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UK ELECTIONS 2024
A Landslide Victory for the Labour Party



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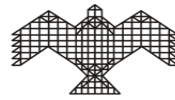
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Europe Monitor

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Image Source: Reuters/Suzanne Plunkett

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WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES

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Source: Reuters/Oleksandr Ratushniak, nato.int, Reuters, Institute for the Study of War, Reuters, Twitter

The War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 888 to Day 861 in four dimensions. First, The War on the Ground. Second, The Moscow View: Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine.

EM DAILY BRIEF

By Samruddhi Pathak, Neha Tresa George and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: DW/ Heikki Saukkomaa, European Parliament, Arab News, REUTERS/Axel Schmidt, Al Jazeera, BBC/AFP

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

COMMENT

UK Elections 2024: A Landslide Victory for the Labour Party

By Govind Anoop

The UK has seen a cycle of long tenures involving both Labour and Conservative parties and the Conservative party looks to regroup and win back the support of the public.

On 05 July 2024, the Labour Party, under the leadership of Keir Starmer, won the UK general elections with 412 out of 650 seats, a vote share of almost 34 per cent, while the Conservative Party in Parliament won 121 seats, a vote share of 23.7 per cent. The election witnessed the lowest voter turnout since 2001 with 60 per cent. Starmer was quoted as saying, “This lack of trust can only be healed by actions, not words,” referring to the public’s loss of support for the outgoing Conservative party. He also announced his cabinet ministers which include Rachel Reeves (finance minister), Angela Rayner (deputy prime minister) and David Lammy (foreign minister).

Outgoing PM Rishi Sunak said: “I have given this job my all, but you have sent a clear signal that the government of the United Kingdom must change, and yours is the only judgment that matters. I have heard your anger, your disappointment and I take responsibility for this loss.”

“...the Conservatives, who pledged to create 1.6 million homes but were received with scepticism from previous unfulfilled promises.”

What is the background?

First, a brief on the UK’s electoral system. There are multiple parties but the five major ones that have emerged on top include the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, the Liberal Democrats, the SNP and the Reform UK. In the 2019 election, the Conservative Party led by Boris Johnson, achieved a

decisive victory with 365 seats, securing a robust majority and a mandate to “get Brexit done.” The Labour Party, under Jeremy Corbyn, suffered a significant defeat, dropping to 203 seats and losing many traditional strongholds. The Liberal Democrats, despite high expectations, won only 11 seats, and their leader Jo Swinson lost her seat. The SNP continued its dominance in Scotland, securing 48 out of 59 seats. In the 2024 election, the Conservative Party saw a decline, losing 251 seats. The Liberal Democrats led by Ed Davey and the Green Party increased their representation. The SNP saw a loss in support in Scotland in favour of Labour while the Conservatives faced the same in Wales.

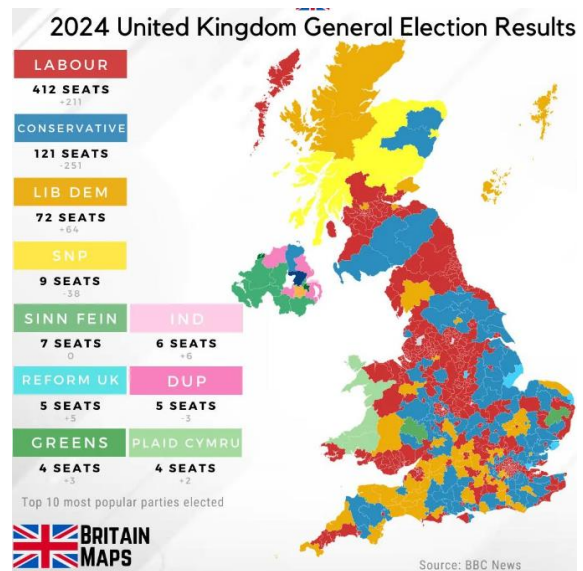


Image Source: BBC

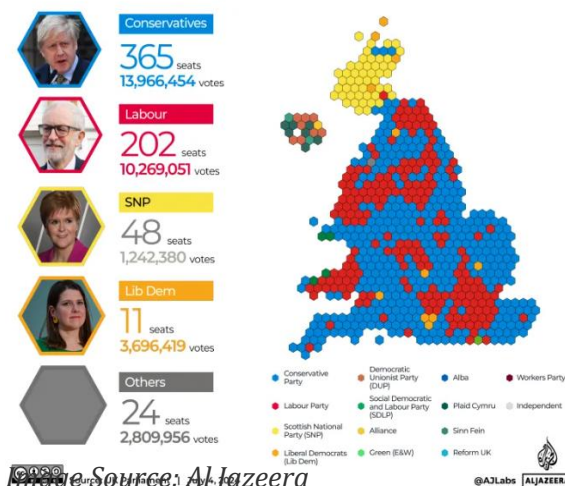
Second, the major issues in the 2024 elections. Labour concentrated on expanding the number of healthcare employees, developing diagnostic instruments, and boosting mental health services to counter this. They also pledged integrated community health facilities and simpler

access to GPs. The Conservative government came under fire for not addressing NHS inefficiencies and cutting waiting times. Further issues include the fallouts from Brexit which included the housing crisis and living expenses where voters expressed frustration about the ongoing lack of affordable housing, which has caused rents to skyrocket and the number of homeless people to rise. In contrast to the Conservatives, who pledged to create 1.6 million homes but were received with scepticism from previous unfulfilled promises, the Labour Party committed to building 1.5 million homes, with a concentration on social housing.

Third, the decline of the Conservative Party. The party had a sharp downturn in popularity in the public as a result of mounting discontent about how they handled important issues like the consequences of Brexit such as the housing crisis, and living expenses, the failing NHS and ineffective actions on immigration. The administration of Rishi Sunak came under fire for not delivering on its promises of inexpensive homes and better healthcare. Further, the failures of former Conservative Prime Ministers such as Liz Truss, Theresa May and Boris Johnson to uphold their promises as well has resulted in a change in public opinion and caused the significant loss of Conservative seats.

UK ELECTIONS 2024
How the House of Commons looked in 2019

Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party clinched 365 seats out of 650 in the House of Commons in 2019.



What does it mean?

First, the Labour Party’s landslide win gives the party the freedom to push for their policies in the Parliament more comfortably and with their promises to provide affordable homes, overhaul the NHS, and enhance the economic situation to be constantly monitored by both the Opposition and the public.

Second, the Labour Party will have to deal with the country’s economic problems, as over 30 per cent of the UK’s aid budget continues to be spent on refugee housing costs. The Labour has also promised to adopt policies emphasising global leadership through the Global South, which contrasts with the Tories “UK First” strategy.

“The Labour Party will have to deal with the country’s economic problems, as over 30 per cent of the UK’s aid budget continues to be spent on refugee housing costs.”

This could be significant, with the new European Commission leaning Right and Trump’s promises if he wins the US elections. However, the UK has seen a cycle of long tenures involving both Labour and Conservative parties and the Conservative party looks to regroup and win back the support of the public.

Govind Anoop is a Research Intern at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS, Bangalore. His areas of interest include issues in domestic politics, trade deals and migration across Europe.

COMMENT

Belgian to Hungarian Presidency of the European Council: What's ahead for the EU?

By Manoranjan Kumar

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

On 01 July, Hungary took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU from Belgium. This is the second time; Hungary is heading. On 18 June, János Bóka, Hungarian Minister for European Affairs, unveiled Hungary's priorities for the Presidency of the Council of the EU. On the timing of the presidency, he said: "Europe is facing the shared challenges of the war in our neighbourhood, global competition, a fragile security situation, illegal migration, natural disasters, the effects of climate change, and the demographic situation." Making Europe "Great Again" would be the Hungarian Presidency's key slogan and will focus on implementing the Strategic Agenda 2024-29.

What is the role of the Council Presidency?

The Council of the EU is a platform where all the member states' ministers meet to negotiate and adopt various EU laws and the EU budget. The member state holding the presidency plays a crucial role in leading Council meetings, steering the legislative agenda, fostering cooperation with other EU institutions, and maintaining continuity in the EU policy agenda. For the council presidency, there is no election held. Every country takes its turn i.e. each member state—however big or small—holds the council's presidency on a six-month rotating basis. Before Hungary, Belgium held the presidency of the Council of the EU, and after six months, Poland came.

The presidency of the council would be responsible for driving forward the council's work on EU legislation, ensuring the continuity of the EU agenda, orderly legislative processes and cooperation among member states. The main tasks of the presidency are planning and chairing numerous meetings in the council and its

preparatory bodies, and representing the council in relations with the other EU institutions.

What did the Belgian Presidency achieve?

From 01 January to 30 June 2024, the presidency of the Council was held by Belgium. During this period, they set mainly six priorities—defending the rule of law, democracy, and unity; strengthening our competitiveness; pursuing a green and just transition; and reinforcing our social and health agenda. During the first half of 2024 under the Belgian Presidency, important legislative and political results were achieved to protect EU citizens, strengthen Europe's competitiveness, and make the EU future-proof with the cooperation of the member states of the EU, European Parliament and European Commission. One of the presidency's main achievements was that it had closed 74 agreements and found 57 council-level negotiating mandates that demonstrated the Belgian 'culture of compromise.'

The baseline of the Belgian Presidency was to "protect, strengthen and prepare." These three keywords guide Belgium to address two main challenges. First, to finalise as many legislative files as possible and second, to contribute to the strategic agenda to reshape and reform the EU. Second, by the end of its presidency, Belgium successfully achieved its triple objectives to drive forward an ambitious legislative agenda, to effectively respond to ongoing challenges and crises faced by the EU and to formulate the debate on Europe's future. The Belgian Presidency organised two country-specific dialogues on the rule of law and celebrated the 20th anniversary of the accession of its 10 member states. In 2004, finalised and adopted the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), the Anti-SLAPP Directive. During its

term, Belgium focused on strengthening the internal market and prioritising the greening of industry. It has also succeeded in overcoming the deadlock on modernising the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). To achieve the EU's objective of climate neutrality by 2050, Belgium adopted a holistic approach to drive the green and just transition and finalised some important legislations towards Green Deal Initiatives.

Apart from its six priorities during its six months of presidency, Belgium also focused on tackling the ongoing challenges. These included its response to the EU's commitment to peace in the Middle East, protection of electoral processes and concerns of European farmers. The Belgian Presidency brokered agreements to secure enduring aid to Ukraine including 'the Ukraine Facility,' which will provide Ukraine with €50 billion in EU financial support for rehabilitation, reconstruction and modernisation in regular instalments by 2027. It also took measures against foreign interference during European elections. There is a long list of work which was done during the Belgian Presidency and it is not possible to mention all. But, in a nutshell, the Belgian Presidency almost fulfilled its all main promised priorities and it will be interesting to see now how the Hungarian Presidency will take it to further and achieve its promised priorities.

What is the agenda of Hungary?

Hungary is focusing on seven key areas (theme-wise) for its working as the EU council presidency. They include— enhancing the EU's competitiveness; reenforcing the EU's defence policy; making the enlargement policy consistent and merit-based; stemming illegal migration; shaping the future of cohesion policy; promoting a farmer-oriented EU agricultural policy; and addressing demographic challenges. The official document released by Hungary states that "Hungary will work as an honest broker, in the spirit of sincere cooperation between Member States and institutions, for the peace, security and prosperity of a truly strong Europe." However, during the Hungarian Presidency it is expected that not much of legislative deals will be taken place because of the newly elected European

Parliament will be busy in the smooth institutional transition that will take centre stage for the majority of the next six months.

Orbán may consider himself as a mediator but in reality, he has no mandate to do so. The president of 'Renew Group' in the European Parliament Valérie Hayer has even called the European Council to explore all legal means to stop the ongoing Hungarian Presidency of the council and hand it over to Poland. The motto called "Make Europe Great Again" seem to be inspired from the former US President Donald Trump's campaign "Make America Great Again," which has been not appreciated by most of the EU leaders.

What does it mean for the EU?

In recent years, Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán has violated EU decisions (asylum/migration policies), and the democratic values, rule of law, and press freedom in Hungary have been undermined under his leadership. Last year, even Hungary vetoed EUR 50 billion financial aid to Ukraine in the EU Parliament. As Hungary heads the EU Council of Ministers for the next six months, it is expected to become a challenge for the EU bodies to come together for a common decision. It will be also a challenge for Hungary to keep the EU united and protect the values of the EU.

In the upcoming six months, the focus is likely to be on broader political discussions concerning the new EU institutional leadership and setting priorities for the next five years, rather than on advancing specific legislative files. Hungary's agenda-setting role may not significantly affect progress more than it has already done by exercising its veto power. However, it will be important to monitor the political discourse. This is mainly due to concern over Hungary's using of the platform to challenge EU unity, particularly on foreign policy issues, and potentially support far-right and nationalist voices that gained ground in the European Parliament elections in June.

Mr Kumar is a Doctoral Candidate at the Centre for European Studies, SIS, JNU. His research interests include social, political and security aspects of North-Eastern Europe, especially the Baltics.

COMMENT

Meloni and Xi sign a three-year Action Plan: Five Focus Areas of China-Italy Collaboration

By Samruddhi Pathak

The primary aim of this agreement is to balance the bilateral trade which is currently tilted towards China's favour.

On 28 July, Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister, as part of her five-day visit to People's Republic of China, held discussions with Xi Jinping, President on future Italy-China cooperation. Italy which had shown interest in collaborating with China on economic projects, was the first to collaborate on the Belt and Road Initiative project in the EU. However, the bilateral ties watered down when Italy withdrew due to concerns over the Chinese threat to the world order and trade. During this visit, the two leaders signed a three-year cooperation strategy that covers areas related to upcoming technology and economic cooperation. Apart from the scope of bilateral relations, they also discussed the crisis in West Asia and the Russia-Ukraine war.



Image Source: [governo.it](https://www.governo.it)

What is the Action Plan for the 2024-2027 Partnership about?

The 18-page document signed by the two leaders discusses cooperation on economic tariffs, market access, green finance, cultural programs, technology sharing and ease of doing business.

The focus was on the following five areas;

1. Economic collaboration was a priority in Meloni's visit to China.

The two countries plan to strengthen the role of the Joint Economic Commission. The aim of this Commission is to enhance complementary roles of Italy and China in the Italy-China Business Forum. Chinese investments in Italy and one-third of Italian investments in China. Meloni, while addressing the Joint Forum during her visit, said that they need to bridge this gap. Italy has also promised to support the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, vice versa, China has promised to support the Italy Chamber of Commerce.

2. Making the market accessible

The two agreed to make their markets accessible to the others' economic operators and eliminate non-tariff barriers that impede trade. These barriers can be eradicated by strengthening the role of the Investment Collaboration Working Group. Both leaders also plan to collaborate on improving the capabilities of medium and small-scale enterprises.

3. Boosting economic infrastructure through sustainable finance

One of the traditional ways to improve economic infrastructure is through international and multilateral banks. Thus, the countries recognise the importance to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, BRICS and other multilateral banks in easing bilateral trade. With sustainability taking centre stage in the 21st century, green finance has been a pivotal area in the Italy-China three-year cooperation plan. The two countries will work to propose a Sustainable Finance Roadmap to prioritise climate change in their cooperation. The bilateral collaboration might also have greater

cooperation with G20 projects since, in 2021, when Italy was holding the presidency in G20, it signed and established a G20 Sustainable Finance Roadmap as well. Thus, the two countries can also bring their bilateral projects to a multilateral platform.

4. Focus on cooperation over technology and pharma

With the rise of fintech companies and e-commerce trade, technology cooperation has become pertinent for ease of doing business. The partnership agreement meticulously discusses an Executive Program between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China and Ministry of Science and Technology, China and their counterparts in Italy. The two countries have proposed a Joint Declaration for Science and Technology. Both countries will also work towards regulatory collaboration on medicine, medical devices and cosmetics. Since the Chinese cosmetic industry is huge and provides cosmetic products at an economic cost, meanwhile, it faces regulatory obstruction from the EU over quality issues. Similar issues are faced by the Chinese pharmaceutical businesses. Thus, the two countries can eliminate factors impeding their pharmaceutical and cosmetic trade.

“Italy will need to collaborate to make use of this advantage. Meanwhile, it will also need to ensure that Chinese products maintain European standards in the quality of their product.”

5. Initiating peaceful research in the polar

Another vital area of cooperation is the Polar sphere. Since both countries have their research stations in the Ross Sea area,

Antarctica, peaceful research cooperation will be initiated between Mario Zucchelli Research Station and Qin Ling Research Station in the Polar region. The countries aim to research climate change and its impact on the Polar region. Similarly, initiatives have been launched in space cooperation as well. A Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between Italy and China on electromagnetic monitoring of the CSES-02 satellite to launch in 2024 and cooperation on the Tain Wen 2 asteroid exploration mission. Both countries are also launching the China-Italy University Rectors Forum in China. The forum aims to train high-level technicians to work in technology-intensive industries.

What does this mean for Italy?

The primary aim of this agreement is to balance the bilateral trade which is currently tilted towards China's favour. China is a manufacturing giant that produces economic products. Italy will need to collaborate to make use of this advantage. Meanwhile, it will also need to ensure that Chinese products maintain European standards in the quality of their product.

Italy voted in favour of the EU when it decided to impose 37.6 per cent tariffs on Chinese EVs. The EU has, multiple times, accused China of 'dumping cheap EVs' in the EU. Similar situations arise in the pharmaceutical industry of China. Thus, the reduction of red tape is important for bilateral business to flourish. This cannot be achieved without including the EU in discussions. Thus, stakeholders in the Italy-China bilateral affairs are more than just two state actors.

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War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan and Neha Tresa George



Source: REUTERS/Oleksandr Ratushniak, nato.int, Reuters, Institute for the Study of War, Reuters, Twitter

War in Ukraine: Day 888

Attacks continue in Kharkiv and Chuhuiv

War on the Ground:

On 29 July, *Anadolu Agency* reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine visited a forward command post in the Kharkiv region and the city of Derhachi in the northwest of Kyiv. The focus of the meeting was to prepare the Kharkiv city and oblast for the winter and autumn period. He appreciated: "I am grateful for their bravery and heroic operations behind enemy lines, as well as during the defence and de-occupation of our cities and villages." He also spoke with the local authorities concerning the security and energy of the region.

On 29 July, *Ukrinform* reported on Russia's concentrated attacks targeting five settlements in Kharkiv- Lyptsi, Hlyboke, Morokhovets, Krasne and Vovchansk. According to Vitaliy Sarantsev, the Kharkiv Operational Tactical Grouping of Troops spokesperson, there is a difficult situation in

Vovchansk and the asymmetrical measures sought by the Ukrainian troops to counter the Russian forces. He confirmed Russia's use of "high-precision technology involving artificial intelligence, long-range reconnaissance and electronic warfare equipment to destroy their unmanned aerial vehicles."

On 29 July, *Ukrinform* reported on the attack of Russian troops on the Chuhuiv district in the Kharkiv region resulting in fire. According to the statements of the Main Directorate of the State Emergency Service (SES) in Kharkiv, Russian troops attacked the private sector of Lozova village in the Vovchansk community of the Chuhuiv district. The attack led to the destruction of private houses and outbuildings. The rescuers extinguished two fires preventing their spread to residential buildings. Although there were no casualties, SES reported the death of over 100 domesticated birds.

* 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.

The Moscow View:**Claims by Russia**

On 29 July, *ABC News* reported on the takeover of two frontline villages in the eastern Donetsk region- Vovche and Prohres by the Russian troops. Earlier this week, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation claimed to take control of the villages. Later, Oleksandr Shyrshyn, the 47th brigade's deputy battalion commander, confirmed the capture of the villages. These are located 30 kilometres away from northwest of Avdiika, another Donetsk city captured by Russia. The Ukrainian General Staff also reported on the Russians attempt to break through the Ukrainian defences around Pokrovsk, a town of around 60,000 people.

On 29 July, *RT* reported on the interception of a US-made M270A1 MLRS system by the Russian troops near the village of Novotroitskoye in Russia's Kherson Region, currently occupied by the Ukrainian troops. The system was identified to be similar to HIMARS, capable of firing both ATACMS tactical ballistic missiles and smaller high-precision projectiles, by a Russian surveillance drone. Iskander-M was launched in the estimated location resulting in a large explosion and fire. The Russian military estimated the death of up to 15 Ukrainian servicemen and the destruction of M270A1 and one escort vehicle.

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

On 29 July, *Ukrinform* reported on the US grant of USD 3.9 billion to Ukraine. According to Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine's Prime Minister: "Ukraine expects to receive the first \$3.9 billion in direct budget support from the United States, totalling \$7.85 billion." During his meeting with Penny Pritzker, the US Special Representative for Ukraine's Economic Recovery, they discussed the issues related to the work of the Multi-Agency Donor Coordination Platform, financing of budget expenditures, recovery projects and support for the energy sector. Shmyhal emphasised the necessity to get funds by early 2025.

On 29 July, the President of Ukraine's official website reported on the round of

negotiations held with Greece on the signing of a bilateral security agreement. They continued the work of draft documents to finalise the agreement for the leaders to sign in the future. Ukraine has concluded 25 bilateral security agreements following the G7 Joint Declaration adopted in 2023 in Vilnius.

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War in Ukraine: Days 886 & 887

Russia's Olenya airfield in the Arctic under drone attack

War on the Ground:

On 28 July, *Politico* reported on a Ukrainian drones strike on Russia's Olenya airfield located in the far north targeting a strategic bomber. According to the report from a Ukrainian intelligence unit, the drones had targeted Tupolev Tu-22M3 supersonic long-range missile carrier at the "strategic aviation base." Russia is yet to release a statement and Ukraine military is yet to disclose further details on the attack. The Olenya air base located in the Arctic on the Kola Peninsula is often used by Russian forces to target Ukraine's civilian infrastructure using cruise missiles such as Tu-95 MS bombers. One such recent attack being the children hospital attack in Kyiv.

The base is located far more than 1,900 kilometres from Ukraine whereas 200

kilometres from Finland. Although Alexander Stubb has denied being involved in the attack. He said: "We have no cause for concern in Finland. We have the situation under control and are able to respond." On the same day, in his everyday address, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President confirmed Ukraine's military destroying Russian military aircraft in the airbase.

On 28 July, Ukraine's General Staff claimed to have hit an oil depot in the Kursk area in southern Russia. This is responsible for supplying Russian troops with supplies. The move comes after a close border attack in Sumy's province. As per the statement from General Staff: "The defense forces continue to take all measures to undermine the military and economic potential of the Russian occupiers and force the Russian Federation to stop its armed aggression against Ukraine." Alexey Smirnov, Kursk Governor confirmed the blaze of three fuel tanks while the Russian air defences claimed on destroying seven Ukrainian drones over Belgorod and Kursk oblasts.

On 27 July, Ukraine's air forces announced to use "camouflage tactics" henceforth to deter ballistic missile attacks of Russia. According to the report of the air force, this technique is known as "passive defence," which is the use of "false positions" to counter increased Russian missile attacks.

On 27 July, Ukrainian sea ports authority claimed on successful transport of 60 million tonnes of cargo through Ukrainian maritime corridor from Greater Odesa port in the last 11 months. According to the report in The Guardian, despite Russian attacks on ports of Odesa, 40.6 million tonnes of grain were exported to 46 countries. In a statement the port authority said: "The bulk carrier Manta Hacer with 25.2 thousand tonnes of Ukrainian humanitarian wheat to Yemen, is moving through the Ukrainian corridor...Ukraine remains a key player in the global food security. Especially concerning the export of grain to countries in Asia and Africa."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 28 July, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, warned on launching production of intermediate nuclear weapon against US missiles deployed in Germany. During a parade in Saint Petersburg, Putin said: "If the United States carries out such plans, we will consider ourselves liberated from the unilateral moratorium previously adopted on the deployment of medium- and short-range strike capabilities." He warned over taking "mirror measures" on action of the US. The missile project mentioned comes under the arms control treaty signed between the US and Soviet Union in 1987. This was withdrawn by both in 2019 over accusation of violation of the treaty but later Russia assured to not restart production of such category missile on condition of the US not deploying missile outside its border.

On 28 July, Russian Defence Minister claimed on Russian troops capturing two villages, Prohres and Yevhenivka, in eastern Ukraine. The Prohres village located in Donetsk oblast is estimated to have been the battlefield for Ukraine and Russia past three months where Moscow has launched multiple conquests since the annexation of Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts. According to the ministry, the Russian troops are moving towards city of Pokrovsk, located northwest of Kyiv.

On 27 July, Russian defence ministry claimed on capturing Lozuvatske settlement in Donetsk Oblast of Ukraine. The report published by Interfax, Russia is observed to have slowly progressed in eastern Ukraine while Ukraine has faced drawback due to

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War in Ukraine: Day 885

Zelenskyy claims the difficult situation for armed forces in eastern Ukraine

War on the Ground:

On 26 July, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President reported on Ukrainian Armed Forces facing heavy pressure in east Ukraine. According to Ukraine's military, this was observed especially near Pokrovsk in Donetsk oblast. Zelenskyy said: "This area has been and continues to be the focus of Russian attacks." He called for improving Ukraine's defence positions.

On 26 July, Ukraine's military claimed to target Russia's airfield in Crimean. According to the report, Ukraine had increased its long-range strikes on Crimea and Russia's navy Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. This led Russia to transit its naval ships to safer ports. In a statement, Ukrainian military General Staff stated that Russia's Saky airfield was observed as the most targeted and confirmed in assessing the aftermath of the strike.

On 26 July, Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine's Prime Minister appreciated Ursula Von Der Leyen, European Commission President for its EUR 1.5 billion aid to Ukraine's "defence and reconstruction." He said: "Together, we are turning adversity into strength and building a safer, more resilient Europe."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 26 July, following several terrorism cases filed, Russia's military court sentenced four suspects to find them guilty of helping Ukraine. According to the court, one of the suspects had planned to attack Sheremetyevo Airport and was sentenced to 15 years. It also claimed that Ukrainian intelligence offering USD 2000 to destroy airplane fuel tanks in the airport. Earlier, another 23-year-old was sentenced for planning treason and for being related to a terrorist organisation.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 26 July, the European Commission approved EUR 1.5 billion in proceeds from the frozen Russian assets to Ukraine's defence and reconstruction. Von Der Leyen said: "Today we transfer €1.5 billion in proceeds from immobilized Russian assets to the defense and reconstruction of Ukraine. There is no better symbol or use for the Kremlin's money than to make Ukraine and all of Europe a safer place to live."

On 26 July, David Lammy, UK Foreign Secretary stressed that China to avoid its companies engaging with the Russian military. During the ASEAN Foreign Ministers event in Laos, the UK Foreign Ministry issued a statement: "Lammy set out that the government would cooperate where we can compete where needed and challenge where we must." It also added to the UK's priority on national security and human rights. In response, Yi called for the establishment of the "right policy orientation...for balanced, pragmatic, open and cooperative attitude."

On 26 July, Gergely Gulyas, the Hungarian Prime Minister's aide accused Ukraine of "blackmailing" Hungary and Slovakia for not allowing the oil deliveries. He said that the Russian group's Lukoil supply was stopped to both which stood for "peace and ceasefire." He added: "If the situation is not resolved, there will be a fuel shortage... a solution must be found by September." Both parties have approached the European Commission to resolve the issue with Ukraine. Hungary was supplied two million metric tonnes of oil from the Russian group every year which forms a third of its imports.

War in Ukraine: Days 884

Increased drone attacks in Izmail city of Odesa

War on the Ground:

On 25 July, Ukraine's air force reported on a Russian drone attack in the southern port city of Izmail for the second continuous day. Apart from this Ukraine authorities in Kyiv, central Ukraine and Odesa also confirmed on attacks reporting damage on infrastructure.

According to the report in Deutsche Welle Russia was found to be attacking ports in Odesa since the end of the Black Sea Grain deal. In the drone attack, Ukraine's air force claimed to have destroyed 25 out of 38 drones and the same was acknowledged by the Romanian defence ministry. It found debris from the Russian Geran ½ drone near the village of Plauru near the Danube and Izmail port. Whereas Oleh Kiper, Odesa governor reported on injury of two from the debris.

On 25 July, during his visit to Hong Kong, Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister stressed to John Lee, the leader of Hong Kong to prevent Russia from circumventing sanctions through Hong Kong. According to the US government, Hong Kong and China are seen as major routes for Russia to procure military and drone components and semiconductors. Kuleba asked the Hong Kong administration to take the required measures to "weaken Russia's" ability to continue the war.

On 25 July, in an exchange of statements between Ukraine and Russia on peace negotiations, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry expressed its readiness to hold talks with Russia in "good faith," while Kuleba denied the state of readiness at present. Whereas, Russian Press Secretary, Dmitry Peskov reiterated Zelenskyy's ruling out of the option for talks as the obstacle to begin the negotiation. The conditions placed till now by both remain far from talks as Ukraine demands for Russian troops withdrawal while Vladimir Putin, Russian President includes the four self-annexed (Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Donetsk) regions as part of Russia.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 25 July, the Russian government claimed to hold joint military exercises with China near Alaska. According to the report, the exercises were not against "third countries" and Tu-95MS strategic missile carriers along with China's Xian H-6 strategic bombers were used in the exercises over Chukchi, Bering Seas and north Pacific Ocean. According to the report, the strategic bombers were of nuclear technology.

On 25 July, Alexander Khinshtein, head of the State Duma lower house of parliament's Committee on Information Policy stated the possibility of reducing the speed of YouTube in Russia. According to Khinshtein, YouTube speeds in desktops can be reduced to 40 to 70 per cent on violation of Russian legislation. Since YouTube blocked Russian channels, it has been subject to criticism from Russia. Similarly, Google has also been fined by Russia for not shifting content that are considered "illegal or undesirable" by Russia. He added: "If the administration of the resource will not change its policy and will not start observing our laws, it can expect nothing good here."

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 25 July, in response to the Russia-China joint military drills, the US military's North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) confirmed that Russian and Chinese aircraft remained in international airspace and had not entered the US or Canadian sovereign. In a statement NORAD: "This Russian and PRC activity in the Alaska ADIZ is not seen as a threat and NORAD will continue to monitor competitor activity near North America and meet presence with presence."

On 25 July, Annalena Baerbock, German Foreign Minister issued a statement asking the Chinese government to work more towards peace in Ukraine. This comes as she visits the arms manufacturer Flensburger Fahrzeugbau (FFG) in northern Germany. She added: "[China] has not only the right to veto, but, above all, the duty to do everything in its power to bring about peace." She also highlighted Kuleba's visit to be essential to being China's perspective in achieving peace.

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War in Ukraine: Day 883

War on the Ground:

On 24 July, Ukrinform reported on the increase in the number of injured due to the shelling in the Kharkiv region. According to the Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office, the number of injured from the Russian strike on the industrial site in Kholodnohirskiy district of Kharkiv had increased to nine. In the preliminary investigation, the Russian strike led to the damage of buildings and enterprises on the site. It was found that the strike was carried out by an Iskander missile. Following this, a pre-trial investigation on the violation of the laws and customs of war had been launched by Ukraine.

On 25 July, Ukrinform reported on Ukraine's response to the drone attacks carried out by the Russian forces. According to Mykola Pletenchuk, Ukrainian Air Force Commander, a total of 38 Shahed-131/136 one-way attack drones were launched from Cape Chauda and the Primorsk-Akhtarsk region of Russia. The drones targeted Ukrainian infrastructure facilities in the region of Odesa and central Ukraine according to the Ukrainian officials. They also reported that 25 of the drones were intercepted due to the combined efforts of mobile fire teams, surface-to-air missile units and e-warfare capabilities. The defence forces were activated across the regions of Odesa, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Kyiv, Sumy, Zhytomyr and Cherkasy. There were no casualties or destruction as reported by the Kyiv officials.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 24 July, *RT* reported on Vladimir Putin, the Russian President's question on the legitimacy of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's position as the President of Ukraine. According to Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary

of the President of Russia: “Our president has repeatedly said that President Zelenskyy definitely lost his legitimacy.” He highlighted Zelenskyy's 2022 decree: “...banned any Ukrainian head of state from engaging in talks with President Putin,” which is seen as a disruption to the peace processes between Russia and Ukraine. Putin condemned Zelenskyy's decision to extend his term which expired on 20 May, citing Ukrainian law. He had argued multiple times that the Ukrainian legislature did not approve of such practices.

On 24 July, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation reported on the crash of Mi-28 in western Russia near Kaluga. Russian officials stated that the aircraft crashed in an uninhabited area Zhizdrinsk district on the border with the Bryansk Region killing all the crew members inside it. The initial data indicated the cause of the crash to be a technical malfunction. According to the report, the Russian Aerospace Forces commission was sent to investigate the site. The aircraft was reportedly used on drone-hunting missions and was returning from a combat sortie.

On 25 July, the *TASS* reported on 500 Ukrainian officers held responsible for the crimes carried out in the Donbas region. According to Alexander Bastrykin, Chief of Russia's Investigative Committee: “Five hundred and sixteen people are being held criminally responsible for committing the said crimes against the peace and security of mankind.” The officers included representatives of the Ukrainian Supreme Command and commanders of military units who were convicted of shelling in the civilian areas. Bastrykin also added that more than 132,000 people, including 24,340 children, had been recognized as victims since 2014.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 24 July, *Euronews* reported on the decrease in aid and support from the German authorities to Ukraine. According to a survey conducted last month, 42 per cent of Germans believed that the country had done too much for the Ukrainian refugees. Some politicians with the Christian Democratic party were complaining about

the large amount of money spent by the government on the Ukrainian refugees. According to them unemployed refugees should go back to Ukraine. The refugees also noticed the subsequent decrease of support from Germany compared to the beginning of the war. With the new budget of Germany coming into force, Ukraine is set to face a decrease in financial and military aid in the coming days.

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War in Ukraine: Day 882

Ukraine Foreign Minister calls for direct dialogue in his visit to China

War on the Ground:

On 23 July, Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister arrived in China to initiate talks on ending the war. During his talks with Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister stated his "extensive, detailed and substantive" discussion was held. In a statement he called to "avoid competition" over peace plans and stressed on having a direct dialogue between Kyiv and Beijing. Till now, Switzerland has been the only actor which organised the first gathering for negotiating peace while China and Brazil have published a joint "six-point peace" plan in May showcasing their support for hosting an international peace conference.

On the same day, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said: "The main topic of discussion

will be the search for ways to stop Russia's aggression and China's possible role in achieving a stable and just peace." Kuleba's trip comes for the first time to China and in response, Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary of the Russian President said: "We intend to continue following the path of developing Russian-Chinese relations in all areas."

On 23 July, the Ukrainian military reported on causing significant damage to a Russian ferry on the port of Kavkaz on the Sea of Azov located in the Krasnodar area. According to Ukrainian General Staff: "The occupiers used this ferry to transport railway cars, vehicles and containers for military purposes." While Veniamin Kondratyev, Krasnodar Governor reported the death of one after a Ukrainian drone strike on a ferry. Port Kavkaz is located on the land opposite to the Crimean Peninsula and the ferries are used to connect between Russia and Crimea.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 23 July, Russian authorities reported on the killing of one person and the injury of five after a Ukrainian drone attack. Veniamin Kondratyev, Krasnodar governor said: "Drones attacked a ferry vessel in the port of Kavkaz." Whereas, the Ukrainian Air Force reported on a Russian attack on critical infrastructure in the Sumy region. Although no casualties were recorded. While the Russian defence ministry reported on several air attacks in the border areas especially over the Crimean Peninsula. According to the ministry: "Over the past night... air defence systems on duty intercepted and destroyed two UAVs over Bryansk region and two over Belgorod region, as well as 21 UAVs over the territory of the Republic of Crimea and the waters of the Black Sea."

On 23 July, Moscow's Mayor's office announced a rise in the pay for those residents of Moscow who would sign up for fighting. According to the report, those who enrol will receive a pay of RUB 1.9 million (EUR 20,000). The increase would mean rise in their annual pay to RUB 5.2 million (EUR 55,000), five times increase from the nominal wage than any Russian (As per

2024 statistics). According to Russian authorities, close to 190,000 have volunteered till now to fight in Ukraine and 490,000 contracts since 2023.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 23 July, EU foreign and defence ministers announced their decision to hold the next ministerial meeting in Brussels against Hungary's "rogue diplomacy" on Ukraine. While Viktor Orban, Hungarian Prime Minister called his visit to Moscow a "peace mission." This earned criticism amongst the EU members on Orban except for Slovakia. Hungary condemned the move, Peter Szijjarto, Hungarian Foreign Minister said: "What a fantastic response they have come up with."

On 23 July, following the resignation of Kaja Kallas, Prime Minister of Estonia, Kristen Michal succeeded her. Michal who is from same centre-right Reform party of Kalla is a similar critic of Russia. In one of her opinion she said: "Russia's aggression against free Ukraine and the entire West" as her priority. Estonia which was part of the Soviet Union from 1940 and 1991, has shared high security concerns over sharing its border with Russia.

On 23 July, Peter Szijjarto, Hungarian Foreign Minister stated the government's decision to block EU funds from member states which supplied munitions to Ukraine. The block will be applicable till Ukraine allows transit of oil from Russia's Lukoil which goes through its territory. Szijjarto said: "As long as this issue is not resolved by Ukraine, everyone should forget about the payment of the €6.5 billion from the European Peace Facility (EPF) compensation for arms transfers."

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War in Ukraine: Day 881 **Ukraine reaches deal worth USD 20 billion for debt restructuring**

War on the Ground:

On 22 July, the Ukrainian government announced signing an agreement with a group of creditors worth USD 20 billion in the form of international bonds and aimed to give financial breathing for Ukraine. The move comes after a week ahead of the "two-year debt suspension" agreement signed in 2022 near expiry. According to the government, it had reached the deal in "principle on debt restructuring." The creditors include BlackRock, Pimco and several other major investors. The deal was approved by the International Monetary Fund which has conditioned its financial aid to Ukraine on reduction of debt.

On 22 July, Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister announced his schedule to visit China between 23 and 26 July to discuss on ending Russian invasion. According to Kuleba: "...main topic of discussion will be the search for ways to stop Russian aggression and China's possible role in achieving a sustainable and just peace." China's foreign ministry has confirmed the same on holding talks with Kuleba.

On 22 July, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President applauded the delivery of another German Patriot system totalling to three missiles received till now. Zelenskyy stated how Ukraine will be able to utilise in air defence and yet more protection needed for Ukraine. On the same day, Zelenskyy also highlighted Joe Biden, US President decision to step out of presidential race. He thanked Biden for his "unwavering support" and stated how the Ukraine and Europe situation is challenging. He expressed hope for the US to continue its leadership and help in preventing Russian from winning the war.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 22 July, Russian defence ministry claimed destroying 75 Ukrainian drones using its air defence systems. According to the report, 47 drones were destroyed over Rostov in the southwestern, 17 over the Black and Azov seas and eight drones were destroyed over the Krasnodar region located near Tuapse in the Black Sea. Apart from this, a few were destroyed over Belgorod, Voronezh and Smolensk. As per the report from local authorities, the Tuapse oil refinery was reportedly hit. It has been regularly subject to attacks since 2022.

On the same day, following the frequent drones attacks, Vyacheslav Gladkov, Governor of Belgorod Oblast reported on death of a civilian from a Ukrainian drone attack. Ukraine is yet to respond or verify the claims of Russia.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 22 July, the EU foreign ministers held a meeting in Brussels where they discussed on boycotting the talks in Budapest. This comes after Viktor Orban, Hungary Prime Minister's solo visit to Moscow in an attempt to end the war in Ukraine has triggered the boycott. According to Annalena Baerbock, Germany's Foreign Minister called it as "ego trip." The Gymnich meeting which takes place six months once across different locations in Europe is used to discuss policy related issues. On the same, Josep Borrell, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy announced that the next foreign and defence ministers meeting would be held in Brussels instead of Hungary. He said: "We have to send a signal, even if it's a symbolic signal."

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War in Ukraine Day 877:

War on the Ground:

On 20 July, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian ships sailing in the Sea of Azov. According to the Ukrainian Navy: "Three enemy ships without cruise missile carriers are in the Sea of Azov, while there are no Russian ships in the Black Sea." The navy also reported that one ship carrying eight Kalibr cruise missiles was sailing in the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, seven vessels in the interest of the Russian Federation, sailed through the Kerch Strait.

On 19 July, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian missile attack carried out in Mykolaiv, on a playground near a multi-story residential building. According to Oleksandr Sienkevych, the Mayor of the region, 14 people were injured and three were killed as a result of the attack.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 19 July, *RT* reported that Russia was unaffected by the Windows 10 outage that disrupted airports, banks and broadcasters around the world, especially in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, India, Germany, Spain, and the US. According to the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications, and Mass Media, "there had been no reports of crashes at Russian airports." The officials also added that the issue pointed out the importance of import substitution of foreign software. Since the imposition of western sanctions on Russia tightened with the Ukraine crisis, the government had lessened its dependence on foreign technologies and goods from 2014.

On 20 July, *The Moscow Times* reported on the Russian attack on the Kherson region in southern Ukraine. The attack came amidst Ukraine losing its foothold on the left bank of the Dnipro River. Earlier this week, the Ukrainian army had realised that the small bridgehead created as a buffer zone and their main positions in the village of Krynky were completely demolished. According to Oleksandr Prokudin, the governor of the Kherson region, "In the town of Bilozerka, about five kilometers from the Dnipro River, "massive strikes by Russian rocket artillery" left two dead." It also led to the injury of five others including a paramedic who got hit by a drone.

On 20 July, the *TASS* reported on the confrontation between Russian forces and the Ukrainian Armed Forces. According to Yaroslav Yakimkin, the senior officer of the group's press centre, the Russian units of the North group repelled five attacks by the formations of the 57th mechanised, 92nd assault brigades of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Vostok special operations forces, and the Kraken Main Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine. He added that the units destroyed the manpower and equipment of three Ukrainian brigades by inflicting the loss of 255 military personnel, six pickup trucks, the Akatsiya self-propelled gun, and the Enclave-N electronic warfare station.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 19 July, *POLITICO* reported on Zelenskyy's call to Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK to "show his leadership" by lifting the restrictions on the use of weapons against the Russian troops. As the first foreign leader to speak at a British Cabinet meeting since Bill Clinton in 1997, Zelenskyy told Starmer and the seniors that hitting inside the Russian territory would help avoid attacks on the residential areas in Ukraine. Zelenskyy also attended the summit in Oxfordshire where the leaders agreed to take action against Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" of 600 tankers evading sanctions on Russian oil.

On 20 July, *POLITICO* reported on Hungary's fuel crisis as Ukraine imposed sanctions on

Russian oil passing through its territory. Kyiv imposed a partial ban on the transit of pipeline crude sold by Moscow's largest private oil firm, Lukoil, to Central Europe, which resulted in the negation of exemptions given by the EU to give Russian-reliant countries more time. Hungary depends on Russia for 70 per cent of its oil imports and Lukoil for half of that amount. According to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air think tank, Hungary spent almost a quarter of a billion euros on Russian crude and gas earlier this year. Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's top diplomat slammed Ukraine and said that the measures could threaten the country's long-term energy goals. The move came amidst heightened tensions between Hungary and Ukraine.

On 19 July, *POLITICO* reported on the NATO general's comment on Ukraine's strategy in the war. At the US security and foreign policy conference, General Christopher Cavoli said that the Ukrainian forces' overall military strategy was good although they were being pushed back in some regions. He also said that it was just a matter of prosecuting it as they were doing a good job of balancing recruitment, training and procurement. He also noted that the military equipment that depended largely on the US was proceeding well, referring to the USD 61 billion US military aid package approved in April after months of delay.

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War in Ukraine: Day 876

War on the Ground:

On 18 July, *Ukrinform* reported on the approval of 10 new models of pistols and foreign submachine guns for the Armed Forces of Ukraine to use. According to the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the approved arsenals were from well-known companies in the US, Italy and Belgium. The pistols and submachine guns approved for use were of nine mm calibre with some having 11.43 mm calibre. The Ministry also stated that the light and compact submachine guns were equipped with 30-round magazines. It also noted the “very high rate of fire” in the guns which was necessary in close combat engagements.

On 18 July, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian attack in the Nikopol district in the Dnipropetrovsk region of Ukraine. According to Serhii Lysak, the governor of the region, “The Russian troops attacked the district with kamikaze drones and heavy artillery.” He also said that the district centre and the Pokrovske and Myrove were under attack. Private and municipal enterprises, an educational institution, power lines, eight private houses, two greenhouses, a garage, three cars and a minibus were among the damaged structures. No casualties were reported.

On 18 July, *Ukrinform* reported on the Russian attack in the village of Komyshany in the Kherson region. According to Roman Mrochko, the regional governor, the strike had inflicted injury on a 55-year-old woman. There had also been shelling in the Tsentralnyi district of Kherson which resulted in the injury of two women.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 18 July, *RT* reported on Russia’s allegation against Ukraine over the usage of chemical and biological weapons in the warfare. According to the statements of Sergey Ryabkov, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Moscow had procured enough evidence to prove that Kyiv was working with Washington to produce components of

biological weapons. He informed that Russia was sending reports to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) regarding the issue. His comments come after the announcement of the Ministry of the Defence of the Russian Federation about the Ukrainian chemical laboratory which was captured by the Russian troops in early July. Russia had also been constantly warning about the large network of biological labs in Ukraine which the US confirmed as “entirely legal.”

On 18 July, *RT* reported on the concern of the US over Russia’s response to the deployment of missiles in Germany. The joint US-German press release earlier this month stated that, “will begin episodic deployments of the long-range fire capabilities of its Multi-Domain Task Force in Germany in 2026.” The weapons include SM-6 anti-aircraft missiles, Tomahawk land-attack cruise missiles, and hypersonic weapons which are still in development. Meanwhile, Sergey Ryabkov responded: “Moscow would keep all options on the table if this happens.” This statement was considered as “concerning” by the US State Department. According to Vedant Patel, State Department spokesman, “Any kind of rhetoric about the use or deployment of nuclear warheads is of course concerning and something we will pay close attention to.” Ryabkov also stated that there would be no “internal restraints” on Moscow’s response to the US deployment of missiles.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 18 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Germany’s decision to treat eight seriously ill Ukrainian children after the Russian missile attack destroyed the Ohmatdyt hospital in Kyiv. The children aged a few months to 15 years were set to be evacuated from Kyiv and treated at German clinics. They would be accompanied by a total of 10 relatives. According to Karl Lauterbach, the Health Minister of Germany: “We will take good care of them in specialised German clinics.”

On 18 July, *Politico* reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President, was urging the Western allies to continue the supply of

weapons to Ukraine. While taking part in the European Political Community summit hosted by the UK, Zelenskyy called on the partners to lift the restrictions on the usage of donated western weapons. He said: "Your bravery might be decisive for peace." He also warned that Russia would try slashing the pro-Ukraine alliance. His call came against the backdrop of growing fear over the possibility of Donald Trump's victory as the US President and Germany's recent cut of military aids to Ukraine. Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK, confirmed his readiness to support Ukraine in the war during the summit.

On 17 July, *Politico* reported on Russia's fears over crypto mining that could cause electricity shortages in the country. According to Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, the country could face electricity disruptions if the government did not bring crypto mining under control. He said that he had given instructions regarding the taxation and tariff decisions to regulate digital mining in the country. Putin also warned about the potential electricity cutoffs which would affect the new enterprises and residential districts if the cryptocurrency mining farms take over free energy capacity.

On 19 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the bilateral agreements signed by Ukraine with the Czech Republic and Slovenia. According to the Ukrainian presidency, the country signed a ten-year bilateral security agreement with the Czech Republic and Slovenia. They continue to provide Ukraine with military assistance and support. The deals in the agreement had a similar framework to the 24th and 25th long-term bilateral agreements that Kyiv had signed with partners such as Britain, Germany, France and the US.

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War in Ukraine: Day 875

UAE mediates exchange of 95 prisoners between Ukraine and Russia

War on the Ground:

On 18 July, *abc News* reported on the prisoner exchange mediated by UAE between Ukraine and Russia. According to the officials of Moscow and Kyiv, 95 captured soldiers were released from each side in the latest prisoner exchange between the countries. According to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President: "We continue to bring our people home. Another 95 defenders have been released from Russian captivity." At the exchange, Tatyana Moskalkova, Russian human rights commissioner met her Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Lubinets and discussed the "joint humanitarian actions" for the released prisoners. Almost all the exchanges which happened occasionally throughout the conflict had been mediated by the UAE.

On 17 July, *The Kyiv Independent* reported on the missing people listed by Ukraine under its unified register for missing persons under special circumstances. According to the Interior Ministry official, 42,000 citizens were listed under the register over the possible causes of war, occupation, or natural and man-made disasters. The figure underlined that Russia's invasion of Ukraine had led to deportations, kidnappings and deaths of both civilians and military personnel. The ministry also has the data of 7000 people which includes 3,000 former prisoners of war who are alive and 4,000 killed people, mainly soldiers. According to

the report, all these figures do not include the Ukrainian children who were deported to Russia and Belarus which exceed 19,500.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 17 July, the *TASS* reported on Russia's readiness to work with any US President capable to hold an equal and mutually respectful dialogue. According to Sergey Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President had repeatedly expressed Russia's willingness to work with any US leader elected by the people.

On 18 July, the *TASS* reported on the destruction of Ukrainian drones and drone boats by the Russian Air Defence forces. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, 33 drones across Crimea and Bryansk areas were intercepted by the Russian Air defence forces. Along with that, ten drone boats that were moving towards the Crimean city of Sevastopol were also destroyed in the Black Sea.

On 18 July, the *TASS* reported on the US-made M109 Paladin artillery gun being shot down by the Russian troops. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the Russian troops destroyed a US-made M109 Paladin self-propelled artillery system of the Ukrainian army by a Lancet loitering munition over the Kherson area. Data recorders also registered repeated detonations over the area.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 18 July, the *BBC* reported on Germany's plan to decrease Ukraine's military aid according to the draft budget proposed for 2025. The country was planning to have aid from EUR eight billion to EUR four billion. According to Christian Lindner, the future of Ukraine was secure as the G7 countries plan to raise USD 50 billion from the interest of frozen Russian assets. Germany being the second biggest donor of Ukraine after the US, the cut comes at a time of change in US leadership.

On 16 July, *NATO* announced the appointment of Patrick Turner as the Senior Representative to lead the NATO

Representation in Ukraine (NRU). Previously, he served in the positions of NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations, Assistant Secretary-General for Defence Policy and Planning and in a range of senior civil service positions for the United Kingdom. In his new position, he will head the NRU and coordinate NATO's efforts and assistance to Ukraine. He will be the connecting point between NATO's policies and Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv.

On 17 July, *Anadolu Agency* reported on the accusation against a former businessman for illegally delivering military components worth EUR 875,000 to Russia. A court in the southern city of Stuttgart in Germany sentenced him to six years and nine months in prison. According to the German Press Agency, the co-accused also received a 21-month suspended sentence over charges of aiding and abetting. The court also said that the accused were the citizens of both Germany and Russia. The delivered components were found to be electrical components including converters, amplifiers and transistors which are common parts of drones. The court condemned the person for violating foreign trade law in several commercial cases.

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War in Ukraine Days: 871

Missile targets children hospital in Kyiv kills 38

War on the Ground:

On 12 July, in an interview with *Reuters*, General Andriy Kostin, Ukraine's top prosecutor called the International Criminal Court (ICC) to sue Russia over a recent missile strike on children's hospital in Kyiv. The attack resulted in killing 38 and injuring hundreds. He said: "For the sake of international justice, cases like the intentional attack on the biggest child hospital in Kyiv [are] worth lifting to the ICC."

On 12 July, Kherson's military administration reported on massive shelling. According to the head of the unit, Roman Mrochko, the attack was targeted against central Dnipro district and continued for an hour. Following the attack, there was severe infrastructural damage especially in water supply was reported but no casualties were observed.

On 12 July, Ukrainian military revealed the number of Russian casualties since the war began to be 556,650. Apart from this the report also found 8,191 tanks and 15,755 armoured combat vehicles were also completely damaged. On the same day, Ukrainian air defences reported on shooting down five cruise missiles and 11 Kh-101 cruise missiles out of 19 across Mykolaiv, Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Khmelnytskyi, Kherson and Sumy. In a statement the air force said: "It is likely that the enemy is using imitators of attack drones to overload air defense. There was no information on casualties or damage."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 12 July, in response to the accusations on hospital attack on Kyiv, Russia denied on targeting the hospital and accused Ukraine's anti-missile fire. As per reports from the UN, the video shows the high possibility of strike to have some from Russian missile. Till now ICC has issues arrest warrants against six including Russia's president and defence minister.

On 12 July, in a response to Ukraine's demand to West for granting permission to use all types of weapons, Russian government warned over "dangerous escalation." At present, the use of weapons is restricted to limited Russian military position for Ukraine, but Russia finds Ukraine to be persistent in asking on removing the limit. Dmitry Peskov, Russian President Press Secretary said: "...the main thing is that these missiles are already hitting our territory.. As for increasing this distance, this is pure provocation, a new, very dangerous escalation of tension."

On 12 July, Russian telecom provider, Rostelecom announced on slowing off YouTube inside Russia. According to the company, there was increase in "processed traffic" and had triggered "serious overload of existing capacities." This was viewed as affected the download speed and quality of the videos on YouTube for all subscribers of Russian operators. Apart from this, Russia has also blocked Facebook and Instagram calling the companies as extremist. Anton Gorelkin, the deputy chairman of the committee on information policy in the Russian parliament, said that Google had stopped its servers in Russia after the war began in 2022.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 12 July, Petteri Orpo, Finland's Prime Minister announced law granting the right to the border guards to send back the third-country migrants trying to enter Finland from Russia. This means rejection of their asylum application and a message to Russia to handle its own security. The law aims to bring temporary measures to cut the inflow of migrants into Finland which is seen as "hybrid warfare." Since the increased influx, Finland had accused Russia of "weaponizing migration" through a large number of migrants entering from Syria and Somalia.

On 12 July, Viktor Orban, Hungarian Prime Minister issued a statement after meeting Donald Trump. He said that Trump would "make peace" in Ukraine. He said: "We discussed ways to make #peace. The good news of the day: he's going to solve it!"

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 12 July, the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Board of Governors passed a resolution condemning the Russian attack on a children's hospital in Kyiv. In the resolution: "(The Board) condemns in the strongest terms the disruption of IAEA technical assistance to Ukraine caused by the Russian Federation's recent military strike that hit the 'Okhmatdyt' National Children's Specialized Hospital."

On 12 July, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling Russia to "urgently withdraw" its military and unauthorised personnel from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant area. This was supported by 99 out of 193 UNGA members, where nine voted against and 60 abstained. Although the resolution does not legally bind Russia must cease its attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Since February 2022, the Zaporizhzhia plant has been subject to frequent shelling raising concerns over nuclear accidents.

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War in Ukraine: Day 870

NATO's Summit ends with multiple military aids to Ukraine

War on the Ground:

On 11 July, on the last day of the NATO summit in Washington, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President urged the NATO allies to withdraw all limits on Kyiv on the usage of long-range targets in Russia. He said: "If we want to win, if we want to prevail, if we want to save our country and to defend it, we need to lift all the limitations." During the summit, Zelenskyy called for unity among Ukraine's allies and stated on Ukraine's expectations for more delivery of air defence supplies. On the sidelines of the NATO Summit, Justin Trudeau, Canada's Prime Minister announced a military package of CAD 500 million.

On 11 July, Ukraine's presidential office announced on signing a security agreement with Romania. The deal becomes the 23rd agreement signed till now on the long-term bilateral defence agreements the UK, Germany, France and the US. According to the office: "A special feature of this agreement is specific points of cooperation to strengthen security in the Black Sea region." As per the deal, Romania will aid Ukraine in clearing the mine in Black Sea. This includes Romania's contribution to train Ukrainian pilots for F-16 fighter jets.

On 11 July, Ukrainian government reported on several attacks by Russia across oblasts. This includes Khmelnytskyi, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernihiv, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Mykolaiv, Odesa and Kherson. As a result close to five were killed and 18 injured.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 11 July, Russia's security service claimed to have intercepted Ukrainian intelligence services efforts to induce a crew member on the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov in Murmansk to sabotage the ship.

On 11 July, in response to Keir Starmer, UK's Prime Minister statement on offering support to Ukraine. Russian government criticised for allowing Ukraine to use UK-supplied Storm Shadow missiles against targets inside Russia.

On 11 July, at the NATO summit, the US and Germany confirmed ongoing preparations for "episodic deployments" of longer-term stationing. This includes SM-6, Tomahawk and developmental hypersonic weapons with longer-range capabilities. On the same day, Russia's Foreign Ministry stated that it would issue its response soon on the US decision to deploy long-range missiles in Germany. According to Sergei Ryabkov, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister: "These actions are aimed primarily at damaging the security of our country, regardless of whether the chances of some future arms control negotiations will increase as a result or whether they will come to nought and go into the negative."

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 11 July, NATO allies at the Washington summit assured Ukraine's "future is in Nato" and its membership path to be "irreversible." Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, said Ukraine's membership in NATO is not a "question of if, but when." Starmer on the same day urged the other NATO allies to increase their defence spending to guard the alliance in "a new and dangerous era." He highlighted, 23 members out of the 32 to be spending two per cent of GDP on defence. He added: "...but in light of the grave threats to our security, we must go further." He reiterated that his administration would plan to reach 2.5 per cent of GDP on defence spending. Emmanuel Macron, French President reassured to the NATO allies on France's commitment towards Ukraine. He said, France will continue to support Ukraine "as long as necessary."

On 11 July, the US announced an additional USD225 million of military aid, including Patriot and NASAMS air defence systems, HIMARS rocket launchers and 155mm and 105mm artillery shells. This comes after a meeting between Joe Biden, US President and Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the NATO summit, where other allies have pledged a joint USD 40 billion as aid to Kyiv. In the summit, the alliance also discussed its common security interests with Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

On 11 July, Starmer pledged to support Ukraine for "as long as it takes." At the summit, he warned over the frontline defence of the Euro-Atlantic region to be the Ukrainian trenches. John Healey, UK's defence secretary visited Ukraine promising artillery guns and shells and 90 Brimstone missiles. The UK government has also confirmed to give GBP 40m to NATO's comprehensive assistance package for Ukraine and the UK-administered international fund for Ukraine worth GBP 300m, for 120,000 rounds of 152mm artillery ammunition.

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War in Ukraine: Day 868

War on the Ground:

On 09 July, Deutsche Welle reported on the emergency meeting held by the UN Security Council following the Russian air strike on the Okhmatdyt children's Hospital in Kyiv. During the meeting, Nicolas de Riviere, France's representative listed the attack among the "war crimes" committed by Russia in Ukraine. Although China condemned the attack, it did not directly denounce Moscow. Meanwhile, Joe Biden, President of the US affirmed to strengthen Ukrainian air defence.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 09 July, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation reported that it had intercepted 38 drones launched overnight by Ukraine. The ministry stated: "Air defence systems on duty destroyed and intercepted three UAVs over Belgorod region, seven

UAVs over Kursk region, two UAVs over Voronezh region, 21 UAVs over Rostov region and five UAVs over Astrakhan region.” The Ukrainian strike over the Belgorod region resulted in the death of four people and injury of more than 30. According to Valentin Demidov, the mayor of the region, the Ukrainian army launched overnight strikes throughout the region.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 09 July, the White House confirmed the meeting of Joe Biden and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine during the NATO summit commemorating its 75th anniversary. According to the statement by Karine Jean-Pierre, White House Press Secretary, the meeting will showcase the US’s “unwavering support” for Kyiv.

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War in Ukraine: Day 867

War on the Ground:

On 08 July, Deutsche Welle reported that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine pledged to retaliate against the Russian strike targeting the children’s hospital in Kyiv. The attack killed at least 31 people. Ukrainian forces claimed intercepting 11 of 13 Russian Kh-101 cruise missiles that were hard to detect.

On 08 July, Zelenskyy and Donald Tusk, Poland’s Prime Minister signed a bilateral security agreement in Warsaw. The deal allowed Poland to shoot down any potential Russian missiles that came in its direction when they were passing through the Ukrainian air space. Zelenskyy referred to the deal as “ambitious” and affirmed his cooperation on combat aircraft with Poland. It was signed ahead of the three-day NATO summit to be held in Washington.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 08 July, John Kirby, White House National Security spokesman announced that NATO was set to take significant steps to assure military and political partnership with

Ukraine. He added that Joe Biden, President of the US will hold talks with Zelenskyy and that there would be big announcements following the three-day summit. According to Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO chief: “At the summit, we will make decisions to further strengthen our support for Ukraine, and the Russians understand that they will not be able to wait us out.” He highlighted that Russians needed to accept a solution that did not undermine the sovereignty of Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine: Day 866

War on the Ground:

On 07 July, Ruben Brekelmans and Caspar Veldkamp, Netherlands’ Defence and Foreign Ministers met with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President. The newly appointed ministers promised “rock solid” support from the Dutch side. Veldkamp stated: “My message to all the officials in the Ukrainian government is that the Netherlands stands by Ukraine and will continue to support Ukraine in political, military, financial and moral ways.” Brekelmans also assured the delivery of US-made F-16 fighter jets to enhance Ukraine’s air defence. He also promised the delivery of missile launchers and a radar system..

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 July, Russian forces reported on a strike targeting a munition depot in Voronezh region, in the Podgorensky district, 80 kilometres from the Ukraine border. According to Alexander Gusev, the Regional Governor: “Several drones were detected and destroyed overnight by air defence systems above the Voronezh region.” He added that the falling debris hit the depot resulting in a fire breakout. There were no casualties reported.

On 07 July, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation reported on taking control of another village in the eastern Donetsk region. According to the ministry: “The forces had “liberated Chigari (Donetsk People’s Republic) and improved the tactical situation.” A day before, Russia claimed to

have captured another village in the same region where Ukrainians reported “fierce fighting.”

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 07 July, John Healey, the UK’s new Defence Minister pledged new military aid and defence packages to Ukraine within the next 100 days. He visited Zelenskyy and Rustem Umerov, Ukraine’s Defence Minister, during his visit to Odesa’s Black Sea port city. He said: “There may have been a change in government, but the UK is united for Ukraine.” The promised package will contain artillery guns, 250,000 rounds of ammunition, de-mining vehicles, small military boats, missiles and other equipment as per the statements of the Defence Ministry of the UK.

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War in Ukraine: Day 863

War on the Ground:

On 04 July, Ukraine’s military announced that they pulled back from parts of the eastern frontline city of Chasiv Yar in the Donetsk region. It came after Russian forces said their forces captured the town. According to Nazar Voloshyn, Ukrainian military spokesman: “Our defenders’ positions had been destroyed. The command decided to retreat to better protected and prepared positions.” He added that it was impractical to hold positions in the town as the lives of soldiers were threatened. Chasiv Yar was a strategic town hit by multiple artillery strikes before being seized by Russian forces.

On 04 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on an attack in the Zaporizhzhia region that killed two and injured one. According to Ivan Fedorov, the governor of the region: “A man and a woman died as a result of enemy shelling.” He added that Russia carried out around 391 strikes on ten settlements in the region in 24 hours. Meanwhile, Russia condemned Ukraine for firing self-detonating drones towards Zaporizhzhia.

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 04 July, TASS reported on the Russian missile strike in the Poltava region of Ukraine that killed one and injured three. According to Ukrgasvydobuvannya, Ukraine’s gas producer, the missile hit a gas facility and destroyed its infrastructure. The governor of the region also reported on the damage caused. Meanwhile, Ukraine’s air force reported on intercepting a Russian missile in the same location.

The West View:

Responses from the US and Europe

On 04 July, according to a report by *Radio Free Europe* and the *Financial Times*, Viktor Orban, Hungary’s Prime Minister was set to travel to Russia and hold talks with Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia. This came just days after he met with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President. According to the report, Orban and Peter Szijjarto, Hungary’s Foreign Minister will visit Moscow, marking his visit to Russia since the war with Ukraine. Both the countries are yet to confirm the meeting.

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War in Ukraine: Day 862

OHCHR finds Russia’s air-dropped bombs to be the cause for increased civilian deaths

War on the Ground:

On 03 July, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a new report on how Russia’s use of air-dropped bombs with increased range caused increasing civilian deaths between March and May. According to the report, the variety of munitions used had caused severe damage across civilian infrastructure and those located on the frontlines. In the report: “The vast majority of civilian casualties (96%) were caused by the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas, such as artillery shells and rockets, bombs, missiles, loitering munitions and other explosive munitions dropped by unmanned aerial vehicles.” It also found 96 per cent of civilian casualties

to have emerged from explosive weapons such as rockets, bombs, missiles, and loitering munitions used in wide areas affecting the mass. According to OHCHR, the Russian offensive in Kharkiv specifically had killed 78 civilians and injured 305 more since May. During March and May, close to 436 civilians were killed and 1,760 were wounded in Ukraine.

On 03 July, Deny Shmyhal, Ukraine's Prime Minister, confirmed receiving two billion as aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This would be the fifth instalment of payment as part of the continuing loan programme which amounts to EUR 15 billion which is scheduled to be given across four years. This fund will be used by the government for its expenditures over welfare and wages to doctors and teachers.

On 03 July, Boris Filatov, Mayor of Dnipro city in eastern Ukraine reported on Russian missile attacks and the death of five civilians. According to the report, 43 others were injured as the attack damaged two schools and three kindergartens. He said: "Russian terrorists have struck our city again. As of now, five people have been killed and thirty-four injured, including a child." In response, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President demanded for advanced air defence systems and weapons with long-range capabilities. He said: "The world can protect lives and it requires the determination of leaders. Determination that can and must make protection from terror the norm again." Apart from this, the Ukrainian air force claimed destroying five out of seven Russian missiles in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast. The missiles were observed to be Iranian-made combat drones.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 03 July, the Russian parliament, the State of Duma and the Federation Council voted to suspend Russia's participation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA). Highlighting the organisation's discriminatory approach, double standards and Russophobia both chambers of the Parliament voted unanimously to stop paying the fee and its participation. State

Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said: "We should not pay for something we did not participate in." He argues over ignorance of OSCE leaders and is criticised for "...politicized tool to deliberately implement an anti-Russian course and also to intentionally distort," amid the war in Ukraine. Since the war began in 2022, Russia has avoided participating in numerous events held by the OSCE.

On 03 July, the Russian Navy claimed to intercept two Ukrainian naval unmanned surface vehicles (USVs) which were deployed in Novorossiysk port. The Russian defence ministry issued a statement confirming the deterrence of speedboat-type drones stationed at the naval base in the Black Sea coast of the Krasnodar area. As per the released video, the intense fire was targeted against the trespassing boats and were disabled. Mayor Andrey Kravchenko reported on minor damage following the fire but no casualties were observed.

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 03 July, Dick Schoof, The Netherlands Prime Minister pledged to continue his support for Ukraine financially and militarily. He said: "Ukraine can continue to count on the Netherlands for financial, military and political support." The independent candidate who succeeded outgoing Mark Rutte, Prime Minister assured support at all levels and for the long term. During Rutte's tenure, the Netherlands signed a deal for EUR two billion as military assistance for Ukraine which will be given over 10 years and later added another EUR one billion. The Netherlands will also be one of the key parties pushing for the supply of F-16s to boost Ukraine's air defences.

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War in Ukraine Day 861

Orban calls for swift ceasefire in his visit to Kyiv

War on the Ground:

On 02 July, during this visit to Kyiv, Viktor Orban, Hungary’s Prime Minister called for a swift ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia. In a joint press conference Orban said: “I asked [Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy] to consider whether... a quick cease-fire could speed up the peace talks” In response, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President called for the ending of the war with “just peace.” While addressing Orban, Zelenskyy appreciated his visit after Hungary starting its Presidency of the EU. He called the visit a clear signal of “common European priorities,” and significant to being “just peace to Ukraine.” He also added: “It is also very important for all of us in Europe that Europe’s support for Ukraine remains at a sufficient level, including our defence against Russian terror.”

On 02 July, the Ukrainian military claimed to carry out “destructive strike” on a Russian ammunition depot in Crimea. This was confirmed by Mykola Oleshchuk, Ukrainian air force commander who did not provide an exact location of the strike but posted a video showing the strike on Balaklava near Sevastopol. Mihail Razvozhayev, Russian deployed governor confirmed the destruction of five targets of the Ukrainian air force over the Black Sea and in the Balaklava district, although no severe damage was reported.

On 02 July, Rustem Umerov, Ukrainian Defence Minister reported on holding talks with Llyod Austin, US Defence Minister. In the meeting, both discussed on military cooperation, security issues and way to strengthen defence partnership between the US and Ukraine. The move follows Zelenskyy’s reiteration for more weapons and Russia’s strike on the Zaporizhzhia oblast which killed seven. Till now US has

been the biggest aider for Ukraine accounting for USD 50 billion military aid since 2022.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 02 July, the Russian Defence Ministry claimed to have destroyed five Ukrainian SU-27 fighter jets and inflicted damage on two additional jets at Ukraine’s Myrhorod airfield in the central Poltava region. On the same day, the Ministry published a video which showed the smoke rising from the airfield. Although it did not specify when the attack took place, it showed how the jets were damaged using Iskander-M missiles. According to the ministry: “As a result of the Russian strike, five active SU-27 multi-purpose fighters were destroyed and two were damaged.” The move comes as Russia is observed to be keen on targeting the airfields which are prepared for the first set of F-16s from the US. On the same day, Yuri Ihnat, Ukrainian Air Force spokesperson said: “There was an attack. There are some losses, but not the ones the enemy claims, after all, they have always done this since the beginning of the invasion.”

The West View: Responses from the US and Europe

On 02 July, Orban visited Ukraine since the war began in 2022. In his meeting with Zelenskyy, he discussed opportunities to create peace and ways to improve the Hungary-Ukraine bilateral equation. He has been the only leader in the EU to have maintained ties with Russia and has been the barrier to the EU’s decision-making against Russia especially in terms of granting financial aid to Ukraine or imposing sanctions on Russia. During the war, he was the only EU leader to have met Vladimir Putin, Russian President in a summit held in Beijing in October 2023. Earlier when he was a nationalist leader in 2010 also condemned the EU on opening membership talks with Kyiv.

On 02 July, Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor and Donald Tusk, Poland’s Prime Minister held a meeting in Warsaw as part of first governmental consultations between Germany and eastern European neighbours. During the meeting, Scholz emphasized that

both countries are major supporters of Ukraine at the political, military and humanitarian levels. Tusk stressed on Germany's commitment to secure Europe as the most critical factor amid the war in Ukraine. He added: "We would just like to point out to everyone, including our German partners, that the issues of the Continent's security should not be seen separately and sometimes in competition with various initiatives." Both agreed on a 40-page action plan which calls Russia as "The most immediate threat to Euro-Atlantic security." The major part of the plan includes the defence issues of the EU countries and the need for development of joint initiatives in tanks, ammunition and increasing the stock of spare parts to Leopard battle tanks sent to Ukraine.

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EM Daily Brief*

By Neha Tresa George and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: DW/ Heikki Saukkomaa, European Parliament, Arab News, REUTERS/Axel Schmidt, Al Jazeera, BBC/AFP

CROATIA

Gunman attack kills six

On 22 July, Croatian media reported on a gunman shooting six in a nursing home in Daruvar. The town is located 130 kilometres from Zagreb, five were found dead including a care worker and mother and another died from severe injuries. The suspect was detained by the police immediately and according to the report, the gunman was a former policeman who fought in Croatia's war of independence during 1991 and 1995 when Yugoslavia split. As per the report from the police, the suspect had a history of "domestic violence and public disorder." The investigation was launched while Zoran Milanovic, Croatian President expressed his shock at the shooting. Since the 1990's breakup of Yugoslavia, many weapons have been held in private homes in Croatia. (["Croatia: Several dead in nursing home attack," Deutsche Welle, 22 July 2024](#))

CYPRUS

President, eyes running the EU policy in the Mediterranean

On 24 July, Politico wrote about Nikos Christodoulides interest in taking up a new role of handling EU policy in the Mediterranean. The Cypriot President intends to contribute to issues relating to shipping in the region. This post was announced by Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission's President. The post was a result of Cyprus lobbying the EU President to focus exclusively in this region. The Republic of Cyprus has been a member of the EU for the past 20 years and has experience of the presidency. 2024 also marks 50 years since Turkey invaded Cyprus. Multiple attempts to establish a settlement have failed. Politico had interviewed Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the Greek Prime Minister, this week who made his interest in the post very apparent. (["Cyprus eyes chance to run EU Mediterranean policy," Politico, 24 July 2024](#))

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

President remembers the Turkish invasion after 50 years

On 20 July, the Cyprus government marked the 50th anniversary of Turkey's invasion. During 1974 invasion, several died and Greek Cypriots mourned which showcased the division in the country by ethnicity. The invasion was due to a coup, supported by Athens to unify Greece. During which the Turkish Cypriots saw it as a redemption from Greek-dominated Cyprus. This led to Turkey capturing a third of the Mediterranean island displacing 40 per cent of the population. In 1960, Cyprus gained independence from the British after a treaty ban on union with Greece or Turkey. It also barred partition and London, Athens and Ankara became the guarantors of Cyprus's independence. While Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's President gave a speech dismissing the chance of reunification which is still demanded by Greek Cypriots. Erdogan said: "We believe that a federal solution is not possible in Cyprus. It is of no benefit to anyone to say let's continue negotiations where we left off in Switzerland years ago." ("Divided Cyprus marks 50th anniversary of Turkish invasion." *Deutsche Welle*, 21 July 2024)

FINLAND

Parliament passes legislation to curb migrants

On 12 July, the Parliament of Finland (Eduskunta) voted for new legislation to curb the increase in asylum seekers at its eastern borders. The law came due to the dramatic surge of migrants from countries such as Somalia and Syria in Finland through its 1,340-kilometre border with Russia in the previous year. Finland accuses Russia of "weaponizing migration" and the "hybrid attacks" which it claims to be the response to its alliance with NATO. Out of the lawmakers, 167 voted in favour of the legislation while 31 voted against it indicating human rights violations. The act awaits the approval of Alexander Stubb, Finland's President and will be valid for one year. According to Petteri Orpo, Finnish Prime Minister, the vote was instrumental in providing a strong message to Russia and their allies to secure Finland's position on

its security. Once the act comes into effect, only children or people with disabilities will be eligible to seek protection. ("Finland passes bill to stop migrants at border." *Deutsche Welle*, 13 July, 2024)

FRANCE

River Seine poses health threats to the Olympic swimmers, reports Deutsche Welle

On 30 July, the men's Olympic triathlon set to be conducted in River Seine was postponed to the next day over concerns about water quality. The event now collides with the women's competition which is also scheduled on 31 July. There are also concerns over the women's and men's 10-kilometer (6.21-mile) marathon swimming races, which are due to be held in the Seine on 8 and 9 of August. The pollution in the river has become a novel controversy since the French authorities spent around 1.4 billion EUR to clean up the river before the 2024 Olympics. They were unsuccessful in reducing the bacterial contamination by 75 per cent before the first Olympic swimming event. The locals had condemned the authorities by organising a campaign, #JeChieDansLaSeineLe23Juin, which translates as # I shit in the Seine on 23 June. From the water test conducted by Eau de Paris monitoring group, the river showed significantly higher levels of Escherichia coli (E. coli) in the river. Heavy rains, Leptospira, transmitted by rodent urine and parasites like cercarial larvae in contaminated water pose health threats to the swimmers. (Fred Schwaller, "Why is the Seine unsafe for Olympic triathlon swimmers?" *Deutsche Welle*, 30 July 2024)

Far-left suspect behind rail-line attack

On 29 July, the French police reported the involvement of far-left suspects in the disruption of the fast railway network. The attack had created havoc among passengers. An individual linked to a far-left movement was arrested the same day by the police and a probe was launched against left-associated individuals. The trains are running on a normal schedule. However, the security has been tightened. To make this

happen, around 50 drones, 250 railway security agents and 1,000 maintenance workers have been deployed along the 28,000 kilometres long railway network. ([“French police arrest far-left suspect after rail sabotage,” Deutsche Welle, 30 July 2024](#))

Macron refuses to name the new prime minister until Olympics

On 24 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Emmanuel Macron, President of France, refused to name the Prime Minister, proposed by the left-wing alliance in France. The dilemma arose after the result of snap elections in the country where no party could claim a clear majority. This has left the national political situation in a deadlock. Lucie Castets is the candidate proposed by the New Popular Front, a left-wing alliance who, according to *Deutsche Welle*, has no political background. However, Macron will have the final say on the appointment of the Prime Minister, nonetheless, that person will have to prove their majority in the no-confidence motion in the lower house of the French Parliament. ([“Macron to name new French prime minister after Olympics,” Deutsche Welle, 24 July 2024](#))

Protests emerge against reservoir construction in La Rochelle

On 20 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on damage of several shops in France’s La Rochelle port city after demonstrations against a local irrigation project. During the demonstration, one police officer and five protestors were reportedly injured when police attempted to control the protest using water cannons and tear gas. One of the protesters said: “We were in the demo, they started blocking ahead and behind... They isolated us off to one side to charge everyone else.” The protests were due to the construction of a massive irrigation reservoir in La Rochelle. According to Gerald Darmanin, Interior Minister the reservoir was to help farmers and agricultural companies at the cost of small producers and the environment. They also claimed the reservoirs to save farms from severe droughts. Close to 2,000 who were part of the protest were charged by police

and to control they installed barricades. Darmanin said: “A number of radical, extreme left-wing participants have attacked property and rampaged a supermarket... It is hard to see a link to defense of the environment.” ([“French police, protesters clash over La Rochelle reservoirs,” Deutsche Welle, 20 July 2024](#))

President Macron wins a shock vote in the National Assembly

On 18 July, *Politico* reported that Emmanuel Macron, the French president won a shock vote in the National Assembly after a last-minute agreement with the centre-right. Pro-Macron and centre-right lawmakers formed an ad-hoc alliance to re-elect Yaël Braun-Pivet as head of the French National Assembly, the fourth highest-ranking official in France. After the first round of the three-round vote, Braun-Pivet and André Chassaigne, from the left front, had an eight-vote difference. Some unaffiliated lawmakers were instrumental in securing her victory at the last minute. It was reported that Macron and the centre-rights would not continue their alliance. According to the statements of a conservative official, the newly formed political group would focus on obtaining prime positions in the government rather than building a government together. The re-election of Braun-Pivet would likely give Macron more political momentum in deciding the government’s future. ([Victor Goury-Laffont, *Macron wins shock vote to keep coalition hopes alive*, Politico, 18 July 2024](#))

Several die in a fire attack in the city of Nice

On 19 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the fire attack in the southern French city of Nice that killed seven people. The fire which the French police believe to be arson broke through a top-floor apartment in a block of flats in the suburb of Moulins at about 3 a.m. local time. According to Damien Martinelli, Nice’s prosecutor, the investigators were searching for a “criminal link” to the fire. Authorities were in search of three people allegedly involved in the cause of the fire. The officials of the city of Nice offered their condolences to the

families who had lost their members. ([“France: Arson attack in Nice leaves several dead,” Deutsche Welle, 19 July 2024](#))

Police blocks entry into the River Seine ahead of the Olympics Opening ceremony

On 18 July, *France24* reported on the imposition of restrictions near the River Seine ahead of the grand Olympics opening ceremony in Paris. Police began blocking locals and tourists without a pass from accessing kilometres-long areas along the banks of the river. Although the authorities had informed about the QR code system of the pass 2023 itself, not many people were aware of it. Most of the visitors who were denied entry expressed their inconvenience over the extra restrictions. This would continue till the end of the ceremony scheduled to be held on 26 July. Unlike other cities, Paris had decided to host the opening ceremony in a river, rather than in a stadium. ([“Paris police seal off River Seine areas ahead of Olympics opening ceremony,” France24, 18 July 2024](#))

Macron accepts the resignation of Prime Minister, Gabriel Attal

On 16 July, *POLITICO* reported that Emmanuel Macron, France’s President accepted the resignation submitted by Gabriel Attal, the Prime Minister of France. According to a statement by the Elysée, the official website of the French Republic, Macron urged “all Republican forces” to reach an agreement to end this transition period “as soon as possible.” The resignation has set forth a transitory period usually up to nine days to appoint a new executive. Till then, the outgoing administration carried out the role of “caretaker government.” Although the choice of Prime Minister and cabinet executives lie with Macron, the prevailing political uncertainty paints a blurry image for France. The victorious left-wing New Popular Front coalition seemed far from gaining an absolute majority in the National Assembly. The executives under the caretaker government could continue their daily duties until a political judgment or legal questions were raised. ([“French](#)

[government resigns, ushering in indefinite transition period,” POLITICO, 16 July 2024](#))

Four migrants reported dead off the coast of Boulogne sur Mer

On 12 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported that four migrants drowned in the Channel off Boulogne sur Mer along the northern coast, citing the French maritime authorities. According to them, the migrants were trying to enter Britain overnight. After receiving an alert, it was reported that a naval patrol vessel reached the area to rescue the fallen people. Although four people were found dead, several were rescued alive. According to the statements of a spokesperson for France’s coastguard, out of the 67 people on board the vessel, 63 were rescued with four ships and a helicopter. ([“France: 4 migrants drown in the English Channel,” Deutsche Welle, 12 July 2024](#))

GEORGIA

Journalists face restrictions and lack of funding after foreign agent bill

On 16 July, *POLITICO* reported on the findings of two press freedom watchdogs on the condition of journalists in Georgia. According to the European Center for Press and Media Freedom, reporters faced a “lack of proper funding, restricted access to public information and lawsuits targeting them.” The article also emphasised the treatment of Belarusian and Russian journalists who were forced to flee from Russia. Meanwhile, the Media Freedom Coalition, backed by 51 countries like the US, UK, Germany and France issued another statement on the “physical assaults and the destruction of journalists’ working property. Earlier this month, Paweł Herczyński, the EU’s ambassador to Georgia said that the country’s chances to join the bloc were low due to a controversial “foreign agent bill” passed by the government. (Gabriel Gavin, [“Press freedom in Georgia at crisis point, NGOs warn,” POLITICO, 16 July 2024](#))

GERMANY

Social Democratic Party tries to gauge its space among domestic voters

On 24 July, Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federation of Germany, announced his intention to run for elections again in the elections due 14 months later. He stated this in his annual press conference that he held before heading towards his summer vacation. The Social Democratic Party, which the Chancellor belongs to, was taken aback by the results of the European Parliament where its rival parties like Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union in Bavaria swept the votes clean. The alliance won almost 31 per cent of the votes, which is the highest. Meanwhile, SDP could reach just 17 per cent. Freidrich Merz, a politician from the CDU party, is the proposed name as the current Chancellor's main opponent in the upcoming elections. However, Olaf Schulz is confident that his Party will turn the situation around and European Parliamentary Elections is a motivation for them. ("Olaf Schulz to run for German chancellor again in 2025," Politico, 24 July 2024)

Court rules to reduce seats in federal parliament

On 30 July, the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, Germany reduced the number of seats in the Bundestag (German federal parliament) from 733 to 630 (103 fewer seats). It also added a regulation to protect the position of smaller parties in the Bundestag. The court said: "If a party receives less than five per cent of the vote yet wins three or more constituencies, it should remain entitled to proportional representation in the Bundestag." The ruling upheld the efforts of two opposition party plaintiffs- the Bavarian Christian Social Union and The Left. Members of the ruling parties welcomed the judgement as they believed that the new rules would increase efficiency. (Nette Nöstlinger, "[German court allows downsizing of massive parliament](#)," POLITICO, 30 July 2024)

Climate protest in Frankfurt airport continues

On 24 July, after shutting down the runway at Cologne/Bonn airport, the climate change activists displayed a similar act of protest at the Frankfurt airport. The frontiers of the protests belong to a group called the Last Generation. The group follows the footsteps of the movement called 'Fridays for Future' which was led by the activist Greta Thunberg. The Last Generation is estimated to have around 500 to 600 members and is mainly financed by donations. A climate activist from the same group was sentenced for one year and four months of imprisonment for damaging public property and resisting law enforcement officers. The motivation behind these protests is to make climate change a primary issue for the German voters since due immigration, security and inflation, climate change had taken a backseat in German politics. Although Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor, has called the move "completely crazy." ("[Germany's Last Generation aims to revive climate protests](#)," Deutsche Welle, 24 July 2024)

Court imposes fine on a journalist on charges mocking Prime Minister Georgia Meloni

On 19 July, Politico reported on the imposition of a fine against a freelance journalist in Germany on charges of mocking Georgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister. A Milan court imposed a fine of EUR 5000 on Giulia Cortese to be given to Meloni for mocking her height. According to her post in X: "You don't scare me, Giorgia Meloni. After all, you're only 1.2 metres (four feet) tall. I can't even see you." She also called Meloni "a little woman" in another post. She was condemned on the charges of "defamatory tweets" and "body shaming" against Meloni. Although Cortese offered to publicly apologise, Meloni rejected the request. Cortese's case is just one among the many cases of journalists facing a lawsuit against them. Press associations had noted that interference and lawsuits from the government had been increasing since Meloni came into power. In the World Press Freedom Index, Germany

dropped to 46th, five below in 2023. (Elena Giordano, [Italian journalist fined €5K for mocking PM Meloni's height](#)," *Politico*, 19 July 2024)

The coalition government agrees on the budget for 2025

On 17 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Germany's draft budget for the year 2025. The new budget resulted from weeks of negotiations among Germany's cabinet. The total budget for the year is EUR 480.6 billion which was EUR 8 billion less than this year. Olaf Scholz, the German Chancellor, Robert Habeck, the Green Party's Vice-Chancellor and Christian Lindner, the finance minister had been trying to close a financing gap of EUR 30 billion for weeks. Lindner said: "A balanced budget was only possible by curbing the politicians' appetite for ever higher government spending." The budget allocates increased payments to families, more investment in kindergarten and climate crisis. According to Lindner, this budget was the "start of the economic turnaround" for Germany. Several initiatives were planned to provide incentives to the employees along with tax advantages to attract foreign skilled workers. Lindner aims to bring an extra EUR six million as revenue next year. (["Germany's coalition agrees on a budget for 2025."](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 17 July 2024)

The government plans to expand its ties to West Africa

On 17 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Germany's plan to expand its ties to West Africa in the Senegal region. Annalena Baerbock, Germany's foreign minister visited Senegal with a 10-member business delegation. The region is ruled by two former opposition members, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko who seek to rebuild a self-determined Senegal. Baerbock considered the investments as for "Germany's security interests" and not as a "charity campaign" since she intended to treat the African partners as "equals." According to her, "The security and future opportunities of this region are closely linked to German

security." When asked about the withdrawal of German troops from Nigeria, she explained that it would not affect the Development funds flowing from Germany to the affected people. She also assured the safety of Ivory Coast, a country in West Africa. Germany also supports the International Counter-Terrorism Academy of Ivory Coast and funds around EUR 2.5 million per year. (["German ties in West Africa not a charity campaign"](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 17 July 2024)

GREECE

Government bans transport of goats to curb infectious diseases

On 30 July, the *BBC* reported that Greece had banned the transportation of goats to contain Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), a highly infectious disease among animals. The virus can kill between 80 per cent and 100 per cent of infected animals while it is not harmful to humans. The Agricultural Ministry of Greece said: "The movement of sheep and goats for breeding, fattening and slaughter is banned throughout Greece." Cases were detected in the central Larissa region and Corinth in the south. The ministry officials met with the local authorities and instructed the farmers, feed suppliers and slaughterhouse owners to curb the spreading disease. The ministry speculated the "suspicious imports" from abroad as the cause of the outbreak. (["Greece imposes restrictions to tackle 'goat plague'"](#), *BBC*, 30 July 2024)

GREENLAND

Environmental activist arrested over anti-whaling intervention in the Antarctic

On 21 July, Greenland police reported on the arrest of a well-known environmental activist Paul Watson. He was known for "direct action tactics and confrontations with whaling ships" was arrested for earlier issued Red Notice for his anti-whaling interventions. According to the Captain Paul Watson Foundation (CPWF) organisation, close to a dozen of police had boarded to arrest Watson and confirmed to summon him in the district court to extradite to Japan. CPWF said: "The arrest is believed to

be related to a former Red Notice issued for Captain Watson's previous anti-whaling interventions in the Antarctic region." In 2012, Watson was arrested by German authorities on an extradition warrant issued by Costa Rica and was later released. ("[Anti-whaling activist Paul Watson arrested in Greenland](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 July 2024)

HUNGARY

Orban to host the next European Political Community meeting in November

On 19 July, *POLITICO* reported that the next European Political Community (EPC) would be hosted by Viktor Orban, the President of Hungary in four months. According to the announcement of Keir Starmer, the British Prime Minister, the EPC was scheduled on 07 November in Budapest, Hungary. The announcement came during the EPC hosted by Starmer with 47 leaders of the EU and other countries. The main aim of the meeting was to improve the relations between the UK and other countries. However, the EU leaders seemed reluctant to attend the EPC meeting scheduled in Hungary due to Orban's self-proclaimed peace missions to Russia and China. Many EU leaders believed that the meeting would be another "Orban propaganda show" which they were trying to avoid. The European Commission even announced scheduling its own foreign minister's summit in August to avoid the meeting in Hungary. (Csongor Körömi, "[Next European Political Community summit to be held in Hungary](#)," *POLITICO*, 19 July 2024)

Prime Minister meets Donald Trump to discuss peace

On 12 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the meeting between Viktor Orban, Hungarian President and Donald Trump, former US President. The meeting was part of Orban's self-proclaimed "peace mission" to end the Russia-Ukraine crisis. The meeting happened at Trump's beachside Mar-a-Lago estate where both seemed to have discussed ways to make peace. Orban made several visits to meet the leaders of Ukraine, Russia and China to stabilise the relations between Russia and Ukraine. However, his

trip to Russia and China was disapproved by the Western allies. The EU also criticised Orban's meeting with Trump as they claimed that it would not help Ukraine. They were also apprehensive about the impression of the West being divided. ("[Hungary's Orban meets Trump on 'peace mission'](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 July 2024)

RUSSIA

Navy conducts military exercises to check on military actions and readiness

On 29 July, the Russian navy kickstarted major combat training exercises of its fleets in the Arctic and Pacific oceans and the Baltic and Caspian seas. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the exercise aimed to check on the actions of the navy at all levels and the readiness of the crew to perform tasks. The Ministry said that 20,000 sailors, 300 surface and submarine vessels and 50 aircraft would take part in the combat training. The drills are expected to include anti-aircraft missile firing, artillery firing at sea and air training targets, combat exercises for setting up passive interference to withdraw forces from a simulated enemy strike and the use of anti-submarine weapons by surface ships and naval aviation. The Black Sea Fleet will not take part in the drill due to considerable losses in the war in Ukraine. ("[Russian navy begins major combat training exercises](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 30 July 2024)

Russia celebrates naval glory on the Day of the Navy

On 28 July, Vladimir Putin, the Russian Federation's President, delivered his speech in St Petersburg to celebrate the Russian Navy. he extolled contemporary modernization in military technology and the development of cutting-edge state-of-the-art facilities in the Russian navy. The history of this day goes back to 1714 when Russia defeated Sweden at Gangut during the Great Northern War on July 27. This is the first big victory of the Russian naval forces. The Russian Navy plays a significant role in the Black Sea and Baltic region. ("[Covered With Glory, Modernizing Quickly:](#)

[Russian Navy Celebrates Its Main Holiday.](#)
Sputnik, 30 July 2024)

Bashar Assad, Syria's President, met Vladimir Putin in Moscow

On 24 July, Russian media released a video of a conversation between Bashar Assad, Syria's President and Vladimir Putin, Russia's President. The Russian President highlighted the tendency of Middle Eastern governments to escalate issues. Russia also played a crucial role in stabilising Syria during its 12 years of civil war. Both Presidents also indicated the possibility of restoration of Syria-Turkey ties. The ties were severed in 2011 when Recep Tayyip Erdogan supported the rebel forces in Syria. The Turkish President has shown interest in returning refugees to Syria. Syria was also included in the Arab League in 2023. Thus, Russia has a significant part of play in shaping the role of Syria in Middle-Eastern politics. (["Syria's Assad meets Putin in Moscow,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 24 July 2024)

US journalist sentenced to 16-year jail term on charges of espionage

On 19 July, *POLITICO* reported that Evan Gershkovich, an US journalist was sentenced to 16 years imprisonment by a Russian court. He was accused on the charges of spying for the CIA by collecting information about a tank factory. According to Robert Metsola: "The 16-year prison sentence against Gershkovich is the antithesis of justice." Gershkovich, who was arrested last year in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg for reporting an assignment to the *Wall Street Journal*, has pleaded not guilty. The American government and the *Wall Street Journal* slammed the case arguing that Russia was using it to prompt the Western governments to release the Russian prisoners there. Both the US presidential candidates- Joe Biden and Donald Trump had confirmed to prioritise Gershkovich's release. (Eva Hartog, ["Russia sentences Evan Gershkovich to 16 years in prison."](#) *POLITICO*, 19 July 2024)

SPAIN

Thousands protest against over-tourism and its impact on housing

On 22 July, close to 20,000 protestors gathered in Palma in Mallorca against overtourism. The protestors demanded for a change in the touristic model as they found it harming Spain's Mediterranean island. They held the slogan "Let's change course and set limits on tourism," "Your luxury, our misery," "This isn't tourismphobia, it's numbers: 1,232,014 residents, 18 million tourists." The protestors belonged to 80 organisation and social groups who want to place a limit on excessive tourism in Balearic Isles especially in Mallorca, Menorca and Ibiza islands. As per the current model, extensive tourism has affected public services, and natural resources and resulted in housing difficulties. The organisers of the protests claimed on 50,000 joining the protest while police stated only 20,000 whereas the government claimed it be only 12,000. In 2023, a massive record of 17.8 million had visited the Balearic Islands especially from mainland Spain and abroad and is expected to increase further in 2024. One of the experts in tourism and business suggested imposing tourist tax as a solution to the local population problem. (["Thousands rally in Spain's Mallorca against mass tourism,"](#) *France24*, 22 July 2024)

Canary Islands report the arrival of around 300 migrants in a day

On 19 July, *Euronews* reported on the increasing number of migrants crossing from Africa to the Canary Islands in Spain. Four boats carrying more than 300 migrants were reported to have reached the island in a day. One of the boats came unassisted while some migrants in a vessel were said to be in critical condition. This route from Africa to the Canary Islands, off the southern coast of Morocco had been the fastest-growing route for migrants. According to the Interior Ministry of Spain, the number of migrants arriving by sea in the Canary Islands increased by 160 per cent between January and July compared to last year. The reported number of migrants was 20,000. The European border control agency Frontex also said that the irregular crossings rose to 303 per cent from January to May compared to last year. The large

number of migrants, especially minors, had caused a strain on the archipelago which already serves around 6000 immigrant children. ([“More than 300 migrants arrive in Gran Canaria by boat in less than 24 hours,” Euronews, 19 July 2024](#))

THE UK

Hottest day with 32 degrees recorded for 2024

On 30 July, the UK marked the hottest day of the year with the intense heat wave affecting large parts. London, southern England and south-eastern Wales are expected to meet the official criteria for a heatwave this week. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) issued a Yellow Heat Health Alert for all areas of England - except for the North East and North West. The alert indicated a likely less impact on the younger generation but not the older generation. It also warned against the increased internal temperatures at hospitals and care homes which could pose difficulties in healthcare services. London reached 32 degrees Celsius, Wales at 29 degrees Celsius while Scotland and Northern Ireland saw highs of 22.3 and 23 degrees Celsius. ([“UK swelters as hottest day of the year confirmed,” BBC, 31 July 2024](#))

Government announced a review of the pension scheme

On 20 July, *Politico* reported on the UK government's launch of a pension review which it claims will reopen billions of investments. This review into the pensions and investment market is viewed as a way to boost support for schemes to improve savings for pensioners. The government is also seen to be viewing defined contribution schemes which is expected to manage GBP 800 billion in assets by 2030. In this one per cent of shift of assets into productive investment could also give a GBP eight billion boost to its economy according to the government. It also intends to review the investment potential of a pension scheme of local governments worth GBP 360 billion while cutting down GBP two billion in fees. According to Rachel Reeves, UK's Chancellor: “The latest in a big bang of

reforms to unlock growth, boost investment and deliver savings for pensioners... There is so much untapped potential in our pensions markets, with an industry worth around £2 trillion.” (Pieter Haeck, [“UK launches pensions review in bid to boost investments,” Politico, 20 July 2024](#))

Labour Party positions its foreign policy to be more Eurocentric

On 12 July, *POLITICO* reported on the new foreign policy pursued by Keir Starmer, the UK's new Prime Minister. At the NATO summit, Joe Biden, the USA's President expressed his approval of Starmer's recent comments on establishing closer ties with the EU. According to his statements, “I kind of see you guys as the knot tying the transatlantic alliance together, the closer you are with Europe, the more you're engaged.” Although Starmer's plan to shift the UK's position to a more Eurocentric position was part of the Labour Party's policy, he seemed to be rapidly advancing his policies. While the leader was reluctant to express his views about Brexit or the UK's future, he seemed keen to bring the UK and EU closer together as his primary foreign policy objective. At the top of his agenda was the UK-EU defence pact to make it easier for British and European defence firms to cooperate. According to John Healey, the UK's Defence Secretary, Britain was also keen to be closely involved in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) — the EU's defence policy project. ([“The Tories are gone — and Britain is moving closer to Europe again,” Politico, 12 July 2024](#))

REGIONAL

FRA report condemns the incapability of EU member states to protect human rights

On 30 July, *POLITICO* reported on the “damning report” published by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) which pointed out the incapability of the EU countries to investigate cases of human rights violations. The report condemned the countries for “serious, recurrent and widespread rights violations against migrants and refugees during border

management.” The report singled out Croatia, Greece and Hungary for their ineffective investigations, citing several cases in 2020 and 2022. The FRA report said: “The low number of investigations of such cases, despite the high number of credible allegations, casts a negative light on border management authorities’ operation.” The countries haven’t commented publicly on the report. (Seb Starcevic, [“EU countries fail to probe beatings, sexual assaults on migrants by police, report says,”](#) *POLITICO*, 30 July 2024)

Eurozone’s economy grows in the second quarter; Germany’s stagnation to impact the growth

On 30 July, *POLITICO* reported that the eurozone economy grew more than expected in the second quarter. There was continued growth in the economies of France, Italy and Spain. Germany’s current contraction of 0.1 per cent and inflation pose difficulties to the European Central Bank (ECB) as it prepares for its next meeting. Overall growth was steady at 0.3 per cent in the three months through June and at 0.6 per cent compared to the second quarter of 2023. Spain had the highest growth of 0.8 per cent and was followed by France and Italy with 0.3 per cent and 0.2 per cent. Surveys of S&P and the Ifo had pointed out a further decline in Germany’s growth. The ECB also acknowledged that the bloc’s recovery could be affected by any global slowdown through trade or geopolitical tensions. (Johanna Treeck and Carlo Boffa, [“Eurozone economy grows faster than expected in Q2,”](#) *POLITICO*, 30 July 2024)

European Court of Justice rules to protect wolves in Spain

On 29 July, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled against the plans of the Government of Spain to hunt wolves. It stated that the wolf shall not be categorised as a species to be hunted at the EU level till the “conservation status” at the national remains “unfavourable.” The Association for the Conservation and Study of the Iberian Wolf (ASCEL) filed a case against the regional Government that had proposed a

hunting plan in 2019 allowing 339 wolves to be hunted down. In a press release, the court said: “The Court answers that the regional Law is contrary to the Habitats Directive.” It countered the 2019 regional government hunting plan which permits 339 wolves to be hunted and does not consider the condition of “unfavourable condition status” of wolves in Spain. Following the ruling, the case will be redirected to Spain’s court to adhere to ECJ rule. (“[Spain: EU court rules against regional wolf hunting plan,](#)” *Deutsche Welle*, 30 July 2024)

Right-wing extremist author faces protests

On 29 July, a Vienna-born Austrian author, Martin Stellar, who is a proponent of right-wing ideology faced mass protest in the German city of Marburg. There were around 700 protesters gathered in the central market. The establishment did not oppose the protests as the Government too sees opposition of extremist views as its responsibility. Stellar is a figure of the “Identitarian movement” that opposes immigration. The controversy and the opposition started when Martin Stellar spoke at a far-right conference held in Potsdam in November 2023 and presented his “Remigration theory.” Under that theory, he demanded the deportation of “non-assimilated” citizens in Germany. (“[Hundreds protest right-wing extremist author,](#)” *Deutsche Welle*, 30 July 2024)

EU Parliament sees a big drop in female representatives

On 29 July, *Euronews* reported the biggest drop in female parliamentarians since 1979. The average age of the EU Parliament is 50 years, raising questions about the representation of the younger generation as well. This time, there are 277 female MEPs out of 720, making up 38.6 per cent. In the last elections, they contributed to 46 per cent of seats, reflecting a major drop. In France, Sweden and Finland female representation has crossed the mark of 50 per cent while in Cyprus, it barely touched 15 per cent. Meanwhile, the elected President of the Parliament is also a

woman, Roberta Metsola. All committees of the Parliament held their meetings to elect the chairs and vice chairs of 20 committees and subcommittees that make up the institution out of which only seven went to female parliamentarians. ([“More right wing with fewer women - a new Parliament compendium.”](#) *Euronews*, 30 July 2024)

UK and Germany plan to strengthen military ties

On 24 July, John Healey, the UK's Defence Secretary, expressed the willingness of the new Labour Party's Government in resetting and strengthening defence ties with Europe. The UK and Germany concluded a deal to boost the defence industries of both countries and cooperate on development and procurement of weapons. The Pact aims to strengthen European defence capabilities, thus NATO defence and provide better security assurances to Ukraine. Healey will also be visiting Estonia, France and Poland showcasing the interest of the new British Government in increasing their presence in the European security industry. ([“Germany, UK sign deal to boost military ties,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 24 July 2024)

Europol finds increased child sexual abuse from AI-generated images

On 22 July, the European policing agency, Europol warned over the increase in the circulation of artificial intelligence-created “child sexual abuse images” on online platforms. In a report from Europol: “Cases of AI-assisted and AI-generated child sexual abuse material have been reported.” It found the use of AI and AI-generated images of abuse to multiply in future and the increasing digital threats in Europe. According to the report, the images generated through AI made it more difficult to find the real-life victims. Another study by the University of Edinburgh found close to 300 million children to be victims of “online sexual exploitation” and AI formed a new spectrum of online abuse. Europol said: “Even in the cases when the content is fully artificial and there is no real victim depicted, AI-generated child sex abuse material still contributes to the

objectification and sexualization of children.” ([“Europol warns of rise in AI child abuse imagery,”](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 22 July 2024)

EU grants EUR 105 million subsidy to farmers to cut nitrogen emission

On 22 July, *Euronews* reported on the EU's approval of EUR 105 million subsidy to promote cutdown of nitrogen pollution among the Netherlands livestock farmers. The move is aimed to push the farmers from nature protected areas to reduce the rise of nitrogen emissions. Since 2019, agriculture sector has witnessed wide-range of protests against governments efforts to bring down nitrogen pollution. This includes, ammonia rising from slurry, manure and chemicals from fertilisers which forms part of the Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB) as part of the latest right-wing coalition. The approved scheme will grant compensation to farmers who will shift from Natura 2000 sites which have been damaged by nitrogen deposition. Owners of small and mid-sized livestock farms can also claim 100 per cent from the cost allotted for relocation, reassembling of farm buildings and restoration of abandoned sites. According to the European Commission, the scheme will be active till 2029 until the objective of sustainable and environmentally friendly development of livestock farming is achieved and at the same time supports EU's Green Deal. This move comes after 14 months of EU competition authorities approving EUR 1.47 billion as state aid of refund up to 120 per cent to the cost spent by the farmers who decide to close livestock breeding over nitrogen emissions. (Robert Hodgson, [“EU approves €105m subsidy for Dutch livestock farmers to cut nitrogen pollution,”](#) *Euronews*, 22 July 2024)

EU and Serbia sign deal on lithium mining

On 20 July, the *BBC* reported on the EU's pact with Serbia on lithium mining. Earlier, Serbia restored mining giant Rio Tinto's licence to extract the minerals from Jadar Valley in the west. Later Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor visiting Belgrade stated the deal would aid Europe's economic

security and expressed his keenness for Germany's auto industry meeting the supplies. According to the report, carmakers will require lithium for batteries as they use zero-emission vehicles. The Rio Tinto's Jadar project is expected to give nine-tenths of Europe's lithium needs. Major car manufacturers such as Mercedes-Benz and Stellantis view the deal as "strategic partnership" over sustainable raw materials and production of battery and electric vehicles. ([Guy Delauney, "EU seals 'historic' pact on Serbia's lithium deposits," BBC, 20 July 2024](#))

The EU and Serbia sign a deal on lithium mining project

On 19 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the agreement signed between the EU and Serbia to develop the Jadar mining project in Serbia and production chains for batteries necessary for electric vehicles. The mine is believed to carry Europe's largest reserve of lithium with the capacity to provide up to 58,000 tons of lithium per year. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Dubravka Djedovic-Handanovic, Serbia's Mining and Energy Minister and Maros Sefcovic, the EU energy chief following a critical raw materials summit. Aleksander Vucic, the Serbian President said, "There will be no project without full protection, and we know it will happen because we are bringing the best experts from Europe to Serbia." Olaf Scholz, the German Chancellor also approved the deal and said that it would help in preserving the independence of Europe and provide more opportunities for the production of batteries and electric vehicles. Serbia could use this deal as leverage to improve its relations with the EU. (["EU, Serbia sign key lithium deal," Deutsche Welle, 19 July 2024](#))

Record high temperatures recorded across Europe triggering heatwave

On 18 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the heatwave sweeping across the European countries. In Italy, Greece and several other Balkan countries, the intense heatwave had resulted in wildfires and a dried-up lake in Serbia. With the temperature to hit 43

degrees Celsius in Greece, the government had closed one of the most famous landmarks of the city, the Acropolis archaeological site. Meanwhile, the Italian government had ranked Palermo, Sicily under the 13 hottest cities in the country. In North Macedonia, around 200 wildfires had been ranging since this month with the government proclaiming a month-long state of emergency. In Albania, the government had rescheduled the working time for civil servants. Most of the Balkan countries had issued heat alerts against the scorching climate. (["Europe: Scorching heatwave bakes Greece, Balkan region," Deutsche Welle, 18 July 2024](#))

Ursula Von der Leyen gets re-elected as the President of the European Commission

On 19 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the re-election of Ursula Von der Leyen for a second term as European Commission President despite uncertainty. She won with 401 votes in favour, 284 against and 15 abstained. She wrote on platform X: "I can't begin to express how grateful I am for the trust of all MEPs that voted for me." However, she did not manage to secure the votes from Georgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy party. After the vote, she noted that the biggest challenge posed in front of the EU was defending their democracy. In the run-up to convince the MEPs before the election, she had pledged to push for a ceasefire in Gaza and confirmed continued support for Ukraine. She also promised to decrease greenhouse emissions by 90 per cent by 2040 with a new energy bill. Leaders from around the world and the EU congratulated her on the big victory. (["Ursula von der Leyen reelected for EU top job," Deutsche Welle, 19 July 2024](#))

Ursula accused of concealing information on the COVID-19 vaccine contracts

On 17 July, *POLITICO* reported on the accusation against Ursula Von der Leyen, the European Commissioner over transparency issues about COVID-19 vaccine contracts. The EU court's ruling came just over 24 hours before her future

would be decided by the MEPs. It could be seen as a major blow to her bidding to become re-elected to the position of European Commissioner as she needs the support of 361 lawmakers out of the 720 in a secret vote. Back in 2021, the Greens had filed requests to access the vaccine contracts and related documents to understand the agreement between the Commission and the manufacturers. However, the Commission only gave partial access to the documents over the argument that it had to protect the commercial interests over privacy matters. This decision of the Commission was condemned by the court. It framed the Commission over charges of concealing provisions on indemnification. The European Commission believed that the court needed to opt for a balanced opinion in these kinds of cases. The Commission can appeal within two months and 10 days of the decision. ("[Von der Leyen loses court case in blow to her 2nd-term bid](#)," *POLITICO*, 17 July 2024)

Roberta Metsola re-elected as the President of the European Parliament

On 16 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the re-election of Malta's Roberta Metsola as president of the European Parliament for another two-and-a-half-year term. She won 562 votes leaving her left-wing rival Irene Montero of Spain with only 61 votes. The victory came amidst criticism over her derailed efforts to advance women's rights. Metsola expressed her gratitude to the assembly and urged lawmakers to confirm the "belief that ours is a Europe for all." She also promised to create a new security and defence framework for the safety of people. ("[Malta's Metsola re-elected as EU Parliament president](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 16 July 2024)

ECR group divided over the re-election of Ursula Von der Leyen

On 16 July, *POLITICO* reported on the divide among the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group in the EU over the re-election of Ursula Von der Leyen as the European Commissioner. The ECR group led by the Brothers of Italy party and Poland's

Law and Justice has 78 out of the 720 MEPs in the Parliament. Von der Leyen faced an intense discussion with the ECR group where she had to answer about 50 questions on the Green Deal, migration and war threats from Russia. Although Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister was expected to support her, Meloni abstained from voting when the EU officials had their chance last month. According to an ECR spokesperson, Romanian, French and Polish delegations had decided to vote no. This was because of their opinion that Von der Leyen did not do much for the goodwill of Europe. One Polish lawmaker also expressed skepticism about her re-election as he argued that "not all Italians would vote in favour of her." For a second term, Von der Leyen needs the support of 361 MEPs out of the 720 in the Parliament. (Eddy Wax And Max Griera, "[Giorgia Meloni's hard-right European Parliament group split on supporting von der Leyen](#)," *POLITICO*, 16 July 2024)

Two new far-right groups- Patriots for Europe and Europe of Sovereign Nations fail secure position in the European Parliament

On 16 July, *Euronews* reported on the failure of the two new far-right groups to secure any position of the vice presidents in the European Parliament. Out of the 14 positions, five were won by the centre-left Socialists and Democrats, three by the European People's Party (EPP), two by the liberal Renew Europe, one by the Greens group and two by the ECR. The far-right candidates from the Patriots for Europe, led by the French National Rally's Jordan Bardella and Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN) of Alternative for Germany (AfD) were voted down by the coordinated efforts of the centrist groups. A Patriots spokesperson was of the opinion that the "cordon sanitaire" to keep off the far-rights from power was "undemocratic" and an "insult to European citizens." (Mared Gwyn Jones, "[Two far-right groups cordoned off from power roles in the European Parliament](#)," *Euronews*, 16 July 2024)

EU accuses platform X for breaching the Digital Services Act

On 12 July, *POLITICO* reported that the EU accused Elon Musk's social media site X for disrespecting the EU social media law. The platform was formally charged with encouraging disinformation and illegal hate speech, misleading authentication features and blocking external researchers from checking on the malignant contents. The site would be charged with a multi-million euro fine under the bloc's Digital Services Act (DSA). In the bloc's first stage of investigation against X, it was found that its blue-check policies were untrustworthy and misled users. Although the checks were created to verify the accounts of government officials, public figures and journalists, the new policy initiated by Musk allowed users to buy the blue-check accounts. The platform was also condemned for not providing very limited access to its public data to the researchers. The European Commission informed on its continued probe into the breach of rules by platform X. The EU has launched an investigation against companies like AliExpress, Meta's Facebook and Instagram and TikTok so far. (Clothilde Goujard, "[EU charges Elon Musk's X for letting disinfo run wild](#)," *POLITICO*, 12 July 2024)

INTERNATIONAL

Italy and China signed a three-year economic cooperation deal

On 28 July, Georgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister, met Xi Jinping, PRC's President and signed an economic cooperation deal on renewable energy, electric vehicles and green technology. It is Meloni's first visit to China as an Italian leader. Italy is seeking to collaborate with China on projects where China is already on the frontier. Even non-state actors like Pirelli, an Italian tyre making company, ENI, an energy group, Leonardo, a defence group and luxury product manufacturers were present at the meeting. Italy is looking to rebuild ties with China after it pulled out from the BRI project. Initially, Italy was the only nation to sign BRI with China in 2019 but later withdrew due to rising threats. In 2023, the bilateral trade between Italy and China was

heavily tilted towards China. Italy has been supporting the European Union's tariffs of up to 37.6 per cent on China automobiles. Simultaneously, even China has initiated probes on dairy and pork products imported from Europe. ("[Italy's Meloni signs deal to 'relaunch' ties with China](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 29 July 2024)

China pressures European lawmakers to skip the Taiwan Summit

On 28 July, *Politico* reported that at least eight politicians from Slovakia, North Macedonia, Bosnia, Bolivia and Colombia. Politicians and politically influential people visiting the Republic of China have been an irritant for the PRC. The Summit is being organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC). It is a group of lawyers from over 35 countries to discuss how democracies interact with China. Its purview is also growing with Malawi, Solomon Islands, the Gambia and Uruguay also joining it. The Executive Director of IPAC even wrote on X that the PRC cannot decide travel plans for foreign officials, tagging the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC. Even Slovakian Parliamentarian, Mariam Lexmann, who also co-chairs IPAC, condemned the Communist Party's move on X. ("[China pressures lawmakers from Slovakia, other countries to skip Taiwan summit](#)," *Politico*, 28 July 2024)

Japan and European countries hold joint exercises at Chitose Base

On 24 July, *Politico* reported about the joint exercises that Japan, Germany, France and Italy held this week. The joint exercises were held in the wake of rising threats from the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. The joint exercise brings two theatres in one frame, according to *Politico*. Since the US perceives China as a major threat, countering China is a greater concern for the US than for Europe. Meanwhile, the Russia-Ukraine war has shifted Europe's focus towards Russia. Europe does have the geographical advantage like the US. Therefore, strengthening the European pillar in NATO has become crucial. Europe is also trying to

distance itself from the US approach towards China, to evade any animosity with the manufacturing giant. ("Europe's warplanes fly to Japan to keep an eye on Russia and China," *Politico*, 24 July 2024)

Chancellor Scholz attends third annual press conference

On 24 July, Germany's Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, held his annual press conference before heading towards his summer vacation. He took questions on the annual performance of his Government. He indicated his intention to run for the position of Chancellor again in the next elections. He also stated that he believes Kamala Harris might win the presidential elections in the US this time. He also stated that his government is hiking its defence expenditure to two per cent of the GDP to meet NATO standards. The US has also deployed its missiles in Germany, to which the Chancellor said that Russia needs to end the war first. When asked about his government's position on the Israel-Hamas war, he emphasised on Israel's right to self-defence and Germany's support for a two-state solution. He also highlighted the increased influx of illegal immigrants and refugees, who will soon be deported to respective countries. He also promised to tackle domestic problems like climate protection, economic transformation and budget cuts. ("Scholz says 'very possible' Kamala Harris wins US election," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 July 2024)

German court asks the Federal Government to improve air quality

On 22 July, the Higher Administrative Court of Berlin-Brandenburg ruled in favour of an environmental NGO and told the Federal Government of Germany to strengthen their National Air Quality Program in order to meet the European air quality standards. The Federal Government can, still, approach the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig to challenge the decision. ("German court orders stronger action to tackle air pollution," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 July 2024)

EU introduces measures in North-East Atlantic to protect aqua life

On 22 July, the European Council introduced new regulations in the NEAFC (A regional fisheries management organisation for managing the fisheries resources) area, the organisation responsible for regional fisheries management. The objective is the preservation of aqua life and improving shipment operations of fisheries. Under the new regulation, camera and sensor technologies will be installed to monitor landings and processing facilities. 22 species have been added to the list for which fishing is prohibited, including cod. The council has banned bottom fishing in certain areas until 2027. ("Council adopts updated fisheries measures in the North-east Atlantic," *European Council*, 22 July 2024)

EU and US plan to lend USD 50 billion to Ukraine

On 22 July, *Politico* reported that the EU and the US are close to approving a loan of USD 50 billion to Ukraine to fight the war. However, the US Government might have to involve the Congress given the risk of taxpayers' money. Therefore, the US has asked the EU to ensure that Russian assets are kept frozen until the loan is repaid. In June 2024, the G7 countries had agreed on providing a loan of USD 50 billion to Ukraine. G7 plans the repayment of loan through seizing Russia's immovable assets in the West. The EU wanted to translate this deal into an EU law but the countries could find a common ground on exact contributions. ("EU, US near deal on USD 50 billion loan on Ukraine," *Politico*, 22 July 2024)

European Commission warns EU Governments against spyware use

On 22 July, the European Commission told the EU Governments to not compromise their citizens' privacy under the banner of national security but ultimately aim to suppress anti-establishment voices. Some EU Governments have decided to use NGO's Pegasus spyware for surveillance. There have been reports of the Government in the Kingdom of Spain breaching the privacy of at least 65 Catalan people through spyware. Similarly, the Government in Greece had

admitted to an opposition leader's phone and such incidents were also reported in Poland and Hungary. ("Curb your snooping, the EU tells governments," *Politico*, 22 July 2024)

Russia jails a US-Russian journalist

On 22 July, Russia jailed a US-Russian journalist, Alsu Kurmasheva, for six and a half years in a secret trial. Alsu, who is based in Prague and she resides there with her family, was accused of spreading false information about the Russian army. Earlier, Russia had sentenced another journalist, Evan Gershkovich, for 16 years on the accusations of espionage. Senior journalists have called this incident a mockery of justice since many journalists have been targeted by security services since the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022. ("Russia jails US-Russian journalist Kurmasheva," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 July 2024)

Pakistan criticizes Germany for not giving protection to its Frankfurt mission

On 21 July, Ishaq Dar, Pakistan's Foreign Minister raised a complaint to Germany following a group of protestors barging into the Pakistani consulate in Frankfurt and removing the national flag. This comes after a group of 400 holding the Afghanistan flag demonstrated outside the consulate. Dar asked Germany: "Fulfill its responsibilities under the Vienna Conventions and ensure the security of the diplomatic missions and staff of Pakistan in Germany." A similar statement was released by the ministry condemning German authorities to give protection. As per 1961 Geneva Convention on Diplomatic Relations mentions the rights and protections of diplomatic missions allowing diplomats their freedom to implement their duties without disturbance

from the host country. On the same lines, Dar stressed to German authorities to take necessary measures to detain those involved in the incident. The demonstration took place to showcase the complaints against Pakistan's military and intelligence which were accused of multi-story residential building killing the "critics and political opponents." According to the Frankfurt police, they had evacuated the protestors and clamped down on the protests. ("Pakistan complains over flag removal at Frankfurt consulate," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 July 2024)

Australia and the European countries commemorate 10 years MH17 flight

On 17 July, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of MH17, the Malaysia Airlines flight by Australia and the EU. Ceremonies in the EU were near Amsterdam's Schipol Airport, where the plane took off. Out of 283 passengers and 15 crew killed in the plane crash, 193 were from the Netherlands. In Australia, a memorial was conducted in the Parliament House's Great Hall for the 29 dead Australians in the plane crash. Peter Hutton, Albania's opposition party's leader condemned Russia for providing Ukrainian rebels the firepower to shoot down the plane, citing a foreign investigation. The EU also called on Russia to accept the responsibility for the plane crash. MH17, which took off from the Amsterdam airport on 17 July 2014 was allegedly shot down when it reached the eastern Donetsk oblast, by the Ukrainians with Russian support according to foreign investigations. ("Australia, Netherlands lead MH17 commemorations, 10 years on," *Deutsche Welle*, 17 July 2024)

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