperation following the leaders' summit. The visit would increase doubts over suspected provision of weapons and munitions to Russia in exchange for Russia's assistance in advanced military technologies.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 11 June, European Commission announced the signing of EUR 1.4 billion of new guarantee and grant agreements to support Ukraine's recovery and attract investment from private sector. The agreements underlined EU's steadfast commitment to support Ukraine. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission said: "The European Union is rallying financial firepower to help Ukraine resist and recover. From the proceeds of immobilized Russian assets, to our €50 billion Ukraine Facility, we will make sure Ukraine has all the support it needs." The agreements consist of EUR one billion of loan guarantees and blended finance worth EUR 400 million which will benefit private companies and small to medium sized enterprises. The focus relies on energy infrastructure, rehabilitation, and repair. The entire list of programmes aims to unlock EUR six billion investments which includes initiatives to support Ukraine's private sector, Resilience, Reconstruction and regeneration of Ukraine programme, infrastructure and financial inclusion programme focusing majorly on reconstruction, Ukraine's energy sector, green, circular economy and critical infrastructure.

On 11 June, in a ceremony attended by international representatives, Brigadier General Avraam Kazantzoglou Deputy Commander of NATO's southern Combined Air Operations Centre in Spain handed over the mission-ready certificate to the Finnish F/A-18, Lieutenant Colonel Rami Lindström Detachment Commander. The deployment of the fighter jets for NATO's air policing mission in Romania became Finland air force's first-ever major contribution to NATO's collective peacetime missions, after it joined the alliance in 2023. The seven Finnish F/A-18 jets will fly air policing sorties alongside the British Royal Air Force Typhoons along with Romanian F-16 fighter jets operating out of Borcea air base, responding to potential threats to Romania's airspace watching over the territorial integrity. In addition, the Finnish and UK fighter aircraft took part in joint

manoeuvres, assurance operations, and training exercises with other Allied forces in the area and abroad.

On 11 June, the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024 commenced in Berlin. Robert Habeck, German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action during the conference expressed on Germany's firm stance for Ukraine. According to Habeck, Ukraine provides a wide range of opportunities at the economic level with massive natural resources, showing potential for development and highly educated population. He called for German and international companies to make use of such opportunities and invest in Ukraine early. Yulia Svyrydenko, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy of Ukraine stated how many foreign investors find Ukraine as an attractive place. She added: "By preparing for joining the EU, we are laying the foundations for a successful future of our country. We are also putting together guarantee and financing programs for investors." She highlighted nine billion euros given under the EU Investment Framework to prioritise on energy, logistics, critical raw materials and digital transformation with an aim to boost Ukrainian market.

On 11 June, the US State Department confirmed the lift of its long-standing ban on weapon supplies and training to Ukraine's Azov brigade. The decision was made after a vetting process which "found no evidence of gross violations of human rights" after the brigade's controversial origins were allegedly linked to far-right groups. The vetting process comes under U.S Leahy Law, under which a military unit found violating Human Rights means it can be cut off from U.S military assistance. The move received praise from the Azov brigade, a volunteer militia battalion set up in May 2014 to combat Russian forces in the Donbas regions, but was condemned by Moscow, with accusations of U.S flirting with neo-Nazis being alleged by Russia's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. This comes from Russian President Vladimir Putin's false claims about a "neo-Nazi regime" in Ukraine to justify his multiple incursions into Ukraine. The ban had originally come about when UN reports arose in 2016 about the

brigade looting civilian property which led to displacement. However, the current leadership of the regiment claimed that its members have no ties to any extremist or far-right organisations.

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War in Ukraine: Day 838

Ukraine's claims successful attack on Russian anti-aircraft missile systems

War on the Ground

On 10 June, according to *The Kyiv Independent*, Ukrainian forces attacked Russian S-400 and S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems in several areas in Russia occupied Crimea overnight. According to the report, two S-300 anti-aircraft missile units were attacked near occupied Chornomorske and Yevpatoria, while one S-400 anti-aircraft missile unit was hit near Dzhankoi. Ukraine's General Staff claimed that Russian air defence earlier failed to intercept the missiles which struck the ferry crossing in

occupied Kerch with US-provided long-range ATACMS missiles.

On 09 June, in an interview with Donbas Realia (Radio Liberty project), Serhiy Golubtsov, head of aviation of the Air Force Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine spoke about the modernized F-16 fighter jets. These are expected to be used for high-precision weapons that Ukraine would receive. Golubtsov said: "Along with the modernised planes, with an improved sight for detecting air targets, a special container will be provided, which allows you to find and direct missiles and bombs at ground targets." He also added that a certain number of aircraft will be stored abroad to avoid them being hit in Russian attacks in Ukraine. He added: "This will be our reserve in case of need for replacement of faulty planes during routine maintenance." As per the report, there is higher risk after Russia warned against NATO bases hosting aircraft and weapons for Ukraine. While Golubtsov highlighted the requirement of more aircraft to gain air superiority, the Ukrainian Air Force is still undergoing the training of F-16 pilots in the West.

On 10 June, *Politico* reported on the resignation of the head of Ukraine's restoration and infrastructure development agency, Mustafa Nayyem who blamed the systemic obstacles in the government in performing his duties. He stated that his agency faced constant confrontation, resistance and artificial obstacles. Additionally, Oleksandr Kubrakov, Infrastructure Minister's dismissal in May will lead to the absence of both infrastructure officials at the conference. The two management problems increased the doubt on Kyiv's transparency and reliability. According to a government report, the total cost of rebuilding Ukraine over the next decade is estimated at USD 486 billion. After the Russian attacks on energy facilities, the reconstruction ability dropped and the government dismissed Kubrakov citing the need for ministerial reforms. However, both the ministers were popular for their performance among the Ukrainian civil society and also worked with the anti-corruption authorities.

On 10 June, *Russia 24 TV* reported on the injury of three soldiers with a local territorial defence unit and a Russia 24 cameraman in Belgorod Region. Vyacheslav Gladkov, Governor of Belgorod confirmed the same and revealed on its occurrence in a town near the Russian-Ukrainian border where indiscriminate artillery and missile strikes were often witnessed during the conflict. Russian forces advanced into the Kharkiv Region in early May 2024, taking control of many border towns and villages in an attempt to establish a buffer zone to prevent further attacks on Russian territory.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 10 June, Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation claimed to seize control of another village in the southern part of eastern Ukraine. The village located in Donetsk is partially occupied by Ukraine and according to the report, Russian troops continue to advance further into the settlement of Staromaiorske. In July 2023, Ukrainian troops had captured back the village during its counteroffensive but it gained only limited success. Staromaiorske which is located on southwestern of the Donetsk region experience fierce fighting at present.

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The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 10 June, in a media conference on the Peace Summit in Bern, Swiss Federal Councillors, Ignazio Cassis and Viola Amherd stated that nearly 90 countries and organisations, confirmed attending the Ukraine peace summit. The Swiss President stated: "This is not about propaganda...This

is about the basis of humanitarian aid provided by Switzerland, based on fostering peace (and) to provide a platform to initiate a dialogue." while most of the top country leaders would be attending the summit, the representatives from US include Kamala Harris, US Vice President and Jake Sullivan, US national security adviser. The final list of participants is awaited and key developing countries like Turkey, South Africa, Brazil and India have not confirmed their delegates. Since Russia was not invited to the peace talks which aimed at the Ukrainian proposals, China and Brazil refused to attend unless both sides took part equally. However, Cassis claimed that Russia would eventually join the peace process and that Switzerland is in frequent contact with authorities in Moscow about the conference. The summit's agenda includes nuclear security, humanitarian aid and food security. Around 4,000 military personnel are expected to be deployed to provide security and support air transportation, surveillance and roll out security fencing and steel wire for the event.

On 10 June, according to *South China Morning Post*, Belarus was starting the second phase of the exercises practicing the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin, the Belarusian Defence Minister claimed that they were proactive measures to increase readiness to use the nuclear weapons." He also added: "We are a peaceful state, we do not threaten or seek confrontation with anyone, but we will keep our powder dry!" In 2023, Belarus hosted a few Russian warheads designed for use on the battlefield, which was a warning sign for the West against escalation.

On 10 June, according to *ABC News*, US and Poland launched an international operation in Warsaw to help Ukraine counter Russian disinformation. The new Ukraine Communications Group, including representatives from 12 countries comprising many NATO members and Ukraine, was inaugurated. James Rubin, a senior U.S. diplomat responsible for countering disinformation said: "The challenge in information warfare is not only to know what the Russians are doing, it's to

also figure out what are the best ways to combat it". Poland, which is increasingly a target of sabotage and other disruptive measures by the Russian secret services joined the group initiated by the US.

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War in Ukraine: Day 836 and 837

Russia reports massive Ukraine attack in Luhansk and Kherson

War on the Ground

On 08 June, Ukraine government announced on reducing of power consumption. Following this, all the ministries and regional authorities were asked to stop the air conditioning and external lighting. This came as Russian attacks increased on energy infrastructure pushing for major blackouts and creating pressure to save electricity. Deny Shmyhal called the situation to be "significant deficit."

On 09 June, Ukraine's air force claimed on air defence shooting out 13 Russian drones over central Poltava region, southeastern Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts, and the Kharkiv oblast. According to Serhiy

Lysak, Dnipropetrovsk regional governor the overnight drone attack had damaged commercial and residential buildings. While another Ukraine spokesperson claimed on Ukrainian military controlling more than half of Vovchansk where the fighting has been intense since Russia launched its latest offensive in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv in May.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 08 June, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President stated that Russia had no intention in using nuclear weapons to win in Ukraine. In an international economic forum in Moscow, he stressed on seeing no visible condition to use nuclear weapons as Russia follow the principle of using only on basic of threat to sovereignty and territorial integrity.

On 08 June, Russian appointed authorities in Luhansk and Kherson oblasts reported on Ukrainian strikes across the cities killing more than 25 and injuring more than 50. Vladimir Saldo, head of Russian occupation authorities in Kherson said: "A Himars missile struck shortly afterwards as residents from neighbouring houses rushed to help the victims" On 09 June, Interfax reported on increase in the death by six but no claims were observed from Ukraine.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 09 June, the UK Ministry of Defence reported on Russia's installation of eight barges in the southern side of Kerch Bridge in Crimea. It was seen as effort to defend the Ukrainian Unmanned Surface Vehicles to protect the bridge and shipping lane. According to the ministry, the installation was complete between 10 and 22 May.

On 08 June, Joe Biden, US President and Emmanuel Macron, France's President remembered the 80th anniversary of D-day and called for support to Ukraine. Biden during his address said the US and the allies "will not bow down" and assured to "stand for freedom." Biden added: "To surrender to bullies, to bow down to dictators, is simply unthinkable."

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War in Ukraine: Day 835

"All negotiations are based on either military defeat, or military victory.

War on the Ground

On 07 June, in a speech before the French National Assembly on the D-Day commemorations Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President compared Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the fight against Nazi Germany. Emmanuel Macron, France's President announced on sending Mirage 2000 fighter jets to Ukraine to increase its direct military support to Kyiv. They had recently stopped donating fighter jets arguing on Kyiv to focus on procuring F-16s. Zelenskyy also urged the Western allies to speed up weapon deliveries to halt Russia's increasing aggression.

On 07 June, *Euronews* reported on the European Commission announcement on Ukraine and Moldova fulfilling the criteria to start formal negotiations on their accession to the EU. They both were granted candidate status just months after the war began in 2022. Although the accession process involves a long list of reforms to meet a series of judicial, constitutional, and economic reforms. According to the report, Ukraine had completed outstanding reforms related to curbing oligarchs, and corruption along with protection of the rights of national minorities. Meanwhile, Moldova was tied up with some pending judicial reforms. Since the decision to commence the talks remained with the member states, it was firmly opposed by Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary citing the corruption levels and the lack of measures to protect the rights of the Hungarian minority in the border region. With Orbán's government set to take the presidency of the European Council, the member states fear further derailment as it has the power to set the agenda and chair the meetings. The

Ukrainian officials revealed that they were looking forward to the decision of EU member states.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 07 June, at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) Vladimir Putin, Russian President on question over peace talks stated that it was based on either defeat or victory, but for him, Russia intends to win. Further, he added on the need for trust in people for a peace negotiation. Referring to the Minsk peace processes, Putin stated how he tried to resolve the conflict in the Donbas region in 2014. In the speech, Putin explained since Russian and the US had sophisticated systems to detect incoming missiles, the European members of NATO were defenseless. He also expressed confidence in Russia's tactical nuclear weapons which were enough to tackle both the European and the US weapons. He also warned about the "infinite casualties" posed by these wars. On nuclear escalation, he rejected the possibility by saying that Russia's nuclear doctrine allowed the use of nuclear weapons only in case of threats to sovereignty and integrity.

On the same forum, Putin stated how Russia's economic growth had exceeded more than any global powers without any reliance on gas and oil. He revealed that Russia's GDP had expanded in 2024 amid the depreciation due to the Ukraine-related sanctions in 2022. The increase of 3.6 per cent was seen from 1.2 per cent in 202, stemmed mostly from non-resource-based industries like manufacturing, construction, logistics, communications, and agriculture, along with supporting industries such as trade, hospitality, and financial services. He stated that Russia had achieved its goal of joining the four largest economies as it is now ranked as the fourth largest economy surpassing Japan and Germany according to the data of the World Bank. Despite many sanctions on Russian banks and cut off from the international SWIFT interbank messaging system, to freeze USD 300 billion in Russian foreign exchange reserves, Putin highlighted on Russia's steady economic growth. Most analysts claim the reason for its influence in the African markets, the

Middle East, and Asia, and the fiscal changes adopted by the country's financial authorities. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had predicted the Russian economy to grow faster than any advanced economy in 2024.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 07 June, *swissinfo.ch* reported on Viola Amherd, Switzerland's President considering the peace conference as a prelude to the upcoming negotiations. In an interview to the Frankfurter Allgemeine, she said that since both parties needed to be at the meeting for negotiations, a peace agreement would not be signed. The peace conference which is supposed to take place between 15 and 16 June at the Bürgenstock resort above Lake Lucerne, will host more than eighty countries. It is intended to create a platform for peace dialogue in Ukraine, humanitarian issues, nuclear safety, freedom of navigation, and food security. Amherd also highlighted the importance of the participation of countries close to Russia. She stated that the countries who confirmed their attendance were from western Europe, the other half from Africa, South America, and Asia.

On 07 June, at a news conference in Sweden that Ukraine NATO Secretary General Jons Stoltenberg said that NATO had the right to self-defend and to hit legitimate military targets as per international law. He said he was considering arming the western allies' enemies in retaliation. The Russian Defence Ministry had accused the Ukrainian forces of firing five US-supplied ATACMS missiles at the Russian-controlled eastern Ukrainian city of Luhansk wounding twenty people. The Russia-installed governor of that region, Leonid Pasechnik also reported that three had been killed in the firing, raising the number of victims to thirty-five including three children. He also revealed that thirty-three buildings had been damaged in an airstrike. The Defence Ministry also reported on its air defence systems shooting down four of the five missiles that damaged two residential apartment blocks alleging the attack as deliberate.

On 07 June, in a meeting with Zelenskyy in Paris, Joe Biden, the President of the US

apologised to Ukraine for a six-month holdup of USD 61 billion military aid package for Ukraine. The President insisted on standing with Ukraine for a long period. Earlier, they had met in Normandy, France where Biden drew parallels between the Nazi forces and the Russian troops invading Ukraine. Following the discussion between both leaders, Zelenskyy called for all US to support Ukraine. Russia is observed to take advantage of Kyiv's shortage of weapons along the 1,000-kilometre front line. Although Ukraine had managed to thwart the Russian troops with US aid, the slow pace of delivery of promised weapons and aid had caused a strain in their relationship.

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War in Ukraine: Day 834

EU exit polls indicate a green signal for the Netherlands Right-wing

War on the Ground

On 06 June, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President arrived Normandy for the D-Day anniversary. The day is remembered in Normandy as France helped in winning the World War II against Nazi Germany. Zelenskyy said: "Allies defended Europe's freedom then, and Ukrainians do so now. Unity prevailed then, and true unity can

prevail today.” During his visit in Normandy, he is expected to meet Joe Biden, the US President to discuss on how Ukraine can capture back Russian occupied territories. On the same day, Emmanuel Macron, France’s President and Zelenskyy are expected to sign two agreements worth EUR 650 million on loans and grants to support critical infrastructure such as energy and facilities damaged in Russian attacks.

On 06 June, Ukraine’s energy company, Ukrhydroenergo reported on launching of international arbitration demanding compensation against Russia’s destruction of Kakhovka dam and power plant. The dam was massively attacked in June 2023 where the company reported a damage of EUR 2.5 billion. It is one of the six dams located on the Dnipro River and the attack resulted in flooding of farmland and leaving people without drinking water. Such dams are critical to Ukraine’s energy as it generate electricity but has been subject to repeated Russian missile attacks.

The Moscow View

On 06 June, the TASS reported on Ukrainian armed forces attack on 11 districts in Belgorod region resulting in damage of civilian infrastructure. The same was confirmed by Vyacheslav Gladkov, Regional Governor. According to him, the Oktyabrsky and Maysky settlements and several villages inside Belgorod district were shelled. He also observed on kamikaze drone attacking an oil depot in Starooskol city resulting in explosion of tanks.

On 06 June, the TASS reported on Russian forces destruction of Ukrainian naval drone facility and an unmanned aerial vehicle. According to the report from Russian defence ministry, the forces used operational and tactical aircraft, missile troops and artillery of the Russian groups to destroy naval drone depot and Ukrainian army in 127 locations. The ministry also claimed on improved positions in the frontline where Ukraine’s 57th motorised infantry and other mechanized brigades were present.

The West View

Responses of the US and Europe

On 06 June, in his speech at the D-Day

memorial Joe Biden, the US President drew comparison of the fight for freedom in World War II and Ukraine. He said: “We will not walk away because if we do Ukraine will be subjugated and it will not end there.” On the same day, the US announced on sending USD 225 military aid to Ukraine which includes, munition. According to the report in the Associated Press, the military aid will include “High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) rounds, HAWK air defense ammunition, Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, Javelin anti-armor systems, 155mm Howitzers, armored vehicles, trailers, patrol boats, demolition materials” and equipment. Along with this, Macron also assured to give Mirage 2000-5 combat aircraft. Macron said: “A new cooperation with Ukraine and the sale of Mirage 2000-5 [jets] ... to allow Ukraine to protect its soil [and] airspace.”

On 06 June, in an address to the lower house of the parliament of Germany, Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor issued a statement on national security. He reiterated Germany’s support to Ukraine and said: “Peace does not mean capitulation.” He rejected: “to allow the return of war as the continuation of politics by other means.” Scholz said that if Germany had to accept imperialism it would threaten the security of Germany and whole Europe. His comment comes as Germany along with the US allowed Ukraine to use its weapons on targeting inside Russia.

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War in Ukraine: Day 833

Putin warns on opting asymmetric measures if West found directly involved

War on the Ground

On 05 June, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President arrived in Qatar for talks with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. They are expected to discuss on bilateral, economic and security issues.

On 05 June, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on Ukrainian forces claims on shooting down 22 Russian drones. According to the report by Ukraine’s air force, the drones were traced to have launched from Cape Chauda in Crimea and Kursk oblast which is 95 kilometres from Russia-Ukraine border. Mykola Oleshchuk, Ukraine’s air force commander said: “...anti-aircraft systems and electronic warfare units, as well as mobile fire groups of the Ukrainian air force had intercepted the drones over Mykolaiv, Kherson, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, and Poltava oblasts.”

On 05 June, *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* reported on death of one and injury of five over Russian forces attack in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk area. Vadym Filashkin, Governor of Donetsk said: “One person was killed and five were wounded. These are the consequences of bombardments this morning in the Donetsk region.” According to a report, the attack was carried out as a separate aerial attack on Toretsk and Selydove.

The Moscow View

On 05 June, in a meeting with international news agencies, Vladimir Putin, Russia’s President stated that Russia considered western supplied weapons as “asymmetric measures” and condemned the US for giving intelligence and target information. Putin said: “If someone deems it possible to supply such weapons to the war zone, to strike our territory... why shouldn’t we supply similar weapons to those regions of the world, where they will be used against sensitive sites of these countries?” He warned over continued escalations resulting in

destruction of international relations and security. Putin stressed on if direct participation was observed against Russia it would “act in a similar way.” He stated that Ukraine’s Armed Forces had lost 50,000 service personnel which was viewed five times than Russia. He said that close to 1,348 Russian servicemen were held till now in Ukraine as prisoners while 6,465 Ukrainian servicemen were under Russian hold. On Ukraine’s mobilization Putin said: “...there aren’t very many volunteers... It doesn’t solve the problem. All of the people they are able to mobilize go to replace the battlefield losses”

On 05 June, Sergei Lavrov, during his visit to Africa warned on any French military instructor present in Ukraine to be “legitimate target” for Russian forces. In the joint conference with the Republic of Congo, he confirmed on the presence of French instructors in Ukraine and stated that they would not have immunity. He added: “Regardless of their status, military officials or mercenaries represent a legitimate target for our armed forces.” He also announced on sending additional military supplies and personnel to Burkina Faso to boost defence capabilities and counter terrorism. Lavrov following the visit said: “we have been very closely engaged in all areas of cooperation, including the development of military and military-technical ties.”

The West View

Responses of the US and Europe

On 05 June, Joe Biden, US President arrived in Paris to take part in the D-day celebrations in Normandy. He is expected to give a high-profile speech and meeting Emmanuel Macron, France’s President and Zelenskyy to discuss on the war efforts to counter Russia. Apart from meeting Biden, Macron is also scheduled to meet Justin Trudeau, Canadian Prime Minister and British King Charles.

On 05 June, *The Guardian* reported on Donald Tusk, Poland’s Prime Minister announcement of a committee to investigate into Russian and Belarus influence in Poland. According to the report, Poland has been one of strong allies in aiding Ukraine but has been subject to increased cyber-attacks to

deter European parliament elections. According to Poland, Russian hackers are suspected to be behind the disinformation spread. Tusk said: "what the real threats from Russia and Belarus look like today... We already know exactly that these two countries and their services are the most active in Poland."

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War in Ukraine: Day 832

UK and Latvia opens bid for company proposals to produce drones under joint coalition

War on the Ground

On 04 June, *Ukrinform* reported on Volodymyr Zelenskyy's daily address focusing on military personnel, the energy sector, and upcoming meetings with the officials to decide on Ukraine's next steps in the war. According to Oleksandr Syrskiy, Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief, and Anatoliy Barhylevych, Chief of the General Staff, the majority of the battles and attacks were happening in the Donetsk region. He also added on to the advantages of long-range drones which boosted Ukraine's strength and ability to derail Russia. Lastly, he emphasised the state's readiness to respond to any form of attack along with the bid to consolidate the world for peace in Ukraine.

On 05 June, *Ukrinform* reported that around 4000 soldiers will be deployed for the Global

Peace Summit to be held on 15 and 16 in Switzerland. They will be responsible for helping with various tasks such as site security, surveillance, command support, and logistics from 05 to 19 June. While the army will support the civilian authorities, the military personnel will assist the Nidwalden cantonal police in charge of protecting critical facilities and air transport. In addition, they will also provide surveillance on lakes and provide logistics and command support.

The West View

Responses of the US and Europe

On 04 June, *Ukrinform* reported on the UK and Latvia as part of the drone capability coalition for companies to supply first-person view drones to Ukraine. Members of this coalition include the UK, Latvia, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and Ukraine with more countries considering joining. The competition aimed at producing drones at an affordable price to strengthen the Western industry. It was open to all industries from any country that were part of the Defence Contact Group. The companies were given a deadline of 28 June to submit their proposals followed by an evaluation by the members of the coalition. The succeeding companies will then receive orders to supply drones to Ukraine.

On 04 June, *France24* reported on the upcoming meeting of Emmanuel Macron, France's President with Zelenskyy to discuss the needs of Ukraine. According to the statement released by the Presidential palace Elysee: "As Russian strikes intensify on the front line and against energy infrastructure, the two presidents will discuss the situation on the ground." Their meeting is expected to take place after D-Day commemorations. Zelenskyy will also visit the Franco-German arms group KNDS whose artillery guns were being used in Ukraine. He will also be scheduled to give a speech at France's National. This was criticised by the opposition leaders saying that it was "inappropriate" to invite Zelenskyy to speak ahead of the elections. Since Macron's announcement to provide more weapons and training to the Ukrainian army, he has faced criticism from his allies along with

warnings from Moscow over a possible Russian strike.

On 03 June, *POLITICO* reported that Joe Biden, the US President decision to not attend the Global Peace Summit in Switzerland. Instead, Kamala Harris, the Vice President, and Jake Sullivan, the National Security Advisor will represent the US according to a statement by the White House. In response, Zelenskyy said that the absence of the US “...would only be met by an applause by Putin — a personal, standing applause.”

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War in Ukraine: Day 831

War on the Ground

On 03 June, Ferdinand R Marcos Jr Philippines President and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine President held a meeting to strengthen their 32-year-old diplomatic ties as Ukraine is set to open its embassy in Manila. Zelenskyy arrived in Manila for a one-day on a working visit after his meeting at the 21st edition of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. Zelensky expressed his sincere gratitude for the continued support offered by Philippines and to the strong stand of the President on the issues affecting Ukraine. The meeting was also an attempt to urge the Asian leaders to join the global peace summit in Switzerland. In response, Marcos promised their continued support for promoting peace and to end the fight even through agencies

such as the EU, and UN. The diplomatic ties between them commenced on 07 April 1992. By 2022, Ukraine ranked as the 90th trading partner of the Philippines, the 119th export market and 76th import source. The total trade between the countries was recorded at USD 16.9 million with export valued at USD 1.49 million and imports at USD 15.41 million.

On 03 June, *Reuters* reported on an overnight Russian attack on a recreation complex leading to death of one and injury of two in the Zmiiv district of Kharkiv oblast. Oleh Synehubov, Governor of the Kharkiv oblast confirmed the same. Both Russia and Ukraine reject claims of targeting civilians in the war but the border city of Kharkiv has witnessed intense attacks as Russian troops launched a new offensive.

On 02 June Ukrainian journalist Iryna Tsybukh who volunteered as a combat medic was killed in an exchange in the Kharkiv area. Tsybukh had facilitated the evacuation of wounded soldiers and had given first aid to many. Her death evoked a wide reaction in social media when her letter went viral which said: “To have the strength to be a free person, one must be brave.” Along with the thousands of people, soldiers, activists, and journalists had followed her on social media. According to the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, at least 91 media workers had been killed since the invasion in 2022.

On 03 June, in response to Zelenskyy's comments in the Shangri-La Dialogue, Mao Ning, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson rejected his claims on China's influence on other countries over peace Summit. She countered saying it placed great importance on the peace summit by maintaining a close connection with all the parties. Earlier, Zelenskyy pointed out Beijing's role in prolonging the war by pressuring other countries to boycott the Switzerland peace summit. He called for representatives from Asian countries to join the summit which would focus on issues such as nuclear security, food security, the release of prisoners of war along with Zelenskyy's 10-point peace plan. The plan seeks to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity and demands for withdrawal of Russian troops. Mao

revealed that Beijing would not send representatives as the meeting did not meet China's requests and expectations. Ahead of Zelenskyy's speech, Dong Jun, Chinese Defence Minister stressed on China's will to maintain a neutral stance on the war and said it had not provided military aid to both members.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 03 June, the Kremlin warned on "fatal consequences" for the US if it ignored the warnings from Moscow on usage of US weapons by Ukraine. This came as a result of Joe Biden Ukraine to hit back the advancing troops in Kharkiv. Earlier, Putin warned on western governments against this move by asking how the US would react if such serious consequences occurred in Europe. Sergei Ryabkov, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister also added that Putin's warning "must be taken with utmost seriousness."

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 03 June, two pro-Russian activists in Germany Elena Kolbasnikova and Max Schlund moved to Russia who were active in organising pro-Kremlin rallies urging Berlin to halt its military aid to Kyiv. According to *Reuters* report in 2023, both were engaged in brewing pro-Moscow stance in Germany with financial support from a Russian government agency. Following a raid in August 2023 in their home in north-west Germany, the German prosecutors found them to have used the funds collected through rallies to buy walkie-talkie radios, headphones, and telephones for a Russian army division fighting in Ukraine. According to their lawyer Markus Beisicht: "They say that they can no longer live in Germany as Russian citizens due to the serious Russophobia." Despite the ongoing criminal proceedings against them, they are believed to have complied with the law.

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War in Ukraine Day: 829 and 830

Zelenskyy calls global participation for peace summit

War on the Ground

On 02 June, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President during his visit to Singapore is expected to talk on "Re-Imagining Solutions for Global Peace and Regional Stability." He also held a meeting with Prabowo Subiant, Indonesia President and US Congress delegation calling support for the peace summit to be held in Switzerland between 15 and 16 June. He said: "It is very important for us to begin the process of establishing a just peace... Therefore, we must work together with the entire world to bring peace closer."

On the same day, in his address, Zelenskyy mentioned his "disappointment" in international leaders who are yet to confirm their participation in the peace summit scheduled in Switzerland. He stated that confirmed received till now from 100 countries while China has announced its decision to not attend. He also thanked Germany, the US and the Netherlands for their military aid especially in providing air defence systems.

On 01 June, Ukraine's air force reported on Russia's massive missile attacks on Ukraine's energy and critical infrastructure injuring

19. It claimed on shooting 35 out of 53 Russian missiles and 46 out of 27 drones since March. Whereas Ukraine's energy operator reported on damage of the grid facilities across eastern, central and western. In response, Zelenskyy called for additional air defences. He said: "Our partners know exactly what is needed for this. Additional Patriot and other modern air defense systems for Ukraine."

On 01 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Zelenskyy scheduled visit to Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. According to the report, his agenda includes winning support for Kyiv and garner more weapons to counter Russia. This continues as part of his previous visits to Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Belgium.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 02 June, Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation reported on Russian forces capture of Umanskoye, a village in Donbas located on E50 highway near north of city of Donetsk and west of Avdiivka. The ministry confirmed on capturing using Russia's "Center" group. According to the report in *RT*, Russian forces had already captured the village in May and its motorised brigade has been deployed. This was also evidenced in a video posted showcasing intense fight in the village using drones and artillery and Russian flag being hoisted. According to Igor Kimakovsky, Russian spokesperson, the Ukraine military had used the area to target the Russian captured zone in Donetsk and Russia's hold would grant control to a key highway which leads to Pokrovsk in the west of Donbas. This move is considered significant as Ukraine's supply routes, troops line would be difficult to continue.

On 01 June, *RT* reported on Russian military carrying out long-range strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and warehouses which consists western equipment. Russian defence ministry issued a statement on using high-precision air and sea based weapons to target the energy facilities which supports defence industrial operations. It stated that, the attacks were in response to Ukraine's attempt to attack Russian energy and

transport facilities. Earlier, Ukraine had claimed on striking oil processing plants across Russia and using US-supplies ATACMS missiles to target Crimean Bridge.

The West View Responses of the US and Europe

On 02 June, in a meeting held with Zelenskyy, Llyod Austin, US Secretary of Defence reiterated the US commitment to maintain its support for Ukraine. In an official statement he said: "The two leaders pledged to further strengthen the strategic defense partnership between the United States and Ukraine." During the meeting, Zelenskyy acknowledged discussion on defence needs, boosting Ukraine's air defence systems, F-16 coalition and preparation of bilateral security agreement.

On 02 June, in an interview, Klaus Hoffmann, German advisor to Ukraine estimated that close to 133,000 war crimes were suspected on Russia on investigation. According to him, there was an increased war crimes totalling 56,000 by 2022, with most being "comprehensively recorded." This included majorly Russian airstrikes on civilians, forced adoption and kidnapping of children which formed basis for International Criminal Court arrest warrant against Putin. He expressed his personal opinion on Russian action being "Terrorism against a civilian population."

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EM Short Notes*

By Neha Tresa George, Govind Anoop, Padmashree Anandhan and Ken B Varghese



Source: Andy Wong/The AP, Alex Brandon/AP Photo/picture alliance, REUTERS/Radovan Stoklasa, AFP/ Le Monde, BBC

AUSTRIA

Social Democrats to fund media for youth

On 18 June, the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) put forth a proposal to fund a newspaper subscription aimed at the age demographic of 16-30-year-olds in an attempt to combat fake news. The SPÖ stated, "Every day we are flooded with contradictory or unconfirmed news. We need high-quality and critical journalism that is available to all citizens free of charge." This was followed by their placing as the third most popular party in the recent European Parliamentary elections and it came as Reporters without Borders (RSF) criticised the financial health of Austria's quality media and called for funds to be allocated based on the quality of the media rather than circulation. The proposal put forth by SPÖ would require the state to subsidise up to EUR 150 per year on media subscriptions for 16-30-year-old Austrians. A report by the Reuters Institute for the

Study of Journalism and Oxford University suggests that currently, only 35 per cent of Austrians have trust in the news. Austria is set to conduct national elections in late September after the European polls where SPÖ placed third with 23.3 per cent support behind the Austrian People's Party (24.5 per cent) and the Freedom Party of Austria (25.4 per cent). ("[Austria's social democrats want to fund media subscriptions for young voters](#)," *Politico*, 18 June 2024)

BELARUS

Report on Human Right issues released by jointly with Russia

On 20 June, Russia and Belarus released a joint report on the human rights situation in over 40 countries. The reports were published on the websites of their respective Foreign Ministries and looked at several EU countries, the UK, the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Ukraine and Moldova. In an address to the reader in the report, both

* 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.

Yuri Ambrazevich, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Sergei Vershinin, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister noted that the Western 'model democracies' have shown racist and neo-colonial views. The report looked at past and present examples to portray the "negative human practices and trends". The authors also highlighted the double standards seen in the assessment of the events and observed that authorities in Western nations were attempting to "justify their failure to act by hypocritically claiming the allegedly absolute nature of the right to freedom of expression". Some of the accusations brought up include systemic racism, police misconduct and unilateral sanctions in the US, neo-Nazi propaganda being spread in Ukraine and the treatment of migrants by Poland. (["Belarus, Russia issue joint report on human rights situation in certain countries"](#), *Belta*, 20 June 2024)

DENMARK

Instant Ramen banned to be sold under health hazard norm

On 12 June, three South Korean instant ramen products were recalled by the Denmark food agency as they were so hot it might cause "acute poisoning." These three products were assessed to have active high levels of capsaicin, chilli peppers according to the Danish Veterinary and food administration. These three products from the Samyang instant ramen line – Buldak 3x Spicy & Hot Chicken, 2x Spicy & Hot Chicken, and Hot Chicken Stew Were being asked to withdraw from sales in Denmark. It has also issued a warning against children eating the noodles and has asked the parents to contact "Poison Line" if their children appeared to show "acute symptoms." This is the first time Samyang foods have been recalled because they were deemed too hot and said that they would work to better understand local regulations in export markets. (["Denmark recalls South Korean firm's instant noodles for being too spicy."](#) *The Guardian*, 12 June 2024)

Prime Minister Mette Fredericksen assaulted in Copenhagen

On 07 June, Police arrested a man after

Prime Minister Mette Fredericksen was assaulted in Copenhagen. The Prime Minister's office said that she was "shocked by the incident." The Copenhagen police had confirmed his arrest but did not provide much information regarding the motive. This attack came just two days before the European Parliament election. In response to this incident, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said: "Dear Statsmin Mette, I was so shocked at the news of you being assaulted tonight. I condemn this despicable act which goes against everything we believe and fight for in Europe. I wish you strength and courage - I know you have plenty of both." Meanwhile, Metsola had said that the attack was appealing and that "Violence has no place in politics." These kinds of similar attacks on European politicians have been increasing in recent days. (["Danish PM Mette Frederiksen assaulted in Copenhagen"](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 07 June 2024)

FRANCE

President Macron warns over civil war

On 24 June, Emmanuel Macron, French President warned over spark of a civil war if far left or far right won in the snap election. Macron criticised both groups for pursuing policies which would spark tensions between communities. Macron continued to condemn Far-left led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon who encouraged division for elections which provoked civil war as "it reduces people to their ethnic group." According to the recent polls, the National Rally is expected to win 35 per cent in the first round, ahead of left-wing alliance which includes France Unbowed party and Macron's centrists. He added: "When you are fed up, and daily life is hard, you can be tempted to vote for the extremes that have quicker solutions. But the solution will never be to reject others." (["Macron warns of 'civil war' if far left or far right wins."](#) *Politico*, 24 June 2024)

Macron announces his stay till 2027, promises change

On 23 June, Emmanuel Macron, President of France, announced that he would stay in his

position regardless of the outcome of the snap parliamentary elections that was called by him earlier this month. In an open letter, Macron wrote "The incoming government, which will necessarily reflect your vote, will I hope to resemble the various republicans who will have shown the courage to oppose the extremes". This comes after the Far-Right's victory in the European Parliamentary elections. Polls suggest that Marine Le Pen and the far-right Rassemblement National would be victorious in the snap elections as well. Le Pen stated that Macron's resignation was necessary to avoid the possibility of a hung parliament for the remainder of his term. While Macron acknowledged the decision to call the snap polls may have caused a kerfuffle, he believed that the elections would only answer the question of "who should govern France?" ("[French elections: Macron pledges 'change' and to 'act until 2027' in open letter](#)", *Le Monde*, 23 June 2024)

New Caledonia faces a fresh surge of riots

On 23 June, *France 24* reported on re-emergence of riots across several buildings including the police station and town halls in New Caledonia. According to the French High Commission: "The night was... marked by unrest throughout the mainland and on the island of Pins and Mare, requiring the intervention of numerous reinforcements: with attacks on the police, arson and roadblocks." The unrest left nine dead and infrastructural damage of EUR 1.5 billion. In response, French government sent 3000 troops and police. The High Commission also confirmed on extinguishing several fires in Ducos and Magenta. He also added on destruction and attempted fires several places in Paita, in the Noumea suburbs. On 24 June, many schools were closed due to this riot and on 22 June seven activists linked to May months riots were sent to the mainland for pre-trial detention. ("[Buildings burned, police attacked amid renewed unrest in New Caledonia](#)," *FRANCE 24*, 23 June 2024)

Women rights supporters march

against the far-right party

On 23 June, thousands rallied in France to denounce the far-right National Party calling it "false feminism" and the "real danger" to women rights. The rally comes ahead of the French snap parliamentary election, organised by the French women's associations, NGOs and trade Unions, due to fears over rollback in women rights, especially reproductive rights if the National Rally (NR) wins in the 2024 elections. According to the latest polls, the NR leads while the Left-wing New Popular front comes second. Despite the constitutional guarantee, women rights supporters fear that rights will slowly disappear. Shirley Wirden, officer in charge of women's rights at the French Communist Party said: "During the debates around making abortion a constitutional right, we could well observe how the far-right deputies were very uncomfortable with the subject, they were calling for filling the cribs with French babies." According to the Police reports, 13000 had participated in the rally, while the organisers estimated 75000 people. Due to the rise of the Far-Right in several parts of the EU member states. Sarah Durocher, President of Planning Familial, a reproductive rights NGO, stated "Every time the far right comes to power somewhere, it attacks the right to abortion, so I don't see why there should be any French exception." Similar rallies were held in around 50 cities across France. ("[French women's rights supporters march against far-right ahead of snap polls](#)" *FRANCE 24*, 23 June 2024)

Witness inflation from hikes in food and energy prices

On 14 June, according to the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE), inflation of 2.3 per cent in May was recorded in France. This was slightly higher than April, 2.2 per cent, which was the lowest in the past two years. This is due to food inflation and increase in energy cost to 5.7 per cent in May, increasing the prices of petroleum products. However, we could see the inflation for the service sectors fall by 2.8 per cent in May compared to April. However, other than

inflation, France also saw a higher interest rate on borrowing in 2024. According to Vincent Juvyns, global market strategist at JP Morgan said: "The surprise decision to call for snap elections adds to uncertainty, particularly as France could face an EU procedure for excessive deficits later on this month." (Indrabati Lahiri, "[French inflation up in May driven by higher energy and food prices](#)," *Euro news*, 15 June 2024)

Pope addresses the consequence of AI in the G7

On 14 June, for the first time, the Pope addressed the leaders at the G7 Summit in southern Italy, while addressing them the Pope challenged them to keep human dignity to the highest proprietary and use intelligence. Pope Francis also brought his moral authority to bear on the group of seven. He also offered an ethical take on government policy and corporate boards. In terms of weapons, G7 leaders recognised the impact of AI in the military domain and the need for proper structure for responsible development and use. They also promote the state to make sure "Military use of AI is responsible, complies with applicable international law, particularly international humanitarian law, and enhances international security." ("[Pope Francis attends G7 summit in historic first, warns of dangers of AI](#)," *Euronews*, 15 June 2024)

New Caledonia voting reforms suspended by Macron

On 12 June, Emmanuel Macron, President of France announced the suspension of the voting reforms in New Caledonia. This comes in response to the violence that erupted on 13 May due to the proposal of the said reforms. On 15 May, France had declared a state of emergency and rushed several troop reinforcements to quell the revolt. Both the indigenous Kanaks who are demanding independence and the loyalists to France made barricades to either revolt against authorities or to protect their homes. On 12 June, the death of a 34-year-old man who had been injured in a confrontation with the police on 29 May, was confirmed by the French Justice

Ministry. An autopsy and an enquiry into the actions of the gendarme have been ordered. ("[Macron suspends New Caledonia voting reform after deadly unrest](#)," *France 24*, 13 June 2024)

Macron asks the voters to unite against extremism

On 12 June, Emmanuel Macron, French President asked the voters to reject extremism in the upcoming elections in France. He called for unity against the far Left and right, for national stability. This is due to the rise of the far right across France for the European Election. After the defeat in the European Elections that damaged his domestic authority on losing parliamentary majority. Macron called for a new election: "I don't want to hand the keys of power to the far right in 2027," for the next Presidential election. Macron also highlighted on building eight new nuclear reactors for the energy transition than the pension proposal pitched by the other parties as it would "bankrupt" the pension system. He also said: "The dissolution of the National Assembly is a test of truth between those who choose to strengthen their hand and those who chose to strengthen the hand of France." While addressing the far-right: "We need greater security, we need to reduce illegal immigration, we need to have a stronger response to youth violence and the authority of the Republic must be visible at all levels." Macron has warned that the Far Right under Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella could take France out of NATO and usher in a new "ambiguity" towards Russian aggression in eastern Europe. ("[France: Macron calls on voters to reject 'extremism'](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 June 2024)

LR party expels chairman following decision to join RN

On 12 June, Annie Genevard, spokesperson for the French centre-right party Les Republicains (LR) announced the unanimous decision of the party's political committee to expel their Chairman Eric Ciotti. This came in response to Ciotti's surprise announcement to offer alliance to the Far-Right National Rally (RN) and the unfavourable response from members of

his own party, mainly since it would have to be a junior partner since it only had seven per cent of votes in the European Parliamentary elections in comparison to the 31 percent the RN received. Ciotti did not agree with the vote, believing that the rules were not followed for the vote and that his position as chairperson was unchanged, as suggested by his post on social media: "I am and remain the president." Both Ciotti's expulsion and the declaration of him as the Rightful leader of the LR has been signed in the party's name, suggesting the beckoning of a legal battle. The LR also promised to release their list of candidates by 30 June and 07 July for the snap elections which was announced by President Emmanuel Macron and has shaken French politics. Macron's decision has been largely attributed to the RN's emergence as the largest party in the European Parliament elections last week. (["French conservatives boot leader over far-right pact call," Deutsche Welle, 12 June 2024](#))

President calls for a snap election after the EU Parliament poll defeat

On 09 June, Macron in an online meeting announced that he would dissolve the national assembly since the Far-Right party National Rally had defeated his Renew Party in the EU elections. In the five-minute video address he says, "After having carried out the consultations provided for in Article 12 of our Constitution, I have decided to give you back the choice of our parliamentary future by voting." The NR party had secured 31.37 per cent votes while Macron's centrist party could only score 14.6 per cent. Jordan Bardella asked Macron to take note of the new political situation and the opinions of French people in his victory speech, shortly after the provisional results were declared. He added: "This unprecedented defeat for the current government marks the end of a cycle and day one of the post-Macron era, which it is up to us to build." In Macron's address, he stated that the rise of Far-Rights in the country was a threat and that the national ballot to be held on 30 June and 07 July is a "serious and weighty decision" and

an "act of trust." By calling for snap elections, Macron was not giving enough time for the opposition parties to prepare. According to some political experts, Macron wanted the Far-Right to gain more power and become unpopular before the 2027 presidential election and thus ensure his party's survival.

Since Macron lost his absolute majority in the Presidential elections in 2022 before getting re-elected, this snap election is a massive gamble for him. If the opposition party wins the election, he will be forced to name someone from their ranks as Prime Minister. This newly selected PM will then choose his cabinet ministers, resulting in what the French call a "cohabitation". If the 28-year-old Jordan Bella were to become the Prime Minister, the sharp divisions could affect the national policies since their agendas and ideologies are different. Nonetheless, the EU elections never had an impact on French national politics. Marine Le Pen, the President of the National Rally Party welcomed the snap election decision by saying that "we are ready." She expressed her confidence in the people of France in the upcoming election also. (Alice Tidey, ["Why has French President Emmanuel Macron announced snap elections after EU Parliament poll defeat?" Euronews, 10 June 2024](#); Sophia Khatsenkova, ["France snap elections: Why Macron is gambling with France and Europe?" Euronews, 10 June 2024](#))

Investigators detain man suspected of making explosive devices

On 05 June, the French counterterrorism investigators detained a dual Russian-Ukrainian citizen on suspicion of planning a violent act leading to an explosion which seriously injured himself. According to the prosecutor's office, "Products and materials intended to manufacture explosive devices" were discovered in his hotel room in the Roissy-en-France town, near Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. The case was being dealt under specialist anti-terror prosecutors and France's domestic intelligence agency General Directorate for Internal Security (DGSI) unlike regular

cases. Since, France condemns the man as a Russian spy targeting French military equipment for Ukraine, French investigations and security concerns have been raised. ([‘French counterterrorism police detain Russian-Ukrainian man.’](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 05 June 2024)

GEORGIA

Parliament gives final signal for the foreign agents bill

On 03 June, Shalva Papuashvili, the speaker of Georgia's Parliament gave the final endorsement for the foreign agents bill. He signed the bill into law after the legislature dismissed the veto of Salome Zourabichvili, the Georgian President. Despite weeks of protests, the bill was approved by Parliament, which is controlled by the ruling Georgian Dream party. The law requires nonprofit organizations, the media, and other organizations to register as "pursuing the interests of a foreign power" if they receive more than 20 per cent of their funding from overseas. Zourabichvili, who vetoed the bill, vocally opposed saying: "the bill was hindering the path toward becoming a full member of the free and democratic world." ([‘Georgian parliament speaker signs ‘foreign influence’ bill into law.’](#) *Le Monde*, 03 June 2024)

GERMANY

Population records lesser than predicted

On 24 June, Germany's population Census was published German Population with 1.4 million fewer residents than the predicted 82.7 million. The country's Federal Statistical Office announced the shortfall was particularly marked when it came to the foreign population. The figure reveals that the population was estimated around 2.5 million between the 2011 census and the 2022 census which was less than it had expected. According to the 2022 census, there has been an increase in the women population than men living in Germany. While the Census has suggested that 43.1 million apartments are available to people with an average of 94.4 Square metres. And the basic rent is roughly EUR 7.28 per square metre. The statistics also estimated

that 71.8 million citizens were German citizens and 10.9 million were foreigners. The foreign population was lesser than previously reported. The new date for the next census would be shortly after Russia's attack on Ukraine, which triggered large Refugee movements. ([‘Germany finds population less than previously thought.’](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 25 June 2024)

Annual discrimination report finds 22 per cent increase in complaints

On 25 June, Germany saw a hike in the annual discrimination report by 22 per cent. The largest share of complaints in the total report is based on racist discrimination, followed by discrimination against disabilities and chronic illnesses. Discrimination against gender identity was closely behind with just 2000 complaints from the year. The agency also logged an increase in complaints based on ageism, religion or worldview, and sexual orientation. A quarter of the cases are from workplaces and the rest are from restaurants, supermarkets or public transport, and around 1146 complaints have been lodged against the public and government agencies. Ferda Ataman has appealed to the government to finalise the reform to Germany's General law on treating people also known as AGG to do it fast. According to Ataman: "The reform of the AGG must now have the highest priority." ([‘Germany: Annual discrimination report logs 22% rise in cases.’](#) *Deutsche Welle news*, 25 June 2024)

Witnessed an increase in Islamophobic crimes

On 24 June, a "German lobby group alliance against Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims" known as Claim reported on five criminal acts are motivated by Islamophobia each day in Germany in 2023 and the rates have doubled in 2024. Rima Hanano, Claim's () Director said, "Anti-Muslim racism has never been so socially acceptable as today and it comes from the centre of society." The most common crimes in question were verbal attacks and insults, followed by cases of discrimination, which also included threats and coercion. The

group also stated that there has been a spike in Islamophobic crimes, in the aftermath of the 07 October 2023 terror attack on Israel. It has accelerated the cases by 60 per cent. Various scholars, politicians and officials have signed up to campaign to raise awareness. ("Germany: Islamophobic crimes more than double in 2023," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 June 2024)

Government investigates into third country asylum processes

On 20 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the German government studied the asylum process in other countries, in order to find a model that would be best for its own use. This is based on the UK's plans for asylum procedures in Rwanda and Italy's agreement for asylum procedures in Albania, however its skeptical about the transferability due to the Germany's high legal and practical restrictions. Nancy Faeser, Interior Minister said that the third world country processed asylum claims as it could be a building block for Germany's migration policy. Although she said that it might not change the migration situation in Germany or impact the number of asylum seekers in the country. This was due to confusion over a country's willingness to accept asylum seekers from Germany. Stephan Weil, Lower Saxony Premier, remained doubtful regarding outsourcing the asylum seekers. He advised that such an investigation must lead to a positive result. While Hesse Premier Boris Rhein was convinced that the federal and state governments "will not stop at expert opinions" but will now present "models and concrete proposals for implementation." She also added that this would be a "milestone" for Germany. ("Germany to examine asylum processing in third countries," *Deutsche Welle*, 20 June 2024)

Top environmentalist and Politician Klaus Topfer dies

On 12 June, Klaus Topfer popular politician and environmentalist died at the age of 85. A member of CDU and former Federal Environment Minister for about 18 months was successful in cleaning the Rhine River which was so contaminated with chemicals.

Klaus Topfer, born on 29 July 1938 in Waldenburg was politically active in Maniz. He stepped up the party in environmental policy and took over the office vouching for "a future without nuclear energy, but also with fewer and fewer fossil fuels." He is also known as the father of the Rio Declaration, the climate change which the United Nations Conference adopted, also known as the "Earth Summit." As the head of the Environment Ministry in Bonn for seven years and was succeeded by Merkel from the former East Germany. He later moved on to become the head of the Federal Ministry for Regional Planning, Building and Urban Development. But this was by no means a step down for him. An economics graduate, he had worked extensively on location policy and spatial planning since the late 1960s and became professor and director of the Institute for Spatial Research and Planning at the University of Hanover in 1978. Topfer was also officially responsible for the relocation of large parts from Bonn to Berlin. Later he gave up his position as Federal minister in 1998 and then at 59, he was unanimously elected by the UN General Assembly to become executive director of the UN Environment Program in Nairobi, Kenya. As the world's top environmentalist, Töpfer was the highest-ranking German at the UN and held this post for two terms until 2006. Anyone who visited him there at the time, in an elegant building complex in a green area of the city, met a committed player with a world view. Topfer was held in high regard in Germany. He was considered a worthy candidate for the office of German President, but rather he chose to become the advisory committees and remained an expert advocate for the expansion of renewable energies and the abandonment of nuclear power. (Christoph Strack, "Germany: Top environmentalist Klaus Töpfer dies," *Deutsche Welle*, 11 June 2024)

Taliban express willingness to cooperate on deportation

On 07 June, Afghanistan's Taliban said it was willing to work to accept the deported Afghan criminals back to their home

country. Germany had said that they were planning for deportation after an incident where an Afghan national killed police on the sideline of the rally held by an anti-Islam group in the Southwestern city of Mannheim. However, the German Foreign Office said it was not viable to execute the plan. The Taliban Foreign Ministry said this was possible only if Germany recognises Afghanistan as a legitimate government. Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, Germany hasn't accepted them as the legitimate government. Scholz, the German Chancellor said that he wanted criminals to be deported soon, even if the countries they are from are considered unsafe. This was due to the national outrage over the killing of a 29-year-old police officer by an Afghan national who arrived in Germany with his brother as minors due to which they were not deported. (["Taliban open to cooperating with Germany on deportations," Deutsche Welle, 07 June 2024](#))

Parties complete final campaign ahead of the EU election

On 07 June, German parties held their final campaign for the European Parliamentary election. While voters from the Czech Republic and Ireland are having polls today to elect their EU representatives, Martin Schirdewan, co-leader of the Socialist Left Party, said that voters in the European Parliament election will decide the future of the election. During the speech at Potsdam, Schirdewan said that voters would choose from the conservative Christian Democratic Union or other parties that would "continue to shape politics in Europe with their policy of austerity." He also added that voters would choose "whether the extreme right, the fascists and new fascism would continue to grow stronger or not." Schirdewan is also the leader of The Left in the European Parliament. Meanwhile, Gregor Gysi, the former left party leader, warned about the possibility of a "right-wing, nationalist and racist majority" in the European Parliament. (["EU elections: German parties make last pitches, Deutsche Welle, 07 June 2024](#))

Defence Ministry prepares for

operational readiness

On 05 June, in a parliamentary session in Germany, Boris Pistorius, the Defense Minister emphasised on the need to strengthen its armed forces, the Bundeswehr, to operational readiness by 2029. To provide deterrence, along with finances, materials and personnel, he believed that a new form of military service with certain obligations was necessary. The German Cabinet approved a new concept document for military and civil defence, outlining responsibilities for the Bundeswehr, aid organizations, and civil defence authorities in disasters and wars, addressing cyber threats and hybrid warfare. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, promising support for the defence industry stressed the need to produce all weapons and ammunitions saying: "Russia's attack on Ukraine in violation of international law has presented the whole of Germany with a new security policy reality." Germany planned to purchase 20 Eurofighter jets from Airbus and two additional frigates as part of its "Zeitenwende" defence policy. Germany is already stationing troops in Lithuania to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and is awaiting a permanent brigade in 2027. (Richard Connor, ["German defence minister calls for war readiness by 2029," Deutsche Welle, 05 June 2024](#))

Flooding persists although rains are expected to stop

On 04 June, the official Bavarian flood information service announced that the high-water levels will persist for some more days, but no more heavy rainfall is forecast. Schools are to remain shut and some local and long-distance routes were closed according to the train operator, Deutsche Bahn (DB). Heavy rainfall had also affected the Rhine River. Markus Söder, the State Premier of Bavaria, declared that the state government will provide at least EUR 100 million as a financial assistance for private households, commercial enterprises, self-employed people and farmers to benefit. Germany's situation eased, while Poland reported floods due to heavy rainfall, with Bielsko-Biala in Silesia flooded and a warning issued by the mayor. (["Germany](#)

floods: Rain eases as fifth death confirmed," Deutsche Welle, 04 June 2024)

Germany reconsiders repatriation of Afghan migrants

On 04 June, Nancy Faeser, the German Interior Minister began reconsidering the repatriation of migrants to Afghanistan after an Afghan asylum seeker fatally stabbed a police officer in an anti-Islam rally in Mannheim on 31 May. She said: "It is clear to me that people who pose a potential threat to Germany's security must be deported quickly... That is why we are doing everything possible to find ways to deport criminals and dangerous people to both Syria and Afghanistan." After the Taliban came to power in 2021, Germany stopped sending migrants back to Afghanistan because the country does not send people back to nations where they face death threats. The suspect was identified as a 25-year-old man, who arrived in March 2013 and was initially refused asylum in Germany. However, since he was only 14 at the time, he was not deported, according to German tabloid Bild. This decision came at the time of the elections where the far-right parties are expected to perform better. ("Germany considers Afghan deportations after police stabbing," Deutsche Welle, 04 June 2024)

Floods affecting several districts in central and southern

On 02 June, German weather forecasts predicted strong thunderstorms in central and southern Germany. The district of Augsburg to the west of Munich was severely affected. The disaster caused the death of a firefighter on duty in Pfaffenhofen an der Ilm, a town in Bavaria where the rubber boat he was using capsized. Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor paid respects to the firefighter. Another firefighter in the Bavarian town of Offingen, also went missing and was being searched by the rescue team. Due to landslides in the southern state of Baden-Württemberg, two railcars of an intercity express train derailed, following which several trains were cancelled by Germany's railway operator Deutsche Bahn (DB). The DB sent

announcements that train services in southern Germany would remain limited and also warned travellers to avoid traveling in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg until the situation improved. With rising levels of the Danube River, the city of Günzburg was heavily flooded and active evacuation efforts were taking place. Two dams on the river Paar, a tributary of the Danube also broke, leading to the closure of a 50-kilometre (31-mile) stretch of the A9 Autobahn (Highway). Regional authorities ordered the immediate evacuation of several villages in Bavaria's Donau-Ries District along the Danube and Schmitter rivers due to massive weakening of the dams. Bavaria, a southern state was one of the worst affected. More than 40,000 have been deployed since flooding began, including over 20,000 emergency services workers and according to the Defence Ministry, around 800 soldiers had also been deployed. Bavaria's Interior Ministry claimed that 3,000 residents had been evacuated. The State's Education Ministry also announced the cancellation of in-person classes at over 40 schools in eight districts across Bavaria. According to the German Weather Service (DWD), heavy rain was expected in the Stuttgart region and areas from the Alps to Saxony. They also reported that several municipalities in the region received more rainfall in 24 hours than they normally do in one month. As floodwaters continued to rise throughout the region, a senior citizen and nursing home located on the banks of the Danube in Bavaria were evacuated. ("Germany floods: Firefighter dies during rescue in Bavaria," Deutsche Welle, 03 June 2024)

Federal Network Agency set to make internet safer

On 03 June, Klaus Müller, President of the Federal Network Agency advised internet platforms to take more active action against hate speech, misinformation and product counterfeits. The Digital Services Act (DSA), which was passed by the Bundestag in March 2024, replaced the German Network Enforcement Act. The act includes European Union regulations which would be enforced by the Federal Network Agency. DSA which

was in effect for the largest online services such as Google, Facebook, X and Amazon, recently amended to include smaller companies. According to the law, Platform operators risk fines of up to six per cent of their yearly revenue for violations. Klaus Müller warned that: "That is very painful...Turnover is usually much higher than profit - and that makes this sword quite sharp." He also introduced a user and complaints portal to make Internet safe for users. ("Federal Network Agency warns internet platforms of fines," Frankfurter Allgemeine, 03 June 2024)

GREECE

Wildfires forces residents to evacuate from Athens

On 19 June, residents were evacuated from Athens due to the wildfire. 13 planes and helicopters and over 70 firefighters worked to put the fire under control, and also closed the main highway that is connected to the airport. Greece has prepared itself for what is expected to be a long wildfire season and the country's national meteorological services has also issued nationwide warning. Although there are no injuries so far, fire service spokes service said the fire is spreading quickly due to the strong winds. And also added that they have dealt with 41 wildfires in total between Monday and Tuesday. While Greece Civil Protection Minister Vassilis Kiklas warned the people to be careful, a small fire would trigger a large wildfire, which can spread due to the strong winds. He also added that they have arrested a 30 year old farmer who caused a fire in the city of Nigrita, Kiklas stated: "even the smallest fire can rapidly turn into a fiery front." According to the European commission report it has recorded at least 20 deaths in Greece due to wildfire. (Tamsin Paternoster, [Residents evacuated from Athens suburb as wildfire season hits Greece](#), *Euro news*, 19 June 2024)

Mediterranean claims lives of 10 migrants; 51 rescued

On 17 June, ResQship, a German migrant rescue charity reported that 10 migrants

were found dead on a wooden boat in the Mediterranean. The rescuers managed to save 51 people in the wooden vessel which had sent out a distress signal but 10 were found dead in the flooded lower deck of the boat. In a separate incident, the Italian Coastguard reported that a search for over 60 people was being conducted after a shipwreck of a boat presumed to have departed from Turkey was found. Out of the 12 rescued, one died after disembarking. The incidents mark the phenomenon of asylum seekers undertaking dangerous attempts to cross the Mediterranean to find a better life, often done in unsafe and fragile boats. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has deemed the Mediterranean as the world's deadliest route for migrants due to the latter having claimed over 20,000 lives since 2014. ([German rescue group: 10 migrants found dead in Mediterranean](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 17 June 2024)

Lufthansa to invest in defence sector

On 16 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Lufthansa's interests in relations with the defence industry and the maintenance of military aircraft. They are expected to do so under their subsidiary Lufthansa Technik (LHT) and it is widely considered to have prompted the Russia-Ukraine war which in turn has also resulted in billions of investments into new aircrafts. LHT is Lufthansa's maintenance and repair subsidiary. It serves over 800 customers and has more than 20,000 employees. Much of German society disapproved of anything military for decades following the end of World War II and the fall of the Nazi dictatorship. German weaponry technology was in demand overseas, but it was also a divisive topic in German politics and society. This changed upon the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war and the announcement by the German Government to invest EUR 100 billion to strengthen the German military. The German Navy ordered five Boeing P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft at the end of June 2021; the initial phase includes their maintenance. Germany is the eighth customer to have taken delivery of a Boeing Poseidon this winter, following the United States, Australia, India,

the United Kingdom, Norway, South Korea, and New Zealand. The aircraft are civilian Boeing 737s into which military systems have been installed. Lufthansa is looking into expanding its military business by participating in the helicopter and stealth bomber sectors. The expansion also looks at potential economic growth by employing Germans. LHT has also bid for NATO aircraft, thus opening opportunities for US-based contracts. ("**Germany's Lufthansa eyes defense sector.**" *Deutsche Welle*, 16 June 2024)

UNESCO sites in Athens closed due to heat waves

On 13 June, the Acropolis of Athens, a UNESCO recognised historical site was closed down for the second day by the Greek authorities due to unusually high temperatures. Temperatures of more than 40 Celsius were forecast in central and southern Greece, and the Culture Ministry closed the Parthenon, and other Greek archaeological sites in Crete, the Dodecanese, the Cyclades and the Peloponnese as a precautionary measure. The minister for civil protection, Vassilis Kikilias, said the heat wave, combined with the dry winter posed a particular wildfire risk. Authorities in Athens provided air-conditioning facilities and issued fans to secondary schools where entrance exams were being held. ("**Greece: Heat forces Acropolis closure for 2nd straight day.**" *Deutsche Welle*, 13 June 2024)

HUNGARY

Heatwaves trigger emergency warning

On 20 June, Hungary Today reported on the heatwaves across the nation, with temperatures reaching up to 37 degrees Celsius and a level three heat warning being in force. The warning has resulted in water being distributed among travellers in train and bus stations. Government employees have received sunscreen, chilled water and caps due to their long hours under the sun. The homeless have also been given protection by providing facilities to offer shade and places to cool off. A "Code Red" has been declared, thus deeming the

heatwave as an emergency in the southern and northern counties of the country. Attila Fülöp, Secretary of State for Welfare Policy at the Ministry of the Interior, stated that the warning is for both social institutions and the public. ("**Heat on the Rise: Highest Warning Level in Effect**", *Hungary Today*, 20 June 2024)

Government offers to mediate between Russia and Ukraine

On 16 June, Peter Szijjarto Hungarian foreign minister offered to be the mediator between Ukraine and Russia, he added that What is needed is to prevent family separations and protect young people, given the large Hungarian population of at least 150,000 in western Ukraine. Budapest is willing to convey messages to Moscow to ease tensions. While Switzerland is hosting a high-level conference on Ukraine from 15-16 June around 92 countries have been invited except Russia and in that 55 countries have confirmed that they would attend it. ("**Hungarian Foreign Minister Proposes Mediation Role Between Russia, EU on Ukraine.**" *Sputnik News*, 16 June 2024)

Hungary fined for non-compliance with migration laws

On 13 June, France 24 reported on EU fining an EUR 200 million fine and an additional daily penalty of EUR one million for failing to follow the bloc's asylum laws by illegally deporting migrants. Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary said: "The ECJ's decision to fine Hungary with 200M euros plus 1M euros daily for defending the borders of the European Union is outrageous and unacceptable." Despite nudges from EU and International Law, Orban has continuously opposed the entry of asylum seekers into Hungary. The EU member countries received a deadline of December to present their plans to implement the new asylum rules which are expected to be applied from 2026. The new rules will make EU's borders harder for irregular migrants, along with accelerated deportations for those found illegible for asylum. While their asylum requests are analysed, the ones seeking asylum would be

held in new border centres. ("EU fines Hungary €200 million for flouting asylum laws," France 24, 13 June 2024)

Hungarian Prime Minister faces poor result in two decades

On 10 June, *Euronews* reported that Victor Orban's right-wing Fidesz party would send 13 MEPs to the parliament after scoring 44 per cent of the votes in the EU elections. Compared to the result of 51.48 per cent in 2019, he has displayed the worst result in almost two decades. The result indicated a shift in Hungarian politics since the party Tisza secured 31 per cent of the vote. The newcomer party led by Peter Magyar, a former ally of Orban has promised to challenge Orban's ten-year control of the territory. Magyar is a former member of Fidesz's party who formed his party in earlier February. He also campaigned on the corrupt policies of Orban that had aggravated Hungary's social divisions. The current government has faced several scandals including a sex abuse scandal leading to the resignation of several key members of the party. Tisza is expected to send around seven MEPs to the European Parliament. The rest of the vote was predicted to be shared between Hungarian Socialist Party with 8 per cent of the vote and the Far-Right Our Homeland Movement with 6.76 per cent. (Tamsin Paternoster, "[Hungary: Newcomer Peter Magyar shakes Orban's hold on power, early results say.](#)" *Euronews*, 10 June 2024)

ICELAND

Elects a businesswoman as its new President

On 02 June, Iceland's presidential election results declared that Halla Tomasdottir, a businesswoman, won to become the second woman president of the country. She was CEO of the B Team, a global non-profit organisation that the UK businessman Richard Branson started, to advance human-centred and climate-conscious business practices. Tomasdottir won 34.3 per cent of votes, ahead of Katrin Jakobsdottir, the former Prime Minister who secured 25.5 per cent votes. Jakobsdottir, who stepped down from her

post in April to contest in the presidential elections, had gained recognition for managing the resurgence of volcanic eruptions on the Reykjanes peninsula since December. Tomasdottir is set to become the second woman to serve as president, following Vigdis Finnbogadottir who was democratically elected in 1980. She will succeed Gudni Johannesson, who had earlier announced his decision not to seek re-election. ("[Businesswoman Tomasdottir elected Iceland's next president.](#)" *Le Monde*, 02 June 2024)

IRELAND

Growing frustration towards immigrants among Irish population

On 31 May, *Euronews.business* published an article which highlighted Ireland's migration policy and its housing shortages. For many months, an influx of asylum seekers led to encampments due to lack of alternative accommodations with tents occupied by Nigerians, Afghanis, Pakistanis and Algerians. Ireland, generally has a positive and welcoming attitude towards migrants, however, between 2019 and 2023 there was a fivefold increase in the applications, which brought along increased frustration. According to Ireland's Central Statistics Office (CSO), since the war, 1,04,870 Ukrainian refugees arrived in Ireland under the Temporary Protection Directive, which adds on to the count. Inadequate investment in public services and a reliance on the private provision of those services are believed to be the causes for the frustration. Additionally, home ownership became unaffordable due to lack of loans, complex planning regulations and the cost of land and labour. The same is true with Ireland's healthcare system which is pushing beyond its capacity. Shortage of beds and doctors causing unmet medical needs for the Irish population, is aggravated by the migrant crisis. The country is slowly witnessing far-right, anti-immigrant stance from the local population, which is expected to reflect in the elections on 07 June. (Eleanor Butler, "Ireland's asylum seeker crisis: Services at breaking point," *Euronews.business*, 31 May 2024)

ITALY

Shipwrecks off southern coast result in death of 11 migrants

On 19 June, at least 11 migrants died and 64 missing due to shipwrecks off the Italian coast, according to the UN agencies. In the first tragedy, a ship carrying migrants from Turkey was caught in fire and overturned approximately 200 kilometres away from the coast of Calabria. Some survivors have reported that the ship had been sailing for eight days before the fire struck. The Italian coastguard initiated a search and rescue operation, at least 12 were rescued and were taken to the port of Roccella Jonica for medical treatment. While most of the missing migrants are from Iran, Syria and Iraq. These incidents are reported as a part of ongoing efforts by the Italian authorities to manage the increase of illegal migrants. While the authorities have advised the migrants to use umbrellas, stay hydrated, and avoid direct sun exposure during the hottest parts of the day. But the major problem arises when unregistered migrants are often lacking in the basic facilities. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported, over 3,150 migrants died or went missing in the Mediterranean last year, making it the deadliest migration route in the world. Though the EU has introduced stricter immigration law, the Italian government has aimed to reduce the number of Sea crossings. This includes restriction on operation of charity ships, which is often accused of encouraging migration. (Daniel Harper, [Shipwrecks off Italian coast leave at least 11 dead and dozens missing](#), *Euronews*, 19 June 2024)

NORTH MACEDONIA

Mickoski elected as new prime minister

On 24 June, Parliament elected right-leaning Hristijan Mickoski as the new prime minister. In the held vote, 77 were in favour, 22 against and 21 absentees. Following the result, Mickoski affirmed of immediate changes over new investment, cut taxes and increase in pensions and wages. Mickoski, aged 46 is the leader of the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE party which gained 43 per cent vote with 58 seats in the May elections

which was short to form governing majority. The party won after long struggle, voter discontent over slow development, weak economy, corruption and delay in EU integration. However, Mickoski asserted to commit towards EU integration. He said: "We continue to stand together with our partners from the EU and together we will harmonize the common foreign policy with the EU." ("[North Macedonia's parliament elects Hristijan Mickoski as PM](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 June 2024)

POLAND

Abortion norm to be eased under Tusk administration

On 25 June, Poland is looking to ease abortion rules, after the parliamentary commission recommended decriminalising the practice within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The previous government had tightened Poland's abortion rule to a near-total ban in 2020 - only allowing abortion in the cases of rape or incest, or it would risk the woman's life. While the new government led by Donald Tusk, has been trying to make the country's law more liberal, but disagreements within the coalition have slowed down the process. The Polish parliament will now consider this proposal later this year. (Claudia Chippa, "[Poland moves closer to easing abortion laws](#)," *POLITICO*, 25 June 2024)

Donald Tusk warns people to vote in the elections

On 04 June, Donald Tusk, Poland's Prime Minister showed ahead of the European Election that his team is increasing security in response to the threat of Russia. The Tusk Civic Coalition has stressed on how the EU should be strong and united against the threat from Russia. He called for people to vote and this comes as concern emerge over Poles being cautious about Russia due to its history and geographical aspects. Northern Poland shares more than 230 kilometres of border with Kaliningrad, a highly militarised Russian enclave, which is protected by thick barbed wire fencing, monitored by vehicles fitted with thermal imaging cameras. Security in Poland had increased since the launch of a full-scale

invasion of Ukraine. But during the election campaign, Tusk promised to continue. He announced "Shield East" a border protection programme that would cost GBP 1.992 billion to reinforce the border, with high-tech surveillance of the trenches. Other EU countries have been talking about migration and Green deals, while Poland has focusing only on security by investing more in defence under the PiS government. (Sarah Rainsford, "Vote or face war': Poland PM's stark warning ahead of EU election," *BBC*, 04 June 2024)

PORTUGAL

Government under Montenegro restricts the immigration policy

On 03 June, a key migration policy in Portugal was repealed by Luis Montenegro, the newly-elected Prime Minister which allowed non-EU migrants to enter Portugal without a job contract. It allowed them to apply for residency after a year of social security payments. On withdrawal of the policy immigrants must obtain an employment contract before entering the nation. Portugal, which was one of the most liberal EU countries that followed the wide-open doors policy, witnessed a shift toward the right-wing, especially on immigration policies. Portugal's foreign population doubled in five years, with 180,000 regularized migrants in 2015, while Montenegro reported 400,000 pending applications. With an aim to limit new arrivals, the Prime Minister said: "We need people in Portugal willing to help us build a fairer and more prosperous society, But we cannot go to the other extreme and have wide-open doors." ("Portugal's new government tightens immigration rules," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 June 2024)

ROMANIA

Romanian air base to become to biggest in NATO

On 23 June, BBC reported on Romania's Mihai Kogalniceanu (MK) airbase possibly transforming into the biggest NATO base in Europe, surpassing Ramstein in Germany. The development comes after Vladimir

Putin, President of Russia, justified his invasion of Ukraine with the reason that NATO was encroaching on Russia's borders with Europe. The MK base is set to have a squadron of F-16s and MQ-9 Reaper drones and a military city which will be host to a rotation of Army, Navy and Air Force personnel of NATO. Reports of Russia's drones going into Odesa have come from observers in the base and while NATO jets have typically avoided conflict with Russians, two known incidents have taken place over the Black Sea. Firstly, in September 2022 when a Russian pilot misunderstood a command and attempted to shoot down a British Intelligence-gathering plane and secondly, in March 2023, when a Romanian Reaper drone was deliberately brought down by a Russian Flanker jet. ("Romanian village set to become Nato's biggest air base in Europe", *BBC*, 23 June 2024)

IKEA's furniture is costing the Romanian forests

On 09 June 2024, Greenpeace claimed that Ikea's suppliers are benefitting from Romania's environment. Recent two investigations revealed the impact of the flatpack furniture giant on the Romania's Carpathian Mountains, which is Europe's largest remaining area of primary and oldest growth forests. According to a Greenpeace report, more than 50 per cent of Romania's old forest has been destroyed in the past 20 years, due to corruption and poor law enforcement. IKEA and the Ingka Group were found to have exploited the areas which were marked as protected areas. As per the investigation, protected areas of the forest underwent intensive commercial logging causing soil degradation and ecosystems. According to the research on the type of forest management, in every Ingka investment property in Romania, only a per cent of the total area was strictly prohibited, while eight per cent was only partially protected. Whereas the rest was used for industrial wood production. In another investigation by Greenpeace in the oldest forest of Romania to examine IKEA's supply chain, it claimed that at least seven suppliers for IKEA's leading wood products were linked

to the “systematic destruction” of old growth forests, including two Natura 2000 protected sites. The franchisor for IKEA’s supply strongly disagreed with both claims according to the report. In response, Ingka Group: “Authorities found no evidence of non-compliance with forestry regulations.” and stated that its practices were “...aligned with rigorous environmental standards set by national laws and international certification bodies like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).” According to the report by Earthsight, IKEA’s fast furniture business surged in 2019. IKEA consumed one tree every second, according to the reports by Earthsight (an NGO) and owns around 2800 square kilometres of forest worldwide and 500 square kilometres in Romania. (Charlie Jaay, [“IKEA in the spotlight: Flatpack furniture linked to ‘systematic destruction’ of Romanian forests” Euronews, 14 June 2024](#))

RUSSIA

Investigators reveal increase in the death of 20 post gunmen attack in Dagestan

On 24 June, Russian investigators reported an increase in the death toll in Dagestan to be 20 with four civilians dead. According to the Russian Investigative Committee: “15 law enforcement officers were killed, as well as four civilians, including an Orthodox priest.” Earlier, the Russian media reported on the launch of anti-terror operations after the gunmen attack in orthodox churches and synagogues in Dagestan. Whereas the National Antiterrorism Committee said: “Following the neutralization of the threats to the lives and health of citizens, it was decided to end the anti-terrorist operation in Dagestan from 0515 GMT.” The next two days have been declared for mourning while no immediate claim has been observed. According to the *TASS*, the gunmen who carried the attacks could be supporters of an international terrorist organisation. This comes three months after the ISIS-K attack in Moscow concert hall which killed 140. (“Russia ends Dagestan anti-terror operation, death toll rises,” *Deutsche Welle*, 24 June 2024)

Gunmen attacks synagogues and churches in Dagestan

On 23 June, gunmen in Russia attacked churches and synagogues, killing a priest, six officers, and members of the National Guard according to security officials. The attack took place in Dagestan and in the coastal city of Derbent, where gunfights were ongoing. The Russian Investigative Committee said that it had opened criminal probes over an “act of terror,” while the hunt for the gunmen continues. Dagestan’s interior ministry said it had killed two of the gunmen in Makhachkala. According to the National Antiterrorism Committee: “This evening in the cities of Derbent and Makhachkala armed attacks were carried out on two Orthodox churches, a synagogue and a police check-point.” Dagestan’s interior ministry stated that all six officers had been killed and another 12 wounded in the attack. Russia’s National Guard said one of its officers was killed and the rest were hurt. While Russia’s FSB security services in April stated that it had arrested four people from Dagestan suspected of plotting an attack on Moscow’s Crocus City Hall concert venue in March, which was later backed and climbed by the Islamic state. ([Gunmen in Russia’s Dagestan attack churches, synagogue and police post](#), *FRANCE 24*, 23 June 2024)

Kaspersky antivirus banned from further sales and update in the US market

On 20 June, Kaspersky, a Russian antivirus company, will no longer sell or even update their software in the US market. This move comes due to the rise of fear of cyber attacks by the Russians. Gina Raimondo stated that the company’s ties with Russia pose a huge risk to its large US customer base. He said: “Russia has shown it has the capacity and... the intent to exploit Russian companies like Kaspersky to collect and weaponize the personal information of Americans and that is why we are compelled to take the action that we are taking today.” The ban would be implemented by 29 September giving enough time to find alternatives for companies relying on Kaspersky. Whereas,

Kaspersky stated that its activities would not threaten the US national security and claimed US decision to be based on geopolitical climate and theoretical concerns and the company would take legal action against this. This comes under the many reports that concern the US regarding many Russian cyber attacks and manipulation. According to the US Department of Homeland Security, it was banned in the federal network in 2017 due to its ties over Russian intelligence. While the Biden administration warned many companies that Kaspersky software could be under Russian influence. ([“US bans Kaspersky antivirus software over Russia ties,” Deutsche Welle, 20 June 2024](#))

BRICS Scientist to discuss over Joint Oceanic and Polar Research at Murmansk

On 13 June, the regional ministry of information policy announced on meeting held between the BRICS Scientists on “Ocean and Polar Science and Technology” in Murmansk, Russia. Where more than 50 scientists are expected to join from seven countries in person for this event. The scientist will show the latest scientific and technological achievements in the field of oceanological and polar research and discuss the agenda of joint activities within the framework of Russia's chairmanship of BRICS. The mission of the working group is to promote cooperation among the members in Ocean Science and Polar research through activities of the government, research institutions and other industries. ([“BRICS Scientists Discussing Joint Oceanic, Polar Research at Meeting in Russia's Murmansk,” Sputnik News, 13 June 2024](#))

Russia surpasses 25 per cent of the Global Wheat Export in 2024

On 24 May, Russian wheat exports surpassed 25 per cent in 2024, The International Grain Council (IGC) forecasted that Russian wheat exports would increase by 1 million tons to record 53.1 million. This would allow Russia to occupy almost 26 per cent of the market which would be the first time in history. This is the highest export volume in modern history and is

almost 10 per cent more than in 2023. In 2024 global wheat exports is expected to reach 205 million tonnes, compared to 207 million in 2023 which is a huge increase of 5.9 million for Russia. ([“Russia's Share in Global Wheat Export to Surpass 25% in 2024,” Sputnik News, 24 May 2024](#))

Russian warship to enter Cuba next week

On 07 June, the White House saw no “significant national security threat” as the Russian warship prepared for an official visit to Cuba. There were a group of Russian warships, including a nuclear-powered submarine according to the announcement made by Havana's Ministry of the Revolution Armed Forces which will visit the island between 12 and 17 June. According to the ministry, Russia plans to conduct activities during the stay, including a visit to the head of the Revolutionary Navy and the governor of Havana as this has a historical and cultural interest. The White House National Security Communication Adviser John Kirby said that the US would have a close watch over their visit, he also suggested that this is Russia's way to signal Washington that it was not happy with its effort in supporting Ukraine. US Senator Macro Rubio warned that the Russian exercise could be a “wake-up call to the Biden Administration.” The Russian ministry stated that “the main goals of the expedition are to show the flag and ensure the naval presence in operationally important areas of the Far Sea zone.” ([“Russian warships will arrive in Cuba next week – Havana,” RT news, 07 June 2024](#))

Foreign minister in Guinea to gather support from West Africa

On 03 June, Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister arrived in Guinea as a part of his visits in West Africa. Guinea's military junta that took power in 2021, has severed long-standing military ties with Western powers in favour of security support from Russia. Previously, Lavrov made various trips to Africa such as South Africa, Kenya and countries in North Africa since the Ukraine war, and Russia is looking for support from many of its 54 allies. In 2023, the military

junta in Burkina Faso overthrew French forces and turned to Russia for security support. Similarly, in Niger, Russian military trainers arrived weeks after the junta that took power last year ordered US troops to withdraw from the country. ("Russia's foreign minister visits Africa, again," *Le Monde*, 04 June 2024)

SERBIA

Elections results favour the ruling party accused of vote irregularities

On 02 June, at the municipal elections in Serbia, the ruling populists gained majority although the results are yet to be confirmed by the Election Commission. Opposition groups in Belgrade and Novi Sad claim that the party had set up illegal call centres run by its activists. Whereas the non-governmental Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability reported crimes related to alleged organised voting, vote-buying, breach of vote secrecy, and un-authorized people at polling places. However, the ruling party denied the opposition's claims over significant irregularities in the vote. In Belgrade, a re-run vote was held following allegations that Aleksandar Vucic, Serbian President governing party rigged the vote. Vucic's Serbian Progressive Party has been in power for more than a decade and was accused of violating free and fair elections. The opposition groups could not demand more since it would weaken their place in the elections. Although Vucic has been leading Serbia into EU accession, its continued association with Russia and China have drifted the country away from pro-EU democratic influence. ("Ruling populists declare victory in Serbia local vote despite opposition claims of irregularities," *Le Monde*, 02 June 2024)

SLOVAKIA

Pellegrini sworn in as President, calls for just peace

On 15 June, Peter Pellegrini was sworn in as the new President of Slovakia. He is an ally of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico. Pellegrini called for a "just peace" and described Slovakia as divided by "a high

mental wall" in Ukraine. His assumption of the office comes after Fico recovers from an assassination attempt. He referred to the assassination attempt and added that the wall needed to be knocked down to avoid more spilled blood. Leftist Pellegrini came to victory in April after his successful campaign against the more liberal Ivan Korcok which revolved around promises of military and financial aid to Ukraine that NATO and EU member Slovakia would give. This comes after Fico's announcement to limit aid to Ukraine to be only military-based and urges directed at the EU to "change from an arms supplier to a peacemaker". The move caused divisions in the country, with accusations of allying with Russia coming from the Opposing Korcok and allies. In response, Pellegrini positioned himself as a peacemaker. While the office of the President in Slovakia is for the most part ceremonial, it also comes with the responsibility of presiding over the nation's armed forces, designating senior judges, and ratifying foreign treaties. It is to be noted that Fico did not attend the Ceremony at Bratislava due to his recovery from the gunshot wounds he sustained from the assassination attempt. He has been discharged and is expected to make a recovery. ("Slovakia: Fico ally Pellegrini sworn in as president," *Deutsche Welle*, 15 June 2024)

Slovak Prime Minister appears first on social media after the shooting

On 06 June, Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico posted a video on Facebook expressing his views on the opposition parties and the assassination attempt. This was his first appearance since he was shot four times on May 15 following which he had undergone two lengthy surgeries. In his first comments, he thanked the medical staff who treated him after the surgery. He also referred to the attacker as a "lone wolf" or "some madman" " but "a messenger of the evil and political hatred" fostered by the political opposition. He also added that he forgave him and he hoped to return to work at the end of June. In his 14-minute video, he criticized the opposition parties for their aggressive and hateful politics. He also

suggested that he was targeted for his differing views on Russia's invasion of Ukraine which conflicted with that of Europe's. He was against the sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia with a deteriorating relationship with Ukraine. He also ended his military aid for Ukraine after being sworn in last October. ("Slovakia: Robert Fico makes first comments since shooting," *Deutsche Welle*, 06 June 2024)

SWEDEN

Former Syrian General accused for war crimes

On 20 June, Swedish Court accused the former Syrian General of war crimes. During 2012 Syrian civil war, Brigadier General Mohammed Hamo was the highest rank Syrian Military official to go for trial in Europe. He was accused of "aiding and abetting" during the Syrian civil war and the charges were related to an attack on several town or places in the area in and around town Hama and Homs during 01 January and 20 July 2012. The Stockholm's district court found no good evidence on involvement of Hamo in war or his role in providing any weapons to use during the conflict. While the Judge Katarina Fabian said: "The main issues in the case are whether the 11th Division of the Syrian Army participated in indiscriminate attacks in certain areas and whether the defendant participated in arming the division in those attacks." The Chief Prosecutor Karoline Wieslander said: "It's a really hard case to investigate considering the fact that the country was still at war and was hard to gather evidence." While senior legal advisor Aida Samani, who monitored the trial, emphasised the importance of the trial. ("Syrian general acquitted of war crimes by Swedish court," *Deutsche Welle*, 20 June 2024)

SWITZERLAND

Financial crises restrains UN activities in Geneva

On 04 June, *Swiss info* reported on unpredictable budget crises as the UN in Geneva plans to take drastic steps to save

money. The move is expected to raise concerns on providing essential services and the ability to carry out its mission effectively. Alessandra Vellucci of information service in Geneva said: "We are not operating as usual and we recognise that both service delivery and staff welfare are experiencing immediate challenges." These financial crises might affect the work of UNOG is planning to globally reduce for stability by cutting 42 per cent non-salary expenses this year. This might lead to the cancellation of all side events and NGO meetings. This includes procurement of goods and services has been put on hold, except for the most essential things and purchasing of Flags and uniforms has been stopped. Building operations have been downsized and training programs have been kept to the bare minimum. Due to the financial crises, the UNOG is prioritising official meetings, such as the UN Human Rights Council and Conference on Disarmament which is required to hold meetings every year. But this means that informal meetings are the main lifeblood of diplomatic engagement and civil society participation which might die. This financial crisis is having an impact not only on UNOG staff but also the broader international Geneva community. The crisis requires strategic planning and innovation to manage the reduced budget while still keeping the essential functions on track. According to the report, moving virtually might be eco-friendly and a viable choice, but this choice would make informal negotiating harder and might affect the participation of civil society voices. This financial crisis was due to the failure of some UN states to pay their assessed contribution, the amount of money each country is expected to pay to cover the UN's work and pay its staff. This is not only faced by the Geneva office but also in New York, Vienna and Nairobi. This crisis could mean that there could be a shift in the global order, which challenges the principles of multilateralism and dialogue that underpin its work. Maertens, associate professor of international relations at the Graduate Institute Geneva (IHEID) warned: "Without enough funds, multilateral meetings and negotiation could be cancelled or

postponed." She also suggested that cost-saving measures risk forcing the UN to abandon some of its inclusive global platforms, which are essentials to bring the world together a wide range of actors for the multilateral dialogue. She also added: "The main risk would be to give up on inclusive forums designed to bring around the table as many actors as possible like UN processes do." (Akiko Uehara, "[UN activities in Geneva hampered by financial constraint](#)," *swissinfo.ch*, 03 June 2024)

Swiss Alps melting observed to be 31 per cent more

On 04 June, Swiss Alps glaciers began melting. Glaciologist Matthias Huss said: "From now on, the melt will dominate." According to the Swiss Glacier Monitoring Network, at the end of April, there will be around 31 per cent more snow in all of Switzerland's 1400 glaciers than average from 2010 to 2020. After these measurements were taken the condition of the glaciers improved even further. This suggests that the Glaciers melt in 2024 is lesser than the past two years. During the last two years, Swiss glaciers have lost around 10 per cent of ice. While it was recorded at six per cent in 2022 and a further melt of four per cent by 2023. ("[The glacier melt in the Swiss Alps has begun](#)," *swissinfo.ch*, 04 June 2024)

THE NETHERLANDS

Prime minister Mark Rutte to head NATO

On 20 June, Klaus Iohannis, Romanian President of Romania, backed off clearing war for Mark Rutte, Dutch Prime Minister to become the next new NATO chief. Klaus said that his country defence Council will have strong support for Mark Rutte as a alliance's secretary general. Council members said: "Declared themselves in favor of Romania's support for the Dutch prime minister's candidacy." The nomination of a NATO head requires consensus from all 32 alliance members and every member has agreed to support Rutte. However, Hungary and Slovakia have not approved it. Though he was a strong supporter of Ukraine, his governance lost the coalition in 2023 but he

quickly gained support from NATO major leaders the US, France, Britain and Germany. Many EU leaders are concerned over Trump's win and the reduction of US support to Ukraine and NATO. The US congress has approved USD 60 billion for new military funding for Ukraine. ("[Dutch PM Mark Rutte set to become new NATO chief](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 20 June 2024)

EU exit polls indicate a green signal for Geert Wilders PVV party

On 06 June, an exit poll in the Netherlands suggested big gains for Geert Wilders and his Far-Right Freedom Party (PVV) in the European Parliament Elections. Out of the 720 seats in the Parliament, the country's parties compete for thirty-one. The poll of around 20,000 Dutch voters predicted a tight contest between the Green/Labour alliance of former European Commissioner Frans Timmermans and Geert Wilders' far-right party. The former is predicted to gain eight seats while the latter to win seven. The Dutch vote might indicate a note for the Far-Rights and their possible majority in the European Parliament. According to Vera Jourova, the EU Commission vice-president for values and transparency, the far-right had been 'riding a wave of widespread frustration' with the COVID-19, economic crisis and wars. The final results for the Netherlands will be announced on Sunday. Ireland and the Czech Republic will go to the polls on Friday while other member states will vote over the weekend. ("[EU elections: Exit poll suggests big gains for Wilders](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 06 June 2024)

Pro-Russian group claims cyber-attack

On 06 June, three Dutch Political parties reported cyber attack in their website. HackNet, a pro-Kermlin hacker group has claimed responsibility for coordinating attacks on the websites of these political parties on the first day of the European election. This would come as a matter of concern that it's happening during the biggest trans-national ballot in history and here we could see foreign actors interfering to convert the vote in their favour. EU officials said on 5 June that they considered

the 72 hours in the run-up to the vote to be "critical," adding that they had mobilised bespoke rapid alert teams to respond to any threats, such as cyber-attacks or coordinated disinformation campaigns. According to some Western cybersecurity firms, HackNet is hacking Western cyberspace by coordinating with the Russian Intelligence services. This group has announced that they are targeting "the internet infrastructure of Europe" to mark the start of voting in the European Parliament election. ("Pro-Russia group claims responsibility for cyber-attacks on first day of EU elections," *Euronews*, 06 June 2024)

Government to inaugurate the European parliamentary vote

On 06 June, voters in the Netherlands began to cast their vote for the European parliamentary elections while Ireland and the Czech Republic will vote on Friday. The other member states are expected to vote over the weekend. Geert Wilders, a member of the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) was among the first senior politicians to vote. Since his party, PVV gained much popularity by becoming the biggest party in the Dutch national parliament six months ago, he intended to build upon that. He also demanded to give powers back to the national capitals with less interference from the EU which would give them more autonomy over issues such as migration. He called for an alliance of far-right parties to weaken the conventional coalition of Christian Democrats, Socialists, pro-business Liberals, and Greens. According to his statement after the voting: "You also need to have a strong presence in the European Parliament and make sure that, if necessary, we will be able to change the European guidelines in order to be in charge of our own immigration policy and asylum policy." The elections are commencing amid the fear of a far-right wave in the bloc. ("EU elections: Netherlands kicks off 4-day parliamentary vote," *Deutsche Welle*, 06 June 2024)

THE UK

Labour Party leads polls, Tories down by four points

On 14 June, Sir John Curtice, Professor of Politics at the University of Strathclyde reported that both the Conservative and Labour parties have reduced support as per the seven polls conducted over the previous week. The Labour still has a 41 per cent average support from their 44 per cent, while the Conservatives are down at 20 per cent from their 24 per cent. The party that gained support was Reform UK, which went up by five points to 16 per cent in comparison to the 11 per cent they had when the elections were called. *BBC's* analysis reported that Tories have lost support due to the Reform UK's decision to stand in almost every constituency, which contrasts their predecessor, the Brexit Party's 2019 campaign of avoiding seats that were held by the Tories and Nigel Farage's decision to contest the elections, the announcement of which resulted in a rise of three points. The *BBC* also speculated that the rise of the Liberal Democrats to 12 per cent might account for the reduction in the Labour Party's support. This has now made the two spearheads of the UK general elections take notice of the potential challenge from the smaller parties. ("Polling expert Sir John Curtice on Reform and Lib Dem gains," *BBC*, 14 June 2024)

Labour Party on the grasp of victory, Tories pessimistic

On 14 June, the *BBC* reported on the contrasting moods seen in the Labour and the Conservative party camps as the halfway stage to the polling day has passed. Most of the former believe that victory is in their grasp whereas the latter believe that the gap between the two parties is too much. Part of the Tories have described their campaign to be "utterly dire" and criticised the lack of a clear message or strategy from their leader, Rishi Sunak. A "prevailing pessimism" is also causing a lack of campaigning and motivation to work for the seats according to some of his conservative peers. However, others believe that the gap between the Labour and Tories is not as serious as the polls indicate and

that the undecideds will swing the polls on Election Day. The pointing out of the consequences of a Labour majority by Grant Sharps, Defence Secretary of the UK has been criticised as a move from a campaign that has run out of ideas. Furthermore, Nigel Farage's Reform UK has shown to be ahead of the Conservatives by one point in a poll conducted by YouGov, a blow to the Tories. On the other hand, the Labour Party prepares to take power, with Sir Keir Starmer attributing their lead to the stability in their promised programmes and the cultural change brought forth. However, Sir Keir faced criticism for his inability to respond to Sunak's tax attack in the debate last week. Furthermore, the far left will be left unhappy with the lack of radical policies in the manifesto he revealed in Manchester. The party has also given major focus to "ground war," by spending resources on door-to-door knocking and leaflet distribution. The party has also spent resources on the "air war," ensuring their best image is spread across the media. Sir Keir's planned visits to constituencies widely considered to be Tory strongholds show confidence in the Labour campaign and in their ability to expand on their seats. The start of the Euros and the attention and passion it will command from the people will disrupt television hours and distract people from the election campaigns. There is also confusion and anticipation about who will take which position in the newly forming Government. ("[As campaign passes halfway, the mood in Tory and Labour camps could not be more different](#)," BBC, 14 June 2024)

Major food recall due to E. Coli outbreak

On 14 June, the BBC reported on a major recall by food manufacturers on at least 60 types of pre-packed sandwiches due to possible contamination with E. Coli. While E. Coli bacteria has not been detected on the products, it is still being recalled as a precaution. Major retailers that have been affected include Aldi, Asda, Co-op and Morrisons. Currently, 211 people in the UK are known to have been affected by E. Coli which is 113 more than last week. 67 of these have been admitted to the hospital, according to the UK Health Security Agency.

Experts believe that the outbreak was linked to ready-made food that is widely available but they have not been able to pin down specific items. Major manufacturers that were affected include Greencore Group who recalled 45 different products and Samsworth Brothers Manton Wood who recalled 15. A third manufacturer is expected to recall products on Saturday too. E. Coli is a broad category of bacteria that are typically found in the intestines of humans and other animals. According to tests, this outbreak's type is E. coli STEC O145. It generates a toxin called Shiga that can damage the lining of the stomach. Frequent symptoms may include vomiting, cramping in the stomach and fever. It typically takes a few days after infection for symptoms to manifest. Most people heal quickly, but some—like small children or those with underlying medical issues—may get quite sick. Experts have advised the usual methods of reducing the risk of infection by "Washing hands with warm water and soap, washing fruits and vegetables and cooking food to the temperatures suggested." ("[Supermarket sandwiches linked to E. coli outbreak](#)," BBC, 14 June 2024)

Labour Party raises GBP 350,000 more than the Tories in the first week

On 14 June, the Electoral Commission reported that the Labour Party raised over GBP 350,000 more than the Conservatives in the first week of the general election campaign. The Labour Party totalled their donations to GBP 926,908, the Tories saw a total of GBP 574,918, and the Liberal Party saw a total of GBP 454,999. The Reform UK raised GBP 140,000 and the Scottish National Party raised GBP 127,998. This contrasts with the donations raised by the parties in 2019 which include GBP 5.7 million raised by the conservatives in the first week compared to the Labour party's GBP 218,000. The biggest Labour donor was Toledo Productions with GBP 500,000 and the largest Tory Donor was GBP 88,000. From 30 May to 05 June, the general election campaign, GBP 3.274 million was donated to political parties, according to official numbers released by the Electoral Commission. Reform UK received the

highest donation amount of any smaller party, totalling GBP 140,000. The largest contributions made to the campaign in its first week of operation were from Fitriani Hay, the wife of former BP CEO James Hay, and H R Smith Group, each contributing GBP 50,000. This report is the first of six on party donations, according to Louise Edwards of the Electoral Commission, who called it: "an important part of delivering transparency for voters." ("Labour raises £350k more than Tories in first week," BBC, 14 June 2024)

Asylum seekers scheduled to depart to Rwanda bailed

On 12 June, 79 detained asylum seekers who were to be sent to Rwanda has been released on bail. The confirmation came through when government lawyers told the High Court that the latest flights would start from 24 July. This was after Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of UK, confirmed that if he returned to power, there would be regular flights starting from July. The Labour party has promised to scrap the policy if it wins the 04 July elections. The Liberal Democrats and the SNP also agreed to scrap the policy because it violates international law. The Home Office denied to comment on the actual number of detainees. Immigration rules say that people can be held in removal centres by ministers only if there is a "realistic prospect" that they will be put on the flight within a "reasonable timeframe." The High court has also ruled that the United Nations Refugee agency needs to provide evidence of ongoing abuses in the country that the detainees were being allegedly subjected to. ("Dozens of Rwanda detainees released on bail," BBC, 12 June 2024)

Labour Party of Britain bets on new childcare places and nurseries

On 10 June, the Labour Party vowed to create 100,000 additional childcare places and more than 3,000 new nurseries as part of its childcare plan. It has said that it would transform the classrooms in the existing primary schools at an estimated cost of around GBP 40,000 per classroom if the party gets elected. Since the number of state and primary schools is expected to fall by

8.8 per cent over the next five years, the Party is planning to use the space freed up in primary school buildings for the 3,334 new "high quality" nurseries, which could be run by the primary school themselves or by the local private and voluntary sector nursery providers. The money could be obtained from the VAT levied on private schools which the Party has called "unfair tax breaks" from private schools. Meanwhile, during the faceoff between the leaders, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak disagreed with this plan and said that it was part of a "class war" to "punish" aspirational parents. The Labour Party had also revealed its long-term plan to deliver a modern childcare system that better supports parents from the end of parental leave to the end of primary school. It had also committed to the government plans of "expansion of funded childcare" from which working parents received additional free childcare hours earlier this year. (Sofia Ferreira Santos, Alice Evans, "Labour pledges 100,000 new childcare places," BBC, 10 June 2024)

BBC lists the voting norms for Channel Islanders

On 09 June, the BBC reported on the UK elections which is scheduled for 04 July. According to the report, the residents of the Channel Islands cannot vote, while residents who have previously lived in the UK, which is a third of its population, have the Right to choose their representative. The general elections will witness the public vote for their respective Members of Parliament (MPs) in the 650 constituencies across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to represent them in Westminster. To vote, one must be over the age of 18 and must be registered in the UK's electoral roll. 18 June would be the last date to enrol on the electoral register. Whereas 19 June would be the application deadline for non-domiciles for a postal vote. They can also apply for a proxy vote, where someone else can vote on the non-domicile's behalf. The final date for a proxy vote application is 26 June. If one has applied for a proxy vote before 31 October 2023, they must reapply. A photo ID is

compulsory and one will have to vote at the polling station local to the postcode they have registered to vote with. ("Can Channel Islanders vote in the UK election?," BBC, 09 June 2024)

Sunak and Starmer in a faceoff before the general election

On 04 June, Rishi Sunak, the UK's Prime Minister, and Keir Starmer, leader of the Labour Party held a TV debate on taxes, the National Health Service and immigration. Sunak said that the Labour Party wanted to increase taxes by GBP 2000 this claim was dismissed by Starmer saying this was "absolute garbage." Both leaders have used this platform to tell their personal stories and childhood and how it has shaped their political views to the voters. This debate caused the audience to question them. The Conservative Party has come up with the number based on how much they claim Labour spending commitments would cost, dividing this by the number of UK households with at least one working member. Sunak has suggested that if the Rwanda policy did not work, he would be willing to pull the UK out of the European Convention on Human Rights. On the question raising of the income tax or national insurance, both leaders denied responding prompting questions on how their policies would be post-election. Immigration was also one of the focused areas of the debate. (Jennifer Mckiernan, Michael Sheils McNamee (Sunak and Starmer clash over tax in the first debate," BBC, 04 June 2024)

Polls predict an overwhelming victory for the Labour party

On 03 June, *Le Monde* reported on recent YouGovpoll which estimated votes across all UK constituencies. According to the report, the labour party is predicted to win 422 out of 650 seats in the UK election. It is considered a major win with highest number of seats since Stanley Baldwin who won 208 seats in 1924. According to the report in Sky news, Tories are expected to be completely lose in large districts from 232 to 140 seats while Lib Dem surge could gain 48 seats and the Scottish National

Party predicted to get only 17 out of 57 seats lower than 2019 results. After undergoing a heavy loss in the 2019 election, Labour is expected to win a majority greater than that of its former leader, Tony Blair, in 1997. Under Keir Starmer, the party may win 222 seats. ("UK general election: Yougov poll predicts biggest ever Labour win," *Le Monde*, 03 June 2024)

Anti-Immigration Reform party leader to stand in the UK elections

On 03 June, in a news conference, the Anti-Immigration Reform UK party's founder and leader, Nigel Farage announced his candidature for the UK general election on 04 July 2024. Farage was a member of the European Parliament in Brussels for UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the Brexit Party, despite having failed in his seven earlier attempts to be elected as an MP in the UK parliament. After initially denying, he later stated that: "I have changed my mind... I am going to stand". He would be competing for the fiercely pro-Brexit seat of Clacton, southeast England. He claimed that polls showed that his party would have a 11 per cent vote share, which would definitely deprive the conservatives of a majority. While acknowledging the Labour Party's expected victory in the elections, he nevertheless called for a step to a political revolt for changing the status quo. ("Nigel Farage to stand in UK election", *Le Monde*, 03 June 2024)

TURKEY

Turkey abandons controversial legislation

On 13 June, Murat Emir, deputy group chairperson of main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) announced the removal of the proposed legislation on "agents of influence" in the ninth judicial package being pushed by Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), which includes changes to the Turkish Penal Code. According to the proposed legislation, "agents of influence" include anyone accused of spreading black propaganda against Turkey or appear to speak in favour of Turkey when they are

actually speaking against it or speak in a manner that could damage the country's social, economic or public order. The move was reminiscent of the Russian "agent law" and the recently passed law against "foreign influence" in Georgia. The AKP's decision against the legislation comes along with the ongoing efforts at establishing cordial relations between the party and the CHP, which emerged following the local elections on 31 March. The efforts are aimed at reducing political tensions and fostering dialogue between the government and opposition parties following the AKP's worst defeat since its establishment in 2002. The CHP, however, saw major improvements in its campaign by safeguarding its strongholds and even taking back some of AKP's bastions, after decades. ("Türkei vertagt Gesetz gegen „Einflussagenten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 13 June 2024)

UKRAINE

Diplomatic influence to Counter Russia's influence in Africa

On 25 June, Ukraine began using diplomatic and strategic initiatives to reduce Russia's influence in Africa. The main goal is to reduce Russia's propaganda and military engagements. Most of the African nations have a strong relationship with Russia which dates to the Soviet Union which has also supported them during their independence struggles. Allies with Russia are widely recognised in terms of economic and diplomatic terms. As for Ukraine, it has near zero diplomatic history with Africa. This was made clear by the limited support shown by African nations for Ukraine at various UN General Assembly votes since the war started in February 2022. Ovigwe Eguegu said: "Ukraine realised that Africa is very, very important when it comes to building a strong position in the United Nations, in particular the General Assembly because Africa presents the largest voting bloc of any continent." Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine Foreign Minister also made several trips to a dozen African nations in 2022 and 2023, as well as the African Union. Another way Ukraine can gain influence is through food diplomacy. Ukraine was the second-

largest supplier of maize and the third-largest supplier of wheat before the war. Though some countries such as Kenya and Ghana have openly voiced their support for Ukraine, there are two reasons why African nations are hesitant to support Ukraine. He said: "And secondly, "African countries have — and some to quite a large degree — tried to maintain a certain degree of non-alignment, such as South Africa. They regarded it as a European war." (Kate Hairsine, "How Ukraine is combating Russia's influence in Africa," *Deutsche Welle news*, 25 June 2024)

REGIONAL

Von Der Leyen, Costa, Kallas chosen for the next top EU position

On 25 June, six EU leaders chose Germany's Ursula von der Leyen, Portugal's Antonio Costa and Estonia's Kaja Kallas would hold EU's senior position at the European Commission, Council and the foreign policy service. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Greek Prime Minister and Donald Tusk, Polish Prime Minister (for the European People's Party), Pedro Sánchez, Spanish Prime Minister and Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor (for the Socialists), and Emmanuel Macron, French President and Mark Rutte, Dutch Prime Minister (for the liberals) were the six leaders. The next meeting will be among the EU leaders where these three names will be presented to the heads of the states for their approval. Georgia Meloni, Italian Prime Minister was not part of the discussion as a condition set out by the Liberals and centre-left groups, who assured that they would not back Von der Leyen if she struck deal with the Italian leader. (Barabra Moens, Jakob Hanke Vela and Paul Dallison, "Von der Leyen, Costa, Kallas approved for EU top jobs by negotiators," 25 June 2024)

Former EIB employee suspected on charge of corruption

On 25 June, the police suspected former EIB employee Henry von Blumenthal of being involved in the European Investment Bank Corruption. This is investigated by the EU prosecutor as a part of an inquiry into allegations of corruption and abuse of influence, and the alleged misappropriation

of EU funds. Frank Rollinger, a Luxembourg-based lawyer for von Blumenthal said: "Yes, there have been searches, but we have no precise idea of what my client is accused of, apart from the fact that we understand it relates to his departure from the bank." (Elisa Braun, "[Second suspect identified in European Investment Bank corruption probe](#)," *POLITICO*, 25 June 2024)

France aims to increase defence cooperation ahead of the snap election

On 24 June, France, Germany and Poland agreed to increase defence cooperation ahead of the snap election. French Armed Forces Minister Sébastien Lecornu shared the stage with his German and Polish counterparts, Boris Pistorius and Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, who have announced joint exercise, military mobility and industrial cooperation. This was the first meeting of the three countries' defence ministers since 2015, showing the revival of the so-called Weimar triangle format after it was paused for eight years when Poland's nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party was in power. According to Lecornu's announcement, France will be joining in a so-called military Schengen agreement already signed by Poland, Germany and the Netherlands. Belgium and Luxembourg are observer members. This deal aims to ease the movement of troops and military equipment through the bloc. The Polish defence minister added that France, Germany and Poland will conduct joint military exercises in Poland next year. (Laura Kayali, "[France deepens military ties with Germany, Poland ahead of risky snap election](#)," *POLITICO*, 24 June 2024)

Opinion in Deutsche Welle recommends for rapid forest management to control wildfires

On 25 June, *Deutsche Welle* reported on how wildfires had become natural occurrence due to increasing temperatures and intense drought conditions. Thereby making fire-prone weather to burn quick and longer. Across Europe, the frequency of such events have increased causing damage of EUR four billion in damages and release of 20

megatons of climate-heating CO2 emissions into air. According to a European Commission spokesperson, the forest fires were "more significant" and it was become more difficult for member states to tackle. Till now the EU response towards such wildfires has concentrated on expanding firefighting capabilities through EU Civil Protection Mechanism and RescEU programme which helps in combating extreme wildfires. According to some scientists and policy experts, the EU could perform better to prevent fires from starting. This comes as 90 per cent of the EU funding focuses on tackling wildfires while only 10 per cent looks at prevention. The scientist at the Institute for European Environmental Policy recommended other methods for sustainable land management and increase resilience of forests. This includes, thinning and spacing of trees, reducing floor vegetation and introducing grazing of cattle and goats. It calls for more coordination and long-term solutions to create a sustainable forest management. ("[Is the EU doing enough to prepare for wildfires?](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 June 2024)

EU launches an investigation into the Apple app store

On 24 June, the European Commission launched an investigation into Apple's app store for alleged anti-competitive practices. This investigation relates to the EU Digital Market Act, which aimed at stopping powerful digital "gatekeepers" from abusing their position as middlepersons between businesses and customers. The initial finding looked into the practices of charging the alternative app stores and app developers fees each time an iPhone user installs their software. According to the initial findings, iPhone makers had breached the DMA. Brussels has also stated that Apple's App stores have appeared to prevent app developers from freely steering consumers to alternative channels for offers and content." If the final ruling says that Apple has violated the DMA, it would have to pay up to 10 per cent of the total revenue. Apple stated that over the past several months it "...has made several changes to comply with the DMA in response to

feedback from developers and the European Commission." (["EU launches probe into Apple's App Store," Deutsche Welle, 24 June 2024](#))

Wolves attack in the French zoo leaves a woman seriously injured

On 23 June, three wolves attacked a woman in France's Thoiry Safari Park and Zoo. French prosecutor claims that she was jogging in a "restricted" area at the time of the attack. The 37-year-old woman was staying with her family at one of the lodges at the zoo. Caillibotte has also stated that the first responders quickly arrived at the location and chased the wolves away. The zoo hosts some 1,500 animals and around 100 species. It also boasts about its lodges being "One-of-a-kind, very intimate experience with the arctic wolves you'll be able to see from the living room," on its website. (["Wolf attack in French zoo leaves woman seriously injured," Deutsche Welle, 23 June 2024](#))

EPP reaches projection numbers with 14 new MEPs

On 18 June, the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) saw fourteen MPs submit their candidacy to sit with their grouping in the EU parliament. Politico reports that seven of the fourteen applicants are from the Tisza party led by Peter Magyar, Hungary's newly emerged opposition leader. The rest include 2 from the Dutch Farm-Citizen Movement (BBB), 2 from the Czech Mayors & Independents Party (STAN) and one each from the Danish Liberal Alliance, Germany Family Party and the Dutch New Social Contract Party (NSC). EPP leader Manfred Weber has stated that politicians wishing to join the group are to be pro-EU, in favour of the rule of law and pro-Ukraine. If the 14 members are taken in, the EPP will manage to achieve its targeted seat number of 190 MEPS. Magyar has requested his supporters to vote on whether he is to take the MEP seat in Brussels. If not, Csaba Bogdán takes the seat instead. As per EEP rules, those who wish to join the group must follow its political program and internal rules. (["14 MEPs vie to join European People's Party in European](#)

[Parliament," Politico, 18 June 2024](#))

EU to increase the safety policy in the nuclear power market

On 19 June, EU countries agreed to have newer nuclear safeguards, despite many environmentalists calls to stop financing atomic power. The EU legally recognised nuclear energy as a low carbon energy which fits for energy transition. As discussion mainly revolves under the inspections of nuclear installations, the Europe Commission as a watchdog uses nuclear material solely for the power generation across the bloc. This nuclear power would further gain more energy following the pledge by the world leaders including Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, France, Hungary the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden — at COP28 in November to increase the nuclear capacity by 2050. While Kadri Simson, Energy Commissioner praised the potential of renewable power, including atomic energy, which would cover 90 per cent of the EU's electricity consumption by 2040. He also added that an industrial alliance of small modular reactors is developing nuclear based technology which is deemed to fit the EU efforts for decarbonisation by 2030. Meanwhile Greenpeace environmental NGO approached the European investment banks regarding the role of finance in Nuclear power activities and has asked the bank "to oppose any funding for nuclear energy, including small modular reactors," because of the safety risk and radioactive waste concerns. ([Marta Pacheco, EU Policy. Member states beef up safety rules amid growing nuclear power market, Euro news, 19 June 2024](#))

Rutte's bid to become NATO chief backed by Hungary and Slovakia

On 18 June, Politico reported on Mark Rutte, outgoing Prime Minister of the Netherlands, being close to becoming the next secretary-general of NATO after having obtained the support of Hungary and Slovakia. Rutte managed to gain the support of both countries after agreeing to allow Hungary and Slovakia to opt out of efforts to help

Ukraine on the promise of Hungary not opposing efforts from the rest of the alliance to do so. Both Peter Pellegrini, Slovakia's President and Viktor Orban, Hungary's Prime Minister publicly endorsed Rutte's bid for the position. Pellegrini also added that discussions on NATO supporting Slovakia's air space until it is capable of independence occurred. This leaves Romania, whose president Klaus Iohannis is Rutte's opposition, as the sole NATO ally not backing. A new alliance chief requires the support of all 32 members. ("Hungary and Slovakia back Dutch PM Rutte as NATO's next chief." *Politico*, 18 June 2024)

Meta to expand its AI translation to 200 more languages

On 19 June, Meta project No Language Left Behind (NLLB) announced that they have scaled up their technology. Which will make it easier for 200 languages lesser spoken around the world. Experts have recommended that Meta should talk with the Native speaker and language specialist in order to improve it as the tool still needs work. Contributors to the dataset are experts in natural language processing (NLP): the subset of AI research that gives computers the ability to translate and understand human language. Meta also stated that it used minded data sources like Wikipedia in their databases. Meta calls a multilingual language model, where the AI can translate "between any pair ... of languages without relying on English data." According to the 2020 report, the NLLB team has improved the accuracy of 44 per cent from the first model. When the technology is at its full potential it is expected to translate more than 25 billion languages every day on Facebook, Instagram and other platforms. Alberto Burgain- Diz professor of AI at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, believes that linguistic groups should work with big tech companies in order to refine their data sets available to them. He also suggested that Meta and other AI companies should take time and look for good data and then go through the legal requirement without breaking intellectual

property law. (Anna Desimaries, "Meta expands AI translation to 200 languages but experts suggest talking to native speakers." *Euronews*, 19 June 2024)

Law that sets targets for Nature Restoration passed by EU

On 17 June, the Nature Restoration Law was approved by 20 European Union Environmental ministers in a meeting in Luxembourg. The law aims at the restoration of habitats to their natural condition by regrowing forests, hydrating moors and allowing rivers to return to their free-flowing state. Lenore Gewessler, Austria's climate minister faced allegations of "unlawful actions" and charges of abuse of office for going against her Conservative coalition partners and backing the policy, thus giving the law the majority it needed to pass. Gewessler stated, "I know I will face opposition in Austria on this, but I am convinced that this is the time to adopt this law." Countries that voted against the law include Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland and Sweden. Belgium, which was responsible for chairing the talks, abstained. The law sets several targets for the EU, the most important of which are a 20 per cent restoration of EU's land and sea areas by 2030 and the restoration of all ecosystems that require it by 2050. This comes after the decline of Europe's natural habitat, out of which 81 per cent is in poor health. The targets set for the latter are 30 per cent by 2030, 60 per cent by 2040 and 90 per cent by 2050. (EU ministers approve contested Nature Restoration Law. *Deutsche Welle*, 17 June 2024)

Commission jobs debated by EU leaders in post-election meeting

On 17 June, the leaders of the EU came together in Brussels to discuss their choices of people to take up key positions in the bloc. Three positions that remain vacant are President of the EU, President of the European Council and that of foreign policy chief or "high representative." The dinner debate comes about at a time when the far right has made major gains in the recent European Parliament elections which has caused unease in the bloc, to the point that

it triggered snap elections in a key EU member, France. While a conclusion had not been reached, Council President Charles Michel said that he was confident that they would do so by the end of June. The post of European Commission President seemed to have an “increasing amount of consensus,” according to Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands. Current EU President Ursula von der Leyen is the favourite to return to the post, having seen her chances boosted by the success of her European People’s Party (EPP) in the recent European Elections. To clinch the job, she will have to gain the support of over 65 per cent of the bloc, that is 15 out of the 27 countries. However, Socialists and Democrats (S&D) of Germany will be hoping for Antonio Costa, former Prime Minister of Portugal to take the position instead. Kaja Kallas, the premier of Estonia is the front runner for the job of foreign policy chief. This comes after her outspoken criticism of Moscow’s invasion and is set to serve as a sign of the EU’s support for East Europe. (“[EU leaders discuss Commission jobs in post-election summit](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 17 June 2024)

Immigration to become critical as working population shrinks in Europe

On 16 June, Europe faces a major threat in decline of the working age group and increase in old age. Europe defines the age group of 16-65 to be part of the working population of the country. According to the report, reduction in this population would cause a major economic problem in the nation. In reality, the EU population has fallen from 66 per cent in 2013 to 63.3 per cent in 2023 and if this continues with an assumption of zero immigration then the working population is expected to decline by 20 per cent according to the report by Allianz Research entitled “European labour Markets: Migration matters.” Major problem of this is that it would cause a decline in the labour market and would cause a fall in the GDP in the longer run. Due to this European growth would also be hindered. Another aspect is that a EU member state would get lesser tax revenue and will have to increase spending on

health care, pensions and subsidies in case of the larger older population. A few ways to counter these issues is to increase the working age thereby allowing the older generation to work longer to fill in the gap, as early retirement is a loss for the government and would have to remove the mandatory retirement age thereby allowing them to be a productivity to the society. According to the report, immigration has become a politically charged issue with discussion ahead of the European parliamentary election being hijacked by populists, nationalists and “great replacement theorists.” The latter claiming that “liberal elites” are promoting non-white immigration from outside Europe to undermine ethnic and cultural homogeneity. ([Shrinking European working age population: immigration matters](#),” *Cyprus Mail*, 16 June 2024)

EU to negotiate with Ukraine, Moldova for membership

On 15 June, EU ambassadors agreed to start negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova regarding their accession to the Union. Ukraine had applied for membership shortly after Russia’s invasion in February 2022 whereas its neighbour Moldova applied 4 months later. This was confirmed by the Belgian Presidency and is set to start on 25 June. While Belgium holds the EU Council of Ministers presidency, it is a rotating post and will be taken up by Hungary after 30 June. Charles Michel, president of the European Council, stated, “We keep our promises and we will support you along the way to membership.” The Council of Ministers is a legislative body; it is not the same as the European Council, which consists of the leaders of the member states. This has come after the European Commission’s demands to reduce the power of oligarchs and to ensure the rights of ethnic minorities. It is expected that candidate nations will need to undergo years of reforms before they can be admitted to the EU. Hungary will assume the rotational presidency of the Council of the European Union following Belgium. Budapest has already expressed their concerns about the European Commission's

determination that Kyiv is prepared for membership negotiations and objected to EU assistance to Ukraine during Russia's war. ("EU agrees on starting membership talks with Ukraine, Moldova." *Deutsche Welle*, 15 June 2024)

Researchers warn about the modernisation of nuclear weapons

On 17 June, *France 24* reported on the dangers of nuclear weapons due to geopolitical tensions as per reports from researchers from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Wilfred Wan, the director of the Institute's Weapons of Mass Destruction Program said, "We have not seen nuclear weapons playing such a prominent role in international relations since the Cold War". Russia's suspension of participation in the 2010 New START treaty, described as "the last nuclear arms control treaty limiting Russian and US strategic nuclear forces", and Russia's tactical nuclear drills close to Ukraine's borders in May was noted by the SIPRI. Vladimir Putin, President of Russia warned his nation in February of a "real" risk of nuclear war. An informal agreement between the US and Iran in June 2023 was also suspended due to the Israel-Hamas war. According to SIPRI, the world's nuclear armed States (the United States, Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel) have continued the modernisation of their weapons. SIPRI estimates that as of January, 9,585 of the 12,121 nuclear weapons estimated to exist worldwide were in stockpiles for possible use. A condition of "high operational alert" was maintained for about 2,100 ballistic missiles. 90 per cent of these weapons belong to the US and Russia. This trend is set to continue and will result in the global deterioration, believes SIPRI researchers. ("Nuclear arms more prominent amid geopolitical tensions, say researchers." *France 24*, 17 June 2024)

Euros 2024: A second Sommermärchen

On 14 June, the *BBC* reported on the general apathy and lack of enthusiasm seen in Germany ahead of the latter hosting Euros

2024. This has been attributed to a combination of the country's men's team's lack of success over the previous decade since their World Cup victory in 2014, the political clashes among the coalitions which have caused rifts in the political state of Germany and the slowing down of economic growth. The situation is reminiscent of the last time Germany played host to the World Cup, in 2006. The period is described as "Sommermärchen," a summer fairy-tale. Due to the country's history and role in the events of the 20th century, their natives had felt uncomfortable with displaying national colours. However, the national team's semi-final run had managed to inspire the nation to let go of its reservations which in turn displayed itself to the world as a united and confident nation. The first concern of the national organizers is the safety and security of every fan. Due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the resurgence of hostilities in the Middle East, Euro 2024 will take place during a period of heightened worldwide tension. Additionally, threats from the Islamic State have been documented. Attacks with political motivation have increased recently in Germany. However, authorities trust in the power of football to result in another "Sommermärchen." ("Will Euro 2024 give Germany another summer fairytale?" *BBC*, 14 June 2024)

Meloni and Macron exchange spurs at G7 Summit

On 14 June, Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister, accused Emmanuel Macron, President of France of using the G7 forum as a form of campaign in response to Macron's criticism of Italy's alleged actions of "watering down language" on abortion rights. This was regarding Meloni's request to remove the term "safe and legal abortion" in the final statement by the G7. The Italian Prime Minister denied any accusations of Italy's reluctance to defend abortion rights. She also denied reports that Italy did the same concerning LGBTQ+ rights from the conclusion of the summit. Macron stated that the clash of women's rights is taking place at a time when French voters are reflecting on how to vote in the snap

elections called by the former upon the Far-Right's victory with 31.4 per cent in the European Parliament elections which is double the margin of 14.6 per cent earned by Macron's party. Clashes between Macron and Meloni have been frequent, ranging from issues on migration to Italy's exclusion from initiatives for Ukraine. Meloni's positions on fundamental rights have always been closely looked at by French officials, although Meloni has never publicly questioned Italy's laws on abortion.

(["Macron, Meloni clash over abortion rights at G7," Politico](#), 14 June 2024)

Ninth EU-NATO progress report stresses on cooperation

On 13 June, the European Council produced the ninth progress report which looks at the implementation of the 74 common proposals put forth by EU and NATO councils in 2016. The report stressed on the need for closer co-operation due to the current challenges to international peace and stability such as the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. The two organisations vowed to play "complementary, coherent and mutually-reinforcing roles" to ensure peace and security. The report also looked at the tangible progress between June 2023 and May 2024, which included countermeasures against hybrid threats such as critical infrastructure, civil emergencies, resilience and counter terrorism, operational cooperation on maritime issues, cybersecurity and defence capabilities and has successfully resulted in the implementation of Plan for Implementation of Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) and the Structured Dialogue on Military Mobility, which in turn focused on defence industries, research, exercise and capacity building. The report noted the commitment from both NATO and EU to strengthen relations through political dialogue and beneficial cooperation. (["EU-NATO: 9th progress report stresses the importance of ever closer cooperation at a key juncture for Euro-Atlantic security," Council of the EU](#), 13 June 2024)

Research finds low voter confidence for general elections

On 12 June, National Centre for Social Research reported on the lack of general trust in UK's politics and election system. The report recorded a high number of 45 per cent of the voters saying that "almost never" trust governments prioritise the country over the party and 58 per cent of the voters do not believe in politicians to tell the truth when in a tight corner. It also suggested that the dissatisfaction with over Brexit among voters is one of the main reasons for the loss in trust. Political scandal and the cost-of-living crisis are also some of the domestic causes. When if they preferred a voting system that was fairer to smaller parties, 53 per cent agreed, the highest proportion ever to question first-past-the-post elections. This was in response to a 79 per cent of voters believing that Britain's system of Governance requires improvement. (["Voter confidence at record low, says report," BBC](#), 12 June 2024)

EU reports on extreme delay in Malta in civil case resolution

On 11 June, European Commission's EU Justice Scoreboard reported on the extreme delays for resolving civil, commercial and administrative cases in Malta and on the lack of data the time taken to resolve corruption and bribery cases. Out of the 25 countries surveyed in the EU, Malta has an average of 2.8 years to settle administrative cases. Although the figures show an improvement in prosecuting money laundering cases in 2022 in comparison to the previous year, reports submitted at this time occurred when Malta was added to the Greylist, and the government made every effort to create the impression it was serious about tackling money laundering which has resulted in Malta escaping the Greylist in 2022. Malta has also not reported a single successful case of prosecuting money laundering. Malta has also not provided for the average length it took for the corruption and bribery cases in 2021 and 2022. (["Malta still slow to resolve court cases – EU Justice Scoreboard," The Shift](#), 12 June, 2024)

Far-rights gains in the EU elections while the Centre-Rights persist

In the EU elections held between 06-09 June, witnessed around 185 million voters across 27 EU countries shifting the balance of power with the right wings gaining popularity as expected. The pro-European coalition at the centre with the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), the centre-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and the liberal Renew Europe group will hold the power securing 56 per cent of all seats with 403 lawmakers if there is sufficient political will. Although there is a sufficient increase in the number of seats, there is no particular sweep or majority secured by the Far-Rights. Since the EPP had secured a majority, Ursula von der Leyen is set to have a second term as the President of the European Commission by the Spitzenkandidaten process. Meanwhile, the snap elections set to be conducted in France and also the weakened German Socialist Party of Chancellor Scholz could weaken her nomination. Even if she does pass the stage, she will then need to secure an absolute majority of 361 newly-elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in a secret ballot. The reshuffling of the parliament once the newcomers get into power would benefit the right wing as many of them belong to the Far-Rights like the Identity and Democracy (ID) and the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). It could also derail the numbers of the centrist Renew Europe group and also the influence of the centre-right coalition in power. Parties currently categorised as non-attached (NI) could look to join the ECR and boost the nationalist grouping's numbers. (Mared Gwyn Jones, "Europe veers right but centre-ground resists: What the EU election results mean and what's next," Euronews, 10 June 2024)

Euro's value drops as Europe faces political uncertainties

On 10 June, *Euronews* reported that the euro, which serves as the official currency of 20 members of the EU, slumped as uncertainties followed Macron's snap elections and parliament dissolution. The euro tumbled one per cent against the US

dollar when the market opened on Friday, reaching 1.0774, a nearly one-month low. It also weakened against the British pound to 0.8469, the lowest level since August 2022, and against the Swiss franc to 0.9660, a more than two-month low. The rising uncertainties with the Far-Rights gain in the EU elections lead to challenges in the political and economic arenas as they have the potential to derail the EU's policies. These right-wing representatives, largely populists, tend to be EU skeptics, anti-immigration, anti-green transition, or pro-Russia. The shift in the balance of power may weaken national and EU-level security policy and thus a decline in economic growth. The European Central Bank had the first cut last week since 2019 which marked the current rate hike cycle. Since the EU's economy stagnated last year, the continuing political crisis might exacerbate the situation. Meanwhile, the US economy is becoming stronger which could lead investors to sell the euro and buy dollars. (Tina Teng, "Euro slumps after Macron calls election and far-right gains in Europe," Euronews. business, 10 June 2024)

ECB announces cut in the interest rate for the first time in five years

On 06 June, the European Central Bank announced a quarter-point interest rate cut due to inflation. This is due to pressure on the consumer side, despite an increase in wages. The rate has reduced to 3.75 per cent, the first reduction in the last five years. The ECB projected an inflation rate of around 2.5 per cent this year and was expected to fall to 2.2 per cent in 2025 and 1.9 per cent in 2026, according to the report published. ECB said that "price pressure has weakened, and inflation expectations have caused decline at all horizons." The bank states that this decision is based on the inflation outlook. The ECB is planning to keep the policy rate sufficiently restrictive as long as it is needed. Christine Lagarde, Chief of ECB said during the press conference that the speed of the cuts is "very uncertain." This inflation will limit room for an additional rate cut, which could be a sign of the ECB's ways to avoid weakening the Euro. ("ECB cuts interest

rates for first time since 2019,” Deutsche Welle, 06 June 2024)

McD no longer holds the trademark for ‘Big Mac’

On 06 June, McDonald's lost its trademark after battling with the Irish rival Supermac, the fast food giant McDonald's lost its complete right to use the “Big Mac” name for its large chicken sandwich the European Court of Justice. This was because the Supermac is similar to McD, which sells in Ireland. This ruling would allow their brand to use the name “Mac” in their food items and company name. This was after the decision made by the European Court of Justice that deemed that McD could have made the best use of the name in the last five years and it should allow this opportunity for other restaurants to do so. This was due to SuperMac alleging that McD had been engaged in trademark bullying, for using the word ‘Mac’ in their name making it difficult for them to expand in the UK and the rest of Europe. Pat McDonagh Managing Director of Supermac said “We knew when we took on this battle that it was a David versus Goliath scenario. The original objective of our application to cancel was to shine a light on the use of trademark bullying by this multinational to stifle competition.” This was not the first time Supermac had also previously complained that McD trademarking the name SnackBox, despite not having anything to do with their menu, while this was a bestseller for Supermac. This court ruling means that McD can only keep the “Big Mac” trademark for its only red meat sandwich and not for its chicken and poultry products. (“McDonald’s loses chicken Big Mac trademark battle with Irish rival,” *Euronews*, 06 June 2024)

Youth support far right with the Greens losing ground

On 06 June, *Politico* reported that the European parliamentary elections will see a rise in young voters supporting the far right in the EU. Similar to the Green wave in 2019 in which climate-focused parties made a record high of 74 seats, the far right is gaining popularity among youth in 2024.

VOX in Spain, Chega in Portugal, Vlaams Belang in Belgium and the Finns Party in Finland are far right parties in the EU with a rising youth support. According to a recent Ipsos survey, 34 per cent of French voters under 30 said they would support right-wing populist Jordan Bardella from the National Rally (RN) party. The Greens were the next most popular choice. However, Josse de Voogd, an electoral researcher observes that: “younger voters are more volatile, while older voters stay with traditional parties.” Additionally, he believed that the younger people saw migration, globalisation and diversity policies in the current periods, unlike the older ones, who grew up when religion or the left-right axis on economic issues was dominant. (Ella Joyner, “Will young voters boost far right in EU elections?.” *Politico*, 06 June 2024)

Charles Michel’s plan to secure the title of the next Commission Chief

On 04 June, *Politico* wrote reported on the EU diplomats fear over Charles Michel, European Council President vying to take down the incumbent European Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen who is preparing for a second term. A certain group of Officials observed a power war between the two leaders on many occasions. While some others believe that he was eyeing for the EU foreign policy chief role, there is a common notion that Michel would pursue a personal revenge agenda as he would preside over the dividing up of the top jobs after the elections. A group of EU diplomats predict that Michel cannot stand a chance against von der Leyen, because her reputation as crisis-manager-in-chief has risen during the pandemic and Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, her party, the European People’s Party (EPP) gained popularity in the polling ahead of the elections. However, they agree that the Commission Chief has also garnered criticisms and pushbacks against her centralised leadership style and her potential cooperation with the right-wing parties. (Barbara Moens and Jacopo Barigazzi, “Charles Michel plots revenge against Ursula von der Leyen,” *Politico*, 04

June 2024)

S&P's poor crediting disturbs France sovereign credibility

On 01 June, after many warnings, France's sovereign credit rating was downgraded by Standard & Poor's (S&P) FROM AA TO AA-. This was due to the logical consequence of budgetary issues. The government's misjudgement of the slow growth economy led to an overestimated 2023 Tax revenue by EUR 21 billion and this has caused France with a much larger deficit than expected. Though the government has announced EUR 20 billion in savings that has yet to be detailed. This could be a threat of a motion of no confidence looming, the budget bill for 2025 promises to be particularly difficult to put together, not to mention the efforts that are to be made between now and the end of President Emmanuel Macron's five-year term. While most European countries aim to reduce their debt, France seems to be going in the other direction. Even though doubts have been growing about the government's ability to reduce the deficit, Bruno Le Maria, Finance Minister still believes in the idea that France would be able to bring the public deficit below three per cent of GDP by 2027. These issues would be used in the political arena more than the financial market. This downgrading may be used by the government to justify future tightening of budgetary screws. This would weaken the government's credibility. Ahead of the European Election this gives a bad impression undermining Macron's claim to leadership in the EU. This would give great opportunities for the opposition parties to talk about the current government's carelessness in Budgetary matters. ("France's bad grade from Standard & Poor's shakes its economic credibility," *Le Monde*, 01 June 2024)

US big tech donations to parties give significant boost in European Elections

On 31 May, Politico reported on how the US based tech companies being major contributors of donations to policy think tanks or parties directly ahead of the

European Parliament elections. Between December 2023 and May 2024, over 60 per cent of all donations to European foundations and parties came from the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats of Europe (ALDE) and the center-right European People's Party. Big Tech companies such as Google, Apple and Microsoft topped the ranking of donors. Although certain European parties, such as the European Socialists, expressly oppose private donations, ALDE actively seeks them out. The party provided private-sector businesses with a range of options to sponsor events the previous year, with a complete package available for a maximum donation of EUR 18,000. The US companies have also donated to the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, the think tank of the center-right European People's Party, apart from other liberalist groups. Additionally, the donations are being made at a time when tech firms are being scrutinized by Brussels and facing several new tech-related regulations. (Pieter Haeck, Sarah Wheaton and Giovanna Coi, "Big Tech donations boost liberals ahead of EU election," *Politico*, 31 May 2024)

Political parties and NGOs spend excessively on online advertising for elections reports Politico

On 02 June, according to a report by Politico, politicians and parties had invested huge sums of money on online ads ahead of the elections. Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian Prime Minister and his Fidesz party was the largest player with ads on Google's platforms and its network of 35 million websites, and on Meta's Facebook and Instagram. The far-right party has explicitly showed its support to Russia in the war and called its opponents as beholden to Brussels. Similarly, according to Google's public repository, Germany's far-right party Alternative for Germany spent as much as EUR 108,000 in May 2024. It is observed that far-right and right-wing parties together spent the most money on Google ads. After Hungary, the far-right Flemish party Vlaams Belang in Belgium has been the second largest spender in online ads. Romania comes third with Marcel Ciolac,

the Romanian Prime Minister who was the top individual candidate spender on Meta's platforms. The European People's Party topped the spending on ads on Meta's platforms. Ads opposing climate fanaticism, migration, Islamization, and EU madness by attacking political rivals were viewed over 28 million times. Fighting crime, and supporting traditions and small businesses were among the other themes. Apart from the parties themselves, many NGOs and politically attached organizations behind parties have also helped raise support. However, nonprofits have voiced concerns that examining political and social media ads in Google's ad library is challenging. The European Commission has investigated into Meta for potentially not monitoring its ads, which could result in a fine of billions of euros under the Digital Services Act. Moreover, Politicians find it more difficult to target particular demographics due to European tech and privacy laws. (Clothilde Goujard, Mark Scott, Lucia Mackenzie and Hanne Cokellaere, "By the numbers: How politicians have advertised online for the European election," Politico, 02 June 2024)

Politico explores winning chances of the European Commission President

On 03 June, in an analysis Politico reported on the chances for Ursula von der Leyen's re-election in the European Parliament and Council. According to the report, in 2019, she managed to win the majority with just nine votes. However, she needs to secure at least 361 votes from 720 Members of European Parliament in the current elections. She also needs to obtain a majority in the European Council during a post-election meeting in late June. As for the Council, Von der Leyen's center-right European People's Party (EPP) has 12 EU heads of state and government expected to support her, with the polls also suggesting that the EPP would be the single biggest group after elections. Additionally, with support from the liberal Renew Europe group and the Socialists and Democrats, she can secure 390 votes, which is beyond the threshold. However, considering a 10 per cent attrition rate, even from within her own party, she needs to campaign further.

Von der Leyen was also seen to be leaning toward the far-right leader, Georgia Meloni, the Italian Prime Minister and her Brothers of Italy party. While her support will be crucial for her nomination in Council, this would lead to the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Renew and Greens to turn away from her. A substantial support from the Greens would assure her victory, but she will have to fulfill a list of demands including commitment to the Green deal. This in turn, would upset her conservative voters who had earlier rebelled against key aspects of Green Deal such as the phaseout of the combustion engine and a nature restoration law. (Nicholas Vinocur, "Von der Leyen needs 361 votes to keep her job. Good luck with that," Politico, 03 June 2024)

Politico provides the timeline of the EU elections

On 31 May, Politico published a report on the entire process of the European elections. The new leaders who will take the EU forward until 2029 is expected to be elected on 07 June, with the results to be announced on 10 June. MEPs in the European Parliament are not officially part of pan-European political groups until they meet and agree on membership. After the election, deal-making will take place as groups will attempt to dominate national parties with small profiles. As the process of forming the Parliament takes place, the groups will also elect their new leaders at the first group meetings, which are set between 18 June and 03 July. On 17 June, EU leaders are scheduled to meet for an informal EU summit led by the European Council president in Brussels. Following this, in a European Council meeting scheduled on 27-28 June, the EU leaders would need to agree on a common President and other posts taking into account the balance between the different political groups, geographic diversity and gender balance. On 16 July, the European parliament's new term would begin, starting with a vote on electing its President. The Parliament then will have to schedule a vote to confirm the European Council's nominee for Commission President. If the first nominee is rejected,

the Council must come up with a second within one month. A new President of the European Commission leads a transition team that creates the new executive after receiving the backing of the European Parliament. Every nation is assigned a portfolio, and the European capitals are responsible for selecting their commissioners. The Commission President heads the creation of portfolios and their distribution among commissioners. To form the new executive, each Commissioner-designate faces an enquiry by the European Parliament after which MEPs will hold a vote on the College of Commissioners as a whole, which is passed with a simple majority. (Barbara Moens and Eddy Wax, "Top jobs timeline: What happens after the European election," Politico, 31 May 2024)

INTERNATIONAL

EU, China to negotiate tariff on Chinese EV

On 23 June, the EU and China conducted a call where officials discussed the frictions over the tariffs on Chinese electric cars and they agreed to conduct further discussions. This is the first time that both sides agreed to negotiate after the EU threatened to apply tariffs of up to 38 per cent on Electric vehicles (EVs). However, while Valdis Dombrovskis, Trade Commissioner of the EU and his Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao agreed to "continue to engage at all levels in the coming weeks", the EU still insisted on the outcome of the negotiations addressing the "injurious subsidisation" of Chinese EVs. China disagreed with the EU and fiercely opposed the tariffs. It also threatened the EU to file a lawsuit with the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Germany and leading car manufacturers have been critical of the tariffs which have increased the rate levied on EU vehicles from 10 percent to a range from 17.4 to 38.1 percent. ("[China and EU to hold talks on electric car tariffs](#)", BBC, 23 June 2024)

China threatens EU against tariffs on EV

On 12 June, according to *Deutsche Welle*, the European Commission planned to impose provisional duties of up to 38.1 per cent on

imports of Chinese electric vehicles. In response, the Chinese Commerce Ministry threatened to sue the European Union at the World Trade Organization (WTO) due to the high import tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles. Earlier, the EU investigated the illegal support from subsidies in China. The EU mandates that the tariffs will come into effect on a provisional basis from 04 July and if China does not act upon it, it will continue permanently from November. However, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said: "We urge the EU... to correct its wrong practices, stop politicising economic and trade issues, and properly handle economic and trade frictions through dialogue and consultation," The German Economy Minister Robert Habeck also added: "Tariffs as a political tool are always only the last resort and often the worst path." ("[China threatens WTO action over EU electric car tariffs](#)", *Deutsche Welle*, 13 June 2024)

Germany against EU sanctions on Chinese EV

On 14 June, *Euronews* reported on Germany's stalling of the EU process on imposing tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles. On 04 July, EU manufacturers were found to have received huge subsidies from the Chinese government which allowed them to sell in the EU market for lower prices. Such tariff was expected to hit Chinese car companies such as BYD, and SAIC motors as they were more affordable in the European market compared to the western producers. China has already hinted that enforcing such tariffs to affect major brands such as BMW, and Porsche. While Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor highlighted such tariffs causing problems in job creation in Germany. Scholz said: "Isolation and illegal customs barriers- that ultimately just makes everything more expensive, and everyone poorer. We do not close our markets to foreign companies, because we do not want that for our companies either." While addressing all these issues, the best course of action is to promote EV adoption and slowly stop internal combustion engines by 2035. (Indrabti Lahiri, "[Why is Germany](#)

opposed to EU tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles?" Euronews, 14 June 2024)

About the authors



Ken B Varghese

Mr Varghese is a graduate in Political Science from Madras Christian College. He is currently working as a Research Intern at National Institute of Advanced Studies. His interest lies in economics and trade relations, security issues in the Indo Pacific region and the Arctic region .



Padmashree Anandhan

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



Neha Tresa George

Ms George is a graduate in Political Science from Madras Christian College. She is currently working as a Research Intern at the National Institute of Advanced Studies(NIAS), Bengaluru. Her interest lies in Europe, gender and ethnic issues around the world.



Shilpa Joseph

Ms Joseph is a Postgraduate scholar at Department of International Relations, Loyola College, Chennai. Her areas of interest include Climate Change, Renewable energy, Europe, EU Politics.

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