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UKRAINE KURSK OFFENSIVE

What does Kyiv want?



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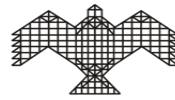
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Europe Monitor

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Image Source: Reuters/Suzanne Plunkett

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Source: Alberto Pezzali/AP Photo, Kostas Pikoulas/IMAGO, AFP, Finnbar Webster, Cesar Manso/AFP, Alexandros Avramidis/Reuters

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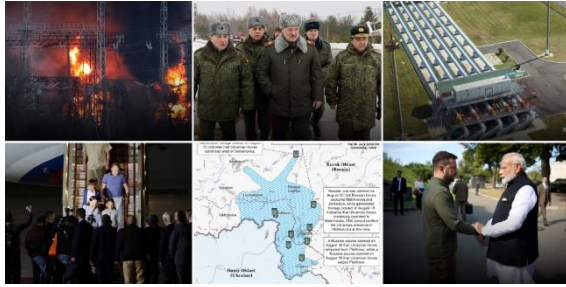
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WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES

By Padmashree Anandhan and Neha Tresa George



Source: Reuters, The Atlantic Council, RBC-Ukraine, President.gov.ua, Institute for the Study of War, Sputnik/Gavriil Grigorov/Pool via REUTERS

The War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 917 to Day 889 in four dimensions. First, The War on the Ground. Second, The Moscow View: Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War in Ukraine.

EM DAILY BRIEF

By Samruddhi Pathak, Neha Tresa George and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: EPA/ Politico, theparliamentmagazine.eu, Augustin Mudiayi/Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières via AP, Fabrizio Bensch/REUTERS, Associated Press, Associated Press

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

Ukraine's Kursk Offensive: What does Kyiv want to achieve?

By Padmashree Anandhan

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

On 06 August, the Ukrainian forces began the counter-offensive into the Kursk Oblast. Russian forces were the first to report the fighting in the districts of Kursk. According to the report from Aleksey Smirnov, Kursk's acting governor, Ukrainian forces breached the Kursk border using armoured vehicles and explosives. In response, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President condemned the incursion and declared an emergency, at the federal and district level in the Kursk and Belgorod oblasts.

On 12 August, Putin stated the objective of Ukraine in the Kursk operation was to create a diversion from the Donbas. While the Ukrainian military later in August revealed the creation of a "buffer zone" after progressing 1,294 square kilometers as its objective.

On 27 August, Ukraine's armed forces stated that the objective of the Kursk cross-border offensive was to redirect Russian forces from "the Pokrovsk and Kurakhove directions." However, Putin denied on Kursk offensive affecting its eastern offensive.

What is the significance of the Kursk oblast?

Bryansk, Kursk and Belgorod Oblasts are the bordering districts of Ukraine and Russia in the east. Belgorod has been subject to shelling and minor incursions by separatist groups which Russia has managed to deter. In the case of Bryansk Oblast, Ukraine had launched a few drone attacks in July which were also prevented by Russian air defences. This left Kursk to be the possible target. Another factor is the presence of the Russian army's "Sever" operational group, which has been fighting in northern Kharkiv since May.

The Ukrainian forces efforts to pressure the "Sever" troops out of Kharkiv and Vovchansk to create space for Ukraine's brigades was a failure. This was one of the reasons why Ukrainian intelligence identified a vulnerable border area of Russia and its target.

Why did Ukraine launch a cross-border attack?

Engaging two brigades, mechanised and air assault in launching attacks into Russia while maintaining defence on home ground could be viewed as Ukraine's showcasing move. In contrast with the 2023 failed spring counteroffensive of Ukraine, the brigades appeared well-experienced and trained for the operation. The nature of attack which used mechanised forces with high level mobility was also another advantage helping in quick advance. Both combined with the set of advanced air defence capabilities which had lacked in previous counteroffensives boosted Ukraine's chance of advancing deeper. In the past three months, the Russian offensive has targeted North-western Kharkiv, Northern Sumy and Chasiv Yar in the eastern Donbas. Since Russia's eastern Ukraine offensive, Ukraine has been able to only defend strongly without a chance to repel. More specifically, since the November 2022 Kherson counteroffensive, Ukraine does not have a record of capturing back the Russian-occupied areas. Kursk is one of the key locations for gas supply neither holds Russian brigades nor communication hubs. What makes it important is a tactical advantage for Ukraine's military to launch deeper missile and drone attacks in Russia. This can be evidenced by the attacks across Bryansk, oil refineries in Moscow and

increased drone launches into Belgorod. Comparing the three bordering regions, both Bryansk and Belgorod have been well defended by Russia through its instant counterattacks on launched Ukrainian missiles leaving Kursk the likely target.

“Russia deterring Ukrainian forces from advancing in Kursk may be the tactical objective but the strategic priority remains on advancing in eastern Ukraine and capturing the larger Donetsk.”

How has Russia responded?

Russian forces in the initial stage of incursion showed no strong defence to counter Ukrainian troops since there were no strong forces deployed. Although in response, it quickly redeployed troops, and aerial weapon systems and carried out evacuations. The Ukrainian forces advance has now slowed down but the larger problem for Russia is deterring the deeper drone and missile attacks by Ukraine. The recent advances of Russia toward Pokrovsk, which is 40 kilometres from Avdiivka (last captured by Russia) and the nearby Myrnohrad are the last remaining towns in Donetsk under Ukraine. Following the win in the battle for Avidiivka, Pokrovsk and Chasiv Yar were the next targets for Russian forces.

Despite the relocation and shifting of weapons and resources to combat the Kursk incursion, Russia spearheads its advance to capture Pokrovsk. While Ukraine was observed to have moved its troops (20,000) from Novohrodivka town to improve its defence in Pokrovsk. Therefore, for Russia deterring Ukrainian forces from advancing in Kursk may be the tactical objective but the strategic priority remains on advancing in eastern Ukraine and capturing the larger Donetsk.

What has been the West response?

Initially, when Ukraine invaded Russia’s Kursk border, there were ambiguous reactions among the US and European allies. The US White House stated that it was unaware of the objectives of the cross-border attack. Later the EU and NATO expressed their support in defence of Ukraine. The larger muffled debate is the usage of west-supplied weapons inside Russian territory which was overall objected across the US and Europe. However, this limitation no longer exists for Ukrainian forces. This compromise has helped the Ukrainian military to defend its ground and expand its strikes further into Russia.

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COMMENT

EU-China clash over EV tariffs: China's emergence and EU's protectionism

By Samruddhi Pathak

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

On 09 August, China made an appeal in the WTO against the EV tariffs imposed by the EU. The spokesperson of China's Commerce Ministry said that it goes against Chinese efforts "to preserve global green transformation." It resorted to WTO's dispute settlement mechanism. China spokesperson stated that the tariffs lack any legal or factual base. China said that the imposed duties lack legal or factual basis. China has argued in the WTO that under Article 30 of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM), the procedural measures of the EU investigation are inconsistent. According to the appeal, the investigation "failed to demonstrate the financial institutions that provided preferential funding" and "calculate the alleged benefit." Thus, there is no causal relationship and no exact amount has been established.

Europe's response

On 03 July, the European Commission published a regulatory document that imposed new duties on battery electric vehicles (EVs) imported from China. The regulation imposed duty on Chinese EV making companies, BYD (17.4 per cent), Geely (20 per cent) and SAIC (38.1 per cent). These are provisional countervailing duties which will be imposed, initially for five years. These duties were imposed after some samples of the EVs were tested. The EU stated that it "relied on a variety of Chinese EV models available in the market" and it "considered the selection of above three mentioned companies as the most representative volume." The methodology used was based on questionnaires with employees and visits by auditors to assess the selling price of EVs and approximate subsidies received by the company. For

companies whose samples were not tested will be subject to average duty of 20 per cent and the companies that did not cooperate in the entire process have been subjected to duty of 38.1 per cent. The justification provided by the Commission is that the EV value chain in China benefits unfairly from subsidies provided by the PRC Government. The conclusion was drawn based on the questionnaires, estimated cost of production, estimated subsidies received and selling price of the EV. Ultimately, the dispute is about Chinese EV makers having an unfair advantage over European EV makers due to government subsidies, which China denies. Although the regulation was released on 03 July, it states that the duties apply to all Chinese-made EVs registered after 07 March implying that EV makers will have to pay duties on backdated imports as well.

China's emergence in the EV market China's enormous contribution has been developing since 2021. China accounted for 60 per cent of global sales of EVs in 2023, an increase of four per cent from 2022. The sales in the EU, China accounted for 21.7 per cent of all EV sales in 2023, including Tesla and other EU brands of EVs that are manufactured in China. The increase is drastic compared to three per cent in 2020.

In China, almost 60 per cent of EVs are expected to be cheaper than their combustion engine equivalent while in the US and EU, combustion engine cars remain a cheaper option for customers. The PRC government introduced a 'dual-credit system' for EV makers in 2018, tax rebates for EV buyers, elimination of 10 per cent sales tax, direct funding for constructing charging poles and promotion of Research &

Development in green technology. Above all, the government is the biggest buyer of domestic EVs which ensures manufacturers a fixed sale of their product. In 2022, the EV sector received loans at two per cent interest. There are a total of 200 EV manufacturing companies in China and their production capacity is much bigger than the size of their domestic market.

EU's protectionism

On 08 May, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the EU, stated that China is 'flooding' their market with cheap EVs. The EU had initiated an anti-subsidy investigation against Chinese made EVs in 2023. On 08 June 2016, the European Parliament passed a regulation that would provide their domestic industry protection against subsidised goods imported from non-EU countries. The notice published on 03 July stated that the Chinese EV industry is causing "injury to the Union EV industry."

A deep public-private coherence is depicted through the notice. The EU provided full immunity to European manufacturers and suppliers involved in the complaint. The statement said that "anonymity was extended to all Union producers." However, similar anonymity was not given to Chinese companies. Moreover, the EU is also providing leeway to Tesla and Volkswagen from the duties when both companies manufacture their cars in China. The EU considers China's industrial overcapacity as a key concern for EU-China trade. Meanwhile, China has accused the EU of "foul play" and contested its tariffs at the WTO.

The EU is an important market for EV makers as its size is expected to reach USD 145 billion in 2024 and is expected to increase by 12.5 per cent by 2028. Since 2022, the EV market has been inflating. The first quarter of 2024 saw an increase of 25 per cent in EV sales compared to the first quarter of 2023. Similarly, in 2022 the sales

were higher by 25 per cent. EVs are projected to have a 20 per cent share in total sales of vehicles globally. China is expected to have a market share of 45 per cent in EV global sales, Europe with 25 per cent and the US with 11 per cent.

Chinese manufacturers have said that they will continue to trade with the EU. BYD, China's top-selling EV maker, has also started building a plant in Hungary. Chinese EV companies are also partnering with EU EV companies to lower the costs. Chinese EV companies are also planning to assemble EVs in Europe. These partnerships might lead to the lowering of tariffs. Although the exports will fall, even in July Chinese EV exports to the EU fell by 45 per cent compared to June.

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COMMENT

Poland launches EagleEye Satellite: What are its space ambitions

By Advik S Mohan

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

On 19 August, the Polish Space Agency (POLSA) announced the successful launch of its largest and most technologically advanced EagleEye satellite. It was the first satellite built and designed in Poland weighing over 50 kilograms which aims to provide high-resolution satellite images of the Earth from space. Grzegorz Brona, the Chief Executive Officer of Creotech said that the EagleEye project would be a significant milestone in the Polish space sector contributing to job growth and advancement.

How did Poland's space missions evolve?

Poland's space missions began during the communist era under the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The Interkosmos space programme of the USSR involved crewed missions to space from pro-Soviet states, and Miroslaw Hermaszewski became the first Polish national to go to space in 1978. Hermaszewski remains the only Polish national to go to space so far. In 1973, Poland independently launched into orbit machines for measuring solar radiation from the Kopernik 500 spacecraft. In 1976, the Polish Academy of Sciences launched the Space Research Centre to advance space technologies and exploration from the Polish perspective. After the fall of communism, the scope for space cooperation expanded for Poland. A cooperation agreement on the peaceful usage of outer space was signed between the Government of Poland and the European Space Agency (ESA) in 1994. The Plan for European Cooperating States (PECS) was signed in 2007; improving the financing for research institutions, universities, and enterprises in Poland. The increasing partnerships with the ESA allowed Polish-made equipment like satellites to be utilised in ESA research missions. As of 2012, 73

Polish-made instruments had been launched into space.

The increasing collaboration with the ESA also propelled Polish agencies to increase their expertise. In 2012, the first Polish-made satellite "PW-Sat" was launched by students from the Warsaw University of Technology. Later, the Space Research Centre launched two nanosatellites into orbit; namely Lem and Heweliusz as a part of the Bright Star Target Explorer (BRITE) programme in collaboration with Austria and Canada. A significant step towards building Poland's space industry was taken in 2014, when the Polish Sejm, the lower house of the Parliament passed an act establishing the Polish Space Agency (POLSA). The Polish government intended to increase its presence in space through POLSA to serve as a common platform for both the scientific and business communities. The creation of POLSA provided fresh impetus to the Polish space sector, allowing it to launch and coordinate missions independently without external support. For instance, POLSA signed an agreement with the Chinese National Space Administration (CNSA) in 2016; agreeing to coordinate the development of space technologies such as in telecommunication, usage, and exchange of satellite data to improve scientific knowledge on topics like the observation of climate change, and space research. However, plans by POLSA to launch a massive 420 million USD investment programme as part of a "National Space Program" alongside private entities failed, due to funding issues.

What is the significance?

The Indigeneity and low-cost factors of the satellite make it supreme for Poland's

national capabilities and give scope to further its design in small satellites. Poland known as the supplier of space technology and components, this satellite mission could be a turning point to portray it as a space power. The Space Research Centre (SRC) and POLSA jointly built the satellite by supplying the telescope computer and algorithms controlling the satellite. Creotech (Poland's manufacturer of satellite systems) built the satellite platform called "HyperSat" and Scanway (A US-Polish company in the field of optical payloads and space cameras) was responsible for the satellite's telescope. The HyperSat platform supports satellites weighing up to 200 kilograms and can be customised, based on specific customer requirements. The EagleEye mission will place the satellite at a Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO). This allows the satellite to reach an altitude of 300-350 kilometres, where it will be tested to see how it can be operated and can improve the quality of Earth imaging. The mission is also an example of the scientific and business sectors collaboration which can be seen from businesses like Creotech and Scanway. Grzegorz Brona, the CEO of Creotech said, "We are opening the door for domestic entities to the rapidly growing and profitable market of designing, building, integrating, and launching small satellites weighing more than 50 kg."

"The increasing collaboration with the ESA also propelled Polish agencies to increase their expertise."

What are POLSA's space ambitions?

Poland's space sector is set to advance further in the future. On 29 August 2023, the Ministry of Development and Technology of Poland and the ESA signed two agreements; promising to aid in the further development of the Polish space sector through greater investments for enhancing the competitiveness of the space sector and producing space specialities, alongside providing internships for Polish graduates from space policy majors to help refine the skills of domestic entrepreneurs. It was also decided that a Polish astronaut would take part in a mission to the International Space

Station (ISS) in 2025, with Slawosz Uznanski chosen for the purpose. Additionally, Warsaw is developing observation satellites jointly with the ESA, as a part of the Camila mission. This mission involves four high-resolution satellites intended for civilian use and expected to be launched in 2027, as well as two satellites for defence and security to be launched in 2028. Since the construction and design of the satellites will be undertaken primarily by Polish companies, it is expected to provide them with the required funding and technical expertise for conducting more missions in the future. According to Marek Wilgucki, Chief Executive of the Four Point startup which focuses on mining industry satellite surveillance, the Polish space industry requires more involvement and funding from the private sector. Poland which has limited space operability among the EU countries presents a success model to use technical skill and technology resources to advance space exploration.

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COMMENT

Attack on Nord Stream: Two years later

By Neha Tresa George

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

What did the media reports say?

Two years after the Nord Stream 1&2 pipelines attack, the geopolitical repercussions remain to be settled. The underwater blasts occurred on 26 September 2022 disabling the pipelines thereby cutting down the transit of Russian gas for Germany and other European countries. The investigations held by Sweden and Denmark were inconclusive making Germany responsible for responding. The issue resurfaced when reports emerged from *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Wall Street Journal* on the possible involvement of "Ukrainian divers" with support from Kyiv officials in the sabotage. These claims were denied by Ukraine. Following this, on 14 August, Germany issued an arrest warrant against a Ukrainian living in Poland. The suspect was identified as Volodymyr Z accused of sabotaging Nord Stream pipelines that connected Russia and Western European countries, especially Germany, through the Baltic Sea. According to the Polish authorities, the man had escaped from Poland and away from the EU after the arrest was issued in June. They condemned Germany's inactions as the accused was not listed as a wanted person in the Schengen register.

On 16 August, August Hanning, Germany's former intelligence chief indicated Poland's alleged involvement in the blast. In response, Krzysztof Gawkowski, Polish deputy prime minister said: "Poland did not take part in anything." On the same day, Sergei Ryabkov Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia said: "Our assumption was that the US and several NATO allies were involved in this disgusting crime." In the past two years, Russia has accused the British navy specialists and the US of planning and implementing the attack. On 19 August, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister accused the US of their

alleged involvement in the sabotage.

What/ Where is the Nord Stream and its strategic importance?

The Nord Stream pipelines were 1,224-kilometre offshore natural gas pipelines connecting Russia and Western European countries. It was built by Russia's state-controlled Gazprom and ran under the Baltic Sea, starting from Vyborg in Russia to Lubmin near Greifswald in Germany. It crossed the Exclusive Economic Zones of Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany and the territorial waters of Russia, Denmark, and Germany. It was set up by Gazprom, Ruhrgas and BASF/Wintershall in 2005. It comprised two separate projects- Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2. The first pipeline was completed in 2011. However, the construction of the second pipeline was delayed by sanctions and debates over the increased Russian dominance in the EU markets. Although it was completed in 2021, the certification of the pipeline was deterred by Germany amidst the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent republics.

The inauguration of Nord Stream 1 in 2011 marked the beginning of a safe and sustainable relationship between Russia and the EU. It was the first pipeline to create a direct link between Russia and Western European countries bypassing the traditional transit routes through Ukraine, Belarus and Poland which were unreliable according to Russia. Since both sides were gaining profits equally, Germany had entrusted Russia as the long-term supplier. The UK was also keen on the Baltic Sea Pipeline and the cheap Russian gas. Therefore, they signed a "bilateral energy pact" with Russia to extend a set of pipelines through Germany and the Netherlands towards the North Sea. Apart from acting as a key to the Russia-EU partnership, it was

also a reliable and cheap gas resource. Bovananenkovo oil and gas condensate deposits were the main natural gas base for the Nord Stream Pipeline. The pipes could transport 55 billion cubic metres, supplying energy to around 26 million households. Russia's cheap gas exports, found their place in the EU market, with their overall share climbing from 31 per cent in 2010 to 40 per cent in 2016.

What happened on 26 September 2022 and since then?

On 26 September 2022, several leaks were found in three of the four gas lines running east of the Danish Island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea. Seismic institutes also recorded some underwater explosions 17 hours apart. Initial estimates revealed that a total of 500 million cubic meters of gas was lost. On further investigation, authorities concluded the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines to be "sabotaged." The leakage stopped only after several days. Sweden, Denmark and Germany took up investigations. However, in February 2024, both authorities of Sweden and Denmark ended the investigations, unlike Germany. They cited "lack of jurisdiction" and "complications" as reasons for halting the investigations, however found no evidence of its citizens being involved. Denmark acknowledged the occurrence of sabotage. It found traces of explosives near the pipelines thus concluding the explosion was a "deliberate act." In 2023, four Nordic public broadcasters published an investigative report indicating Russia's involvement in the blast. Moscow denied the claims while accusing the US and the UK. In the same year, US intelligence officials had suspected a pro-Ukrainian group for planning the attack which Ukraine denied. German media outlets ARD, Süddeutsche Zeitung and Die Zeit revealed the involvement of Volodymyr Z., a diver who allegedly dived 80 metres down and placed the explosives. It also suspects two other Ukrainian diving instructors, Svitlana and Yevhen Uspenska, although no arrest warrants were issued. In July, Germany affirmed that its investigators had raided a sailing yacht used to transfer the explosives to the pipelines. They found traces of an octagon in the yacht, the same found at the blast site. However, there was no evidence of

the involvement of the Ukrainian government according to the German officials. Meanwhile, the *Wall Street Journal* contacted four senior Ukrainian defence and security officials directly or indirectly involved in the act. According to the report, the scheme which cost around USD 300,000 had a six-member crew on board the yacht. The plan initially approved by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President was dropped after the CIA, the US intelligence agency demanded him to stop. However, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the then-military general moved forward with the operation as they believed the pipelines to be a legitimate target in their defence against Russia. Zaluzhnyi, now Ukraine's ambassador to the UK called the allegations as a "mere provocation" and denied his involvement.

The explosions and the investigations that followed led to a blame game between the countries. Denmark, Germany and Sweden did not find any "state participation" in their investigations except the *Wall Street Journal* which blamed Ukraine. The investigations so far could only trace the involvement of Volodymyr Z without a substantial conclusion.

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EM Daily Focus*



Source: Alberto Pezzali/AP Photo, Kostas Pikoulas/IMAGO, AFP, Finnbarr Webster, Cesar Manso/AFP, Alexandros Avramidis/Reuters

THE EU

WHO declares Mpxv a global health emergency; Europe and Africa to collaborate

By Advik S Mohan

On 14 August, *Euronews* informed that the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared the Mpxv outbreak in Africa as a global health emergency. According to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, the detection of a new and more dangerous Mpxv variant poses a significant global threat. The organization has stated that it requires 15 million USD to support Africa's Mpxv response. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the epicentre of the current outbreak, with the new strain spreading through close and sexual contact. Over 14,000 cases and over 500 deaths related to Mpxv have been reported across Africa in 2024, considered to be an undercount due to lack of testing. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have also declared Mpxv to be a continental public health emergency, and the fear is that the disease could further

spread due to poor health infrastructure and limited manufacturing capability in Africa. The European Commission's pandemic preparedness group and Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic have promised to send vaccine shots to Africa, which the CDC says will be given based on the extent of the outbreak in a country and risk-levels for vulnerable groups like pregnant women. The WHO has also requested countries and international groups to donate shots from their own stockpiles. African and European health authorities are working together to expand Mpxv testing and tracking in Africa, with the European Commission expected to invest EUR 3.5 million. The present outbreak comes over two years after a similar public health emergency was declared in July 2022.

On 15 August, *Euronews* published a public health guide to the Mpxv virus, which is spreading again. Mpxv, formerly known as monkeypox was first detected in monkeys utilized for research, but human cases have been common too. The virus is endemic to central and western Africa. The virus has two variants; the more severe Clade I and

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Clade II. However, a new variant named clade I spreading through sexual networks has sparked concern. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDCs) stated that suspected Mpox cases in Africa this year have crossed 17,000, with the number believed to be an undercount due to limited testing. Symptoms of Mpox include rashes on multiple parts of the body which resemble pimples or blisters, fever, headache, chills, muscle and back pain etc. according to public health authorities. Close contact with an infected person especially sexual contact is how the virus commonly spreads, although direct contact with infected wild animals is also a method through which it spreads. Jaime Garcia-Iglesias, a chancellor's fellow at the Centre for Biomedicine, Self and Society at the University of Edinburgh hailed the World Health Organization (WHO)'s declaration of Mpox as an emergency, stating it would galvanize governmental action and provide increased funding for research and diagnostics. Garcia-Iglesias emphasized on the need for proper public health messaging regarding the virus, deeming governmental engagement with community organizations as essential. Experts have also urged governments not to hoard vaccines.

Regional response

Denmark

On 15 August, Paul Chaplin, CEO of Danish biotechnology company Bavarian Nordic said that 10 million Mpox vaccine doses can be provided by the end of 2025. Chaplin said in remarks to Bloomberg: "We have inventory and we have the capabilities, What we're missing are the orders." The remarks come as African nations deal with a fresh outbreak of the Mpox virus, which has been declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO). The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) stated that 10 million doses are required to deal with the outbreak. Bavarian Nordic and the European Commission have donated over 200,000 doses to Africa, and Chaplin stated that 300,000 more doses are ready for immediate shipment. In preparation for a potential outbreak, several European countries hold Mpox vaccine stockpiles. The European Union had signed a contract for

two million vaccine doses in November 2022, while the US Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) ordered Bavarian Nordic to refill its vaccine stocks.

Sweden

On 15 August, Sweden reported a case of the more severe clade I variant of Mpox. The Public Health Agency of Sweden stated that the variant was diagnosed in an individual who was in Stockholm after being infected in a virus-affected area of Africa. According to the Agency, this is the first case of the more severe clade I variant being detected outside Africa. However, the agency said that the patient's treatment "does not affect the risk to the general population." The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared Mpox as a public health emergency of international concern, for the second time in the past two years. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has called for a coordinated international response to stop the outbreaks and save lives.

The UK

On 15 August, the *BBC* informed that UK health chiefs were making plans to deal with a potential Mpox virus outbreak in the country, despite a low risk. Mpox has been declared as a global health emergency, and healthcare workers in the UK are being made aware of the virus symptoms and the need for rapid testing. There are no confirmed cases of the Clade 1b variant of Mpox in the UK, but experts are warning that cases could spread. Deputy director at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) informed that plans to prepare for cases were underway, including ensuring that clinicians can recognize cases promptly, rapid testing is available and protocols are developed for treating infected patients and preventing onward transmission. Children, people with weak immune systems, and pregnant women are at higher risk of Mpox. The UK had witnessed a large outbreak in May 2022, curbed through large-scale vaccination. In 2024, 239 Mpox cases have been reported in the UK up till July. 225 of these are in England, with 98 patients presumed to have been infected in the UK and 74 outside.

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CYPRUS

Cyprus remembers the 50th anniversary of the Turkish invasion

By Neha Tresa George

On 21 July, Cyprus marked the 50th year of the Turkish invasion which divided it along ethnic lines. The island is divided into two parts: the internationally recognized Cyprus in the southern region composed of the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) composed of the Turkish Cypriots. Southern Cyprus mourned for those who died in the 1974 invasion and hoped for the reunification of the Republic of Cyprus during the ceremony to remember the Turkish invasion of 1974. According to Nikos Christodoulides, the President of the Greek-held, internationally recognized Cyprus, the sole solution to the crisis on the island is: "A Republic of Cyprus with a single sovereignty." In a speech by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President of Turkey rejected the idea of a federal solution to the island and called for international recognition of the Turkey-led Northern Cyprus in his speech. He also expressed his opinion: "The Cyprus Peace Operation saved Turkish Cypriots from cruelty in 1974."

Historical overview

Between 1500 to 1800s, Cyprus had been ruled by the Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Arabs, Knights Templar, Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans and the British. In 1821, The Greek War of Independence sparked Greek nationalism in Cyprus which paved the way for the Greek Cypriot demand for enosis – the island's union with Greece. The Turkish Cypriots being the co-inhabitants were against the annexation to Greece as they sought an equal say over the

question of the island's sovereignty. As a result, in the 1930s the relations between the communities deteriorated during the British. In 1959, the London and Zurich agreements between Britain, Turkey and Greece created the partner Republic of 1960, a bi-communal state based on the partnership between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots. The constitution was designed to function as a federation. Communal affairs, such as birth, death, marriage, education, culture, sporting foundations and associations, some municipal duties as well as taxes, were managed separately by the administrations of each community. The harmony which lasted for three years was followed by an intercommunal conflict in 1963 between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots due to the initiation of Akritas plan. It was put forward in "Thirteen Points" which amended the constitution by reducing the rights and status of the Turkish Cypriots to that of a minority. As a result, they were expelled from the partnership Republic of 1960 which led them to create the Cyprus Turkish Administration on 21 December 1971. The Greek military along with Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston (EOKA), the extremist group of the Greek-led Cyprus conducted a coup d'état to achieve enosis (union of the island with Greece). This was followed by the invasion of Turkey in 1974. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey, was formed at the end of 1983.

Ethnic divide

Cyprus consists of two ethnicities- the Turkish Cypriots numbering about 200,000 and the Greek Cypriots numbering about 700,000. Both communities lived peacefully until the Greek War of Independence in 1821. Greek nationalism during British rule was characterised by violent campaigns that attempted to annex the Island to Greece. Nevertheless, the 1960 Republic of Cyprus, respecting the existence of both communities, was created at the end of British rule. The Thirteen Points (constitutional amendment) initiated by the Greek Cypriots further aggravated the disagreements between them and resulted in Turkish Cypriots forcefully living in small, congested enclaves in the wake of communal

violence. The Turkish invasion following the coup d'état to achieve enosis was marked by large-scale violence and displacement. Around 40 per cent of Greek Cypriots were pushed to the south of the island and one-third of the island was conquered. Thousands from both communities were killed. The invasion led to the physical division of the line through the Green Line and also resulted in the creation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Present state of the Island

Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, remains to be the world's last divided capital. The Republic of Cyprus led by the current President Nikos Christodoulides is internationally recognized by the UN and the rest of the world. The Turkish Cypriots condemn it as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is solely recognized by Turkey which makes it a complex political issue. The existence of two distinct cultures and traditions makes it further difficult to attain integration. The communities also blame each other for the massacres that led to the loss of lives of thousands of Cypriots. More than 750 Greek Cypriots and almost 200 Turkish Cypriots remain missing. While the Greek Cypriots seek reunification as the prime solution for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the Turkish Cypriots have always rejected the idea, on claims that it would undermine their rights in the territory.

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GREECE

Cyprus remembers the 50th anniversary of the Turkish invasion

By Advik S Mohan

Where did the wildfires occur?

On 11 August, a wildfire broke out in

Varnavas, a town in Greece, located 35 kilometres to the northeast of the Athens. The wildfires spread through the forests quickly and reached the suburbs. Athens was surrounded by flames up to 25 metres and thousands of residents were evacuated from hospitals, monasteries, and children's home. Within Athens, suburbs like Nea Penteli and Vrilissia were among the worst affected. At least 100 homes reportedly suffered damage, while satellite images by the National Observatory of Athens showed the fire had damaged about 10,000 hectares of land. Apart from Athens, surrounding towns like Grammatiko, Marathon, and Nea Makri were also affected by the fires.

In response to the fires, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of Greece announced the highest possible red alert. To combat, the Government sent over 760 firefighters, at least 16 teams of forest commandos and vehicles, 17 aeroplanes, and 15 helicopters. Additionally, the Hellenic Army, the armed forces of Greece, and several volunteers also helped in tackling the fires. By 13 August, through the efforts, the wildfires were reduced to only a few areas. Several European countries assisted the Greek government through the European Civil Protection Mechanism. This includes, Romania, Italy, France, Cyprus, and Czechia which planned to send firefighters and aircraft to help Greece tackle the fires. The Mitsotakis administration also offered several relief measures for victims; including interest-free loans to rebuild homes with no property tax for three years, a support payment of EUR 10,000 and business owners relieved from tax payments for six months.

Why do the wildfires recur?

Greece is no stranger to wildfires, it has become increasingly common in the past years. In 2023, Greece witnessed wildfires that left at least 28 people dead and burned a total of 1800 square kilometres. It was also the longest heatwave in Greece's history which lasted up to 17 days, with temperatures crossing 43 degrees Celsius. Greece's position in the Mediterranean, is one of the fastest warming regions making it particularly vulnerable to extreme heat. Christos Zerefos, a Greek geologist and

Secretary-General at the research establishment, the Academy of Athens stated that Greece being close to Africa allows hot, dust-bearing winds called 'Sirocco' or 'Khamsin' to make their way from across the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea towards Greece. According to Zerefos, these dry winds cause the local vegetation to dry up, increasing the likelihood of fires occurring. He believes that another factor hampering Greece's responses to crises is its geography as an archipelago of islands. The islands have different ecosystems of their own, and differ in terms of infrastructure levels; which makes a unified response difficult.

Another problem attributed to the increasing forest fires has been the rapid expansion of residential areas. Natural habitats like forests have witnessed growing human settlements and encroachments, with cities expanding more. For instance, several suburbs in Athens were located close to the pine forest area, meaning that the residents in those suburbs were at direct risk from the fires. Excessive immigration to cities in Greece has also resulted in lower populations living in forested areas, meaning that excess biomass or organic material from the forests can no longer be removed by individuals as it was before. This has allowed branches, twigs, and bushes to accumulate, and become a source of ignition during wildfires.

What has been the government response?

The Greek government has taken several steps to deal with the problem of wildfires. One of these is the creation of the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection. Another step taken by the Greek government is providing companies with carbon credits as an incentive to remove extra biomass from the forests. Similarly, causing a forest fire was declared a criminal offence. The Greek government has also planned early warning and intervention signs for wildfires like placing temperature measurement sensors and cameras in high-risk forests, greater firefighter recruitment, and reforestation helping build caution mechanisms. However, the critics argue that the country still lacks a proper plan to tackle the issue. According to them, initiatives such as the opting support

of the local communities to tackle wildfires by coordinating preparedness and removing flammable materials from forests remain as mere regulations rather than being implemented.

The government measures to tackle Greece's wildfires have proven to be substantial for temporary while devastating wildfires recur consequently causing damage to citizens and the environment. There is a need for a governmental plan to tackle the problem for long-term and it is essential to implement a sustainable plan to control the wildfires and prevent frequent evacuation.

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SPAIN

A Catalan leader's visit to Spain creates a problem: Who is Carles Puigdemont? And what is the issue over his visit?

By Neha Tresa George

On 08 August, Carles Puigdemont, a former Catalan separatist leader currently in a self-declared exile in Belgium visited Barcelona. In his speech, he condemned the Spanish

judges for derailing his right to speak and vote. His return was after seven years, in his speech, he said: "We have been persecuted for years, and we are subjected to repression that has affected thousands of people for being pro-independence. Being Catalan has become something suspicious." Mossos d'Esquadra, the regional police in Catalonia had planned for his arrest after the speech at the parliament building but eventually failed. He escaped through the crowd allegedly with the help of Catalan officers. A day later, he posted on the social media platform X that he was back in Belgium after "difficult days."

After his escape, the police launched "Operation Cage" by causing roadblocks and traffic jams up to the French border to locate him. The two Catalan officers accused of assisting the escape were arrested. Pablo Llarena, a judge of Spain's Supreme Court demanded an explanation from the Barcelona police on his escape and arrival back in Belgium.

Alberto Núñez Feijóo, the opposition-Spanish Peoples Party's leader accused Pedro Sanchez, Spain's Prime Minister of the incident. He referred to it as an "unbearable humiliation" and asked for the resignation of Fernando Grande-Marlaska and Margarita Robles, the Interior Minister and Intelligence Chief of Spain.

Who is Carles Puigdemont? And what is the issue over his visit?

Carles Puigdemont is a separatist leader and former president of Catalonia who led the independence referendum in 2017 to separate the region from Spain. As the President, he approved laws for conducting the referendum for the provision of a legal framework that would supersede the Spanish constitution. It was conducted despite the suspension of laws by the Constitutional Court of Spain. On 27 October 2017, he declared unilateral independence from Spain after the majority of Catalans voted for separation. This was followed by the dismissal of Puigdemont's government and the imposition of direct rule from Spain. He faces arrest warrants from Spain on charges of rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds during the referendum. During

the Catalonia elections in May 2024, Sanchez withdrew the legal proceedings through the Amnesty bill but not the arrest warrant. His political party, JuntsxCat supports and remains popular among the pro-Catalan supporters of independence.

After the parliamentary elections of July 2023, Sanchez's government needed the support of Puigdemont's party, JuntsxCat to remain in power for another term. This led to the passage of the controversial amnesty bill granting pardons to accused Catalan leaders for their part in the 2017 referendum. JuntsxCat also threatened to withdraw their support as some felt Puigdemont was denied his "political rights." The Spanish government managed to maintain the coalition and appoint Salvador Illa as the new President of Catalonia. Under the deal between the prime minister's socialists and the leftist separatist ERC (Catalan Republican Left) party, Sanchez has promised an economic powerhouse larger than Portugal or Finland, independence on fiscal matters, with no tax collection from Spain. However, the government faces a dilemma between the two groups that are instrumental in its survival; those against Puigdemont (mostly Spaniards) and the pro-Catalan supporters in Sanchez's party.

The incident could revive the spirit of the pro-independence movement and aggravate the already divided society. The two nationalist movements- Catalan and Spanish remain to be at odds. His return was welcomed by a large number of pro-independence Catalans who still consider him as President. They saw him as a ray of hope to bring the long-awaited independence from Spain. He was also protected by them in his attempt to evade the police. The loophole in the amnesty bill could invoke the possibility of protests by them against the Spanish government. Meanwhile, the Spaniards saw this as a threat to the existence of their nationhood and solidarity. Most of them oppose, Puigdemont, separatist leaders and movements.

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THE UK

Violence in the UK: Protests and Counter Protests on Immigrants

By Samruddhi Pathak

In the news

On 7 August, several counter-protesters and protesters against the riots gathered in the cities of London, Brighton, and Bristol in support of refugees. The gatherings were peaceful. The violent anti-immigrant protests which began on 30 July turned into riots on 4 August.

On 7 August, Prime Minister Keir Starmer stated: “I guarantee you [rioters] will regret taking part in this disorder whether directly or those whipping up this action online, and then running away themselves. This is not protest. It is organized, violent thuggery.”

On 6 August, the number of arrests surpassed 400, as per *Le Monde*. The riots spread across the UK and Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged to use full force against the rioters. The government deployed over 6,000 riot police across 30 locations. Starmer called a meeting with cabinet ministers and gave a speech calling rioters “right-wing thugs.”

Issues at large

First, background to the riots and counterprotests. The protests erupted when a teenager attacked three girls during a dance session in Southport. Later, false information was circulated that the attacker was an asylum-seeking Muslim teenager. The protests began in Southport turned into riots and expanded to the rest of the country in a week. Protests were also against the stagnant economy. The UK’s inflation

touched nine per cent in 2022. The prices of utilities have been rising but quality of living has been the same for more than a decade. Besides, people were angry at the government for housing the immigrants using taxpayers’ money. A week into the unrest, counter-protests began against the riots and the racial sentiments.

Second, the involvement of the right wing. The far-right parties including the English Defence League and UK Reform Party have been at the forefront of the riots. The leaders of these parties have been allegedly instigating anti-immigrant sentiments and xenophobia among people. Besides, the members of right-wing pressure groups including the Patriotic Alternative and British Movement were active in the riots.

Third, the disinformation campaign. Starmer blamed social media for propagating polarising content. False information incited violence and right-wing parties perpetuated it. A social media post that falsely claimed the attacker to be a Muslim refugee was widely circulated. This led to the widespread circulation of Islamophobic posts on social media. Meanwhile, there were no attempts to delete these posts or curb their circulation. This led to people protesting near mosques and sensitive areas.

Fourth, the government’s response. The government deployed police and provided them with riot gear. The government is adamant on curbing the riots and has made its position clear on anti-immigration sentiments. Municipalities announced community events for better assimilation of immigrants and solidarity against racism. The Prime Minister announced penalties on rioters for public property damage.

In perspective

The riots are unlikely to reach a boiling point. Besides, people are divided on the issue of xenophobia. Protesters encountered counter-protesters in many cities. Therefore, far-right protests do not represent the sentiments of the entire country. The number of counter-protesters have outnumbered protesters reflecting the consensus of the country.

The surveys by Ipsos and the European Social Survey have concluded that the majority of the British people perceive immigration positively. However, the riots have spread across the country. This reflects that the riots were deliberately instigated with political motives. However, the unrest does reflect a rise in extremism in British society.

Riots and Protests in the UK: A Week After

By Samruddhi Pathak

On 12 August, the UK's Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, cancelled his summer break due to public disorder that erupted four weeks after he assumed office. His spokesperson said: "We have seen de-escalation but the work is not over yet."

On 10 August, peaceful anti-racist rallies were organised across the country. At least 779 protesters were arrested for riots during the previous week. Starmer announced harsher punishments for rioters. He said: "Criminal law applies online as well as offline." On 9 August, police were heavily deployed with riot gear. Clashes between protestors and police in Liverpool injured several police officers.

On 8 August, anti-immigrant protesters faced counter-protesters in various cities. Counter-protesters outnumbered the protesters. Starmer called a Cobra meeting as a part of the emergency crisis response.

Issues at large

First, the state of protests. The anti-immigrant protest began on 29 July and turned into riots by 1 August. A week later, counterprotests erupted on 7 August. Thousands of counter-protesters gathered in London, Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Birmingham, Southampton and Dundee. The counter-protests were organised by several groups including the Asylum Links and the Monitoring Group which are organisations dedicated to welfare of refugees. The counter-protesters belonged to all age groups and were not limited to young people. The cities witnessed violent riots and anti-racist rallies. Most people in those

gatherings blamed the role of social media in radicalising the masses.

Second, the divide within the civil society on immigrants. The anti-immigrant protests and riots were organised by the right-wing groups. However, the majority of the UK population does not support the anti-immigrant sentiments. According to the European Social Survey, the UK population perceives immigration positively for their culture and economy. This was apparent in the civil society participation in the anti-riot protests. Human rights groups including Stand Up to Racism and Newham Monitoring Project had organised the anti-racist gatherings. However, the riots and the counter-protests reflect a divide in society on immigration issues.

Third, the state's response. Starmer and his government responded with a policy of no tolerance towards violence. Starmer called the rioters "right-wing thugs." The government took immediate action and deployed police to contain the riots. The government announced penalties for disturbing the public order and arrests of rioters. It deployed 6,000 special police officers.

In perspective

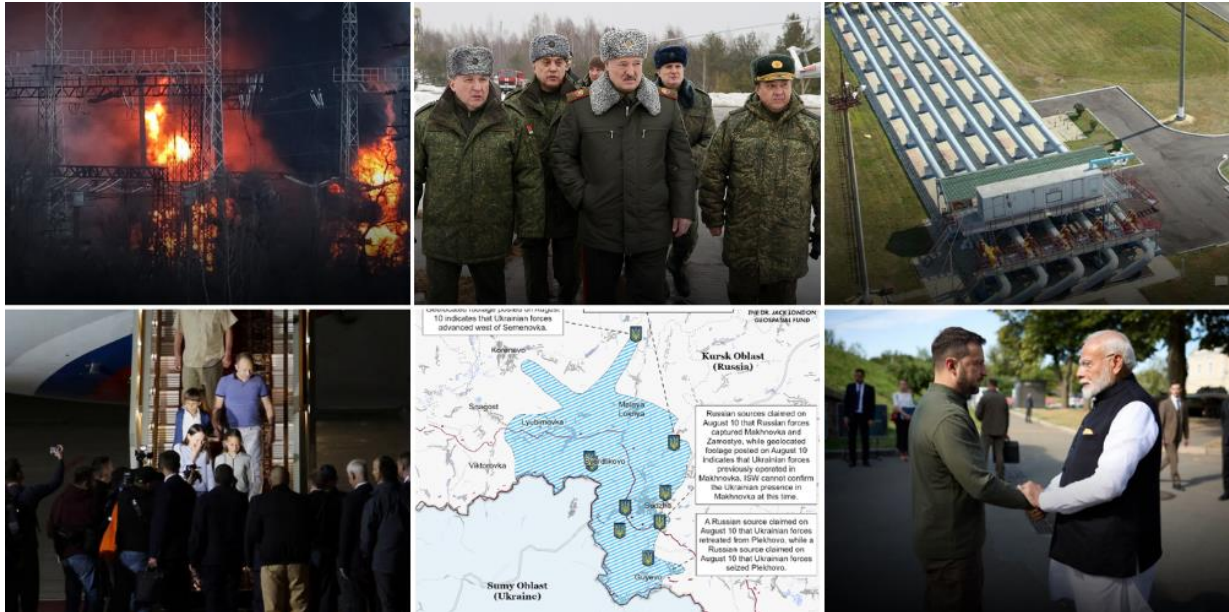
First, the de-escalation. Rioters were shunned by the public support for the immigrants. Besides, the government has announced harsh punishments for violence and riots. Heavy policing, the state's tough stance and public opinion have been the reasons for the de-escalation.

Second, the limited but extreme influence of right-wing ideology in UK society. Riots, although an extreme event, are not the first symptoms of the rise of far-right ideology. European society has been dealing with xenophobia. Antagonising immigration has been advocated by all governments through their policies of cutting down immigration.

Third, the racist sentiments. The issue has been resolved only on the surface in terms of responding to the riots. The UK will have to address the root causes and there are no easy solutions.

War in Ukraine: Daily Updates*

By Padmashree Anandhan and Neha Tresa George



Source: Reuters, The Atlantic Council, RBC-Ukraine, President.gov.ua, Institute for the Study of War, Sputnik/Gavriil Grigorov/Pool via REUTERS

War in Ukraine Day: 917

Ukraine reports mass drone attack across its energy infrastructure

War on the Ground:

On 27 August, *Politico* reported on Ukraine's successful testing of its first ballistic missile. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine confirmed the test, stating that it was "positive." The successful missile test comes after Ukraine successfully launched Palyanytsia, its first missile-drone. According to Zelenskyy, Ukraine largely lacks funds for large-scale domestic military production, making it dependent on the Western nations. However, in April, it had launched its "ZBROYARI" initiative, aiming to garner Western funding for domestic defence production.

On 27 August, *Politico* reported that the Armed Forces of Ukraine had captured 594 Russian prisoners of war (POWs) during their ongoing incursion into the Kursk region of Russia. Oleksandr Syrskyy,

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, disclosed the number; claiming that the surprise incursion into Kursk managed to distract a "significant number of Russian soldiers." Syrskyy stated that Ukrainian forces had succeeded in capturing over 1,294 square kilometres of territory and 100 settlements in Kursk, alongside the 594 POWs. He also added that the Kursk operation was a pre-emptive one to protect Ukraine and that 30,000 additional Russian soldiers had entered Kursk.

On 27 August, an article in *swissinfo.ch* reported on the death of six residents in an missile and drone attack on Ukraine by Russian forces. Regional officials in the city of Kryvyi Rih stated that three individuals had been killed by a missile strike that "wiped out" a hotel. Serhiy Lysak, Governor of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast which includes Kryvyi Rih informed via Telegram that five residents were injured and one was still missing. Separately, drone strikes on the city of Zaporizhzhia in southeastern Ukraine left

* 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.

three residents dead. Local authorities informed that three citizens were injured in the Zaporizhzhia region, alongside four individuals injured by a missile strike in Kharkiv Oblast. Zelenskyy promised to retaliate against Russia and requested Ukraine's allies to provide long-range capabilities and consider joint defence operations following a massive drone and missile attack on Ukrainian energy infrastructure by Russia. The Ukrainian Air Force stated it had shot down five out of ten incoming drones and 60 out of 81 drones.

On 26 August, a Reuters article reported that Russia had launched over 200 drones across Ukraine. According to officials from the Government of Ukraine, the attacks targeted critical infrastructure across Ukraine such as power facilities. Civilian facilities, hydropower plants and railway infrastructure facilities were among the infrastructure targeted during the attack, which resulted in power cuts and water supply shortages in many parts of Ukraine. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation informed that it had used high-precision weapons to strike important energy infrastructure in Ukraine such as power substations and aircraft weapon storage sites, that supported the military-industrial complex. Mykola Oleshchuk, Commander of the Ukrainian Air Force stated that the attack was the "most massive" of the entire war and informed that the air force had shot down 102 out of 127 incoming missiles and 99 out of 109 drones. Zelenskyy stated that the Ukrainian government was preparing to the attack. At the same time, the Government of Poland informed that an "object" had entered its airspace and landed on Polish territory.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 27 August, an article in Anadolu Ajansi informed that Rafael Grossi, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had visited Russia, for an inspection of the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant (NPP). The visit was organized to the Russian town of Kurchatov, in response to security threats to the plant over the ongoing incursion by Ukraine into the Kursk region. Grossi plans to meet the plant

management and assess the situation and severity of the threat; with the Director-General having warned previously about the dangers of military activity close to nuclear facilities. Ukraine had attempted a kamikaze drone attack earlier on the plant, which provides power to 19 regions in the Central Federal District of Russia.

On 27 August, Vyacheslav Gladkov, the Governor of Belgorod Oblast stated in a Telegram post that "the situation on the border remains difficult but under control." One of the pro-Russian Telegram channels, Shot claimed that around 60 Ukrainian soldiers along with eight armoured vehicles launched the operation near Nehoteevka village. However, the Mash channel claimed that 200 Ukrainian troops were involved in the same area, with 300 Ukrainian soldiers engaged in fighting near a checkpoint in Belgorod.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 26 August, the United States Embassy in Ukraine published a statement by The White House where Joe Biden, President of the US strongly condemned the Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Biden stated that the US would continue to lead a coalition of over 50 nations providing Ukraine with support, through military equipment like air defence systems and interceptors as well as energy equipment. The President also informed that Ukraine had been provided the equipment for five additional air defence systems.

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War in Ukraine Days: 914 & 915

Russia reports Ukrainian attack in Belgorod

War on the Ground:

On 24 August, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President announced the launch of a locally-made drone-missile weapon system called Palyanytsia, against the Russians. He said: "The first and successful combat use of our new weapon took place today, a new class of weapon, the Ukrainian missile-drone Palyanytsia." The word "Palyanytsia" refers to a type of Ukrainian bread. It also has several symbolic significances related to war. The Ukrainian military has not revealed any details of the missile. However, according to Oleksandr Kamyshin, Ukraine's armaments production chief the rocket-drone were high-speed precision-targeted projectile.

On 25 August, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry warned Belarus about the large-scale deployment of troops at the border. As per the Ukrainian intelligence reports, the ministry stated that the Belarusian Armed Forces targeted a specific number and type of personnel, tanks and artillery. The ministry asked Minsk to avoid "tragic mistakes" and that Ukraine had the duty to protect its territorial integrity.

On 25 August, Vitaliy Sarantsev, a spokesperson for Ukraine's operational and tactical group in Kharkiv reported on possibilities for the Ukrainian military to push out the Russians in the Kharkiv region. However, the current tactical operations in the field was not revealed. Sarantsev added that the situation remained intense as the Russian army tried to strike all the active frontlines. He added: "The areas of Vovchansk and adjacent settlements, as well as the Lyptsi-Hlyboke direction, remain

under attack. However, all the attempts to advance are stopped by the Defence Forces - they suffer losses and retreat."

On 24 August, *Daily Sabah* reported on Zelenskyy's independence speech. He condemned the war and said: "The war violated not only our sovereign borders but also the limits of cruelty and common sense. It was endlessly striving for one thing: to destroy us." He said that whatever damage Russians were inflicting in Ukraine "had now returned to their home." He argued that the Ukrainian response would be "worthy, symmetrical and long-range."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 25 August, *RT* reported on Ukraine's attack on Rakitnoe town in the Belgorod Oblast. According to Vyacheslav Gladkov, Governor of Belgorod, the attack resulted in the death of five civilians and injury of 13 more. He referred to the attack as a "brutal terrorist attack." The shelling also led to the damage of a gas pipeline and an electrical power line. Further, he said that the drones and bombardments inflicted damage on residential homes, vehicles and civilian facilities. Russia's Investigative Committee had filed a criminal terrorism case against the backdrop of the strike on Rakitnoe.

On 24 August, *The Moscow Times* reported on the prisoner exchange held between Ukraine and Russia where they transferred 115 prisoners of war each. According to Zelenskyy: "Another 115 of our defenders have returned home today. These are soldiers of the National Guard, the Armed Forces, the Navy, the State Border Guard Service." The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation also confirmed the exchange. The Russian prisoners of war receiving psychological medical help in Belarus would be brought back to Russia after the treatment.

DPeskovov

On 25 August, the Russian Emergencies Ministry reported that more than 340 people were evacuated from five districts of Russia's Kursk Region. The Ministry also reported that 197 temporary accommodations were set to operate in 28

Russian regions, thus providing shelter to 11,500 people. The Ministry added that more than 3000 tons of humanitarian aid were delivered to the shelters during the time of emergency.

The West View:

Responses from Europe and the US

On 24 August, the US promised air defence missiles to Kyiv in another batch of military aid. The announcement came from Joe Biden, the US President on Ukraine's Independence Day. He also said that 400 individuals and organisations would be sanctioned for promoting Russia's invasion. The latest package included new air defence missiles along with counter-drone equipment, anti-armor missiles, mobile rocket systems and ammunition. According to Lloyd Austin, the package was worth USD 125 million. Zelenskyy welcomed the new package and stressed Ukraine's urgent need for military aid.

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War in Ukraine Day: 912

Russian Defence Ministry reports on Ukraine drone attack Volgograd Oblast

War on the Ground:

On 22 August, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President visited the northeastern Ukrainian region of Sumy. It was his first visit to the border area since the Ukrainian Kursk incursion in early August. Zelenskyy said that the Ukrainian forces had captured another settlement and detained more Russian soldiers, with whom he hoped to carry out the "exchange fund." After he met with the local authorities, he added that there was a decrease in Russian shelling and civilian casualties in the Sumy region after the Kursk operation. He added: "Another settlement in the Kursk region is now under Ukrainian control and we have replenished the exchange fund."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 23 August, Russian authorities reported on a Ukrainian drone strike. The attack caused a fire at a military site, near the village of Marinovka, 300 kilometres east of the border with Ukraine and the Russian air force base. According to Andrei Bocharov, the Volgograd Regional Governor, the drones were intercepted by the Russian forces. He also reported on the rescue operations led by fire and security services. There were no casualties reported. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation said that their forces had repelled over 13 out of 28 drones over the Volgograd region.

On 22 August, Aleksandr Bogomaz, Governor of the Bryansk region reported that Russian forces had intercepted a cross-border attack by Ukrainian troops in the region. He said that the situation was "stable and under control." The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation did not immediately comment on the matter.

On 22 August, during a cabinet meeting, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President condemned Ukraine's strike on the Kursk's Nuclear Power Plant. He said: "The International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] has been informed. They promised to come themselves and send specialists to assess the situation. I hope they actually do so." Rafael Grossi, IAEA director is set to visit the power plant next week. He was also planning to visit Zelenskyy after the visit. Grossi added

that the IAEA was very concerned about the nuclear power plants due to their lack of protection. He also noted the increasing combat operations and military activities around them.

On 22 August, Russia announced the filing of a criminal case against US journalist Nick Paton Walsh and two Ukrainian correspondents, Olesya Borovik and Diana Butsko on charges of “illegally crossing” the border, near the town of Sudzha. The statement of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) read: “They will be put on the international wanted list in the near future.” It added that they could be sentenced to five years imprisonment if convicted.

On 22 August, local Russian authorities announced the installation of 60 main public transport stations with reinforced concrete shelters in the Kursk region. Aleksey Smirnov, Kursk’s acting governor said: “Today we began to install reinforced concrete shelters in Kursk. On my instructions, the Kursk city administration identified key points for placing concrete modular shelters in crowded places.” They will be installed in Zheleznogorsk and Kurchatov in the Kursk region.

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War in Ukraine Day: 911

Switzerland to join EU's cyber security organisation to boost defence

War on the Ground:

On 21 August, Narendra Modi, India’s Prime Minister ahead of his visit to Kyiv stated “peaceful resolution” to be the focus of the meeting. He said: “I look forward to the opportunity to ... share perspectives on peaceful resolution of the ongoing Ukraine conflict.” The visit follows his trip to Poland. On the same day, Richard Verma, US Deputy Secretary of State called the decision to visit Ukraine by Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India as important. He highlighted the principles of the “defence of liberty, freedom and the rule of law” while acknowledging India’s long-standing relationship with Russia.

On 21 August, Ukraine’s parliament ratified the Rome Statute to make it a party of the International Criminal Court (ICC). It was passed with 281 in favour with a temporary exception to Ukrainian military. This means the military would not be charged with war crimes for seven years from the official adoption. Kyiv also affirmed that the ICC requests for peace and cooperation would be made through diplomats and then to the Ukrainian state prosecutor or the Justice Ministry.

On 21 August, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine claimed on targeting Russian S-300 anti-aircraft missile complex near Novoshakhtinsk in Russia’s Rostov region. According to the report: “The joint combat efforts of all components of Ukraine’s Defence Forces on critical Russian military targets continue. More strikes will follow.” Explosions were recorded at the site. The extent of the attack and the casualties are yet to be reported.

On 21 August, *The Hill* reported on Ukraine’s pressure on the US to lift the ban on using US-made long-range artillery, Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) to hit airfields and logistical hubs deeper into Moscow. Dmytro

Zhmailo, Executive Director of the Ukrainian Security and Cooperation Centre commented: "Threat of escalation has actually no basis."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 21 August, the TASS reported on the statements by Dmitry Medvedev, Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman. According to him, Moscow was not ready for any peace talks until Ukraine was completely defeated in the Kursk region. He also questioned the earlier peace talks coordinated by the Western countries and referred to them as "useless." He also condemned the UK for supporting Ukraine on operations against Russia.

On 21 August, Moscow was attacked by nearly a dozen Ukrainian drones marking the largest drone attack since 2022. It was part of the surprise incursion carried out in the Kursk region. According to the reports in the TASS, Russian air defence forces intercepted 11 drones over the Moscow region, 23 over the Bryansk region, six over Belgorod and three over the Kaluga region in response.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 21 August, Switzerland proposed to join the European Cyber Security Organisation (ECSO). According to a statement released by the Swiss government: "Membership of ECSO allows Switzerland to obtain important information on current technology decisions and developments as well as access to expert networks." The move was intended to enhance Switzerland's cyber security and greater cooperation with the EU. It is expected to have access to the working groups and technology papers they produce. ECSO is the EU's only cross-sectoral and independent membership organisation working on cybersecurity.

On 21 August, Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor visited Moldova for the second time in two years. They are expected to discuss bilateral relations and security issues. It would also include Moldova's accession to the EU and the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war on them. According

to Adrian Băluțel, head of the Cabinet of the President of Moldova, Germany had been the collaborator in "social, reconstruction and infrastructure projects" and is expected to become a key partner in "economic development."

On 21 August, Richard Verma, US Deputy Secretary of State called the decision to visit Ukraine by Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India as important. He highlighted the principles of the "defence of liberty, freedom and the rule of law" while acknowledging India's long-standing relationship with Russia.

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War in Ukraine Day: 910

Ukraine evacuates as Russia advances in Pokrovsk

War on the Ground:

On 20 August, *The Associated Press* reported on the evacuation of civilians along with children from Pokrovsk city. This follows Russian forces advance into the city. Close to 53,000 are predicted to be remain in Pokrovsk and many are expected to exit the

city. Pokrovsk is a Ukrainian stronghold and an important city for logistics in the Donetsk region. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine said that the Ukrainian army was attaining “set goals” in the Kursk region. He added that Ukraine had achieved control of the so-called “red lines” indicating their control over the Russian town.

On 20 August, Ukraine’s parliament passed a bill banning activities of religious organisations like the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that has connections with Russia. The bill now awaited the approval of Zelenskyy. Roman Lozynskyi, an independent Ukrainian MP said: “Today we have embarked on the inevitable path of cleansing from the inside of the Kremlin’s agent network, which for decades hid behind the mask of a religious organisation.” Although the Church claimed to have severed its ties with Russia back in 2022, its priests and financial backers were caught helping the Russian army in Ukraine. It also asked Ukraine to stop “persecuting” Christians thus condemning the ban. On the same day, on the Kursk incursion, Zelenskyy claimed on capturing 92 settlements and advancing 1,250 square kilometres till now inside Kursk. He said: “The Russian border area opposite our Sumy region has been mostly cleared of Russian military presence.”

On 20 August, *ABC News* reported that Ukrainian forces had destroyed all three bridges over the Seym River in western Russia, citing Russian sources. It could trap Russian forces between the river and the Ukrainian border. An unnamed representative for Russia’s Investigative Committee said: “As a result of targeted shelling with the use of rocket and artillery weapons against residential buildings and civilian infrastructure in the Karyzh village ... a third bridge over the Seym River was damaged.”

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 20 August, Russian troops claimed to capture Novgorodskoye town in the Donetsk. Russian Defence Ministry reported on the destruction of Ukrainian forces responsible for a key logistics hub.

According to the report, 585 servicemen, three tanks, two vehicles, M777 howitzers and guns were destroyed. The capturing also means an advantage to the ongoing offensive towards Toretsk which holds a cluster of industrial towns.

On 20 August, the Russian Foreign Ministry summoned Stephanie Holmes, US charge d’affaires against the involvement of a private military company (PMC) claimed to be from the US. According to Russia, the Forward Observation Group known as PMC was found to be taking part in an attack from Kyiv on the Russian border. The ministry said: “...clearly demonstrate the United States’ role as a direct participant in the conflict and its complicity in Vladimir Zelensky’s malicious plans.” Holmes warned over the engagement of specialists in the Russian border as illegal and considered as targets for Russian forces.

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War in Ukraine Day: 909

Ukraine reports third ballistic missile attack in Kyiv

War on the Ground:

On 18 August, Serhii Popko, the head of the Kyiv Military Administration reported on Russia’s third ballistic missile attack on Kyiv. He said that the missiles used were KN-23, a North Korean-made ballistic missile. Ukraine’s Air Force later released a report claiming that two ballistic missiles, five cruise missiles and eight kamikaze drones were used in the attack and all of them were

intercepted by Ukraine. Ukraine's State Emergency Services reported damaged residential buildings but no casualties. *The Kyiv Independent* reported the rising role of North Korea as a vital arms supplier to Russia. However, Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office has claimed that around half of the missiles fired at Ukraine had malfunctioned, questioning the quality of North Korean weapons.

On 19 August, *The Associated Press* reported that several Ukrainian citizens were leaving the city of Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine; around 53,000 people still reside in the city. The Russian army was observed to be advancing rapidly towards the city. Pokrovsk is a Ukrainian stronghold and an important city functioning as a logistics hub in the Donetsk region.

On 19 August, Ukrainian forces claimed destroying the second strategic bridge in Russia's Kursk region. Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, said that the purpose of the attack was to create a "buffer zone" to stop Russian invasion. This is Ukraine's biggest attack on Russia since the War began in 2022. Lt Gen Mykola Oleschuk, Ukraine's Air Force, posted on social media, "Minus one more bridge." Ukrainian Intelligence has identified three significant bridges in the Kursk region that are essential for logistical support to Russia. Mykhaylo Podolyak, an adviser to President Zelensky, said that Ukraine aims to initiate negotiations and not occupy Russian territory. In response, Russia warned over "major provocation" and retaliation.

On 19 August, the UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that 2023 recorded the highest number of humanitarian workers' deaths. 280 aid workers died in 2023, which is "outrageously high" as per the OCHA. out of the total 280, 163 were recorded in the Gaza strip. Ukraine recorded the sixth-highest number of deaths with six deaths due to the Russian invasion. This is an increase of 137 per cent compared to 2022.

The Moscow View Claims by Russia

On 19 August, *The Moscow Times* reported

on Vasily Golubev, Governor of Russia's Rostov region statement on the injury of more than 40 firefighters while battling a major blaze at an oil storage facility in Rostov. Meanwhile, Ukraine claimed responsibility for the attack. According to the report, the attack was aimed at the Kavkaz oil and petroleum storage facility. Proletarsk town in Rostov Oblast is approximately 250 kilometres from Ukraine. According to *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, at least 18 people have been injured due to the fires. Rostov has been a target for Ukraine's drone attacks due to its proximity to the border.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 19 August, the *BBC* reported on the UK's unwavering support to Ukraine during the war. The statement from Keir Starmer's, Prime Minister of the UK, came as Ukraine gained advantage over Russia in the Kursk region. Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, had urged the UK government to supply long-range Storm Shadow missiles to Ukraine for the War. Zelensky also said: "Long-range capabilities are the answer to the most critical strategic questions of this war." The *BBC* reported that the UK is among the highest donors to Ukraine. The UK has pledged EUR 7.6 billion as military assistance to Ukraine. However, the UK has made it clear that the British weapons will only be used for self-defence and not for operations in Russian territory.

On 19 August, Chatham House published a detailed analysis of Ukraine's advancement in the Kursk region. The raid has acted as a morale booster for Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. The analysis suggests signs of pessimism in the Russian media. The Ukrainian attack has inflicted significant damage on Russia. Russia is also pulling troops from the Kursk region. Ukraine's decision to go ahead with the offensive in the Kursk region was prompted by the West's hesitation to support Ukraine given their position in the War. The offence has allowed the West to renew calls to supply Ukraine with arms it has demanded.

On 19 August, *Euronews* reported on the construction of a new military base started in the Lithuanian Rūdninkai training ground,

near the Belarus border. The training ground will house 5,000 German soldiers. Lithuania estimates that almost half of them will come with their families. The military base will be constructed with an investment fund of EUR 800 million.

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War in Ukraine Day: 907 & 908

Belarus deploys 120,000 troops along the Ukraine border

War on the Ground:

On 18 August, *Daily Sabah* reported on Ukraine's strike on one of the key bridges in the Kurak to stop the supplies to Moscow. Simultaneously, Russia was observed to have speeded its offensive against Ukraine in Pokrovsk. Mykola Oleshchuk, Ukrainian Air Force Commander said: "Minus one more bridge." However, there are no clear report on when and how the attack was carried out.

On 18 August, *Politico* reported that the

Ukrainian forces destroyed a second road bridge over the Seim River in the Glushkovsky district of the Kursk region. Mykol Oleshchuk, Ukrainian Air Force Commander said: "The Ukrainian air force continues to deprive Russia of its logistical capabilities with accurate airstrikes, which significantly affects the course of hostilities." Alexei Smirnov, Kursk's acting governor confirmed the attack and reported destruction of two bridges by HIMARS missiles. The military resupplies to Russian forces are predicted to be disrupted

On 18 August, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President confirmed that Ukrainian troops were advancing and strengthening their positions in the Kursk region. Citing reports from Oleksandr Syrskiy, the army chief, he also claimed that Ukrainian troops were capturing more Russian soldiers. Ukraine has captured around 80 communities across 1,150 square kilometres (444 square miles) in Kursk since they commenced the attack. According to the residents of the region, the Russian government seemed to belittle the incursion. Zelenskyy also reasserted his demands over the permit from the Western countries to use long-range weapons.

On 18 August, *ABC News* reported on Zelenskyy's statements on the purpose of the Kursk attack. According to him, Ukraine aimed to create a buffer zone to prevent further attacks from the Russian side. He said: "It is now our primary task in defensive operations overall: to destroy as much Russian war potential as possible and conduct maximum counteroffensive actions." Earlier, he mentioned that the operation aimed to protect communities in the Kursk region. He also noted that the Ukrainian forces "achieved good and much-needed results" in creating the buffer zone.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 18 August, Vasily Golubev, Governor of Rostov Oblast, reported on a drone attack on an oil facility in Rostov by Ukraine. The facility in Proletarsk, southeast of Russia was subject to damage due to diesel fire from debris from the drones. Russian air defences claimed to counter five of the "aircraft-type"

drones. Following this the Ukrainian army said: "It stored oil and petroleum products that were also supplied to the needs of the Russian occupation army ... Measures to undermine the military-economic potential of the Russian Federation continue."

On 18 August, the Russian Defence Ministry claimed on capturing Svyrydonivka, a settlement in the frontline located 15 kilometres away from Pokrovsk. In a statement: "As a result of active operations, units of the Centre grouping of troops have liberated the village of Sviridonovka." This comes following a warning issued by head of Pokrovsk's military administration of Ukraine to evacuate residents around 10 kilometres. According to Kyiv spokesperson: "This is the third ballistic missile attack on the capital in August with a clear interval of six days between each attack."

On 17 July, *rfi* reported that Russia's FSB security service had launched a criminal investigation against two Italian journalists Simone Traini and Stefania Battistin of RIA news agency for illegally crossing the border into the Russian Federation. According to the FSB security service: "The foreign journalists "carried out video shooting in the territory of the settlement of Sudzha," a town claimed by Ukraine's forces. Cecilia Piccioni, Italy's ambassador, was called to explain the situation. She said that RAI and their journalists worked in an "independently and autonomously." RAI also planned to make them return to Italy for their "safety and security."

On 17 August, the *TASS* reported on the statements of Mikhail Ulyanov, the Russian Permanent Representative to the international organisation on inviting Rafael Grossi to visit the Kursk nuclear power plant. According to him, it was a "very timely and important step" taken by Alexey Likhachev, CEO of Rosatom. Likhachev also expressed his concern to Grossi on the Ukrainian drone strikes that threatened the security of nuclear power plants in Zaporizhzhia and Kursk.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 18 August, Alexander Lukashenko,

President of Belarus spoke about the deployment of Ukrainian troops along the Belarusian-Ukrainian border. He said: "On the Belarusian-Ukrainian border they keep more than 120,000 troops on our border." He added that special units and highly trained officers in Alpha and Almaz were also present. In response, Minsk had amassed "nearly a third" of its army along the border. He also recalled the worsened situation during the Independence Day parade in Minsk. However, Andrii Demchenko, Ukrainian border force spokesman did not note any increase in the military buildup and said that the situation remained unchanged.

On 18 August, *Anadolu Agency* reported on the increasing concerns over the safety of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. On investigating a drone strike that hit the road around the site's perimeter, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed the declining safety of the power plant. Rafael Mariano Grossi, the IAEA chief said: ""I remain extremely concerned and reiterate my call for maximum restraint from all sides and for strict observance of the five concrete principles established for the protection of the plant." There were no casualties and no impact on the plant's equipment. However, the damage had affected the road between the two main gates of the plant. IAEA also reported on the increase in military activity around the plant.

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War in Ukraine Day: 906

Ukraine military claims further advance in Kursk

War on the Ground:

On 16 August, Ukraine's military claimed to advance between one and three kilometres in Kursk. General Oleksandr Syrskyi said: "The troops of the offensive group continue to fight and have advanced in some areas from one to three kilometres." According to the report, Ukraine has control over 82 settlements and Syrskyi expressed hope to deport more prisoners from the ongoing fighting in the Ukrainian border. He also reported intense fighting in the eastern front line in Toretsk and Pokrovsk.

On 16 August, in an interview with *Deutsche Welle*, Yevheniia Kravchuk, Ukraine's spokesperson from the President's office commented on its incursion into Kursk. He said how the fighting could help strengthen Ukraine's position. The incursion began on 06 August and Ukrainian forces claim to have advanced. She stressed that the incursion into Kursk was not to capture the territory but to ensure no Russian attacks were launched into Ukraine from Kursk. She added: "So basically the operation of our army made possible [keeping] our territory intact, so this is part of self-defense."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 16 August, the TASS reported on a strike at a supermarket in Donetsk, an area controlled by Russia. According to the report two were reported dead and Russian authorities criticised the Ukrainian army for the attack. Denis Pushilin, Russia-appointed spokesperson said that close to 10,000 square meters were in flames along with

damage to nearby hospitals.

On 16 August, Russia's Defence Ministry reported on countering an attack by Ukraine targeting the Crimea bridge. In a statement: "Air defenses were used last night to deflect a group strike by 12 ATACMS missiles made in the US on the Crimean bridge." The bridge opened in 2018 connects Kerch and Krasnodar between Crimea and Russia.

On 16 August, the Russian government declared an association of Russian politicians as "undesirable." The group was accused of being part of events on "anti-Russian orientation" in Germany. In a statement: "They spread misleading information about the activities of Russian state agencies and support extremist organizations." According to the report, the participants of the organisation consider the Putin regime and the war in Ukraine as criminal and delineating from the democratic path.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 16 August, Ivan Anusic, Croatia's Defence Minister announced the decision to bring back military conscription due to regional tensions. This move comes as Russia's war in Ukraine continues and triggered public protests. According to Anusic, the salaries of the soldiers and non-commissioned officers have been increased. He said: "The modernization and equipment of the Armed Forces is proceeding as planned and in accordance with the agreement with our allies and the NATO leadership." The conscription was ended in 2008 but has been reintroduced following a similar trend in Latvia in 2023.

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War in Ukraine Day: 905

White House confirms redeployment of troops by Russia into Kursk

War on the Ground:

On 16 August, *Ukrinform* reported on the overnight drone attack launched by Russian forces in Kyiv. According to the Kyiv City Military Administration, air defences were activated after the UAVs were launched from the Kursk region. There were no reports of any damage or casualties.

On 16 August, *The Moscow Times* reported on the Ukrainian drone attack in the Belgorod region in Shebekino town, Russia. The attack led to the injury of four people. An apartment also caught fire following the attack. According to Russia’s military forces, one of the Ukrainian drones launched was intercepted.

On 15 August, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine submitted a draft bill that laid down bonuses and preferences entitled to servicemen and military participating in the combat missions on the Russian territory. The memo to the bill read as the “Law on social and legal protection of servicemen and their families.” It noted that the implementation of the law would not have any additional expenditure. It included servicemen working outside Ukraine, mostly in Russia.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 16 August, *RT* reported that Nikolay Patrushev, Former Russian Security Council Secretary had condemned the US for its alleged role in the Kursk attack. He said: “The US leadership’s claims of non-involvement in Kyiv’s actions in the Kursk Region do not correspond to reality.” He added that Kyiv could not execute such an operation without the direct involvement and support of the US.

On 16 August, *The Moscow Times* reported that Russia and Ukraine were negotiating on the exchange of prisoners who were captured during the Kursk attack. According to Dmytro Lubinets, Ukrainian Parliament

Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman), he had a “proactive conversation” on the issue with Tatiana Moskalova, Russian spokesperson. He said that Kyiv was ready for an exchange based on the “Geneva Convention at any time” but condemned Moscow for delaying it, which Moskalova denied.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 16 August, John Kirby, White House National Security Advisor affirmed that Russia had redeployed some troops and resources to the Kursk region. He said: “It is not clear exactly how many forces the Russians are going to put there, what their intentions are, what they are going to do, or what the Ukrainians are doing.” He added on the new military packages that were set to be announced later. He promised Ukraine to provide them with weapons and capabilities to defend.

On 16 August, *Ukrinform* reported that the US delayed the approval for the use of ATACMS missiles inside Russia’s Kursk region. According to US officials, as cited by CNN, the missiles could only be used in the Russian-occupied Crimea. They added the reason to be the limited supply of long-range missiles and not the risk of escalation.

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War in Ukraine Day: 903

"No interest in taking over the territory of the Kursk region" says Ukraine

War on the Ground:

On 13 August, *Ukrinform* reported on Russian forces strike on the infrastructure facilities in the city of Sumy through a missile and an airstrike attack. According to the regional military administration, the onsite emergency services were working on the recovery.

On 13 August, *Ukrinform* reported on the transfer of military equipment from Crimea to the Kherson region by the Russian troops. According to Crimean Wind, a Telegram channel, a large number of military trucks were transported from Crimea to the administrative border with the Kherson region.

On 14 July, the *Financial Times* reported on the Ukrainian army's significant advancements in the second week of the Kursk incursion. According to the report, Ukrainian forces captured hundreds of Russian soldiers following the 30-kilometre advancement and gained "a firm ground in Sudzha and Guyevo and Goncharovka." The captured soldiers were kept as prisoners of war who could be exchanged in prisoner swap.

On 13 August, Heorhii Tykhyi, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine said that the Kursk incursion aimed to defend the Ukrainian lives and not to capture any foreign territories. According to him: "Ukraine has no interest in taking over the territory of the Kursk region, but we do want to protect the lives of our people." He emphasised the report by Oleksandr Syrsky, Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Ukraine on the 30-kilometre advancement into the Russian territory. He also reiterated Russia's long-range strikes in the Ukrainian region of Sumy and insisted on assistance to enhance Ukraine's air capabilities.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 13 August, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation reported that Ukraine had lost over 420 servicemen and 55 armored vehicles in Kursk. According to the reports of the *TASS*, the Russian forces repelled the Ukrainian troops near the settlements of Obshchy Kolodez, Snagost, Kauchuk and Alekseyevsky, deep inside the Russian territory. Ukrainian armed forces' 82nd airborne assault was intercepted as part of the Russian operation to drive away the troops. A Russian aircraft also destroyed the Ukrainian armed forces' reserves in the areas of Sumy Region.

On 13 August, *RT* reported on the Defence Ministry of Belarus statement on the delivery of rocket and artillery troops to Russia for military drills. As per the statement, the joint exercise between Belarus and Russia involved the use of multiple rocket launch systems. It also sent Belarusian air defence forces in an Il-76 airlifter to the Ashuluk range in Astrakhan Region in southern Russia to join the Russian military.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 13 August, Grant Shapps, British Defence Minister responded to the comment on the Kursk incursion from Vladimir Putin, Russia's President. He said: "Putin's outrage at Ukraine's audacity to seize around 1,000 square kilometres of Russia's Kursk region should be seen in the context of his illegal occupation of 100 times more Ukrainian soil today." He added that the war could only end if Russia stopped interfering with the democracy in Ukraine.

On 12 July, John Kirby, White House National Security Communications Advisor expressed his concern over the supply of North Korean missiles to Russia. Although he did not confirm the involvement of Pyongyang missiles, he talked about the security threats it could have on Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific. He justified Ukraine's actions as a defence mechanism against the Russians. He said: "The only people at war in Ukraine are the Russians; they're the ones that invaded Ukraine. And Ukraine is defending itself against that aggression."

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Previous Special Alert: War In Ukraine

War in Ukraine Day: 902

Putin warns of “worthy response” to Ukraine's incursion

War on the Ground:

On 12 August, General Oleksandr Syrskyi, Ukraine’s top military commander said that his troops controlled 1,000 square kilometres of the Kursk region. He said: “The troops are fulfilling their tasks.” Fighting continues actually along the entire front line. It was the first public comment made by a Ukrainian military official since the surprise attack. During his briefing about the front-line situation, he also confirmed that the situation was under their control.

On 12 August, the *BBC* reported on the fire breakout at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant controlled by Moscow for more than two years. Yevgeny Balitsky, the Kremlin-installed governor of Zaporizhzhia blamed the Ukrainian shelling for the blaze. Meanwhile, Zelenskyy believed the fire was a deliberate attempt. However, no radiation spike was reported according to the statements of Zelenskyy and Balitsky. Another report from Vladimir Rogov, a Kremlin-installed official said: “The fire had been completely extinguished.”

On 12 August, *The Guardian* reported on the involvement of more than 1000 Ukrainian troops in the Kursk incursion. According to a Ukrainian security official, the troops aimed to “...destabilise Russia and drive out Russian forces with light, fast-moving attacks.”

On 12 August, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) announced the arrest of Oleksandr Kheil, Ukraine’s deputy energy minister over charges of bribery. He was dismissed from the Cabinet of Ministers as part of a government-led probe into corruption since the war. According to the official statements from the Ministry of Energy of Ukraine: “Cleansing the energy industry of any forms of corruption is one of the priorities of our work.” The SBU accused him of the extortion of half a million dollars in exchange for handing over mining equipment owned by a state-owned coal company and allowing its relocation to the mines in the west Ukraine

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 12 August, Vladimir Putin, Russia’s President condemned the Kursk incursion during a meeting with senior officials. He rejected the possibility of peace talks till Ukraine stopped its strikes on the civilian population and nuclear power plants. Putin believed that Kyiv aimed to distract Russian forces from the Donbass region where they are making significant advances. He further stated that Ukraine would receive a “worthy response” as the main goal of Russia was to push back the Ukrainian forces.

On 12 August, Russian officials reported that the Ukrainian forces had captured around 28 settlements in Russia’s Kursk region after advancing up to 30 kilometres on the seventh day of the incursion. More than 12,000 people had been rescued from the main city of Kursk. There are thousands of ethnic Armenians residing in the place. According to the statements of Derenik Koshtoyan, the head of a local Armenian community association, they were considering fleeing from the place altogether.

On 12 August, *Anadolu Agency* reported on

the evacuations implemented in Russia's Belgorod and Kursk regions. According to Vyacheslav Gladkov, governor of Belgorod region: "In order to protect the life and health of our population, we are starting to move people who live in Krasnoyarskiy district to safer places." He affirmed that the Russian troops would "cope with the threat." Meanwhile, Alexey Smirnov, Governor of the Kursk region said that the operational headquarters in charge of the evacuation of residents.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 12 August, ISW reported that Iran would deliver hundreds of anti-ballistic missiles to Russia as per an agreement signed between them in December 2023. The agreement promised the delivery of Ababil close-range ballistic missiles and Fateh-360 short-range ballistic missiles to support Russia in its war with Ukraine. These missiles have 120 kilometres range and can carry around 150 kilograms of payload. According to European intelligence sources, thousands of Russian military personnel were in training in Iran on how to operate these Fateh-360 missiles.

On 12 August, *Defence and Security Monitor* reported on the supply of 14 Leopard 2A4 main battle tanks and armoured recovery vehicle to the Czech Republic as part of the German initiated Ukraine recovery plan. It will be carried out through Rheinmetall, an international arms supplier company based in Germany. The Czech Republic will supply military equipment to Ukraine in exchange for these vehicles. The deliveries will continue till 2026. The recovery plan also known as the "ring swap" program aims to exchange Soviet-era equipment in exchange for modern Western systems in Ukraine.

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War in Ukraine Days: 900 & 901

**Ukraine advances further into Kursk
War on the Ground:**

On 11 August, *RTE* reported that the Ukrainian army advanced 30 kilometres into the Russian territory following the Kursk incursion. Russia's military confirmed that it had attacked the troops and equipment around 30 kilometres from the border near the villages of Tolpino and Obshchy Kolodez. In a statement, the Ministry of Defence of Russian Federation: "Russian troops foiled attempts by Ukrainian mobile groups with armoured vehicles to break through deep into Russian territory." A senior Ukrainian official said that thousands of Ukrainian troops had been deployed for the operation. On 11 August, Zelenskyy addressed the public through a video, sharing updates of the war. He highlighted the Russian drone attacks carried out against Ukraine and urged its partners to lift the restrictions on long-range missiles. He stated: "Our priority remains the maximum strengthening of

Ukraine's air shield. Our air defence, our combat aviation.”

On 11 August, *CBS NEWS* reported that Zelensky had confirmed for the first time that Ukrainian military forces were carrying out a “surprise military incursion into Russia's Kursk border region.” He said that he had discussed the incursion with Oleksandr Syrskyi, Ukraine's top commander, to push the war into Russian territory. He stated: “Ukraine is proving that it can indeed restore justice and ensure the necessary pressure on the aggressor.” The main aim of the operation is still unknown as the Ukrainian military officials are maintaining a policy of secrecy.

On 10 August, Ukrinform reported on the IAEA's warning to Ukraine and Russia to avoid a nuclear accident in the context of the NPP based in the Kursk region of Kurchatov, Russia. Rafael Grossi, the IAEA chief reminded them about the seven pillars of maintaining nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict. He stated: “I would like to appeal to all sides to exercise maximum restraint to avoid a nuclear accident with the potential for serious radiological consequences.” His comments came after the Russian embassy in Vienna pointed out the remains fallen from missiles, found near the plant premises.

On 11 August, *Anadolu Agency* reported on the discussion between Rosatom, Russia's state-owned nuclear energy company and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog. Alexey Likhachev, the head of Rosatom informed Rafael Grossi, the IAEA chief about the “direct threat” posed by the Ukrainian armed forces to a nearby nuclear power plant near the Kursk region. In the call between both chiefs, Likhachev discussed Ukraine's attempt to capture the power plant. According to Rosatom: “At the moment, there is a real danger of strikes and provocations by the armed forces of Ukraine at the nuclear power plant.” It added that the falling debris from destroyed missiles could affect the normal operation of the plant and compromise nuclear safety and security.

On 10 August, Dmytro Pletenchuk, the Ukrainian Navy spokesperson reported on the attack and destruction of a former offshore gas platform used by the Russian

forces in the Black Sea. He added that the Russian occupation in this platform posed a threat to civilian navigation as they used the location for GPS spoofing. According to his statements, there were no civilians and the platform was not functioning normally. Moscow has not commented on this incident yet.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 11 August, Alexey Smirnov, acting governor of the Kursk oblast in Russia ordered an acceleration of the evacuation of residents of the Belovsky district. He stated: “I have instructed the head of the Belovsky district to accelerate the implementation of the decision of the operational headquarters on evacuation.” According to Nikolay Volobuyev, the Head of the Belovsky district, people were fleeing on their own in unorganised buses and settling in temporary shelters and safe places around the Kursk region.

On 11 August, the *TASS* reported on the redeployment of Russian aerial surveillance and attack drone units from the Zaporizhzhia Region to the Kursk Region to intercept a Ukrainian attack. According to Yevgeny Balitsky: “The technical capabilities of our units allow us to provide substantial support to the region, which came under terrorist attacks.”

On 11 August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation responded to the Kursk incursion by the Ukrainian forces. According to Maria Zakharova, the ministry's spokesperson: “A tough response from the Russian Armed Forces will not be long in coming.” She added that the Ukrainian military struck the Belgorod and Voronezh regions in a drone attack. Meanwhile, the Russian Defence Ministry stated that the forces had destroyed over 35 Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles.

On 10 August, the *TASS* reported on the evacuation of over 76,000 Russians from the border areas of the Kursk region. Artyom Sharov, spokesman for the Russian Emergencies Ministry's interdepartmental operational headquarters said: “Resettling residents to safer places has been a priority

of its work. A total of over 76,000 people have been temporarily resettled since this work began.” He added that the interdepartmental operational headquarters worked to assist the population in the Kursk region. According to him, over 4,400 residents were accommodated in 60 temporary settlements in eight Russian regions.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 10 August, *Reuters* reported on the reinforcement of the border by Belarus after it found Ukraine violating its airspace on the Kursk incursion. Alexander Lukashenko, the President of Belarus stated that several Ukrainian drones which violated their airspace were destroyed. He added that others were destroyed by Russian forces in the city of Yaroslavl. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry called for “comprehensive measures” from the Ukrainian side and warned that these incidents could affect Ukraine’s diplomatic presence in Minsk. There have been no comments from Ukraine.

On 10 August, *TRT WORLD* reported on the “counter-terror” operation carried out by Russian forces to halt Ukraine’s advances into the Kursk region. Russia was equipped with extra troops, convoys of tanks, rocket launchers and aviation units. According to Russia’s national anti-terrorism committee, the operation was beginning in Belgorod, Bryansk and Kursk regions. During these operations, security forces and the military were given unlimited powers. In addition to that, movements are constrained, vehicles can be captured, calls can be monitored and areas can be declared as no-go zones. The anti-terrorism committee referred to the Kursk incursion as a “terrorist attack” and “an attempt to destabilise Russia.”

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War in Ukraine Day: 899

Fighting continues in Kursk region

War on the Ground:

On 09 August, the Ukrainian army reported on targeting a Russian airfield in the Lipetsk region and claimed to destroy ammunition warehouses. Ukrainian General Staff confirmed on strike using guided aerial bombs at warehouses and several facilities. It observed ignition, fire and multiple detonations. According to the report, Su-34, Su-35 and MiG-31 aircraft were based in the Lipetsk

On 09 August, Ukraine’s Interior Ministry reported on putting out a large blaze as a result of Russian missile strike in Ukraine’s Donetsk area. In the blaze, 14 were reportedly dead and 43 injured, however rescue efforts continue to strike at Kostiantynivka town. In response Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s President said: “Russia always knows exactly where its missiles strike; this is a deliberate and targeted act of Russian terror.”

The Moscow View:

Claims by Russia

On 09 August, the Russian Defence Ministry reported on deploying its forces and arms into the Kursk region and claimed on repelling the Ukrainian forces. According to Russian state media, it had transited BM-21 Grad multiple rocket launchers, artillery guns, tanks, heavy tracked vehicles and Samaz trucks into Sudzha district in Kursk. On ground, it continues to claim efforts to repel the Ukrainian incursion. The ministry said: "...continue to repel an attempted incursion by the Ukrainian armed forces into the territory of the Russian Federation."

On 09 August, Ukrainian intelligence reported that special forces destroyed six Russian armoured vehicles and eliminated 30 soldiers in a raid in the Black Sea. According to the report, the raid took place on the Kinburn spit which springs out of the Black Sea area near Dnipro River. However, the Russian Defence Ministry claimed countering the attack and killing of 16 Ukrainian soldiers by mines and gunfire. The reason behind the attack, was the Russian military presence in the spit being a barricade for Ukraine's exports to Mykolaiv and Kherson ports.

The West View:

Responses from Europe and the US

On 09 August, the US announced a new package of military aid for Ukraine for USD 125 million. On the same Antony Blinken, US Secretary of the State called the package as the most needed and said: "This support will help Ukraine protect its troops and its people and reinforce its capabilities across the front lines." The package includes "air defence interceptors, munitions for rocket systems artillery, multi-mission radars and anti-tank weapons." In response, Zelenskyy called it critical for the US to continue its aid and "demonstrate leadership in protecting Ukrainian freedom and European stability."

On 09 August, the US imposed sanctions on several entities and individuals in Belarus who were found to have given military support to Russia or helped Russia in circumventing sanctions. This includes 14 technology and logistics companies in Belarus and 19 senior people from the

companies. In a statement, the US Treasury said that the targeted persons were engaged in war through "military resource production and transshipment of goods to Russia." It criticised Alexander Lukashenko for supporting Russia against Ukraine. The sanctions also include Boeing 767 airliner of the presidential fleet of Belarus.

On 09 August, UK military analyst, Frank Ledwidge commented on Ukraine's cross-border attacks in the Kursk. Ledwidge observed Ukraine to be capturing more lands at a fast pace while showing inability to hold control of the captured area. He added: "Over the next few weeks we will see counterattacks from the Russians and this will be a major combat zone I suspect." According to him, the Kursk is critical for gas supply.

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War in Ukraine Day: 898

Ukraine claims advancing 10 kilometres in Kursk region

War on the Ground:

On 08 August, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President in his evening address

said: "Russia brought the war to our land and should feel what it has done." He appreciated Ukraine's army performance in being "effective" He reiterated Ukraine's stance for "just peace" and added: "We want to achieve our goals as soon as possible in peace time." On the cross-border incursion, German Galushchenko, Ukraine's Energy Minister assured that Russia's gas transit station to be still operational in the town of Sudzha where the intense fighting is taking place. Although reports from Russian "military bloggers" claim that Ukraine captured the gas measuring station which is 10 kilometres from the Ukraine border.

08 August, *Ukrinform* reported that the recent incursion of Ukrainian troops in the Kursk region did not impact the quantitative composition of Russian forces in the Kharkiv oblast. According to Vitaliy Sarantsev, the Kharkiv Operational-Tactical Grouping of Troops spokesperson: "On the Vovchansk axis, Russians have already rotated troops, pulling up a fresh unit from the Luhansk region." He also noted the decrease in the assault efforts in Kharkiv and the surge in artillery strikes. Further, he said that Russia's goal to capture the Vovchansk had not changed as they continued advancing their control zone onto settlements.

On 08 August, Iryna Vereshchuk, Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine reported on the unavailability of the humanitarian corridor Kolotylivka – Pokrovsk. It was used for civilian evacuation following the Russian strikes near the border areas of the Sumy region. Meanwhile, the Mokrany – Domanove route through the Belarusian-Ukrainian border could be used for evacuation as per his statements.

On 08 August, Dmytro Kuleba, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine held a meeting with Manish Gobin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mauritius. It was the first visit of Ukraine since the diplomatic ties were established in 1992. Kuleba expressed his gratitude to Mauritius for their unwavering support and the accession to the final communique of the Peace Summit in Switzerland. He also called on the country to participate in the second Peace Summit. Gobin assured assistance to involve more

African countries in the "Peace Formula." They also discussed mutual investments and agreements on trade and development. Both the countries signed an agreement on visa-free travel and others on educational cooperation.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 08 August, *RT* reported on the statements of Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chair of the Russian Security Council on the Kursk incursion. He said: "From this moment, the special military operation should become openly exterritorial in nature." He encouraged Russian forces to take over further land in Ukraine. He noted that there should not be restrictions in terms of recognized borders.

On 08 August, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation released a video depicting the destruction of Ukrainian military equipment that had been used in the Kursk region. According to the ministry, the Russian troops used Lancet loitering munitions to destroy several Ukrainian Kazak armoured personnel carriers and US-made Bradley infantry fighting vehicles. They also reported on the strikes carried out against the Ukrainian armour and the air defence systems in the Kursk region.

On 08 August, *RT* reported on the civilian attacks carried out by the Ukrainian forces in the Kursk region. According to Aleksey Smirnov, the acting governor of Kursk: "The Ukrainian military has been actively trying to impede the evacuation of civilians from the settlements near the border. Kyiv's units were "firing at civilians and ambulances." He also reported on the death of medics due to the attacks. The civilians were evacuated with the help of armoured cash-in-transit vehicles donated by banks. There were also reports of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attack on an ambulance injuring civilians.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 08 August, *Euromaidan Press* reported on the statements of Matthew Miller, the US State Department spokesperson over the Kursk incursion. He confirmed that the US was not notified about this operation. He

stressed that although the US provides weapons and advice, the decisions on daily strikes came under Ukraine's mandate. On the US restrictions over weapons usage, he said that the policy remains unchanged as Ukraine was not allowed to strike deeply inside Russian territory. On the same, Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief expressing support for Ukraine from the EU said: "...has the right to defend itself."

On 08 August, *Financial Times* reported on the large-scale orders received by Rheinmetall, Germany's largest defence group. Amidst the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, the Düsseldorf-based group on Thursday said sales in the first half of the year increased by a third to EUR 3.8 billion, while operating profit nearly doubled to EUR 404 million. Armin Papperger, the Chief Executive, expects this to rise by EUR 2 billion in the coming years. He being a proponent of military support to Kyiv had also announced the construction of several factories in Ukraine, tank maintenance, munitions and air defence which is condemned by Russia.

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War in Ukraine Day: 897

Russia claims to have halted Ukraine's advance in Kursk

War on the Ground:

On 07 August, Sumy City in Ukraine experienced explosions after warnings from air defence systems. Oleksiy Drozdenko, the head of the Sumy Regional Military Administration reported on the explosions following the air raid alert. Sumy's military administration ordered for mandatory evacuation of 6000 civilians from 23 settlements of five communities in the district, namely Krasnopillia, Mykolaivka, Myropillia, Yunakivka and Khotin which were in the range of fire. Volodymyr Artyukh, head of the Sumy region said that the situation in the district remained tense but under the control for the armed forces.

On 07 August, *Ukrinform* reported on warnings to Russia by Kyrylo Budanov, head of the Ukrainian Defence Ministry's Main Intelligence Directorate. According to him, Russia would be forced to either end the war or announce a large-scale mobilisation by 2025. He added that problems with human resource management began in Russia three months ago. He stated the personnel shortage faced by the Russian army recently and the subsequent decrease in the flow of volunteer fighters. He believed that Russia was trying to rectify the situation through a mobilisation plan.

On 07 August, *Ukrinform* reported on transferring Russian air defence systems to the Taman Peninsula, an area closer to the bridge across the Kerch strait that connects Crimea to Russia, citing a report by the ATESH partisan movement. The report said that two Buk-M2 and S-400 air defence systems were accompanied by military vehicles and two URALs carrying personnel.

On 07 August, *Ukrinform* reported on the intense shelling attacks by the Russian forces in the areas of Kharkiv and the military's increased presence in Vovchansk. According to the Kharkiv Operational Tactical Grouping, 517 shelling attacks on the positions of Ukraine's defenders were recorded. They also noted the increased usage of artillery, mortars and multiple-launch rocket systems by the Russian army.

Ukraine's Intelligence reported on the increasing military presence, preparatory activities, forces and equipment from the Russian side in the Vovchansk region.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 07 August, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President condemned Ukraine's incursion in the Kursk region. According to him: "Ukrainian forces are conducting indiscriminate fire from various types of weapons, including rocket weapons, at civilian buildings, homes, ambulances." He promised supplementary support to the region amidst the emergency. Aleksey Smirnov, the acting governor of the region, was constantly in touch with Putin. He confirmed the deployment of a medical team to treat injuries caused by the Ukrainian fire. He also stated the increase in support for Kursk emergency services. According to him, more than 2,000 people have fled the border areas since the attack.

On 07 August, Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the Russian General Staff reported that the Russian forces halting Ukraine's incursion into the Kursk region. He estimated that Kyiv's forces had suffered 315 casualties during the attempted incursion, with at least 100 troops killed and 215 wounded. He also added on the loss of four armoured vehicles including seven tanks from the Ukrainian side. According to his statements, Russia's counteroffensive would either destroy or push back the Ukrainian forces beyond the border.

On 07 August, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation in its military update estimated the loss of around 260 troops and 50 pieces of heavy weaponry by Ukrainian forces in its recent incursion into the Kursk region. The attack which was launched two days ago had resulted in casualties in the Russian town of Sudzha. The report also stated Ukraine's failure in entering Russian territory. They were counterattacked by airstrikes, rocket and artillery fire and Russian manoeuvres according to the report. The listed destroyed weapons were seven tanks, eight armoured personnel carriers, multiple infantry fighting vehicles, two Western-donated Stryker IFVs and two Buk surface-to-air missile launchers.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 07 August, the *BBC* reported on the reasons behind Ukraine's launching of a cross-border attack into the Kursk region of Russia. According to the report, Ukraine's biggest battlefield problem was manpower while Russia comparatively has and is closer to Pokrovsk, eastern Ukrainian town. Therefore, sending many soldiers to the border can be counterintuitive. One of the military analysts, Mykhaylo Zhyrokhov, agrees that the attack should not be "accidental" but part of a "plan." He said: "If you look at official reports, there were significantly fewer Russian glide bombs dropped in the Donetsk area... That means the aircraft which carry them are now elsewhere in Russia." The attack into Kursk is also seen as a suppressive move against the Russian offensive in north-eastern Kharkiv and northern Sumy. However, this will be the first time Ukrainian forces breached the border but Russia was observed to be quick in responding through the state of emergency, swift evacuation and redeployment of troops in Sudza, a town in Kursk. Zelenskyy in his previous address said: "The more pressure is exerted on the aggressor that brought the war to Ukraine... Just peace through just force."

On 07 August, the *BBC* reported that Nigeria severed its diplomatic ties with Ukraine. According to Niger's military government, it was in "solidarity" with Mali, which cut its ties with Ukraine two days ago. Both the countries had cited the comments of Andriy Yusov, a spokesman for Ukrainian military intelligence who commented on the killing of dozens of Malian soldiers last month. Although he did not elaborate, his statements suggested Kyiv's role in the attack. As a response, the governments of Mali and Nigeria cut off their relations with Ukraine. This was viewed as a major blow to Ukraine's attempt to win over the support of West African states during its war with Russia.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 07 August, Svetlana Grinchuk, Deputy Energy Minister of Ukraine met with representatives of the Chamber of Deputies

of the National Congress of Brazil. The visit was the first since 2012. The Brazilian side extended their support to Ukraine for their integrity and peace. Followed by the Energy minister's briefing on the energy infrastructures and the current situation, the role of international support in restoring the energy facilities lost due to the war was discussed. They further discussed the prospects of energy development and support funds for Ukraine. The work of nuclear generation also came to the limelight and the parties discussed the safety of the operation of Ukrainian-controlled nuclear power plants and Ukraine's resumed control of Zaporizhzhia plant, a Russian-occupied largest power plant in Europe.

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War in Ukraine Day: 896

Russia claims cross-border attack by Ukraine

The War on the Ground:

On 06 August, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President held a meeting with the staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to understand the situation in the front line and discuss additional funding for the missile programme. The discussion included Pokrovsk, Toretsk and Kharkiv sectors and a report from the intelligence on possible developments of Russian troops. Zelenskyy said: "The Defense Forces' needs until the end of the year and production dynamics... The Staff meeting decided to allocate additional funding for our missile program. There will be more missiles of our own production."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 06 August, Russian forces claimed to deter border cross-border attack by a Ukrainian "reconnaissance group." Aleksey Smirnov, Kursk's acting governor stated that Ukraine's troops had tried to cut through Russia from Sumr and the fighting sparked in Sudzhansky and Korneevsky districts of Kursk. He warned over disinformation campaign after the failed cross-border attack. According to the report, 100 armoured vehicles had entered the Russian border by Sudzhansky district carrying armed US M4 automatic rifles, grenades and C4 explosives. Since 2022, the districts in the Russian border, Kursk, Belgorod and Bryanks have been subject to several missile, drone strikes damaging the energy infrastructure and residential areas. On the same day, Smirnov reported on the death of two civilians including the injury of children from Ukrainian troops' attacks in Kyiv. As per the Russian army, the Federal Security Service (FSB), Ukrainian forces had used artillery, drones, tanks and tried to breach the Russian border and during the attempt close to 20 are reportedly dead.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 06 August, *Politico* reported on EU's approval of EUR 4.2 billion to Ukraine under its EUR 50 billion package of loans and grants for Ukraine reconstruction. In a statement, the Council of the EU listed the nine conditions met by Ukraine: "...public finance management, governance of state-

owned enterprises, business environment, energy and de-mining.” As per the official text, Ukraine’s fight against corruption and money laundering and appointing a new head to its National Agency on Corruption Prevention was seen as progress. Following this, Ukraine would have to implement reforms to improve the GDP to 6.2 per cent by 2027 as per EU estimations and aid in cutting its debt by 10 per cent.

On 06 August, the US Department of State stated the possibility of extending the permission for Ukraine to strike deep into Russia. The move comes after Ukraine received F-16 fighter jets. Matthew Miller, US State Department spokesperson stated that there was continued assessment of the security situation and needs of Ukraine’s military. However, there was no clearance on the expansion of Ukraine’s partners. He said that the decision would come after a discussion among NATO members.

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War in Ukraine Day: 895

Lithuania aids EUR 8.7 million as social assistance to Ukraine

War on the Ground:

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War in Ukraine Day: 895

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War on the Ground:

On 05 August, *Ukrinform* reported on the redeployment of Russian units from the Luhansk region to the Kharkiv. According to Vitalii Sarantsev, the spokesperson for the Kharkiv Group of Forces, the 22nd Motor Rifle Regiment of the Russian armed forces were being deployed in the Luhansk region. He talked about the internal rotations carried out by the Russian forces involving volunteer units and foreign nationals. He believed them to be representatives of the Middle East, Central Asian, or African countries.

On 05 August, *Ukrinform* reported that Ukraine received a USD 3.9 billion grant from the US through the World Bank. According to Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine's

Prime Minister: "The funds will help finance priority budget expenditures such as salaries for teachers, doctors and rescuers and social benefits." He also added that this was the first tranche of direct support from the US. He believed that Ukraine would face the financial period confidently after the allocation of the funds. He also thanked the US for their attention and support throughout the war.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 05 August, *RT* reported on the destruction of Ukrainian Leopard tanks by the Russian forces. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, they spotted the tanks in Kharkiv oblast, firing on Russian positions. The crew of a Russian Msta-S self-propelled howitzer destroyed them. However, the ministry was unclear about the destroyed variants of the tank. According to the report, Ukraine has dozens of Leopard tanks including Leopard 2A4 and older Leopard 1A5 tanks. Although, it is unclear on number of tanks available in the inventory.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 05 August, *LRT* reported on allocation of EUR 8.7 million of the funds borrowed from the state to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour to help the Ukrainians. A total of EUR 10,000 was also allocated to the Health Ministry. The allocated money was for child benefits, social assistance for school children, social payouts, to partially cover heating and water costs and housing rental support. According to the Social Security and Labour Ministry, the country had allocated around EUR 114 million from the state budget to help Ukrainians.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 05 August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine responded to the decision of the Transitional Government of the Republic of Mali to break off diplomatic relations with Ukraine. According to the statement released, Ukraine as a member of the UN adheres to the norms of international peace. It rejected the accusations of Ukraine's support for international terrorism as put

forward by the government of Mali. It reminded the Mali government about the increased role of Ukraine in the support of rights, independence and decolonisation of African people including the Republic of Mali. Lastly, it condemned the Mali government for not providing any proof to Ukraine's involvement in the incident that happened in North Mali. It also rejected its claims and asked for a thorough study of military structures and groups controlled by Russia.

On 05 August, *Ukrinform* reported on the Republic of Botswana becoming a signatory of the Peace Summit joint communique. In response, Zelenskyy appreciated the support and contribution towards global security. On the same day, as a result of Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister meeting with Nancy Tembo, Malawian Foreign Minister signed a memorandum for political consultations and to advance their bilateral relations.

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War in Ukraine Days: 893 & 894

Ukraine's military claims on sinking Russian submarine in Sevastopol

War on the Ground:

On 03 August, *Reuters* reported on the Ukraine military attacks against Russia. According to Ukraine's Defence Ministry, it

sunk a Russian submarine in Sevastopol and hit an airfield, oil depots, fuel and lubricant storage facilities in Belgorod, Kursk and Rostov regions. The general staff of Ukraine's military added that the Sevastopol attack further caused damage to four launchers of the S-400 anti-aircraft "Triumf" defence system. The military also reported on the overnight attacks at the Morozovsk airfield in Rostov Oblast, Russia's store for guided aerial bombs and several oil depots and fuel storage facilities.

On 03 August, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President following the overnight attacks on the Morozovsk field in Rostov Oblast and Sevastopol, stated that it was fair to strike Russia. He added: "Russian combat aviation must be destroyed wherever it is, using any effective means. We need this joint decision with our partners – a security decision." He emphasised the importance of securing Ukrainian lives by pointing out Russia's attack with more than 600 guided aerial bombs in the same week.

On 04 July, Zelenskyy, confirmed the usage of US-supplied F-16 fighter jets for military operations. Although the location remains undisclosed, he called for expansion of training programs for pilots and engineering teams.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 03 August, the *TASS* reported on the casualties caused by the overnight Ukrainian attacks. Three civilians in the Oryol, Donetsk and Belgorod regions of Russia were inflicted with injuries. According to Andrey Klychkov, the governor of the Oryol region, two among the seventeen Ukrainian drones hit a residential building with one casualty. In the Donetsk region, a female civilian was injured according to the report of Alexey Kulemzin, the mayor of the city. Meanwhile, the kamikaze attack in the Belgorod region attacked a car inflicting injury upon the driver.

On 03 August, the *TASS* reported that fuel tanks were caught on fire due to the overnight attacks carried out by Ukraine. Vladimir Savin, head of the Kamensky district administration said: "Fuel tanks at

Oil Depot No. 7 were damaged and caught fire in an attack involving six unmanned aerial vehicles." He also reported that there were no casualties.

The West View: Responses from Europe and the US

On 03 August, *Euronews* reported on Russia's response to the overnight attack carried out by the Ukrainian forces in Rostov Oblast and Sevastopol. According to the Ministry of Defence of Russian Federation, its air defence capabilities intercepted 75 drones over the areas of Belgorod, Krasnodar, Kursk, Oryol, Rostov, Voronezh and the Ryazan region which is deeper inside Russia. The ministry also reported that 36 drones were destroyed over the Rostov region. According to Vasily Golubev, the governor of Rostov Oblast, the region was attacked by 55 drones and the warehouses and storage facilities in the Morozovsk and Kamensky districts were affected.

On 03 August, *BBC* reported that Ukraine claimed to have attacked and sunk the Rostov-on-Don, a Russian submarine in the occupied Crimean Peninsula. According to Ukraine's general staff, a missile attack sank the submarine in the port city of Sevastopol. He added: "The destruction of Rostov-on-Don once again proves that there is no safe place for the Russian fleet in the Ukrainian territorial waters of the Black Sea." It was one of the four submarines in Russia's Black Sea fleet. The officials of Kyiv also reported on the destruction of S-400 air defence systems annexed by Russia in 2014.

The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War

On 04 July, Mali government announced cutting its diplomatic ties with Ukraine following the comments by Andriy Yusov, spokesperson of Ukraine's military intelligence agency. According to the report in *Deutsche Welle*, Yusov has confirmed on Ukraine's involvement in an attack by armed terrorist groups in a fighting near Algerian border which killed 84 Wagner fighters and 47 Malian Soldiers.

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War in Ukraine Day: 890

First F-16 fighter jet delivered

War on the Ground:

On 31 July, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President signed the law No. 3880-IX to amend the budget. According to the proposed law, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, if necessary, can temporarily suspend payments on external public debt until 01 October 2024. It was adopted on 18 July and gave the government the right to put off payments on external debt if necessary. The law also makes it possible to include the public debt restructuring a series of Ukravtodor (State Agency of Automobile Roads of Ukraine) Eurobonds for 2021 for a total of USD 700 million with interest. According to Roksolana Pidlasa, the head of the parliamentary budget committee: "The IMF has routinely expressed support for this bill, as it will help strengthen Ukraine's debt sustainability."

On 01 August, Interfax Ukraine reported on Zelenskyy's interview on engaging China in conflict resolution. He expressed Ukraine's hope that China would pressure Russia rather than mediate the conflict. He wanted China to follow the US and the EU in its approach to Russia. He said: "If China wants to, it can force Russia to stop this war." He also condemned China for not taking a strong stand and called on it to take a "principled position."

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 01 August, the Press Secretary of the Russian Federation commented on the

recent report of F-16 fighter jets delivered to Ukraine. He emphasised: "The jets would not influence the dynamics of events at the front." He further added: "There is no "magic pill" for Kyiv and it will not have this "panacea" for long." His comments come after Bloomberg reported on the arrival of the first US-made fighter jets in Ukraine. The report did not indicate the country which supplied the aircraft but noted that the number of jets was "small."

The West View:

Responses from the Europe and the US

On 01 August, Gabrielius Landsbergis, Lithuania's foreign minister and a US official confirmed the arrival of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine. The number of delivered aircraft was reported to be six and is expected to increase in future. According to Oleksandra Ustinova, head of Kyiv's parliamentary commission on arms, Ukraine needs 120 F-16s to enhance its air capacity. Ustinova also added that at least 20 pilots would be ready to fly the jets by the end of 2024.

On 01 August, Moldova's Foreign Ministry asked one of the employees in the Russian Embassy to Chisinau to leave in 48 hours. The move comes after Chisinau officials detained two Moldovan officials after a security raid in the parliament under suspicion of spying. In a statement, the ministry confirmed the summoning of Oleg Vasnetsov, Russian Ambassador and its employee's declaration as "persona non grata." According to the report in Radio Free Liberty, under Maia Sandu, Moldova's President has expelled 45 Russian diplomats out of 70 after an investigation revealed the gathering of intelligence information for Russia.

On 01 August, Euronews reported a significant reduction in Ireland's weekly payments to refugees. The Government currently provides EUR 232 per week but from 01 September 2024 the amount will be reduced to just EUR 38.8. The left-wing parties have raised concerns against the reduction since it will increase child poverty. The reduction will affect 19,000 refugees.

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War in Ukraine Day: 889

Russia begins third stage of non-strategic nuclear drills

War on the Ground:

On 31 July, Kyiv Independent reported on the naval attack carried out by Ukraine on a weapons storage facility near Kursk Oblast, a Russian city. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation claimed to have intercepted a Neptune missile over the Kursk Oblast overnight. Alexei Smirnov, the acting governor of Kursk Oblast reported on a fire breakout at an unnamed facility which was contained two hours later.

On 31 July, Kyiv Independent reported on the multiple explosions in Kyiv caused by the drone and missile attack on Ukraine. After two explosions, attack drones were flying over Brovary on the eastern outskirts of the city. The Air Force had warned of Russian drone attacks in the south of the city. According to the statements of Ukraine's Air Force, Russia launched dozens of drones towards several regions of Ukraine. There were no reports of casualties or damage.

The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 31 July, the Russian Defence Ministry reported on starting the third stage of drills to deploy tactical nuclear weapons. The move comes after Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation decision.

In the exercise, personnel of the Southern and Central military districts planned to train special training warheads for the Iskander operational-tactical missile system, connecting launchers and taking it to the designated positions. Military personnel of the Russian Aerospace Forces' units will train to load the aircraft with warheads. This third stage of drills aimed to maintain Russian military personnel and hardware to carry out the designated missions.

On 31 July, Putin called for a signing bonus of RUB 400,000 for new army recruits. The recruits were to sign military contracts for one year from 01 August to the end of 2024. The latest bonus is double the lump-sum of RUB 195,000 which the government had offered the recruits to fight since 2022. The issued presidential decree also "recommends" an additional RUB 400,00 to be paid by the senior regional officials to the enlisted residents.

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

On 31 July, ASB Zeitung reported on Wheelan, who carries Canadian, British and

Irish citizenship, had been in custody since 2018 on charges of espionage. Lawyers of detained soldiers and opposition leaders were searching for their whereabouts amid speculations of a prisoner exchange between Russia and the US. US and Russia were negotiating the exchange of Evan Gershkovich, a US journalist imprisoned in Russia, sentenced to 16 years for espionage with Vadim Krasikov. The US and the EU had continued to requests to reveal the location of Gershkovich, following these negotiations.

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EM Daily Brief*

By Neha Tresa George and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: EPA/ Politico, theparliamentmagazine.eu, Augustin Mudiayi/Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières via AP, Fabrizio Bensch/REUTERS, Associated Press, Associated Press.

AUSTRIA

Floods cause damage in Alpine and rainfall in Doebling

On 18 August, news reports by Austrian media and local authorities confirmed the outbreak of heavy floods in the country. Damage in the western Alpine regions by floods was recorded through social media footage of muddy water damaging cars in the ski resort village of St Anton. The Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF), the state-owned public broadcaster brought about the impact of floods in the capital of Vienna; reporting that the Austrian Fire Brigade Association was called in over 450 times on Saturday, 17 August due to the disruption caused to rail and road transport in the capital. Kevin Hebenstreit, a meteorologist for ORF Vienna stated that the 110 litres of rain per square metres reported in the Doebling district was a record for August rainfall in the city. According to UBIMET, a weather forecasting firm, a large proportion of Vienna's average summer rainfall was witnessed in just one

hour on Saturday. Karl Nehammer, Chancellor of Austria confirmed the damage in a tweet on X, thanking officials who were attempting to rectify the damage. ("[Austria battles major flooding after record downpours](#)," *Reuters*, 18 August 2024)

Last Generation ends the campaign

On 06 August, climate activist group *Last Generation* announced that it was ending its campaign in Austria as there was no hope of improvement from the Government. The branch office said that the Government has shown complete incompetence and has no prospects of success. The group said that the Government is choosing ignorance on its use of fossil fuels. The group had taken different measures like blocking roads and getting glued to runways to protest against climate change. However, the Chancellor of Austria, Karl Nehammer wrote on X that he is glad that the "nonsense is over." He has previously described the protestors as extremists. Most climate change activists have been subject to jail times, fines and

* 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.

bans by the European governments. ("Austria wants to remain in fossil ignorance": Climate activist group to end campaign. *Politico*, 06 August 2024)

BULGARIA

Bulgaria urged to scrap controversial LGBTQ ban

On 12 August, Bulgaria was asked to withdraw its LGBTQ promotion ban by the Council of Europe. Michael O'Flaherty, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, tweeted on the social media platform X that he was "deeply concerned by the recent law passed by Bulgaria's Parliament to ban so-called LGBTI 'propaganda' in schools." O'Flaherty urged Rumen Radev, President of Bulgaria to not sign the law, and said authorities must take steps to tackle discrimination and rhetoric against the community. The law bans teaching in schools ideas about sexual orientation and gender identity, apart from the 'biological one.' It sparked protests in the Bulgarian capital, with demonstrators chanting "Shame on you." ("Council of Europe urges Bulgaria to scrap LGBTQ 'promotion' ban." *Euractiv*, 13 August 2024)

Parliament passes law restricting LGBTQ+ "propaganda"

On 08 August, Bulgaria joined Hungary and Russia to pass legislation that prohibits "propaganda, promotion and incitement" of LGBTQ+ "views." The bill was introduced by the far-right, pro-Russia Revival Party. Moreover, it was passed with a massive majority with 159 votes out of 240 in favour of the Bill. Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 and this year, it was ranked the third worst country in the EU bloc for the queer community. Forbidden Colours, an LGBTQ+ rights group based in Brussels, protested in front of the Sofia, parliamentary building of Bulgaria. The European Commission and several EU countries had filed a case against Hungary's law on restricting LGBTQ+ rights in the European Court of Justice. Thus, it will be interesting to follow the European Commission's reaction towards Bulgaria's new law. Bulgaria is also heading towards its seventh national elections in the last three years since parties are failing to form

a stable government. ("Rights groups slam Bulgaria for banning LGBTQ+ 'propaganda'." *Politico*, 08 August 2024)

President calls for seventh parliamentary election in three years

On 07 August, President Rumen Radev announced a parliamentary election due to a lack of support for the current Government to form a coalition. Since the anti-graft protests in 2020 against the coalition government formed by the centre-right Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) Party, Bulgaria has had an unstable parliament. In the recent election, GERB became the largest party in the country. Another biggest party is the Continue the Change (PP) Party. Bulgaria continues to face a stalemate since 2021 barring it from joining the Eurozone and operating freely in the Schengen area. The elections are scheduled in the upcoming two months. ("Bulgaria heads to another snap election after parties fail to form government." *Reuters*, 08 August 2024)

CYPRUS

Biologist nominated by the government for post of EU Commissioner

On 19 August, the Government of Cyprus announced that it had nominated Costas Kadis for the post of European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety. Kadis, a biologist and acting dean at The School of Health Sciences at Frederick University in Cyprus has served as Cypriot Minister of Health and Cypriot Minister of Agriculture in the past. Konstantinos Letymptotis, a spokesperson for the Government of Cyprus stated that Kadis's ministerial experience, academic skills, and training compelled the government to select him for the post. The post became vacant after Stella Kyriakides, the incumbent Commissioner, announced she would not run for a second term. According to the European Commission, EU member nations have to name their pick for the post of Commissioner by 30 August. Despite Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission requesting countries put forward both a man and a woman, several

countries including Cyprus have announced only a man. (Ketrin Johecova, "[Cyprus nominates Costas Kadis as EU commissioner](#)," Politico, 19 August 2024)

Central Bank revises GDP growth to three per cent

On 06 August, the Central Bank of Cyprus published its Economic Bulletin June 2024 edition. In the Bulletin, the Bank revised the projected GDP growth rate to three per cent, increasing it by 0.2 per cent. The bulletin said that the impact of the Middle East conflict is limited. The growth is mainly driven by the domestic demand rather than the export demand. Also, the upward trend is due to better-than-expected economic returns in tourism services, trade and construction, and an expected decrease in inflation due to the eurozone's unified monetary policy. The Bulletin said that the projection is "conservative." Meanwhile, it also recognises the volatility of the economy due to the uncertain external environment. The Bank highlighted the role of the European Union's Recovery and Resilience Facility in supporting economic activity in Cyprus. Employment in the country will also increase by 1.6 per cent and inflation by 2.1 per cent as per the Bulletin. ("[CBC revises Cyprus' GDP growth forecast for 2024 to 3 per cent](#)," *Cyprus Mail*, 06 August 2024)

Cyprus-US joint air force exercise

On 06 August, the Defence Ministry of Cyprus announced that Cyprus and the US air forces would hold joint exercises from 06 to 08 August. The joint training will involve the air forces and the army of both countries. The announcement comes due to conflict in the Middle East demanding a greater American air force presence. A few weeks ago, the Minister of Transport of Israel said that Israel might ask Cyprus for naval assistance if the conflict escalated. Meanwhile, Hezbollah has threatened Cyprus and said it will consider Cyprus "a part of the war." Last week, according to the *Washington Post*, the US sent 12 warships and an aircraft carrier to the region to prepare for the war it is trying to avoid.

("Cyprus-US joint air force exercises planned," *Cyprus Mail*, 06 August 2024)

DENMARK

Bavarian Nordic says 10 million Mpox jabs possible by 2025 end

On 15 August, Paul Chaplin, CEO of Danish biotechnology company Bavarian Nordic said that 10 million Mpox vaccine doses can be provided by the end of 2025. Chaplin said in remarks to Bloomberg: "We have inventory and we have the capabilities, what we're missing are the orders." The remarks come as African nations deal with a fresh outbreak of the Mpox virus, which has been declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO). The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) stated that 10 million doses are required to deal with the outbreak. Bavarian Nordic and the European Commission have donated over 200,000 doses to Africa, and Chaplin stated that 300,000 more doses are ready for immediate shipment. In preparation for a potential outbreak, several European countries hold Mpox vaccine stockpiles. The European Union had signed a contract for two million vaccine doses in November 2022, while the US Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) ordered Bavarian Nordic to refill its vaccine stocks. (Rory O'Neill, "[Bavarian Nordic says it can supply 10M Mpox jabs by end of 2025](#)," Politico, 15 August 2024)

FINLAND

Kurdish leader captured by Turkish intelligence

On 25 August, *Middle East Monitor* reported that the alleged ringleader for the branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Finland had been captured by the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), the intelligence agency of the Government of Turkiye. As per anonymous Turkish security sources in the media, the MIT and the Istanbul Police Department carried out a joint operation; which resulted in the capture of Mehnaz Omari or 'Naze Ad' in Istanbul this week. It is alleged that Omari, who is an Iranian national, organised events

and protests in Finland supporting the PKK and being involved in the group's coordination, recruitment, and financing efforts. His arrest comes amidst increased efforts by Turkish intelligence to infiltrate the activities and networks of the PKK across Europe. Turkish authorities have accused the PKK of using European countries for recruitment and spreading their activities, and Omari's arrest can help in uncovering the organisation's activities according to Turkish security sources. (["Turkiye intelligence agency captures PKK's Finland ringleader," Middle East Monitor, 25 August 2024](#))

Environmental organisations file case against the government for climate inaction

On 23 August, an article in *Fortune* informed that a group of six environmental organisations was filing a case against the Government of Finland for its inaction in meeting the country's climate targets. The six organisations filed the case in the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland on 02 August, arguing that the government's inaction violates the Climate Act. As per the organisations, Finland's failure to curb emissions from the agricultural and transport sectors, and excessive logging means it is not on track to meet its emission reduction targets. Kaisa Kosonen, Senior Policy Advisor at the environmental organisation Greenpeace Norden accused the Finland government of failing to enact solutions, cancelling actions, and not revising the outdated plan for land use and forestry. The organisations noted that this was after Finland had adopted strong net zero climate targets in 2022, and promised to become climate neutral by 2035. They also stated that the present case builds on an earlier ruling by a Finnish court, and the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that Switzerland violated the rights of elderly women through its failure to combat global warming. (["Greenpeace files supreme court case accusing Finland of climate inaction," Fortune, 23 August 2024](#))

Gears up against possible Russian sabotage attacks

On 23 August, *Deutsche Welle* reported about preparations by the Government of Finland against potential sabotage attacks by Russia. Concerns over Russian attacks have been increasing across Europe after a Russian plot to assassinate the chief executive officer (CEO) of German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall, a key supplier of weapons to Ukraine was uncovered. Russia has also been linked to recent fires at an IKEA store in Lithuania and a mall in Poland. Mari Heinenon, Director of Water Services at the Helsinki Region Environmental Services Authority (HSY) stated that Finland has always been preparing for potential Russian attacks, even before the invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, underground shelters have been constructed which can withstand nuclear conflict and fit about 90 per cent of the country's population. Citizens in Finland have also been trained to take on specific responsibilities in case of emergencies. Due to Finland's advanced preparedness, Sauli Niinistö, the former President of Finland was made a Special Advisor and asked to write a report on improving the crisis preparedness of European societies by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission. According to Sauli Niinistö, former Prime Minister of Finland, European societies need to develop a mindset that security is important; and the public and private sectors must cooperate to ensure security. ([Teri Schultz, "Finland: Leading the way in defence against sabotage," Deutsche Welle, 23 August 2024](#))

Statistics Finland records highest unemployment rates in the EU

On 13 August, a report published by Statistics Finland highlighted the dire unemployment scenario. The figures show Finland's unemployment rate at 8.4 per cent, the third-highest in the EU. However, the top two countries, namely Spain and Greece have seen their employment figures improve in the past one year. Finland has declined even more, with little hope for respite. Janne Huovari, Senior Financial Advisor at the Finnish Ministry of Finance

stated that the rate could increase with the government's austerity measures. Governmental reforms geared at improving employment such as cuts to housing allowance and staggering of earnings-related unemployment benefits may increase unemployment if there is no demand for labour, according to Huovari. This has also made the government's aim of creating 100,000 new jobs difficult, with Huovari acknowledging that it would be "challenging. Huovari believes that rising interest rates have negatively impacted the Finnish economy since variable rates are more common in the country for housing and corporate loans. The impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and high immigration continuing despite a negative economic situation are contributing factors as well, in his view. (["Finland's unemployment rate among worst in EU8," YLE News, 13 August 2024](#))

Government replaces football turf pitches ahead of micro-plastic ban

On 13 August, an article in YLE News talked about the creation of new "non-filler" football pitches in Finland. The loose turf fillers used presently in artificial football pitches contribute towards microplastic pollution, and will be banned in the European Union from 2031. Of the 44,000 pitches to be replaced, over 500 are located in Finland; putting the country at the forefront of the issue. Oleg Jauhonen, Helsinki municipality coordinator stated that the present artificial pitches utilize plastics and other materials as fillers to make grass blades stand up straighter, and the rubber crumbs used are carried into natural environments and watercourses. However, according to Jauhonen, the new pitches can be recycled easily since they do not contain multiple toxic materials. There are 80 artificial pitches in Helsinki, 70 per cent of which use pollution causing rubber crumb fillers. Jauhonen also noted that the non-filler surfaces had received positive reviews when they were used in Belgium, and believes they will be suitable for junior football at least. Käpylä football field will see the first of the new surfaces installed in the autumn, the first step towards a gradual

shift in Finland. Tero Auvinen, Head of Infrastructure, Football Association of Finland stated that a six-year transition period was extended by two years, in order for new materials to be developed. Auvinen said, "Pitches should be both environmentally friendly and good playing surfaces." (["Finland replacing artificial pitches ahead of microplastics ban," YLE News, 13 August 2024](#))

FRANCE

Macron rejects left-wing alliance sparks anger

On 27 August, an article in *Deutsche Welle* informed that Emmanuel Macron, the President of France had refused to name a left-wing government. Macron stated that having a left-wing government would threaten "institutional stability" and argued that he could not choose a Prime Minister who would receive a vote of no confidence in the parliament. France has been in political deadlock since inconclusive legislative elections where the New Popular Front (NFP) left-wing alliance got the most seats. Marine Tondelier, National Secretary of the Ecologists Greens party stated that Macron was ignoring the election results; while Mathilde Panot, leader of the France Unbowed group in the National Assembly threatened Macron with impeachment. Manuel Bompard, national coordinator for the France Unbowed group stated that Macron's remarks were an "unacceptable anti-democratic coup" while Jean-Luc Mélenchon, founder of France Unbowed threatened an impeachment motion against the President. Fabien Roussel, National Secretary of the French Communist Party ruled out fresh talks with Macron. (["Anger after Macron rejects France left-wing government," Deutsche Welle, 27 August 2024](#))

French President states Telegram CEO arrest not political

On 26 August, an article in *Deutsche Welle News* informed that Emmanuel Macron, the President of France stated that the arrest of Pavel Durov, the founder of messaging app Telegram was not motivated by political reasons. Durov had been arrested at Le

Bourget airport outside Paris on 24 August and faces charges of failing to curb Telegram being used for criminal purposes. With multiple questions and claims circulating around Durov's arrest, Macron posted a tweet on X, stating that, "The arrest of the president of Telegram on French soil took place as part of an ongoing judicial investigation. It is in no way a political decision." The President also stated that France was, and would remain committed to freedom of expression and communication, innovation, and the spirit of entrepreneurship. Durov has been sent to the maximum 96-hour initial detention in French custody, with a judge deciding whether to release him or press charges after the initial period. (["Telegram CEO Pavel Durov's arrest not political-Macron," Deutsche Welle News, 26 August 2024](#))

Longest caretaker government for 39 days

On 24 August, *Le Monde* reported that France had set a record for the longest period under a caretaker government. France has been without an elected government for 39 days since 16 July, when Gabriel Attal, the Prime Minister of France resigned following inconclusive parliamentary elections. During this period, Attal and his cabinet have been running a caretaker government handling the "day to day" affairs, while negotiations over forming an elected government continue. This is the first time under the French Fifth Republic government that the transition period between two governments has crossed nine days. The present period under Attal is also more than the 38-day gap record without an elected administration under the previous Fourth Republic form of government. (Pierre Breteau, "[France sets its new record for longest period under caretaker government," Le Monde, 24 August 2024](#))

Left-wing parties divided as left-wing leader plans to launch impeachment against Macron

On 19 August, *Politico* reported on the increasing fragmentation in the New

Popular Front left-wing political alliance in France amidst negotiations over government formation. The present divisions began after Jean-Luc Mélenchon, founder of the France Unbowed left-wing party called on the French Parliament to launch an impeachment procedure against Emmanuel Macron, President of France if Lucie Castets was not appointed the Prime Minister. He is also the left-wing alliance's preferred candidate for the post. However, the leaders of other left-wing parties in the alliance like the Socialist Party and The Ecologists Greens criticised Mélenchon's impeachment call; which comes right before scheduled talks over government formation between Macron and the New Popular Front. Meanwhile, the internal squabbles amongst the left have come as a boost for Macron who has favoured a more centrist alliance governing France, instead of the left. (Giorgio Leali and Antonio Lattier, "[French left splits again after Mélenchon calls for Macron's impeachment," Politico, 19 August 2024](#))

NGO finds increased Microplastics in soda bottles

On 25 August, *Euro News* reported on a report which found that the level of microplastics in soda bottles increased based on the number of times they were opened. The report by Agir pour l'environnement (Act for the environment) a French non-profit organisation (NGO) found that six types of plastic were present in Coca-Cola and Schweppes soda, in contrast to the manufacturers declaring only two. As per the report, the more the bottle is opened, the more the plastic cap may degrade causing more particles. The first time the bottles were opened, four microplastics were found for one litre of Coca-Cola and 4.6 for one litre of Schweppes. However, after opening 20 times, 46 microplastics were found for one litre of Coca-Cola and 62 for one litre of Schweppes. Nanoparticles were also found in large amounts in the bottles. Magali Leroy, Survey Manager for the Agir NGO stated that the results questioned the guarantee of Coca-Cola and French health authorities that the drinks do not have an

adverse health impact. Previous research and studies had found a large level of microplastics present in plastic water bottles. It is also estimated that the annual intake of microplastic particles from food sources ranges from 39,000 to 52,000 per person every year. (Oceane Duboust, [“Number of microplastics in soda bottles found to increase the more you open them,” Euro News, 25 August 2024](#))

Macron must accept changed political scenario says an editorial in *Le Monde*

On 19 August, an editorial in *Le Monde* stated that Emmanuel Macron, President of France must adapt to the new political situation in France. The editorial notes how France remains without a government six weeks after the parliamentary elections; an unprecedented situation which violates democratic principles, in the view of the editorial. According to the editorial, the political deadlock stems due to the rigid views of two opposing political camps. The first is that of political groups on the left who want a Prime Minister who is an autonomous head of government. The second is President Macron, who wishes to remain at the centre of French politics, exercising influence. The editorial calls on the double denial of both political groupings to end, to ensure a stable government. It states that Macron needs to accept the results of the elections which saw a decrease in his power, and accept the changed scenario. Simultaneously, the left groups must learn to cooperate, rather than believing they can govern the country alone. The editorial concludes with the hope that attempts are made towards creating a proper government, instead of the prevailing political polarization. ([“Macron must stop playing for time,” Le Monde, 19 August 2024](#))

Macron to meet party leaders to form alliance

On 16 August, Emmanuel Macron, President of France, announced that he would convene all party leaders on 23 August. The spokesperson of the Élysée Palace said that Macron will hold a series of discussions with all leaders to decide upon the Prime

Minister. Earlier, in July, Macron said that he would announce the Prime Minister after the Olympics 2024 concluded. The national politics of France has reached a stalemate since the elections. In June, Macron had dissolved the parliament and called for snap elections. No party can claim the majority. The spokesperson said that the 23 August meetings aim to “build the broadest and most stable majority possible to serve the country.” The left-wing party, New Popular Front, emerged as the largest party and has voted for Lucie Castets as the new Prime Minister. France24 reported that Macron might push for an alliance that includes the traditional right and centre-left in the government while ruling out any chances of the hard-left party, France Unbowed, or Marine Le Pen's far-right party in the government. He has also pushed Xavier Bertrand, head of the northern Hauts de France region, to be named as Prime Minister. ([“Macron convenes French party leaders for August 23 talks aimed at forming a government,” France24, 16 August 2024](#))

Marcon ally Gabriel Attal poses threat to President says opinion in *Politico*

On 15 August, *Politico* reported on the potential disagreements between Emmanuel Macron, President of France and Prime Minister, Gabriel Attal. The article brought out how after Marcon's shock decision to call snap parliamentary elections, leaders from his party had rallied behind Attal. Leaders worried that Marcon's unpopularity would hurt their electoral chances; and supported Attal, who was appointed as France's youngest Prime Minister only a few months back. Marcon's centrist alliance lost one-third of their seats in the election, but finished ahead of the far-right National Rally. In this scenario, Attal took control of Renaissance, the main centrist parliamentary group. Baptiste Dupont, a researcher for a polling group, believed that Attal has maintained his popularity by distancing himself from Marcon's unpopular decision to dissolve parliament. Dupont said: “The role of villain fell on the shoulders of the president.” Attal

has reached out to leaders of other parliamentary groups and met Olympic athletes, boosting his profile as a leader. However, Attal's desire to lead both the parliamentary group and the party has led to criticism. An anonymous Renaissance MP said, "There's no better way to get burned than trying to control everything at once." (Victor Goury-Laffont and Clea Caulcutt, "Macron protégé Gabriel Attal turns into biggest threat to president," *Politico*, 15 August 2024)

Minister for Justice calls out Sweden over gang violence impact

On 12 August, Peter Hummelgaard, Danish Minister for Justice stated that his country would pressurise Sweden to contain cross-border gang violence. The remarks come amid an increase in violence by Swedish gang members in Denmark in recent months, which the Danish government calls an effect of gun violence in Sweden. Sweden has about 14,000 active gang criminals and about 48,000 people loosely affiliated with gangs. Due to this, Sweden has the highest per capita rate of gun violence in the EU. To combat the growing threat to Denmark, Danish police began monitoring passengers arriving from Sweden by train more closely, and the government plans to introduce facial recognition technology to increase the speed of manual investigation. Hummelgaard said: "We will of course also put pressure on Sweden to take responsibility for these things." Additionally, Thorkild Fogde, National Police Commissioner of the Police of Denmark informed at a press conference that Swedish gang members involved in violence would face consequences. ("Denmark to pressure Sweden over gang violence," *Reuters*, 12 August 2024)

Masses of ice break off from the Mont Blanc glacier

On 05 August, one person died and four were injured when a block of ice, known as sérac, fell in the Mont Blanc du Tacul region. Mont Blanc is the highest mountain in Western Europe, on the France-Italy border. The deceased person was a French national.

The person was mountaineering with a group of 15 people, the group included Spanish and Swiss citizens as well. Officials have said the breaking of ice blocks is a natural process making mountaineering a dangerous sport. ("France: 1 dead in Mont Blanc glacier ice fall," *Deutsche Welle*, 06 August 2024)

Government issues advisory for citizens in Lebanon

On 04 August, France joined the US and the UK calling its citizens back from Lebanon. It asked them to: "Leave the country as soon as possible." The advisory comes after the Israel and Hezbollah conflict has transformed into a broader regional conflict in the Middle East. According to *Le Monde*, around 23,000 French citizens lived in Lebanon and 10,000 citizens visited in July. Meanwhile, the US is moving its fighter jets and warships to the region to protect American personnels and Israel. The escalation comes after Israel claimed its strike near Beirut. On 03 August, Hezbollah launched around a dozen rockets at Israel. ("France calls on citizens in Lebanon to leave 'as soon as possible'," *Le Monde*, 05 August 2024)

GEORGIA

Georgian Dream party threatens to ban opponents

On 23 August, *Politico* reported on Georgian Dream, the ruling party in Georgia had threatened to ban more than half a dozen parties if it won the parliamentary elections in October. Irakli Kobakhidze, Prime Minister of Georgia made the threat, referring to opposition groups as 'criminal political forces'; and stating that all the pro-Western political groups in Parliament were 'one political force.' Just days earlier, Georgian Dream had threatened to ban the United National Movement (UNM), the largest opposition group in the Parliament of Georgia. The threat comes amidst protests against the Georgian government over a bill that brands NGOs and media outlets with Western support as 'foreign agents.' The bill has led to the European Union (EU) suspending talks on Georgian membership, as well as the US suspending

funding. Tinatin Akhvlediani, a researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies stated that banning the opposition would be the effective end of Georgian democracy, comparing it to governments in Belarus and North Korea. According to Tina Bokuchava, Chair of the UNM, the attempt to ban her party shows the Georgian Dream has become a "Putin-style authoritarian government." (Gabriel Gavin, "[Georgian government goes 'North Korea' with bombshell plan to ban opposition parties](#)," *Politico*, 23 August 2024)

Thousands protest against Slovak government's policies

On 23 August, *Politico* reported on the developments in Slovakia, where hundreds took part in protests against the government. The protestors include opposition politicians, journalists and nonprofit employees alarmed at the government taking what they perceive to be an illiberal direction under Robert Fico, Prime Minister of Slovakia. Protests in the country have resumed after Fico, who survived an assassination attempt in May returned to public life. The resignation of Martina Simkovicova, Slovakian Minister for Culture was demanded, with demonstrators criticising her decisions to cut funding for independent art institutions and sack the National Theatre Director and Director of the National Gallery. Other contentious actions taken by the Fico administration include closing the special prosecutor's office dealing with corruption cases and revamping the public broadcaster Radio and Television Slovakia. This has led to fears that Slovakia is moving away from close ties with the West, and gravitating towards autocratic governments instead like in Hungary. Meanwhile, Fico believes he is being targeted for following a "sovereign and self-confident Slovak foreign policy." (Eddy Wax and Csongor Koromi, "[Slovakia's Fico is back after being shot. So are the country's protesters](#)," *Politico*, 23 August 2024)

Georgian Dream party vows to ban United National Movement

On 21 August, Georgia's ruling party Georgian Dream released a statement that blamed the largest opposition party United National Movement (UNM) for starting the Russia-Georgia war in 2008. It also accused the party of planning to open a second front in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. The Party pledged to declare UNM and its satellite parties as unconstitutional once Georgia Dream gets a majority in the parliament. The Party also intends to introduce bills curbing the propagation of LGBTQ+ ideas, like Hungary and Bulgaria. As of now, the Georgian Dream Party can still appeal to the Constitutional Court to outlaw the party based on the allegation to "overthrow the constitutional order of the country...to infringe on the independence and territorial integrity of the country, or to propagandise war or violence." Opposition claims that Georgia Dream wants to concede to Russia Parliamentary elections in Georgia will take place on 26 October. (Ketrin Johecova, "[Georgia's ruling party wants to outlaw the opposition](#)," *Politico*, 22 August 2024)

GERMANY

Attempts to reduce auto industry dependence on China

On 26 August, *Politico* reported on the attempts by the Federal Government of Germany to reduce its economic dependence on China. Through steps like supporting tariffs on Chinese-made EVs, arresting German citizens on charges of spying for the Chinese government, and increasing military exercises with Japan; the German government is attempting to signal to China that an era of strategic competition has begun. However, the German auto industry remains sceptical of measures to move away from China. The car manufacturers receive substantial profits from sales in China and have opposed moves that could anger the Chinese government; such as the proposed tariffs on Chinese-made Electric Vehicles (EVs). Amidst a shift towards EVs, German car manufacturers BMW and Volkswagen have seen their sales in China decline. The reluctance of the auto industry and the weak German economy means that the

German government cannot completely move away from China. (Stuart Lau, Nette Nostlinger, and Jordyn Dahl, "[Germany's slow-motion move away from China](#)," *Politico*, 26 August 2024)

Germany provides Africa with 100,000 vaccine doses in Mpox fight

On 26 August, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the Federal Government of Germany would donate 100,000 doses of the Mpox vaccine to African countries. The doses will go from the reserve of 118,000 doses maintained by the German military. Additionally, the German government will provide funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) and support African partners through the Gavi Vaccine Alliance. Steffen Hebestreit, a spokesperson for the German government informed that Germany's aim was to support the efforts to combat Mpox in Africa, and that the German government would work alongside the African Union (AU) to foster local vaccine production. The announcements by Germany come amidst the Mpox outbreak having been declared a global public health emergency, with the new and deadlier Clade 1b strain a major threat. ("[Germany to donate Africa 100,000 mpox vaccine doses](#)," *Deutsche Welle News*, 26 August 2024)

Government at risk of losing state elections to far-right says *Deutsche Welle*

On 25 August, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the incumbent Federal Government of Germany was in danger of losing regional state elections. Elections are scheduled to be conducted in the east German states of Thuringia and Saxony on 01 September, and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany trails behind in polls. There are fears whether the SPD could garner even the five per cent vote share required for representation in the state parliament. Its coalition partners the Green Party and Free Democrats are also at risk of suffering humiliation in the elections. On the other hand, the far-right party, Alternative for Germany (AfD) has taken advantage of concerns by voters in these states over migration, the economy, and the

German government's aid for Ukraine to lead in the polls. Bjorn Hocke, leader of the AfD in Thuringia said that a vote for the AfD was needed to prevent "the demise of the country." The party is far ahead in opinion polls in Thuringia, while in Saxony polls show the Christian Democrats (CDU) being equal to the AfD. At the moment, the only chance of preventing the AfD from forming governments in the two states appears to be an unlikely coalition between the CDU and the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), a left-wing nationalist party. The BSW is polling well in the two states, and is opposed to stationing US missiles in Germany; complicating things for the CDU. (Ben Knight, "[German government's future in danger in regional elections](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 August 2024)

Government announces plan to decarbonise industries

On 23 August, *Euro News* published an article informing about plans by the Federal Government of Germany towards decarbonising its industries. The German government is expected to invest EUR 3.3 billion in measures aimed at making industries more climate-friendly, as part of the plan to cut emissions to net zero by 2045. A program of "carbon contracts for difference" was started, in order to move towards more climate-friendly production methods. One of the proposed governmental measures is burying carbon underground at offshore sites. However, critics state that carbon storage is less effective compared to measures like using solar and wind energy. The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action of Germany plans to start the programme as soon as next month, with companies given three months to submit projects for possible support. (Ruth Wright, "[Germany announces €3.3 billion plan for decarbonising industry, including underground carbon storage](#)," *Euro News*, 23 August 2024)

Significant rise in illegal border crossing in Germany

On 21 August, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) of Germany released a report

suggesting a drastic increase in the number of illegal migrants in 2023. According to the report, 2,66,224 individuals crossed the border illegally. The number is 33.6 per cent higher than in 2022. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency reported 3,80,200 undocumented individuals in the 29 countries' Schengen area. The number is the highest since 2016. Main countries of origin of illegal border crossing were Syria, Turkey and Afghanistan. Most of them entered Europe through human smugglers and traffickers. ("German police report significant rise in illegal migration," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 August 2024)

Ukraine war persuading voters in Eastern Germany says an opinion in *Deutsche Welle*

On 21 August, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the impact of Germany's foreign policy on the voters of eastern Germany. State elections will be organised in September in Thuringia, Saxony and Brandenburg. Issues at the centre of the election campaign are the supply of weapons to Ukraine and the stationing of new US weapons in Germany. Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, Germany has spent EUR 23 billion to support Ukraine. Germany is only second to the US in providing support to Ukraine. The Forsa polling institute found in a survey that 34 per cent of citizens of eastern Germany think that the country is doing too much for Ukraine. Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union support the Ukrainian cause while left-leaning parties like Alternative for Germany and Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance advocate pro-Russian foreign policy initiatives. Tino Chrupalla, co-chairperson of Alternative, said in an interview, "We are paying exorbitant energy prices, inflation has skyrocketed, all as a result of the sanctions. This must stop." The debate has also gained momentum after Olaf Schulz, Chancellor of the German Federation, agreed for deployment of American missiles on German soil. ("Foreign policy shapes regional elections in eastern Germany," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 August 2024)

Two men arrested for plotting to shoot near Swedish parliament

On 22 August, German prosecutors charged two men for plotting a shooting near the Swedish parliament in Stockholm. One of them was a member of the Islamic State extremist group and the other one was a supporter of the group. Both accused hold Afghanistan citizenship and donated money to the Islamic State Khorasan Province through intermediaries. Both suspects were arrested in Gera, a city in eastern Germany. The court in the district of Gera will decide on the proceedings of the trials. Extremism has increased in Germany. In the summer 2023, Iraqi Christian refugees burnt copies of the Quran in Sweden. After which Iraqi refugees stormed the Swedish embassy in Germany. Quran burning further led to Turkey blocking Sweden's membership bid in NATO, meanwhile also increasing polarisation in the society. ("Germany charges 'IS' supporters with Sweden attack plot," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 August 2024)

Federal government to tackle knife crime through stricter regulations

On 19 August, it was reported that the Federal Government of Germany plans stricter knife laws following an increase in the number of stabbings. The country has been alarmed by the problem after reports of a 5.6 per cent year on year rise in the cases of serious bodily harm involving a knife. 430 knife attacks were reported in and around railway stations, in the first six months of 2024. In response, Nancy Faeser, German Federal Minister of the Interior and Community demanded that knives of only six centimetres be allowed, except for household knives; alongside a complete ban on switchblades. However, Dirk Baier, a German criminologist at the Institute of Crime Prevention and Delinquency in Zurich doubted the German data on knife crime, stating that both attacks and threats carried out with knives are put in the same category. Lars Wendland, chairperson of the German Trade Police Union advocated for facial recognition and random checks by police in "no weapon zones", to prevent knife attacks from occurring in the first place. The debate around knife crime has

also received a racial dimension; with far-right political party Alternative for Germany (AfD) accusing the country's migration policy of being behind the crime rise. However, Baier argued that social circumstances rather than ethnic identity were the reason for the increasing number of knife attacks. (Ben Knight, "[Germany getting tough on knife crime](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 19 August 2024)

Opinion in *Deutsche Welle* records response of major countries on the Nord Stream attack

On 16 August, *Deutsche Welle* outlined the response of the major geopolitical players to reports stating Ukraine was involved in the 2022 Nord Stream pipeline attack. According to Ukraine, there has been complete denial that they were involved in the attacks. Mykhailo Podolyak, Advisor to the Office of the President of Ukraine stated there was no practical sense for Ukraine to be involved in the attacks. However, the article states that Ukraine had a valid reason for being against the pipeline since it could have proved a source of funding for Russia. Similar to Ukraine, Poland has also denied any involvement in the attacks, despite a former head of the German intelligence agency claiming the same. Germany's support for Ukraine remains strong too, with the government stating its support for Ukraine "remains independent" of the Nord Stream sabotage probe. Meanwhile, Russia blamed the West for the attacks, saying that there was no way Ukraine could have attacked without a 'wink' from the US. (Darko Janjevic, "[Nord Stream sabotage: How are the key players reacting?](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 16 August 2024)

German Green leader Habeck declares intent to run for Chancellor

On 15 August, Robert Habeck, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action indicated he would run for the post of Chancellor of Germany in a Politico interview. Habeck, the present Vice-Chancellor of Germany said on the Berlin Playbook podcast, "I would like to take on the responsibility." With Annalena Baerbock, German Federal Minister for

Foreign Affairs and leader of The Greens party stating she would not run for Chancellor, Habeck had been considered as the most likely Greens candidate for Chancellor. Habeck faces the unenviable task of recovering the popularity lost by the Greens since the last German federal election in 2021. Frictions between the current German ruling coalition over the budget have escalated tensions and infighting. Habeck acknowledged these issues in the interview, saying: "It's quite obvious that this coalition has major problems finding common ground. The ideas are falling apart." However, Habeck expressed optimism that a draft budget would be agreed upon, and warned of the danger of rising populism in Germany. (Gordon Repinski and Nette Nostlinger, "[Germany's Habeck signals he'll run for chancellor](#)," *Politico*, 15 August 2024)

First female astronaut to be sent in the first human spaceflight

On 14 August, SpaceX, the private space exploration company stated that the first German woman astronaut would fly into space. Rabea Rogge, a robotics researcher who studied electrical engineering and information technology; has been selected to be a part of the Fram2 mission on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, alongside four other astronauts. In a tweet on X, Rogge said, "I'm really looking forward to the research and getting some cool projects off the ground." The mission will be the first human spaceflight over the Earth's poles and is expected to take place in late 2024. Purple lights at the Earth's polar regions will be examined closely during the visit, which SpaceX stated would also produce the first X-ray images of humans in space. The mission is the latest in a series of increasing private space tourism visits. ("[First German woman set to fly into space with SpaceX](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 14 August 2024)

Water supply sabotage suspected at military base in Cologne

On 14 August, a German military base close to Cologne airport was temporarily sealed off, due to suspicions of the water supply

being sabotaged. A spokesperson for the Bundeswehr, the German military said, "As the drinking water was showing unusual values, the drinking water supply in the barracks was cut off." Reports by news website Der Spiegel informed that the German police and the Military Intelligence Service were jointly investigating the incident. The Cologne-Wahn military base employs around 4300 soldiers and over 1000 civilian forces, while command authorities and civilian departments of the German military are also based there, according to Der Spiegel. It also serves as a crucial transit hub for Ukrainian soldiers trained in Germany. The incident comes after Nancy Faeser, German Federal Minister of the Interior and Community had warned about potential cyberattacks conducted by adversaries like China, Russia and Iran. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Russian saboteurs aiming to disrupt arms shipments to Ukraine launched an arson attack on a metal factory belonging to arms manufacturer Diehl. At the same time, there were reports that a military base for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the city of Gelsenkirchen in North-Rhine Westphalia had been sealed off. Nette Nostlinger and Stuart Lau, "German authorities suspect water supply sabotage on military base," *Politico*, 14 August 2024)

Deutsche Bundesbank reports increase in Chinese direct investments

On 14 August, the Deutsche Bundesbank, Germany's central bank, showed Germany's direct investments into China had increased. This occurred despite requests by the German government that businesses diversify into other markets. The Bundesbank data showed German investments in China in the first quarter to be EUR 2.48 billion, rising to EUR 4.8 billion in the second quarter. The total in the first half of 2024 stands at EUR 7.3 billion, higher than the investments total for the entirety of 2023. (Guy Chazan, "German investment in China soars despite Berlin's diversification drive," *Financial Times*, 14 August 2024)

Develops AI tool of decipher colonial era documents

On 12 August, *Deutsche Welle* wrote about a new AI tool developed by German Federal Archives that can decode handwritten texts of the pre-World War era. Most colonial era documents were written in Kurrent, a cursive form of writing which was banned by the Nazi party. It is not in practice anymore which is why it is difficult to understand archived material in German. Claudia Roth, German Commissioner for Culture and Media, said that the technology will strengthen knowledge of the dark chapter in German history i.e., colonialism. Colonial crimes of Germany still remain in a blind spot. Though Germany's colonial period was short and overshadowed by the UK and France, it is responsible for the Herero and Nama genocide. Only in 2021, Germany officially admitted to have committed a genocide in present-day Namibia. Although the AI tool is a pilot project, it has been trained to decipher Kurrent. Also, like ChatGPT and other AI models, it will hone its skills to translate with time. This reflects a major impact of AI on history. ("AI meets colonialism: Germany develops new research tool," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 August 2024)

Protestors gather in Berlin against government policies

On 03 August, thousands of protestors gathered around the Kurfürstendamm shopping street toward Berlin-Tiergarten to protest against Germany's rising defence budget. They shouted slogans: "We are peace ready, not war ready." Defence Minister of Germany, Boris Pistorius, in an interview said that the country needs to be ready for a war against Russia by 2029. The protest was peaceful, with no violence, arrests or accidents. Berlin police had deployed around 500 officers to monitor the demonstration. They were carried out by a group called the "Lateral Thinking movement" started during COVID-19 to originally protest against vaccine requirements and the government's lockdown policies. (Richard Connor, "Berlin: Thousands march in COVID-19

pandemic skeptic protest," *Deutsche Welle*, 03 August 2024)

Germany and the Philippines to sign a defence agreement by end of 2024

On 04 August, during his visit to Manila, the Defence Minister of Germany, Boris Pistorius, and Defence Minister of the Philippines, Gilberto Teodoro, committed to sign a defence deal before 2025. This is the first time a German defence minister has visited the Philippines. Pistorius focused on a rule-based order and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region. The statement and commitment are after Chinese presence in the South China Sea gained momentum. The Philippines has already signed defence deals with the US, Japan, India and Sweden to contain Chinese presence. On 02 August, Germany joined the UN Command in South Korea led by the US. Thus, with increase in defence budget and involvement in NATO, Germany is also expanding its influence spheres in the Indo-Pacific. ("Germany, Philippines commit to defence deal by end of year," *Deutsche Welle*, 04 August 2024)

Sports Minister signs a deal proposing to host 2040 Olympics

On 02 August, Nancy Faeser, Germany's Sports Minister signed an agreement to conduct the 2040 Olympic Games. This would be on the same day of Germany's reunification in 1990. In a news conference, Faeser said: "The government stands united behind a new German bid for the Olympic and Paralympic Games... We want to utilise the great opportunities that the Olympic Games offer for our cohesion, our economy, and sport." She emphasised the 2040 bid as a "strong symbol" and a sign of democracy to coincide with German unification. While DOSB President Thomas Weikert who has been trying to win government's support for 2040 said: "The clear, cross-party commitment of the federal government and [Chancellor Olaf Scholz] to a bid is an important and motivating signal both internally and externally." In Germany, Berlin, Leipzig, Munich, Hamburg and the Rhine-Ruhr region. ("German minister signs

deal to bid for 2040 Olympics," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 July 2024)

Joins UNC as 18th member to monitor DMZ between North Korea and South Korea

On 02 August, Germany became the 18th member of the US-led United Nations Command (UNC) in South Korea. The UNC, known as a multinational military force, monitors the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between South and North Korea. The DMZ was formed in 1950 and acts as an armistice to restore peace while also helping in communication with North Korea. The UNC inspects the border and commits to aid the South in the emergence of a conflict. Boris Pistorius, Germany's Defence Minister said: "We need to stand firm against those who want to undermine peace and stability, against those who attack our common order." Whereas Army General Paul LaCamera, Army General Paul LaCamera stated that Germany's joining of forces would help expand perspectives and resources and improve collective capabilities. Since 2013, Germany would be the first to be added to UNC after Italy. Pistorius called the German presence in the South China Sea as a "strong signal" to track the situation. ("Germany joins multinational force monitoring Korean border," *Deutsche Welle*, 02 August 2024)

Police control the climate protestors at Hamburg

On 02 August, Germany's police in Hamburg city stated that they barred climate activists from preventing Hamburg airport operations. According to the police: "The officers found equipment in the suspects' bags that "suggested an intended blockade action at the airport." The equipment includes cutters, vests, posters and a sand-resin mixture. The temporarily detained suspects had fled and in response several police were deployed to protect the runway and there were no impacts recorded. After a six-month pause, climate protests were brought back in July at many German airports. Earlier, the German government approved legislation to tighten the penalties on those who disobeyed the perimeters

while the protestors have stressed on phasing out fossil fuel. ([“Germany: Police stop climate protesters at Hamburg Airport,” Deutsche Welle, 02 August 2024](#))

Defence Minister calls for de-escalation in the Middle East

On 01 August, the Defence Minister of the Federation of Germany, Boris Pistorius, emphasised the role of NATO and the responsibility it needs to take towards global security. He called for stability in the Indo-Pacific region and the Middle East. With the dangers of a full-scale escalation in Lebanon and Israel, Pistorius has asked the NATO to step in and avoid further escalation. He stated this during his visit to the Indo-Pacific Command in the US. Germany’s involvement in NATO has increased lately. It has increased its defence budget from 2024 to fulfil the NATO standards of 2 per cent of the GDP for the first time since the Cold War. With France’s presence in the Indo-Pacific, even Germany was an active participant in the Rim of the Pacific 2024 and Pacific SKIES 2024.. ([“Germany’s Pistorius talks Middle East, Indo-Pacific with DW,” Deutsche Welle, 01 August 2024](#))

Germany's beer sales go down in the first quarter

On 01 August, the German Federal Statistical Office reported a fall of 0.6 per cent in beer sales in the country in the first quarter of 2024. The fact is even more disappointing because Germany hosted Euros 2024 and the sales fell despite that. Bad weather and lower temperatures are also being assumed as reasons behind the sales contraction. The Managing Director of the German Brewers’ Association blamed thunderstorms and bad weather that caused people to stay indoors to be the reason behind low sales. ([“Beer sales down despite Euro 2024 hopes,” Deutsche Welle, 01 August 2024](#))

GREECE

Massive wildfire sparks panic in Athens

On 11 August, a rapidly moving wildfire outside Athens forced residents to leave

their homes. The wildfire burnt trees, houses and cars and created smoke clouds around Athens. Over 400 firefighters were sent to battle the wildfire which erupted on 11 August and quickly spread to the village of Varnavas to the north of Athens. The government sent evacuation alerts to nine areas near Varnavas and other regions of Greece witnessed fire alerts for Sunday and Monday. Vassilis Kikilias, Minister of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, invoked emergency measures including calling the army to deal with the fires. Kikilias said, “Extremely high temperatures and dangerous weather conditions will prevail. Half of Greece will be in the red.” The wildfire is the latest adverse impact of climate change being felt by Greece. The country experienced its warmest winter yet in 2023 and is expected to witness its warmest summer in 2024. ([“People flee wildfire near Athens as it spreads ‘like lightning,’” Euractiv, 12 August 2024](#))

Wildfires in Greece

On 11 August, citizens of Athens were warned of severe air quality due to the smoke caused by wildfires. This year, Greece recorded the hottest months of June and July. It faced numerous wildfires. A major fire arose near Athens where 250 firefighters were deployed and many citizens were evacuated. Almost half of the municipalities in Greece are on red alert due to wildfires. The country also faced drought this year. The conditions are worsened due to climate change imposed by fires and high temperatures. ([“Half of Greece on red alert as wildfires rage near Athens,” Deutsche Welle, 11 August 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” and was arrested for an earlier issued Red Notice for his anti-whaling interventions. According to the Captain Paul Watson Foundation (CPWF)

organisation, close to a dozen 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

Witnesses increase in EV registration

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

Colt CZ to expand production capacity of small arms

On 30 August, Colt CZ, one of the world's leading small arms manufacturers based in the Czech Republic announced its production expansion in Hungary. It is one of the leading companies manufacturing firearms, tactical accessories and ammunition for military and law

enforcement, personal protection, hunting and sport shooting. It started a joint venture with Hungary in early 2023 and hopes to expand production capacity through new firearms in Kiskunfélegyháza (southern Hungary). The new factory set up in Hungary would incorporate "manufacturing processes, robotics, fully automated turning and milling centres, and advanced surface treatment equipment." Their partnership aimed to "equip the Hungarian Defence Forces with CZ firearms and to produce handguns for global export from Hungary." ("Renowned Czech Arms Manufacturer Expands Production in Hungary," *Hungary Today*, 30 August 2024)

Government to tighten laws against cybercrime

On 08 August, the Minister of Justice of Bulgaria announced during a press conference that a package of laws was submitted to the parliament to tackle cybercrime. The initiative was taken by the Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Justice and the Hungarian National Bank. The law will speed up the communication between banks on the amount of money stolen through online fraud so that they can freeze it. In Particular, credit card fraud is rising in the country. Amendments in criminal proceedings of online fraud will make it effective. The courts will be able to decide sentences on general jurisdiction rather than take special expertise. Investigation authorities can obtain data from telecommunication companies without a prosecutor's request. These laws will boost cooperation between government authorities and private actors. The Minister also said that a centralised fraud detection system will be ready by 2025. ("New Law Enters into Force Tackling Online Criminals," *Hungary Today*, 08 August 2024)

AI enabled VIREO satellite completes mission; Re-enters the atmosphere

On 08 August, the Hungarian CubeSat satellite completed its mission to use artificial intelligence in space. The satellite is called VIREO, Virtual Intelligence Realisation for Earth Observation. The AI-

enabled Earth Observations could assist disaster management, agriculture and energy production. Images of the Earth's surface that the satellites provide will help researchers track changes and predict any calamity accurately. The satellite was developed and manufactured by C3S Ltd., a space company based in Budapest. The Company has also signed a deal with European Space Agency for building a DCDC convertor. Thus, even European countries are trying to enter the space race. (["Hungarian Satellite Successfully Completes Its Mission," Hungary Today, 08 August 2024](#))

ICELAND

TikTok trend cited as a reason for low cucumber supply

On 24 August, the *BBC* reported on a sudden surge in demand for cucumbers in Iceland which had led to cucumber supply shortages, with a viral TikTok trend regarded as the reason. The surge in demand began after Logan Motiff, a Canadian TikToker known as "cucumber guy" began sharing cucumber recipes. The cucumber recipe which also uses rice vinegar and sesame oil has grown exponentially in popularity in Iceland, meaning cucumber farmers are unable to keep up with the demand. However, some have questioned whether the social media trend is behind the cucumber shortages. Kristin Linda Sveinsdottir, Marketing Director of the Horticulturists' Sale Company (SFG) the Icelandic farmers association stated that the return of schools from summer vacations and cucumber farmers replacing their cucumber plants had impacted supplies; although she admitted the social media trend had contributed as well. (["TikTok blamed for hit to Iceland cucumber supply," BBC, 24 August 2024](#))

ITALY

Earthquake-ridden towns in dilemma due to the latest budget

On 20 August, *Politico* reported about the pressure on Italy from the EU to reduce its fiscal deficit. The Italian city of Amatrice was hit by a 6.2 magnitude earthquake in

2016 which left 90 per cent of the population homeless. The Italian government approved a budget for rebuilding the town, Giuseppe Conte, former Prime Minister, introduced a 'Super bonus' scheme to increase the resources allocated. The scheme has further complicated the bureaucratic processes. Under the scheme, homeowners can claim up to 110 per cent of the costs of sustainable home renovations through tax credits spread over four to five years. However, the super bonus proved to be hurtful to the town as the surge in demand led to the inflated cost of construction materials. This led to disastrous miscalculations as the total expected cost ballooned to EUR 219 billion, over six times the predicted cost of EUR 35 billion. Thus, construction firms did not start a full-scale reconstruction, rather they developed places with modest energy improvements. (Ben Munster, ["Italy's budget mess leaves earthquake-stricken towns in limbo," Politico, 20 August 2024](#))

Government passes legislation to promote green energy

On 07 August, Italy passed a legislation to promote ease of doing business in the green energy sector of the country. This is done to meet the decarbonisation goals of the country. The Government plans to increase the solar energy generation capacity of the country to 50 gigawatts by 2030. Under the new legislation, solar power projects with below 10-megawatt capacity will not need clearance from the Government. The approval process has also been reduced. However, installation of solar power plants on agricultural land is prohibited under the new law. This move has been criticised by Renewable developers and supported by agriculture lobby groups who are key supporters of the current Government. Companies have urged the Government to look at agri-voltaic projects to allow them to use agricultural land for PV installation. However, the Government has yet to pass the bill in its bicameral parliamentary houses. (["Italy cuts red tape on green energy, clamps down on illegal plants," Reuters, 08 August 2024](#))

Industrial production sees 13 per cent decline on yearly basis

On 02 August, in an opinion in *Euronews* reported on how Italy's production had stabilised despite its year-on-year data stagnates. According to the report, production increased by 0.5 per cent on a month-on-month basis in June. A similar rate of expansion was observed in May but with a positive sign after a year of negative readings. The data, month-on-month indicated a rebound in capital goods where consumer goods and energy products reduced by 0.3 and 1.4 per cent. Yearly, production was reduced by 2.6 per cent which was the 17th record of the negative figure, whereas there was a 13 per cent decline. Paolo Pizzoli, senior economist for Italy and Greece said: "...data seems to be pointing to a stabilisation rather than a full rebound for Italian industrial production..For a more noticeable improvement we might have to wait for the end of 2024, provided the demand angle improves." (Eleanor Butler, "Italy's industrial production creeps up while growth remains tepid," *Euronews*, 02 August 2024)

LATVIA

Government to construct barriers against Russia

On 06 August, the government announced the building of concrete figures known as "Lego blocks." Latvia is building its defence line along its border with Russia and Belarus. It is to prevent hostile action from Russia. It is a part of the Baltic Defence Line that was announced in January by Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. It was proposed in NATO Madrid Summer Summit 2023. The Defence Line will not include coastal defence but only land-based bunkers and also make use of natural barriers like trees and mountainous terrain. Its purpose is to prevent Russian intrusion. ("Baltic Defence Line in Latvia gets its 'dragon's teeth'," *Euronews*, 06 August 2024)

LITHUANIA

Construction of German army base near Russian border begins

On 19 August, *Reuters* reported on Lithuania's construction of a military base for the Bundeswehr or German military. The base in Rudninkai only 20 kilometres from Belarus will accommodate up to 4000 combat-ready German troops; along with storage and maintenance for equipment like tanks as well as shooting ranges. This will be the first permanent foreign deployment of the Bundeswehr since World War II. Lithuania has increased its defence spending to three per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and increased taxes to support the same. Raimundas Vaiksnoras, Chief of Defence of the Republic of Lithuania estimated it would cost over EUR one billion until 2027 to build the base. According to Vaiksnoras, the base would reassure the Lithuanian population of its security, as well as deter the Russians. However, there are fears that the base will not be constructed in time since only about a fifth of the buildings in Rudninkai have been contracted for construction. At the same time, disputes within the German government over budget spending are putting its military commitments into question. (Andrius Sytas, "Lithuania begins construction of base for German troops near Russian border," *Reuters*, 19 August 2024)

MALTA

EY warns energy exhaustion by 2035

On 04 August, a data firm EY issued an analysis wherein it suggested that the rising sale of electric vehicles could compel Malta to completely exhaust its energy by 2035. The former chairperson of Enemalta, a Maltese energy company, said that the country needs to increase its ability to produce energy to meet the already peaked energy demand. He recommended greater investment in renewable sources. He also emphasised on educating people on using renewable sources and promotion of photovoltaics. Luciano Mulé Stagno, the head of University of Malta's Institute for Sustainable Energy, said that they need to be more aggressive with the use of PVs. He also suggested building energy storage

facilities so surplus energy can be used during peak demand or sold to other countries. His suggestions for EV charging include incentivising off-peak charging by variation in tariffs. ([“Energy demand could exceed supply by 2035, experts warn,”](#) *Times of Malta*, 04 August 2024)

NORTH MACEDONIA

Two million fake EUR two coins were produced

On 06 August, Europol issued a statement in which it said that a Macedonian national has been uncovered in a forgery operation wherein the accused was producing EUR two coins on a mass level. The operation was carried out by Macedonian, Kosovar and Europol officials. The accused was an employee at the Ministry of Interior, North Macedonia. The accused was also found in possession of a machine for production of counterfeit currency and “thousands of assembled coins and core blanks.” Today, Kosovo is facing an epidemic of counterfeit currency. The country adopted Euro as its currency in 2002, however, it is not a part of the Eurozone. The most common counterfeit note is EUR 20 banknote in Europe. ([“Macedonian ministry employee arrested for mass-producing fake €2 coins,”](#) *Politico*, 06 August 2024)

POLAND

Polish Space Science and Technology successfully launches EagleEye Satellite

On 18 August, the EagleEye satellite was launched by Polish Space Science and Technology. The mission was facilitated by SpaceX. The launch took place at Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. The project began in April 2020. The objective of the satellite is to send high-resolution images of Earth, one metre per pixel, for research and monitoring purposes. The mission is expected to last for one year. The control centre of the satellite is situated in Warsaw at Creotech Instruments headquarters. The satellite will rotate around Earth at low altitudes. It will initially start from 500 kilometres altitude and will gradually descend to 350

kilometres. Even though the satellite was designed from ground up, there were important components that were not locally manufactured. For example, Poland does not have manufacturing facilities for microprocessors. The mission represents the potential of public-private cooperation in Poland since this was a collaboration of Creotech Instruments S.A., a private company and Poland’s largest manufacturer of satellites, and the Space Research Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a government scientific partner. It is the largest Earth satellite built by Polish engineers, weighing around 55 kilograms. It will have various applications, ranging from agriculture to military. ([“Historic milestone for Polish space science as they successfully launch EagleEye satellite,”](#) *Euronews*, 18 August 2024)

Climate ministry to build desalination plants to improve water condition

On 07 August, the Climate ministry of Poland and mining companies announced the drafting of a plan to build desalination plants to improve the water quality of Oder River. In 2022, there was a mass death of fish in the river due to bad water pollutant levels. It was announced as an ecological catastrophe. As per environmentalists, the main reason was water salinity in the river where coal mines discharge saline water. It feeds golden algae which is toxic for aquatic life. Thus, the main issue was industrial waste which led to algae bloom. Since the river runs through the Germany-Poland border, Germany has often accused Poland of neglecting industrial standards and its failure to stop dumping. The cost of building a desalination installation is around USD 300 million, which is very expensive. ([“Poland drafting plan to reduce Oder river salinity, minister says,”](#) *Reuters*, 07 August 2024)

RUSSIA

One year after Prigozhin death

On 24 August, *Politico* drew parallels between the present incursion into Russia by Ukraine with the attempted mutiny by Yevgeny Prigozhin, who led the private

military group called Wagner. The article said that they were both humiliating situations for the Government of Russia. Prigozhin had led a failed mutiny against the Russian government in June 2023 and was killed in a plane crash two months later. The report states that the prospect of Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia being challenged by one of his henchmen was once unthinkable; yet occurred with Prigozhin's mutiny. Similarly, it was not considered conceivable that Russia could be invaded; however, with the Kursk region incursion by Ukraine foreign troops have entered Russia for the first time since World War II. According to the report, the Kursk incursion has damaged the Russian's government's claims that the war is going smoothly, just like Prigozhin's mutiny had. However, the article also warns that the Russian government may not suffer immediate consequences despite this. Many Russians still see Putin as their saviour; and following the Prigozhin episode, there have been widespread changes amongst the top military brass of Russia increasing Putin's control. (Eva Hartog, "[One year after Prigozhin's death, the Kremlin is humiliated once more](#)," *Politico*, 24 August 2024)

US Nuclear strategy perceives China as threat due to close ties with Russia

On 20 August, *The New York Times* reported on Joe Biden's revision to the US Nuclear Employment Guidance Policy. Vipin Narang, an MIT nuclear strategist who served in the Pentagon, said that Joe Biden issued updated nuclear-weapons employment guidance to account for multiple nuclear-armed adversaries. Pranay Vaddi, National Security Council's senior director for arms control and non-proliferation, said that the updated nuclear strategy aims to "respond to nuclear crises that break out simultaneously or sequentially, with a combination of nuclear and non-nuclear weapons." Russia and China are conducting military exercises regularly. Similarly, North Korea and Iran are supplying arms to Russia, which it uses against Ukraine. Richard N Haass, former senior State Department and National Security Council official for several Republican presidents,

said: "We are dealing with a Russia that is radicalised." According to the report in *Deutsche Welle*, China is expected to increase its nuclear warheads from 500 to 1000 by 2030 with help from Russia. ("[Biden Approved Secret Nuclear Strategy Refocusing on Chinese Threat](#)," *New York Times*, 20 August 2024; "[Report: Biden approved China-focused nuclear strategic plan](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 August 2024)

Google to remove AdSense program from Russia

On 12 August, Google announced that it would deactivate Russia-based AdSense accounts. A Google spokesperson stated the decision was taken since the company would no longer be able to make payments to Russia-based AdSense accounts, which have been monetising traffic across Russia. While Google did not cite a reason for its decision, it has been observed that YouTube was subject to slower speeds in recent weeks. Google has also faced criticism from the Russian government, for not taking down content the government considers illegal. Google stopped advertising to Russian users after the invasion of Ukraine and stopped monetising content supporting the Russian war. ("[Google says it is deactivating Russia-based AdSense accounts](#)," *Reuters*, 12 August 2024)

"Putin's control over the judiciary is one of the factors to power" says an opinion in Deutsche Welle

On 09 August, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, completed 25 years of remaining in power either as the Prime Minister or President. Putin was appointed as the Prime Minister by Russian President Boris Yeltsin on 09 August 1999. *Deutsche Welle* has explained how Putin has managed to remain in power. Apart from eliminating opponents, there were other factors to Putin's hold on power, according to *Deutsche Welle*, which is his control over the judiciary. Justices, loyal to the authorities, were given more power over their colleagues. Thus, the judiciary is no longer independent. Another factor is the "collective manipulation of historical memory." The report cites Russian

sociologist Alexander Bibkov stating that Putin will remain in office for a long time. (["25 years of Vladimir Putin at Russia's helm," Deutsche Welle](#), 10 August 2024)

Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) 2024 to focus on the BRICS' role

On 08 August, Anton Kobyakov, advisor to the Russian President, held a press conference on the upcoming EEF 2024. The forum is organised by Roscongress Foundation. It aims to strengthen Russia's international business ties. EEF 2024 will cover new routes for transport and logistics, opportunities and challenges in far eastern Russia, financial systems and robust education policies. The Forum will take place from 03 to 06 September 2024. It will also emphasise on BRICS role in international development and its potential role in building a multipolar world. Apart from BRICS, even the involvement of SCO will be discussed. BRICS members include Brazil, China, India, South Africa, Iran and Egypt. (["BRICS Role in Multipolar World to Top Eastern Economic Forum's Agenda," Sputnik](#), 08 August 2024)

Russian Security Council Secretary in Iran

On 05 August, Sergei Shougu, Russian Federation's Security Council Secretary arrived in Iran to visit General Staff of the Iranian armed forces Mohammad Bagheri and discuss Russia-Iran security cooperation. The visit is happening when tensions in the region are high and Israel, Hezbollah and Iran are on the verge of a full-scale war. Even the missiles and drones used by Iran to attack Israel were Russian-made. Both countries consider each other as a strategic ally. The meetings are supposed to take place during this week. (["Shoigu Arrives in Iran to Discuss Global, Regional Security," Sputnik](#), 05 August 2024)

Holds military drills near the Kuril Islands

On 01 August, Russian missile troops held drills on Kuril Islands which is a disputed territory and is claimed by both the Russian Federation and Japan. Earlier, in May, the Russian Federation had stated that it will

establish observation posts on the Islands. According to Russia, Japan's alliance with the US has become a hurdle in Russia-Japan bilateral ties. In March, Russia withdrew from peace negotiations over the Kuril Islands, in March 2022, after Japan imposed sanctions on Russia due to its invasion of Ukraine. The peace negotiations had been initiated in 2018 by Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, and Shinzo Abe, Japan's former President. The Kuril Islands are made up of 56 islands, however, only four of them are disputed. The Islands separate the Sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific Ocean. At the end of World War II, the USSR took over the Islands. (["Russia holds military drills on disputed Kuril islands, Interfax says," Japan Today](#), 01 August 2024)

SERBIA

Hundreds rally against controversial mine

On 19 August, hundreds of citizens attended a rally in Serbia against the lithium mining project by mining corporation Rio Tinto. Residents fear that the proposed mine could significantly damage the environment in Serbia, although the government argues that it will boost the economy. Protestors gathered in the central square of the industrial town of Valjevo, and chanted slogans like "You will not dig" and "Rio Tinto, leave Serbia!" Aleksandar Jovanovic Cuta, one of the organizers of the protest said: "Serbia will not go quiet over this issue. This is non-negotiable." Another demand raised at the Valjevo rally was an end to the perceived government clampdown on environmental activists. Aleksandra Bulatovic, an environmental activist, stated that over 40 activists had been questioned and had their apartments searched since a rally in the capital of Belgrade on 10 August. They were accused by authorities of conspiring against the constitution, although Bulatovic called it unconstitutional. (["Scores in central Serbia rally against Rio Tinto's lithium project," Reuters](#), 19 August 2024)

President criticised for controversial mine

On 19 August, *Politico* reported on the domestic implications of the Government of Serbia's decision to build a mine. The Jadar deposit located in Serbia contains one of the largest reserves of lithium (known as 'white gold') in the world, and Aleksandar Vucic, President of Serbia plans to open a mine owned by British-Australian mining corporation Rio Tinto. The EU has supported Vucic's plans due to its own intentions of making a greener future. It is estimated that the mine could produce 58,000 metric tons by 2030 enough to power up over a million electric vehicles. However, thousands of protestors have opposed the mine, believing it would make Serbia dependent on the EU and destroy the local environment. It is feared that corrosive acids used could damage the local ecosystems in an agrarian nation. Nebojsa Petkovic, a protest leader said: "We are becoming a colony of all the great powers." Protestors also regard the EU's talk of democratic values as hypocritical, owing to their support of the autocratic Vucic. With Vucic calling the protests an attempt to overthrow him and the media covering the protests little, highways and thoroughfares have been blocked as a protest tactic. Rio Tinto has engaged in damage control, confirming that the mine will comply with all environmental regulations. (Una Hajdari, Antonia Zimmerman and Stuart Lau, "[Serbia's leader wins the West with promises of 'white gold' - but loses the people](#)," *Politico*, 19 August 2024)

Protest emerge after Rio Tinto resumes mining project

On 11 August, streets of Belgrade were filled with protesters shouting slogans like "You will not dig." People are protesting against the lithium mining project that has resumed in the western region of the country. People said that lithium mining affects irrigation in agricultural lands and drinking water facilities. Serbia has signed an agreement with the EU under which Rio Tinto, a British-Austrian mining company, can resume its project. The company will provide lithium to EV makers in Europe. Jadar mine in Serbia can cover 90 per cent of the EU's lithium demand. However,

Aleksandar Vucic, President of Serbia, has alleged the protest is a political foul play to topple him. ("[Serbia: Protests over vast Rio Tinto lithium mining project](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 11 August 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 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 tourism phobia, it's numbers: 1,232,014 residents, 18 million tourists." The protestors belonged to 80 organisations 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 50,000 joined the protest while police stated only 20,000 whereas the government claimed it to 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)

Supreme Court questions Barcelona Police

On 09 August, Pablo Llarena, a judge of Spain's Supreme Court, said that he wanted an explanation from Barcelona police over Carles Puigdemont's speech on 08 August. Puigdemont, a leader of the Junts Party that organised the illegal independence referendum in Catalonia in 2018, entered Spain despite court orders to arrest him. Later, he gave a speech in Barcelona and vanished into the crowd and escaped out of the country. The police have arrested two

policemen for allegedly assisting Puigdemont's escape. His lawyer said that Puigdemont completed some political work that was due and left for his home, however, his residence outside Spain was not mentioned. Secretary General of the Junts party has said that he left for Waterloo. In his speech, he said that the right to self-determination belonged to the Catalan people. ("Spain demands answers after Puigdemont escape," *Deutsche Welle*, 09 August 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)

Anti-tourism protests continue against high housing cost

On 11 August, people gathered in Mallorca, on the Balearic Islands, to protest against mass tourism in the city. A few days ago, similar protests were seen in Barcelona. Citizens complain that mass tourism has led to overcrowding in the city, housing crisis and pressure on health and water facilities and disappearance of local culture. Demonstrators laid their towels on a beach

and took a dip in the sea to protest symbolically. The government has taken measures to curb illegal accommodations for tourists by imposing a fine of EUR 80,000. ("Demonstrators in Mallorca protest high costs of housing and saturated public services," *Euronews*, 11 August 2024)

Catalan separatist leader to be arrested on return to Barcelona

On 07 August, Carles Puigdemont announced his return to Barcelona after his exile for seven years. The leader was in a self-imposed exile and likely to be arrested on his arrival to Barcelona. Catalonia police have said that they will be following the court's order and arresting him when they see him. His political party, Junts, is ready to welcome him. Puigdemont was actively involved in the succession bid of 2017 where Catalan demanded independence from Spain. The Supreme Court of Spain had ruled the independence referendum as illegal. Even before his arrival, Spanish politicians have revolted against his entrance in the Parliament calling him a fugitive. The current coalition Government in Spain relies on Junts party for passing legislation. Thus, the government cancelled legal proceedings against him, yet the Supreme Court order of his arrest still remains. ("Exiled Catalan separatist Puigdemont faces likely arrest in highly publicised return to Spain," *Reuters*, 08 August 2024)

SWEDEN

Bear hunt faces pushback from animal rights campaigners

On 22 August, *Euro News* reported on the criticisms against Sweden's hunting of brown bears. The Government of Sweden has approved killing 486 brown bears, which amounts to 20 per cent of the entire brown bear population. While the Swedish government has deemed bear hunting as essential to keep a predator species in check, some believe that it is a source of macho prestige for hunters and getting rid of threats to hunter targets like elk. Magnus Orrebrant, Chairman of the Swedish Carnivore Association stated that measures like using bear watching for countryside

development and preventive measures to reduce damage would be better protections. Campaigners have also warned that the Swedish government's campaign risks turning back progress made on brown bear conservation. Jonas Kindberg, leader of the Scandinavian Bear research project stated that killing both female and male bears indiscriminately would not contribute to a stable bear population. Licensed hunting is allowed in Sweden, leaving a loophole for hunters. (Lottie Limb, "['We cannot continue to shoot this many': Campaigners hit back at Sweden's controversial bear hunt](#)," *Euronews*, 22 August 2024)

First case of severe Mpox strain reported in Sweden

On 15 August, Sweden reported a case of the more severe clade I variant of Mpox. The Public Health Agency of Sweden stated that the variant was diagnosed in an individual who was in Stockholm after being infected in a virus-affected area of Africa. According to the Agency, this is the first case of the more severe clade I variant being detected outside Africa. However, the agency said that the patient's treatment "does not affect the risk to the general population." The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared Mpox as a public health emergency of international concern, the second time in the past two years. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has called for a coordinated international response to stop the outbreaks and save lives. (Lauren Chadwick, "[Sweden reports first case of more severe Mpox strain](#)," *Euronews*, 15 August 2024)

Euronews reports on public health guide to Mpox

On 15 August, *Euronews* published a public health guide to the Mpox virus, which is spreading again. Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, was first detected in monkeys utilised for research, but human cases have been common too. The virus is endemic to central and western Africa. The virus has two variants; the more severe Clade I and Clade II. However, a new variant named clade Ib spreading through sexual networks has sparked concern. The Africa Centres for

Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDCs) stated that suspected Mpox cases in Africa this year have crossed 17,000, with the number believed to be an undercount due to limited testing. Symptoms of Mpox include rashes on multiple parts of the body which resemble pimples or blisters, fever, headache, chills, muscle and back pain etc. according to public health authorities. Close contact with an infected person, especially sexual contact, is how the virus commonly spreads, although direct contact with infected wild animals is also a method through which it spreads. Jaime Garcia-Iglesias, a chancellor's fellow at the Centre for Biomedicine, Self and Society at the University of Edinburgh hailed the World Health Organization (WHO)'s declaration of Mpox as an emergency, stating it would galvanise governmental action and provide increased funding for research and diagnostics. Garcia-Iglesias emphasised on the need for proper public health messaging regarding the virus, deeming governmental engagement with community organisations as essential. Experts have also urged governments not to hoard vaccines. (Lauren Chadwick, "[What is Mpox, how does it spread and why has it been declared a global health emergency?](#)," *Euronews*, 15 August 2024)

Government faces criticism for 'snitch law' from the right-wing

On 12 August, the Swedish parliament passed the 'snitch law' under its 2022 agreement among right-wing parties. This agreement brought the far-right Sweden Democrats (SD) party into the coalition government. The SD party has a rigid anti-immigrant stance and the 'snitch law' is a part of the broader agenda. The new law can compel educators and healthcare professionals to report undocumented people. The platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants called the law 'inhuman.' This would lead immigrants to not avail basic services like education and health. Similar legislation was passed in Finland and Germany which led to discrimination among undocumented individuals. ("[Sweden's 'snitch law'](#)")

immigration plan prompts alarm across society.” *The Guardian*, 12 August 2024)

Witness boost in high-tech start-ups

On 13 August, *The New York Times* reported that despite facing economic challenges like the rest of Europe, Swedish entrepreneurs are giving tough competition to global tech companies. Famous startups like Spotify and Skype are as known as YouTube or Google. Therefore, Sweden can become a case study for other European countries to boost tech-based startups. According to the report: “Europe has been a bystander rather than an innovator in the tech field.” The economic impact of not housing startups is substantial, moreover long-term effect of relying on foreign companies for social media and communications. This dependence might lead to privacy complications in the future. (“Can This Country Show Europe How to Compete Again?” *The New York Times*, 13 August 2024)

Far-right individual charged for burning of Quran

On 07 August, a far-right man was charged for burning the holy Quran on multiple occasions in 2022. The Swedish Prosecution Authority did not name the person but Swedish media has identified the person as Rasmus Paludan. Paludan has been associated with Islamophobic activities in Denmark and Sweden. In 2023, more than 500 incidents of Quran burning had taken place and the Government banned Quran burning in December 2023. Puladan’s organised Quran burning in April 2022 instigated a Muslim person to attack a Swedish couple in Brussels. Quran burning incidents also, briefly, sabotaged Sweden’s bid to join NATO and also worsened its relations with Turkey. (“Danish far-right extremist charged over Quran burnings.” *Politico*, 08 August 2024)

THE NETHERLANDS

Sea mammals in trouble along the Dutch Coast due to climate change

On 04 August, SOS Dolgijn reported a drastic rise in the number of sea mammals being rescued. The organisation stated that

every year the number has been rising. However, this year the number has already touched 150. Also, they could not specify any particular reason. However, climate change has been cited as an indirect cause. Climate change has made sea mammals’ immunity weak. Therefore they become more susceptible to diseases. Also, in many cases animals were deafened by noise pollution. However, almost two third of the cases involve animals being estranged. This is the first news about maritime activities affecting aquatic lives. In July too, there were reports about sharks along Florida coast intaking cocaine due to traffickers disposing of them in the sea. Thus, lack of security and surveillance along the transatlantic coastal region poses serious dangers to innocent aquatic animals while most of them are occupied with naval activities in the Indo-Pacific. (“More reports of sea mammals in trouble; Reason unclear.” *NL Times*, 04 August 2024)

THE UK

Yellow warning issued due to Storm Lilian

On 22 August, the MET office of the UK issued yellow weather warnings for the residents of northern England. Heavy rains due to the storm might also lead to localised flooding in the region. August is not prone to named storms. The UK faced two named storms, Antoni and Betty, in 2023. Ellen and Francis hit the UK in 2020. As autumn season is also approaching, it is the season when jet streams, fast winds at higher altitude, can also redirect Atlantic winds towards the UK. Autumn is also the peak of hurricane season. On 21 August, some parts of the UK faced heavy rainfall due to residual winds from an ex-hurricane named Ernesto. Since Hurricanes form over warm waters, Atlantic countries are not prone to them. The temperature is expected to be lower than average for the upcoming weekend. (Simon King, “Storm Lilian: 80mph winds forecast for parts of the UK,” *BBC*, 22 August 2024)

Government proposes measures against migration through the English Channel

On 21 August, the UK Government announced the recruitment of 100 new "specialist intelligence and investigation officers" into the National Crime Agency to tackle the high number of boats filled with asylum seekers which also include human smugglers. The Interior Ministry of the UK said that they aim to achieve the highest rate of deportations in the last five years by February 2025. The newly elected Labour Party-led Government plans to increase detention capacity and sanction employers who hire people with no right to work in the UK. Keir Starmer, the UK's Prime Minister, scrapped the policy that included deportation of undocumented individuals to Rwanda. Instead, Starmer said that plans to dismantle human traffickers who organise illegal crossing of borders. The government will appoint a Border Security Commander, who will be cooperating with other European countries on illegal migration. Starmer also pledged to cooperate with France on the surge of illegal migration. So far, 19,294 people have crossed the English Channel illegally this year. The number is 10 per cent higher as compared to 2023. The government is currently investigating 70 cases of human trafficking. ("UK announces new measures to crack down on migrant crossings from France," *France24*, 21 August 2024)

Prime Minister proposes to control far-right threat through economic progress

On 20 August, an article in Politico stated that Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom planned to tackle the threat from the far-right by improving economic conditions. After the far-right riots in the UK, it is believed that Starmer's aides regard solving the socio-economic problems in the country as the solution to prevent such violence. An anonymous Member of Parliament (MP) from Labour close to Starmer stated that a pragmatic approach was required by the government to resolve the sense of alienation from the political class, felt by large sections of the population. Luke Tryl, the director of polling firm "More In Common" said: "It is not sustainable to have a functioning

democracy with such high levels of disillusionment." Anonymous government officials and Labour MPs confirmed that the party was focusing on a bottom-up approach; aimed at resolving the anger felt by the population through improving their economic situation. According to Tryl, just one act like mending every pothole in the country could push back against the far-right narrative that politics is irrelevant. (Esther Webber, "Keir Starmer's plan to tackle the far right? Fill some potholes," *Politico*, 20 August 2024)

Immigration to be the top priority for UK citizens since 2016 says Ipsos poll

On 16 August, the results of a poll conducted by market research and polling firm Ipsos confirmed that immigration was the biggest issue for UK citizens. According to the Ipsos poll, 34 per cent of those surveyed regarded immigration as the main issue, ahead of other issues like healthcare, crime, and the economy. The poll comes after anti-immigration and racial violence unfolded across the UK in early August. Mark Clemence, a researcher for Ipsos said: "The impact of the recent riots across the UK is clear in this month's data... the level of concern about crime and race relations has also surged to recent highs." Another poll conducted by research and data analytics firm YouGov also revealed immigration as being the main issue for voters. This is the first time since the Brexit referendum of 2016 that immigration has been top of the list of major concerns for the population. ("Immigration biggest issue for Britons for first time since 2016, poll shows," *Reuters*, 16 August 2024)

UK doctors vigilant despite low Mpox risk

On 15 August, the *BBC* informed that UK health chiefs were making plans to deal with a potential Mpox virus outbreak in the country, despite a low risk. The Mpox has been declared as a global health emergency, and healthcare workers in the UK are being made aware of the virus symptoms and the need for rapid testing. There are no confirmed cases of the Clade 1b variant of Mpox in the UK, but experts are warning

that cases could spread. Deputy director at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) informed that plans to prepare for cases were underway, including ensuring that clinicians can recognize cases promptly, rapid testing is available and protocols are developed for treating infected patients and preventing onward transmission. Children, people with weak immune systems, and pregnant women are at higher risk of Mpox. The UK had witnessed a large outbreak in May 2022, curbed through large-scale vaccination. In 2024, 239 Mpox cases were reported in the UK up till July. 225 of these are in England, with 98 patients presumed to have been infected in the UK and 74 outside. ("Mpox risk low but UK medics on alert," *BBC*, 15 August 2024)

Augar Review warns universities for restructuring

On 14 August, Sir Philip Augar, head of the 2018 Augar Review into education and funding in the UK, warned that the British university sector needed restructuring if it wanted more governmental funding. Augar stated that while he understood the sector's need for help in the face of higher inflation, frozen tuition fees and lower international student applications, universities should live within their means and accept restructuring if required. Augar's remarks came ahead of A-level and BTech results being released on Thursday, both of which are expected to show a decline in university applications. A drop of up to 50 per cent in international student applications means that lower-ranked universities are searching for domestic applicants. Some universities have already announced job cuts and course closures, while Augar estimates that about half of the 140 universities in Britain are running deficits. Augar believed that the government should provide bailouts to educational institutions under stress. Augar said, "It's not fair on students who hold degrees from those institutions, or wise for the towns and cities where they are situated because universities are such an important Firestarter to the local economy." The Department of Education could encourage mergers or bring in turnaround teams to help the university management slim down,

according to Augar. Nevertheless, he felt that more cash would need to be injected eventually to preserve the quality of UK higher education. Augar felt that increasing the government teaching grant for universities, or tuition fees and maintenance loans were potential steps the government could take. (Peter Foster, "UK universities must cut costs to survive, warns Augar," *Financial Times*, 14 August 2024)

ONS reports wage growth lowest in two years

On 13 August, it was revealed that wages across the UK grew the slowest in over two years. Data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), under the UK Statistics Office showed that average wages including bonuses rose by 4.5 per cent compared to a year earlier. Occurring alongside a rise in the number of individuals claiming unemployment benefits in July, this is expected to make it easier for the Bank of England to cut interest rates. Even excluding bonuses, the current growth in regular wages is the slowest since July 2022. Meanwhile, the number of claimants of job seeker allowance rose by 135,000 in July, the highest in four years. However, individuals entering or re-entering the workforce led to a decline in the unemployment rate, to 4.2 per cent. The number of job vacancies also declined, while overall employment between March and June rose by 97,000, the highest in a year. (Geoffrey Smith, "UK wage growth slows to new 2-year low," *Politico*, 13 August 2024)

Anti-racism rallies held in response to outbreak of racist violence

On 10 August, anti-racism rallies were held across the UK. The rallies in different parts of the country, including London, Birmingham, Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow were a response to racial violence. This follows the Southport murders which saw the looting of shops and attacks on hotels with asylum seekers. The riots were incited by misinformation that the Southport attacker was a Muslim asylum seeker, and the rallies were meant to show a unified response to

the violence. A rally in Belfast saw protestors waving signs saying 'Ulster says no to racism.' Fiona Doran, chairperson of campaign group United Against Racism struck a note of defiance saying: "These are our streets and we will not concede them to the racist forces who want to divide us." A rally in London began at the headquarters of Nigel Farage, Reform UK leader who has called for a reduction in immigration to the UK. Anti-racism protests were also held in Newcastle and different cities and towns across Scotland. Simultaneously, police officers have been going after individuals accused of inciting violence online, with arrests followed by sentencing. The police have also placed dispersal orders and garnered stop and search powers in order to ensure violence does not occur again. (Mallory Moench, "[Thousands of anti-racism protestors rally across UK](#)," *BBC*, 11 August 2024)

Keir Starmer cancels holiday to respond to riots

On 10 August, Keir Starmer, UK Prime Minister cancelled a planned holiday to focus on his government's response to the riots, according to a Downing Street source. The police force remained vigilant to deal with any fresh outbreak of violence, and continued the process of arresting rioters. At least two people have been jailed for inciting racial hatred on social media, and specialist officers have been ordered to pursue online offenders. ("[UK's Starmer scraps holiday to focus on response to riots](#)," *Reuters*, 11 August 2024)

Northern Ireland leaders call out racist violence in province

On 11 August, Michelle O'Neill, First Minister of Northern Ireland and Emma Little-Pengelly, Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland issued a joint statement condemning racially motivated violence in the province. A mosque in Newtownards town was attacked by a petrol bomb and sprayed with graffiti, and cars were set on fire in Belfast city. In response to these attacks, O'Neill and Little-Pengelly issued their condemnation, saying "They are disgraceful manifestations of criminality

and have absolutely no justification." The leaders also hoped that those responsible would be brought forth before the courts. Alistair Cathcart, Mayor of Ards and North Down Borough Council said, "There is no justification for racism, violence and condemnation in our communities and like others I would call for it to stop." Defying the racial violence, about 15,000 people marched in an anti-racism rally in Belfast, hours after the mosque attack. (Charlie Moloney, "[Northern Irish first minister condemns mosque attack and other violence](#)," *The Guardian*, 11 August 2024)

Poll shows support for tax on fast food companies

On 11 August, an article published in *The Guardian* spoke about a survey discovering that the majority of people want taxes imposed on companies making junk food or ultra-processed food. The survey done by Ipsos, a market research firm for the Health Foundation think tank showed that 58 per cent of the respondents supported a tax on companies producing food high in salt or sugar, with the revenue to be used for buying fresh fruits and vegetables for poor families. A smaller number (53 per cent) wanted to tax companies involved in producing ultra-processed food like ham or biscuits, with the revenue utilised to help low-income households eat better. 19 per cent of the sample of 2136 adults were opposed to a tax on junk food producers and 20 per cent did not know. On the other hand, 24 per cent did not favour taxing ultra-processed food producers, while 21 per cent did not know. Adam Briggs, Senior Policy Fellow at the Health Foundation said that the public support for taxes on producers should drive the government to take substantial action towards combating the obesity epidemic. According to Briggs, the Labour government's manifesto promises such as banning junk food advertising for children on television before 9 pm were not enough to tackle a problem costing the UK an estimated 98 billion pounds per year. Briggs advocated for a sugar-tax on confectionery, cakes and biscuits, sugary breakfast cereals and pizzas, among other food items. However,

Chris Van Tulleken, Associate Professor at University College London and author of the book *Ultra Processed People* said that regulating individual products would be the best move, since the companies making the food privatise the benefits and externalise the costs. The Food and Drink Federation also rejected the notion of greater taxes, instead advocating for the government to support producers in making healthier products through adding fibres and vegetables and removing sugar, salt and calories. (Denis Campbell, "[Majority in UK want new tax on makers of ultra-processed and junk food](#)," *The Guardian*, 11 August 2024)

UK Ministers prepare for spending decisions

On 11 August, *The Guardian* reported on His Majesty's Treasury or The Exchequer ordering Cabinet Ministers to find methods to save cash and fund reforms. Rachel Reeves, Chancellor of the Exchequer is planning to raise taxes, and is planning to have a balanced budget by slashing funds and errors from the welfare system, and cutting down on government consultancy contracts. However, this would not be enough to increase governmental revenue, and more reforms are needed. Darren Jones, Chief Secretary to the Treasury wrote to cabinet ministers, warning that funding would only be given to priority subjects like reducing NHS waiting lists, improving border security, cracking down on antisocial behaviour and recruitment of teachers. The article further states that all requests for spending will be obliged based on whether they are in line with the priorities of the UK government. A source from Whitehall, the site of the British government offices, claimed that the Labour government had to take these difficult decisions owing to the precarious state the previous Conservative government left the country's finances in. (Michael Savage, "[UK ministers warned to prepare for tough decisions on spendings](#)," *The Guardian*, 11 August 2024)

Two migrants dead in an English Channel crossing attempt

On 11 August, two migrants attempting to cross the English Channel died on a small boat in a tragic incident. According to a French maritime official, about 53 migrants were rescued in the incident which occurred offshore between Calais and Dunkirk. Jacques Billant, Prefect of Pas-de-Calais said that authorities had begun the rescue operation when a vessel fell into difficulty. The Gris-Nez Regional Operational Surveillance and Rescue Centre (CROSS) had located the boat, and a British Coast Guard vessel helped French vessels pick up the boat. The French authorities confirmed that 53 of the 55 migrants were brought back safely to Calais, while two of them passed away. A UK government spokesperson confirmed the incident, saying "it underlines the terrible dangers of small boat crossings." According to French officials, 25 migrants have died this year while trying to cross the world's busiest shipping lane. (Paul Pradier and Simon Jones, "[Two migrants die trying to cross English Channel](#)," *BBC*, 11 August 2024)

UK faces thunderstorms and extreme heat

On 11 August, the UK Meteorological Office issued warnings of a yellow thunderstorm affecting the northern parts of the country into Monday morning, while the south would be witness to extreme heat. Tropical Storm Debby across the Atlantic Ocean has brought heavy rain and pushed warm air to higher latitudes, leading to thunderstorms being expected across Northern Ireland, northern England and Scotland. Monday is expected to be the hottest day of the year, exceeding the 32 degrees Celsius recorded at the end of July. Southern England and the Midlands could cross 30 degrees Celsius, while the northern and western parts of the UK will witness cooler weather until Monday evening. The weather forecast goes on to predict that Tuesday will be another warm day for southern England, with temperatures up to 28 degrees Celsius. However, temperatures are expected to become cooler next week, with the hot weather pushed east. The forecast also notes the increasing prevalence of these heat spikes during summer over the years.

(Darren Bett, "[Thunderstorm warnings as UK set for 'heat spike'](#)," *BBC*, 11 August 2024)

Government seeks strong ties with France

On 09 August, Politico wrote about Keir Starmer, UK's Prime Minister, willingness to strengthen ties with France. The bilateral ties were strained after Brexit. Even in former PM Rishi Sunak's cabinet, there were ministers who had supported Brexit. In July, Starmer had also said that he wants to "reenergize the relations" and that the UK and France should deepen their security cooperation. Emmanuel Macron has reciprocated likewise, he had congratulated Starmer, even before he was officially appointed as the Prime Minister, a breach of the protocol. Thus, the two leaders share a good interpersonal relationship. France's Foreign Secretary also called Starmer a "Francophile." Although their ties will be tested on issues like the fishing issue on the English Channel. ("[Keir Starmer is a sensation with the French](#)," *Politico*, 10 August 2024)

Government assures to stay on alert despite slowdown in protests

On 08 August, the UK police were deployed heavily following high security, massive arrests and protests across the UK. The heavy deployment helped to prevent the riots from spreading and engaging racist attacks against Muslims and migrants. Due to this, the far-right immigration protests did not occur while thousands of anti-racism protestors demonstrated. Despite the slowdown among the far-right, the government stressed to remain cautious and the police reported an additional 20 gatherings and three counter-gatherings to have taken place. Yvette Cooper, Interior Minister said: "We're going to continue the strong policing response, making sure that there are additional police officers ready to respond." (Sachin Ravikumar and Kylie Maclellan "[UK riots halted by police, communities but country remains on alert](#)," *Reuters*, 08 August 2024)

Guarantees loan of EUR 249 million to Turkey along with Poland for solar project

On 08 August, the British and Polish export credit agencies guaranteed a loan of EUR 249 million arranged by Standard Chartered Bank to a renewable energy company Kalyon Enerji, based in Turkey. It is a 390-megawatt project and includes construction at seven different sites. The power plant is expected to generate solar power for 65,000 households annually. British exporters will be providing inverter stations and powerplant controllers. It will generate jobs in the UK and strengthen its role in the renewable energy supply chains. Meanwhile, Poland will be providing security systems. ("[UK and Poland target green exports with €249 million financing for solar project](#)," *Government of UK*, 08 August 2024)

Environmental agency to reduce risk of flooding on the east side of Hull

On 08 August, the Environment Agency of the UK announced completion of the second phase of Holderness Drain Flood Alleviation Scheme. The Scheme is projected to save 800 households from flooding. The second phase, called Castlehill Aquagreen, started in 2022. The Scheme is also expected to improve the connectivity to the area. It is a partnership project between the Environment Agency and the Hull City Council. ("[New Aquagreen reduces flood risk for hundreds east of Hull](#)," *Government of UK*, 08 August 2024)

Protests escalate as far-right groups and counter-protest demonstrators gather

On 07 August, several demonstrators holding slogans "refugees are welcomed here" and "say no to racism" gathered in many cities to protest against the far-right rioters. In Liverpool, counter-protests gathered around the asylum-seekers' office to support immigrants. In London, peaceful rallies were seen protesting racism. In Bristol, 1,500 counter-protesters had gathered and similarly, in Newcastle too, 1,000 people had gathered to condemn racism. 2,000 people had also gathered in

Brighton to protest racism. *BBC* interviewed some counter-protesters who called the riots as: "This is violence. They are thugs." This reflects a clear division in the society on the acceptability of immigrants. The previous seven days in the country were marked by the worst riots in the UK in the past 10 years. On 07 August, many businesses, hotels and restaurants owned by immigrants were closed due to riots. The government had deployed heavily around the targeted areas and the police have been provided with riot gear. Two groups clashed in Plymouth following a series of protests, however, the police stated that more community level engagement will be organised by the municipalities. The police force affirmed measures taken at the local level to prevent escalation of violence. ("Joe Stanley-Smith, ["Thousands gather in anti-racist protests after warnings of more far-right violence in UK,"](#) *Politico*, 08 August 2024; Lucy Manning and Mallory Moench, ["Anti-racism protesters rally after week of riots,"](#) *BBC*, 08 August 2024; ["Police reassurance amid further protest rumours,"](#) *BBC*, 08 August 2024)

Rise in anti-Semitism says BBC

On 08 August, the *BBC* reported a record high number of anti-Semitic incidents from January 2024 to June 2024. The Community Security Trust recorded 1,978 incidents of hate directed towards Jewish individuals, out of these 121 were incidents of direct assault and 83 involved serious property damage. The number is almost double of that in the first half of 2023 i.e., 964. The Chief Executive of the Trust said that the numbers are unprecedented and the Trust will continue to protect the British Jewish community. The Home Secretary of the UK, Yvette Cooper, said that the numbers are "appalling" and there is no place for hatred in the UK. Conservative Shadow Home Secretary James Cleverly said that the incidents have increased after the Hamas attack on Israel on 07 October 2023. ("[Big rise in antisemitic incidents in UK - charity,](#)" *BBC*, 08 August 2024)

Starmer promises action against rioters

On 05 August, UK's Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a speech that full force of law will come upon those involved in the riots. He condemned attacks on mosques and the Muslim community in the UK. The riots took place due to false information that the teenage attacker was a Muslim immigrant while the officials have made it clear that the stabber was a UK-born national to Rwandan parents. He also advised social media platforms to take some responsibility over the furious content circulation online. He said even cybercrime will be met with the full force of law. Rioters in northern England also attacked a hotel, supposedly housing asylum seekers. According to *Deutsche Welle*, a 41-year-old, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, who led the English Defence League and was a far-right Muslim agitator, has a prominent role behind inciting violence. Another leader, Nigel Farage, from the right-wing Reform UK party, has been instigating anti-immigrant sentiments among people after the Southport attack. ("[UK riots: PM Starmer pledges swift action toward agitators,](#)" *Deutsche Welle*, 05 August 2024)

Riots in the three cities after death of three minors

On 04 August, more than 90 people were arrested by the Police for riots in Liverpool, Belfast and Manchester, which turned violent. The protests sparked after three minor girls were stabbed to death by a teenager. This follows after false information was circulated that the attacker was a Muslim asylum seeker. Particularly in Liverpool, around a thousand people gathered to shout Islamophobic and anti-immigrant slogans. The police were seen in riot gear and with dogs to contain the riots. According to the *BBC*, far-right forces are behind organising these violent protests. Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, has stated that there is no excuse for violence. In Bristol, protesters were shouting slogans: "We want our country back". Meanwhile, they were encountered by anti-racist protesters. However, beer cans were thrown at anti-racist groups. In Belfast,

there were protesters outside a mosque. There were at least 30 demonstrations planned by far-right people. Meanwhile, Shadow Home Secretary, James Cleverly, has asked the government and Starmer to “send a clear message to thugs.” (Alex Binley, [“Dozens arrested after protest disorder spreads,” BBC](#), 04 August 2024)

Far-right protests are not boiling point says BBC

On 05 August, an opinion in the BBC reported on the protests in the UK. Riots and arrests are being reported. The riots came after false information about the identity of a stabber was circulated. *BBC* has brought the sufferings of asylum seekers and minorities whose struggles have increased since the riots. The *BBC* report cited an Ipsos survey that revealed that 52 per cent of British thought immigration was too high. Next, the European Social Survey, found that most British think that immigration is positive for their cultural and economic growth. Thus, the *BBC* reported that the UK might not be on the verge of a civil war but there was latent anger among the public. It concludes: “... it would be a mistake to assume that orchestrated far-right hooliganism is representative of the mood in Britain.” ([“Protests reveal deep-rooted anger, but UK is not at boiling point,” BBC](#), 05 August 2024)

Prime Minister criticises the protestors

On 04 August, Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK and the leader of the Labour party, said that he will make rioters regret their deeds. He called this a “far-right thuggery.” The rioters have been associated with the English Defence League, a far-right anti-Islamic group. Protests held slogans saying “We are not far right, we are right” and “Stop the invasion.” The riots reflect the presence of anti-immigration sentiments in British politics. *Le Monde* reported 370 arrests as of 05 August. Even mosques are being targeted. The PM also held an emergency meeting with his cabinet ministers. He also met the Scotland Yard chief Mark Rowley. The riots also display

the power of social media and false information on public order. ([“British PM Starmer says far-right rioters will 'regret' disorder,” *Le Monde*](#), 04 August 2024; [“UK riots: Starmer holds emergency meeting over far-right violence,” *Le Monde*](#), 05 August 2024)

Dolphins found dead in River Thames

On 05 August, The British Divers Marine Life Rescue was monitoring a dolphin nicknamed Jo Jo. While sighting Jo Jo, they found two dolphins dead near Chelsea Harbour Pier. Only a week before, another dolphin was found dead on the Thames riverbank in Greenwich, London. This is becoming a subject of concern since only a day before, reports of sea mammals being sick and weak in the Dutch coastal region were reported. This raises questions on the quality of water in the river and the availability of small fish for dolphins, questioning the problem of overfishing by humans in the river. It is fascinating how the UK is eager to own fish that come through the English Channel and riot against those who come through the Channel. ([“Dolphin found dead on bank of River Thames,” *BBC*](#), 05 August 2024)

Stabbing in Southport

On 01 August, three minor girls were stabbed to death by a teenager in Southport, a town in Northwest England. Some protests erupted due to a rumour that the attacker was a Muslim asylum seeker. The police also said that false information was spread with an intention to prompt violence. Protestors had links to far-right groups. The suspect also has ten counts of attempted murder and owned a sharp object. ([“Southport attack: UK police charge 17-year-old with murder,” *Deutsche Welle*](#), 01 August 2024)

TURKEY

Wildfires pose risk to houses and war memorials

On 16 August, reports brought out the threat posed by wildfires in the northwestern regions of Turkey. According to officials, an electricity spark through forest areas started the fires. A forest fire in

the western province of Izmir which began on 15 August in the Karsiyaka district, forced residents to leave their homes. Suleyman Elban, Governor of Izmir stated that the fire's proximity to residential areas and the high winds were making containment efforts difficult. A village had already been evacuated and over 1000 firefighters were battling against the blaze. The provinces of Canakkale, Manisa, and Bolu were also subject to fires, with neighbourhoods and villages evacuated. The fire affected Canterbury Cemetery, the burial site of Allied troops from World War I, with gravestones blackened by soot. The wildfire is the latest in increasingly common ones across Turkey, with climate change blamed. ("Turkey wildfires threaten homes and war memorials." *Deutsche Welle*, 16 August 2024)

Foreign Minister announces joining South Africa against Israel in the ICJ case

On 07 August, the Foreign Minister of Turkey, Hakan Fidan, announced, in Cairo, that Turkey has submitted intervention in South Africa's case that accuses Israel of genocide in Palestine. Thus, Turkey will also be joining the case with SA. South Africa filed the case in December 2023 accusing Israel of breach in Genocide Convention. Almost 39,000 Palestinians have been killed in attacks since October 2023. After SA had filed the case, Israel's Foreign Minister called the country a "legal arm" of Palestine. Last month, in July, Erdogan Tayyip, President of Turkey, threatened Israel with sending NATO troops to fight them. The ICJ statute allows such intervention and similarly, even Spain and Ireland have said that they will join the case. ("Turkey joins South Africa's genocide case at ICJ against Israel." *Politico*, 08 August 2024)

Turkey builds new anti-submarine warship for Ukraine

On 02 August, a new anti-submarine warship built for Ukraine was launched in Istanbul in the presence of Rustem Umerov, Ukrainian defence minister and Ukraine's first lady, Olena Zelenska. This would be the

second warship built by Turkey for Ukraine since February 2022. The latest warship is expected to improve the capabilities of Ukraine's Navy against Russia's advanced weapons. It is equipped with cutting-edge weapons aimed to give Ukraine a breakthrough against the Russian fleet. Zelenska said: "We understand the importance of security better than anyone. This corvette will ensure the safety of our shared region, the common sea of our countries." Although the construction of the warship comes under the bilateral agreement of 2020, it is still unclear if it will be delivered to Ukraine as the Montreux convention bars warring parties' battleships from entering the Black Sea controlled by Turkey.

Signs free trade agreement with Ukraine

On 02 August, *Ukrinform* reported on Turkey ratifying a free trade agreement (FTA) with Ukraine. According to the report, the bilateral trade stood at USD 7.3 billion and is expected to increase to USD 10 billion. Under the FTA, Ukraine and Turkey plan to cancel import duties by Turkey for 93.4 per cent of Industrial goods and 7.6 per cent of agricultural goods. After the transition, both expect to remove import duties for 1.5 per cent of industrial goods and 28.5 per cent of agricultural goods. In exchange, Ukraine will cancel import duties for 56 per cent of industrial goods and 11.5 per cent of agricultural goods.

UKRAINE

Government claims no involvement in Nord Stream pipeline attacks

On 15 August, the Government of Ukraine denied any involvement in a 2022 attack on the Nord Stream gas pipelines. This came a day after it was claimed that authorities in the German capital of Berlin had issued an arrest warrant, in connection with the attack. Volodymyr Z, a Ukrainian national is alleged to have hired a German yacht to bring explosives and diving equipment to the location of the pipelines. While Volodymyr Z is believed to have had accomplices, no links with the Ukrainian government have been confirmed. Mykhailo

Podolyak, Advisor to the Head of Office of the President of Ukraine claimed that only Russia possessed the knowledge and expertise required to carry out the Nord Stream bombings. The German government has been accused of carrying out the investigation slowly by the governments of both Ukraine and Poland, with Volodymyr Z's departure to Ukraine from Poland cited as a failure of the German authorities to inform on time. Jorg Schmitt, an investigative journalist part of the team issuing the warrant stated that right now, it seemed as if Ukraine had been involved in the attacks. ("[Nord Stream pipeline sabotage: Ukraine denies involvement](#)," *DW News*, 15 August 2024)

REGIONAL

Marks 35 years since historic protests against the Soviets

On 23 August, an article in *ERR News* remembered the 35th anniversary of the historic Baltic Way protests against Soviet rule. The article is a historical account of the Baltic Way protest on 23 August 1989, which saw over 2 million people form a 670-kilometre human chain across the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; to draw attention to the occupation of their homelands by the Soviet Union. The date of the protest also coincided with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (MRP) between Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany which led to the eventual annexation of the Baltic states by the Soviets. In 1986, it had been decided that 23 August, the day the MRP was signed, would be marked as Black Ribbon Day. In 1989, on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the MRP; political organisations in the Baltic states (Rahvarinne in Estonia, Tautas fronte in Latvia, and the Sajudis movement in Lithuania) organised a large-scale human chain across the capitals of the three countries protesting for political freedom. Over two million people were a part of the entirely peaceful human chain, which symbolised the desire of the citizens of these countries to break free from Soviet control. It then led to the independence of the Baltic countries by the end of 1991, regaining their freedom. ("[The Baltic Way:](#)

[35 years since 2 million protest for freedom from Soviets](#)," *ERR News*, 23 August 2024)

Climate change poses a threat to alcoholic drink production

On 23 August, an article in *Euro News* brought out the impact of increasing climate change on the production of alcoholic drinks in Europe. For instance, the combination of extreme weather and soil degradation is reducing grape harvests in the mountainside vineyards of northern Italy, where the prosecco white wine is produced. It is estimated that Italian grape harvests could decline by a fifth, with drought and intense rainfall making the process more difficult. Similarly, the palinka fruit brandy from Hungary is under threat, since droughts and the arrival of extreme weather conditions are damaging the production of fruit crops such as blackcurrants and raspberries. To combat this threat, palinka is now being made with kiwi fruit in some areas. There is concern that the iconic British beer or pint could disappear altogether, as the production of hops used in beer is under threat due to warmer weather. Similarly, a growing scarcity of water has made it difficult to produce the Guinness drink. (Rebecca Ann Hughes, "[Guinness, prosecco, palinka: Climate change is a threat to Europe's most beloved tipples](#)," *Euronews*, 23 August 2024)

Users can delete default apps after Apple's compliance with DMA

On 23 August, *Euronews* informed that technology conglomerate Apple would now provide its users in Europe with the ability to delete apps like Safari and App Store. Apple announced via a post to developers that it would make changes to the browser choice screen, default apps, and app deletion for users in the EU in compliance with the Digital Market Act (DMA) regulations. There would be a Default Apps section and default settings for features like navigation, passwords, texts, and phone numbers present for users by the end of the year, although users would still be able to re-download the apps. It would also be easier to choose alternative browsers, and

Apple customers will receive a list of browser options. The changes come after Apple was informed by the European Commission that its App Store rules prevented app developers from offering alternative avenues of content to consumers, violating the DMA. (Pascale Davies, ["Apple's Europe users will be able to delete default apps such as Safari amid EU competition rules."](#) *Euronews*, 23 August 2024)

Beach concession control dispute between EU and Italy ends

On 23 August, *Euronews* published an article informing that the Government of Italy would be required to comply with EU regulations relating to the management of beach concessions from early 2025. The European Commission has accused Italy of lacking transparency and creating an effective monopoly of beach concessions with no competitive tendering. The beach concessions in Italy have been family-run businesses for decades, and have been accused of not allowing competitors into the market. Costs at beaches vary across Italy ranging from EUR 25 at basic establishments to over EUR 100 in fancy resorts like Capri. Estimates by the Italian Court of Auditors show that the beach businesses with an average revenue of about EUR 260,000 have been paying only about EUR 7600 for their concessions. Pietro Paganini, an economist, accused Italian governments of protecting the beach operators for vote benefits. On the other hand, beach operators complain that they require compensation in exchange for their investments. (["Beach Wars: Are EU and Italy close to resolving beach concession feud?"](#) *Euro News*, 23 August 2024)

Household expenditure highest in Ireland, Spain and Italy

On 20 August, *Euro News* published an article looking into the increases in household expenditure over the past two decades in Europe. Figures by the database EuroStat show that expenditure on housing, water, electricity, and gas accounts for 24.1 per cent of household consumption in the EU in 2022. The expenditure on housing,

water, electricity, and gas category includes housing costs for both renters and non-renters, costs of housing maintenance and repairs, water supply and other services, electricity, gas, and other fuels. Additionally, household expenditure has increased from 21.1 in 2002 to 24.1 per cent in 2022, due to the rising costs of living. While the housing expenditure increase is less than the health expenditure increase (14 per cent and 22 per cent respectively) the impact of the increase in housing prices is much more due to more housing expenses. The rising costs of living in the EU can be shown through the fact that the household spending percentage on housing and utilities has increased over time, reaching a peak of 25.6 per cent in 2020 during the COVID-19. There is a disparity in the increase by percentage points between 2002 and 2022 in the share of housing, water, electricity and gas in EU household expenditure. Ireland saw the biggest increase at 7.7 percentage points followed by Spain and Italy at 6.3 and 5.4. However, countries like Romania and Serbia saw a decrease in expenditure, such as a 4.1 reduction in percentage points for Romania, and a 3.6 reduction for Serbia. There also exist variations in terms of expenditure on housing, water, electricity, gas by countries as a part of overall household expenditure. Slovakia spent the most in 2022, with 30 per cent of its expenditure on this, followed by Finland and Denmark with 29.1 per cent and 26.1 per cent. However, countries in Southern and Eastern Europe like Montenegro and Turkey spent much less (11.6 and 12.4 per cent) indicating that they are less affected by rising living costs than Northern and Central Europe are. Another way to gauge the impact of the cost-of-living increase is through the report by the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which shows that lower-income households face more burden due to rising housing costs. For instance, 49 per cent of low-income private tenants in the UK spent over 40 per cent of their income on rent, 32 per cent in France and 28 per cent in Italy did so. (Servet Yanatma, ["Housing expenditures surge in the EU: Which countries saw the largest increase?"](#) *Euro News*, 20 August 2024)

Fulfils gas storage target ahead of the schedule

On 22 August, *Euronews* informed that the European Union (EU) had reached its target of filling up the winter gas storage capacity to 90 per cent weeks ahead of schedule. According to the European Commission, the target was reached on 18 August, ten weeks before the 1 November deadline. The nearly 92 billion cubic metres of gas present in the stocks can make up for almost a third of the combined winter gas demand of the 27 EU states. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the EU has drastically reduced gas imports from Russia; with national governments across the bloc taking the responsibility of assuring households. A 300 billion EUR worth programme called RePower EU was also launched by the EU, as part of the shift towards renewable energy. This is the second year in a row that the EU has reached the target ahead of schedule, with a spokesperson for the Commission calling it a good sign of the EU's ability to find alternative energy supplies. (["EU reaches its winter gas shortage target weeks ahead of schedule," Euro News, 22 August 2024](#))

Multidimensional impact of overheating found in the Mediterranean

On 22 August, *Euronews* reported on the impact of rising temperatures in the seas, on areas beyond just marine biodiversity. For the past few years, the Mediterranean Sea has been a hotspot for climate change, with temperatures there heating beyond the global average Ocean temperatures have remained exceptionally high, causing a marine heatwave which has led to mass mortality in many marine species like corals. Apart from the local organisms, communities dependent on the sea for their livelihoods such as fish farmers and fishermen have struggled, due to the impact of excessive heat on the local flora and fauna. About EUR 400 billion is generated from the Mediterranean's ocean-related activities every year, but climate change has put a shadow over this. High temperatures in the ocean can also lead to storms and

increase temperatures on land; something countries in Southern Europe like Italy have been enduring. Karina von Schuckmann, an oceanographer for research institute Mercator Ocean International stated that societies need to focus on adapting to and mitigating climate change impacts since the after-effects of warming oceans will reverberate for long. (Rosie Frost, ["Lost income, less tourists and freak weather: Overheated seas affect far more than just marine life," Euro News, 22 August 2024](#))

European Parliament faces questions after complaints of data breach

On 22 August, NOYB-European Centre for Digital Rights, a non-profit organisation focusing on privacy violations, announced that it had filed two complaints alleging that the European Parliament had violated the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Back in May, data on 8000 applicants for temporary positions like contractual agents had been breached, with NOYB focusing on the mishandling of information leading to the breach. According to NOYB, the breach made use of 'PEOPLE', an external application controlled by the human resources service of the European Parliament, which had access to sensitive data about individuals, like their IDs, passports, marriage certificates, residence documents. Reports suggest that the data had been compromised for months, and the cause of the breach remains unidentified. NOYB has also called out the Parliament for its refusal to delete data after a formal request by a complainant. If the EDPS finds the Parliament guilty of infringing the GDPR, then measures like suspending data flows could be imposed. (Romane Armangau, ["European Parliament under scrutiny after data breach complaints," Euro News, 22 August 2024](#))

Politico presents the names of the nominees to form the European Commission

On 21 August, *Politico* reported names of the nominees for Ursula von der Leyen's, EU President, Commission. All the nominees will have to be approved by the Parliament. The following are some of the notable

names to be proposed before the Parliament: Magnus Brunner from Austria who currently serves as the Finance Minister of Austria Dubravka Suica from Croatia who is the European commissioner for democracy and demography. Costas Kadis from Cyprus who has previously served as Cyprus' minister of health, education and culture, and agriculture and environment. Jozef Sikela from the Czech Republic who is currently the Czech industry and trade minister. Kaja Kallas from Estonia had stepped down as Estonian prime minister in July after being picked by EU leaders as the bloc's next foreign policy chief. Henna Virkkunen from Finland. Thierry Breton from France. He is also the European commissioner for internal market and services. Apostolos Tzitzikostas from Greece. He is the Governor of Central Macedonia. (["Von der Leyen's new Commission: The names we know so far," Politico](#), 21 August 2024)

Congo asks for more Mpox vaccines from the EU

On 21 August, Jean Kaseya, head of the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said that the African continent requires more than 10 million doses of the Mpox virus vaccines, while the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) alone requires 3.5 million doses. Europe has announced that it will send 2,15,000 doses to Africa and Japan has pledged three million doses and the US will send 50,000 doses. *Politico* has reported that most European countries have their reserves for storing vaccines and the number is in the hundreds of thousands. In April 2024, the European Medicines Agency had suggested the EU to donate the stockpiled vaccine doses "to avoid a potential spread across the northern hemisphere." Europe has only one Mpox vaccine manufacturer, Bavarian Nordic. The EU procures all the vaccines produced by Bavarian Nordic. (["Congo to EU: Give us your mpox jabs," Politico](#), 21 August 2024)

European Commission approves building silicon chip factory in Dresden

On 20 August, the European Commission approved the building of a new silicon chip factory in Dresden, Germany. The German Federal Government will provide a fund of EUR five billion to the European Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (ESMC) under the approval. It is going to be the first chip factory set up by a Taiwanese Semiconductor Manufacturing Company in Europe. The manufacturing facility will develop high-performance chips. The approval aims to reduce Europe's dependence on other countries for technological advancements. ESMC is a joint venture between three European firms, Bosch, Infineon and NXF, and Taiwanese semiconductor giant, TSMC. The European firms will be holding 30 per cent stakes in the factory collectively while TSMC will be holding 70 per cent. The Commission said that it is necessary to "ensure the resilience of Europe's semiconductor supply chain." The factory is expected to start production in 2027 and will focus on chips for the automobile industry. It is expected to create 2,000 jobs. Dresden University of Technology and TSMC also signed a student exchange program wherein 30 German students will go to TSMC for a two-month internship. *Politico* has written that Germany has walked the tightrope of making the entire cooperation an economic one, rather than a political one. *DW* highlights that the semiconductor industry is also risky as an investment since Joe Biden, the US President, lost billions of USD in ventures to build chip manufacturing units in the States. (["EU greenlights new chip factory in Dresden," Deutsche Welle](#), 20 August 2024)

EU plans to impose import duties on Chinese electric cars

On 20 August, the European Commission stated that it planned to impose five-year import duties of up to 36 per cent on Chinese electric car imports. The decision comes after the Commission imposed provisional tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) last month, for unfairly undermining their European counterparts. China's policy of using state funds for developing EV firms has given it an edge

over European manufacturers, who lack the luxury of governmental support. The EU was the largest recipient of Chinese EVs in 2023, at nearly 40 per cent. The Commission plans to impose tariffs of 21.3 per cent for Chinese manufacturers cooperating with them, while a maximum 36.3 per cent will be imposed on uncooperative EV firms. On the other hand, Tesla cars manufactured in China will be subjected to a rate of nine per cent; after the Commission found it benefitted little from Chinese subsidies in contrast to local manufacturers. China has filed an appeal with the World Trade Organization (WTO) over the tariffs, while the EU believes that they are compatible with WTO rules. ([“EU plans 36% tariff on Chinese EVs, with lower duty for Tesla,” Le Monde, 20 August 2024](#))

Turkey’s gas pipeline to become the only Russian gas supply point to Europe after Kursk incursion says *Deutsche Welle*

On 19 August, an article in Deutsche Welle News brought out the potential impact of Ukraine’s incursion into Russia’s Kursk region, vis a vis gas supplies to the European Union (EU). The Armed Forces of Ukraine had claimed the offices of Russian energy corporation Gazprom at the crucial Sudzha town were under its control, a claim denied by Russia. Sudzha acts as a processing point for gas being exported from Russia before it is supplied to the rest of Europe via Ukraine. At present, neither Russia nor Ukraine appear willing to end the gas transportation system in Sudzha; the only Russian town still processing gas through Ukraine. Ukraine has also indicated that it will not renew a five-year deal allowing Russian gas to be shipped through Ukraine, which expires in December 2024. Benjamin Hilgenstock, a senior economist at the Kyiv School of Economics believes that Ukraine will not end the Russian gas supply before the expiry of the deal, due to its goodwill with the European nations benefiting from Russian gas. EU member states still import a combined EUR 8.4 billion worth of Russian hydrocarbons but have begun the process of moving away from dependence on Russian gas. For

instance, Hungary has signed a gas deal with Turkey. Its gas pipeline is likely to become the only way through which Russian gas can enter Europe. (Arthur Sullivan, [“What Ukraine’s Russia incursion means for EU gas supply,” Deutsche Welle News, 19 August 2024](#))

Fertility crisis in Europe; Lowest birth rate since 1960

On 17 August, Eurostat released the latest data on birth rates for 2022. The number of live births in 2022 was the lowest recorded since 1960. Fertility rate is the number of babies per female. In 2022, the number of live births was 3.8 million, for the first time it was less than four million. There has been a continuous downward trend since 1960. Ireland and Finland recorded the steepest downfalls in birth rates. Meanwhile, Czechia, Romania, and Bulgaria recorded an increase. 1990 was the last year when Europe recorded more than five million births i.e., 5.1 million. In 2022, the highest fertility rate was in Georgia i.e., 1.83 and lowest was in Malta, 1.08. the average of the EU as a whole was 1.46. fertility rate was 2.35 in 1970, 1.4 in 1998 and peaked in 2016 with 1.5, according to the World Bank data. Europe has the lowest fertility across the world, after East Asia and the Pacific region. The highest birth rates were recorded in Western and Central Africa at 4.98 followed by Southern Africa at 4.35 and Arab at 3.1. ([“Europe’s fertility crisis: Which countries are having the fewest babies?,” Euronews, 17 August 2024](#))

Fears of Mpox outbreak in Europe after Sweden case

On 16 August, an article in The New York Times wrote about concerns of Mpox spreading widely in Europe. The concerns came after a case of the new clade I variant was reported in Sweden, and the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a global health emergency. The infected person in Sweden had travelled to an infected area, and the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) stated that high travel between Europe and Africa meant that more cases were likely. The Centre advised countries to be more prepared and

issue travel advisories for people travelling to affected areas. Pamela Rendi-Wagner, Director of the ECDC warned that Europe and North America would remain at risk as long as the outbreak in Africa was not controlled. Dr Paul Hunter, an epidemiologist at Norwich University believes there are two mpox epidemics going on now. The first is the Clade Ib variant outbreak which drove the 2022 outbreak and is spread mainly through sexual contact. The other is the deadlier Clade I variant, which differs based on how it can be spread. Clade Ia spreads through household contact and exposure to affected animals as well, not just sexual contact. On the other hand, it is indicated that Clade Ib mainly spreads through heterosexual sex. At present, Sweden is the only nation outside Africa to have reported a case of the new variant. However, public health experts have urged vigilance, with prompt treatment of patients and prioritizing testing. The EU informed it would donate over 175,000 vaccine doses to Africa. The governments of the US and France, and Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic have also indicated their willingness to donate vaccine doses to Africa. (Lynsey Chutel, Jenny Gross and Christina Anderson, "Mpox Case in Sweden Sets Off Concerns of Wider Spread in Europe," *The New York Times*, 16 August 2024)

Mediterranean Sea records highest temperature in history

On 16 August, the surface temperature of the Mediterranean Sea reached its highest with a median of 28.9 degrees Celsius. The previous record occurred on 24 July 2023 which had a median value of 28.7 degree Celsius. Since the record is of 15 August 2024, the maximum surface temperature of a water body was recorded on the Egyptian coast of Al-Erish. The readings came from the satellite data of the European Copernicus Observatory. The summer of 2024 has been recorded as the warmest in Spain after 2023. Justino Martinez, a researcher at the Catalan Institute of Research for the Governance of the Sea, said that it is concerning how two consecutive summers have been the hottest. The surface

temperature recorded the highest during the 2003 heatwave before 15 August 2024. The Mediterranean region is the hotspot of climate change. The sea has been absorbing excess heat released from human activity since the beginning of the industrial age. The heat continues to accumulate due to the release of greenhouse gases. It has an intense impact on aquatic life. It threatens fish stock and food security. Warmer oceans are also less capable of absorbing pollutants. ("Mediterranean Sea reaches highest surface temperature ever recorded," *France24*, 16 August 2024)

EU warns to treat Mpox with caution as cases spread

On 16 August, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the infectious disease control agency of the European Union (EU) advised countries to prioritise Mpox vaccinations for individuals visiting virus-affected areas. The ECDC stated that Europe would likely witness more cases of the dangerous clade I variant Mpox after Sweden reported the first case. According to the ECDC, while there are low chances of the variant spreading amongst the wider population, it still poses a moderate risk to individuals with underlying conditions. However, in contrast to the earlier mpox outbreak on the continent in 2022; countries have enough vaccines now and have been proactive with their public health messaging. Health Service Executive, the publicly funded healthcare system of Ireland stated that it had access to enough supplies of the Imvanex shot supplied by Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic. The governments of Italy, Spain, and Czechia have also confirmed that they have enough vaccine supplies to meet potential demand. At the same time, the Government of the United Kingdom has issued an "urgent public health message" to public health providers to ensure staff are trained and have access to protective equipment. According to the European Commission, its Health Security Committee will meet on 19 August to plan a coordinated response between member states; while the ECDC stated they would review the mpox

response in Africa to learn lessons. (Mari Eccles and Rory O'Neill, "[Heightened mpox vigilance urged by EU as deadly virus spreads](#)," *Politico*, 16 August 2024)

EU enquires about LGBTQ+ propaganda law

On 16 August 2024, Helena Dalli, the EU Commissioner of Equality, sent a letter to the Bulgarian Minister of Education and Science asking for information on legislation passed on banning LGBTQ+ propaganda in Bulgarian schools. The Commission said that it evaluates if the law is in alignment with European values. The legislation was tabled by the Revival Party, a far-right pro-Russian party. Parties belonging to the political centre-ground also supported the bill. Bulgaria is ranked among the worst countries for the LGBTQ+ community in the EU. It also failed to respond to the EU Court's ruling to legalise same-sex relationships. Rémy Bonny, executive director of the rights group Forbidden Colours, said that Bulgaria is prioritising "Russian values over European values." He said that the bill resonated with the Russian law of 2013 which banned teaching of LGBTQ+ ideas in classrooms. Even Hungary was accused of copy-pasting the same law in 2021 and the EU launched a legal action against Hungary. ("[Why critics want an EU response to Bulgaria's law banning LGBTQ+ 'propaganda' in schools](#)," *Euronews*, 16 August 2024)

GenAI not disruptive amid the Russian misinformation spread says Meta

On 15 August, Meta released its Adversarial Threat Report. The report claims that GenAI had a limited role in spreading misinformation in Russian news. The EU has launched a probe against the company under the Digital Services Act of 2015. The Meta spokesperson said that the company has a "well-established process for identifying and mitigating risks on our platforms." In the report, Meta said that Russia is trying to mimic authentic reports using artificial intelligence to make them look authentic. Russia aims to undermine Ukrainian efforts in the war. ("[Meta sees](#)

[limited use of GenAI in Russian disinformation](#)," *Euronews*, 16 August 2024)

WHO declares Mpox a global health emergency; Europe and Africa to collaborate

On 14 August, *Euronews* informed that the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared the Mpox outbreak in Africa as a global health emergency. According to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, the detection of a new and more dangerous Mpox variant poses a significant global threat. The organization has stated that it requires 15 million USD to support Africa's Mpox response. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the epicentre of the current outbreak, with the new strain spreading through close and sexual contact. Over 14,000 cases and over 500 deaths related to Mpox have been reported across Africa in 2024, considered to be an undercount due to lack of testing. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have also declared Mpox to be a continental public health emergency, and the fear is that the disease could further spread due to poor health infrastructure and limited manufacturing capability in Africa. The European Commission's pandemic preparedness group and Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic have promised to send vaccine shots to Africa, which the CDC says will be given based on the extent of the outbreak in a country and risk-levels for vulnerable groups like pregnant women. The WHO has also requested countries and international groups to donate shots from their own stockpiles. African and European health authorities are working together to expand Mpox testing and tracking in Africa, with the European Commission expected to invest EUR 3.5 million. The present outbreak comes over two years after a similar public health emergency was declared in July 2022. (Gabriela Galvin, "[WHO declares Africa's Mpox outbreak a global health emergency as new outbreak spreads](#)," *Euronews*, 14 August 2024)

Rising costs pose a risk to EU pensions

On 16 August, *Deutsche Welle* reported the threat to the European pension systems posed by increasing costs. The European Union (EU) faces a demographic timebomb, with a third of its population expected to be over the age of 65 by 2050. The rapidly ageing population has led to greater spending on pensions, which has reached up to 10 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in some countries. Some European countries like France have introduced controversial measures to deal with the problem, such as raising the retirement age. Additionally, millions of people are not saving enough in their private or occupational pensions to complement their state pensions. The Eurobarometer public opinion survey's 2023 data showed that only 23 per cent of EU residents have an occupational pension scheme, and only 19 per cent own a personal pension product. 39 per cent of respondents are not saving for retirement, as per the survey of the Insurance Europe trade body. The ones who save have also received low returns on their investments, owing to factors like high inflation, high fees, poor asset allocation and lack of transparency in pension products. The EU introduced the Pan-European Personal Pension Product (PEPP) which allows workers to build up an EU-wide portable additional pension. However, only Slovakia has rolled out the scheme so far, due to the complicated and restrictive nature of the scheme. Workers are also demanding more flexibility in their investments and retirement age, with cheap and easy mobile investment apps an increasingly popular option. (Nik Martin, "[Aging Europe: Rising costs threaten EU pensions.](#)" *Deutsche Welle*, 16 August 2024)

New EU regulations pose threat to development of fresh treatments for diseases

On 14 August, the *Financial Times* carried out an article about the new rules by the European Union (EU) threatening to cut the number of new treatments for rare diseases, due to curbs on medical trials. Nearly 40 groups including Cancer Patients Europe and the World Federation of

Hemophilia said the guidelines would make it difficult to get approval for drugs intended to cure rare diseases. Randomised control trials with a large group of people were too expensive and unethical, as compared to single-arm trials. An analysis by the Alliance for Regenerative Medicine (ARM) found that about 80 per cent of approved and available therapies in the EU use single arm studies. Regulators are of the view that the rules could allow countries to authorize medicines more quickly, as countries work together on joint clinical assessments. Stefano Benvenuti, head of public affairs at Italian charity Fondazione Telethon believed that the rules were positive but their implementation guidelines were restrictive. Benvenuti added that treatments on some rare diseases had even been stopped due to the low number of patients. (Andy Bounds, "[EU rules threaten to cut new treatments for rare diseases.](#)" *Financial Times*, 14 August 2024)

EV leasing firms in Europe at crossroads

On 13 August, *Reuters* reported that low resale values of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in Europe have caused leasing firms to double prices. Industry executives say that cuts in subsidies for new EVs are negatively impacting sales. It is estimated that up to 80 per cent of EVs in Europe are leased, and the market is dominated by corporate and commercial entities who buy up to 60 per cent of new EVs in countries like Germany and Spain. The lease price is calculated based on estimated resale prices for a vehicle. However, leasing firms suffer financial losses if second-hand prices are lower than expected. Second-hand EV prices in Europe have been declining, owing to external factors like Tesla's price cuts and the influx of cheaper Chinese EVs into the market. Tim Albertsen, the CEO of Ayvens, a car leasing company, said that his company was leasing EVs once or twice more at affordable rates. Leasing firms are also concerned by the risk of a potential European Commission diktat on mandatory EV sale targets. This could increase prices further. (Nick Carey, "[Leasing model behind](#)

Europe's EV drive at risk of breakdown."
Reuters, 13 August 2024)

EU to wait and watch on Slovakia agency restructuring

On 12 August, the European Commission said it was monitoring the dismantling of Slovakia's two key criminal agencies. The National Criminal Agency of Slovakia (NAKA) is being restructured presently by the government of Robert Fico, Prime Minister of Slovakia. It is planned to be replaced with three new specialized police units, which separately deal with corruption, drugs-related criminality, and terrorism. Regular police units will also take over several of NAKA's former responsibilities, and investigators may be transferred to lower-level police units. Additionally, the government also plans to abolish the National Central Unit for Special Types of Crimes (NCODK) which deals with environmental or cybercrimes. Slovakia has promised to train personnel from both agencies, as a part of its restructuring. However, taken in line with other actions by the Slovakian government, for instance changing the Criminal Codes; the actions may come in conflict with the Rule of Law published by the EU executive. Several former NAKA investigators are also facing charges. However, for now, the European Commission has decided against immediate actions. (Charles Szumski and Zuzana Gabrizova, "Brussels waits till dust settles on anti-corruption overhaul in Slovakia." *Euractive*, 12 August 2024)

Diplomatic tensions between Hungary and Poland

On 13 August, *Hungary today* reported the friction between Hungary and Poland and described it as a 'dramatic shift.' The two countries have shared cordial relations in the past. However, their relations are strained due to the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war. The new government of Poland under Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister of Poland. Hungary's stance on the conflict has drifted the countries apart. *Hungary Today* calls this hypocrisy on the part of Poland as it continues to engage with Russia while criticising Hungary for doing so. However,

the report recalls a long history of shared interests and mutual cooperation.

("Diplomatic Tensions and Historical Frictions in the Hungarian-Polish Relations," *Hungary Today*, 13 August 2024)

47,000 people lost lives due to heatwave in Europe

On 12 August, Barcelona Institute for Global Health published a report that said around 47,000 people in Europe died due to excessive heat in Europe in 2023. Southern Europe recorded the highest mortality rate as it is more vulnerable to heat waves. Greece recorded 393 deaths due to excess heat per million inhabitants, Bulgaria recorded 229, Italy and Spain recorded 209 and 175, respectively. Germany recorded 76 deaths, reflecting the vulnerability of Mediterranean countries. Older people are more affected by the heat wave. Also, climate change impact also seems gendered as the mortality rate of women is significantly higher than men. The report suggested that these problems can be prevented through better healthcare facilities and early warnings. It also said that people are developing adaptability towards heat too, due to which mortality rates are not as high. ("Heat caused nearly 50,000 deaths in Europe last year: study." *Deutsche Welle*, 12 August 2024)

Big Tech companies accused of complicity in spreading of riots

On 10 August, as the UK recovers from deadly riots, the role of big tech social media companies in aiding the spread of misinformation has come under heavy scrutiny. Prominent tech companies including the likes of Meta, TikTok, and Snapchat have made no statement on the violence, while X (formerly Twitter) has been a source of conspiracy theories being spread. Elon Musk, owner of X has been at the forefront during the riots, tweeting "civil war is inevitable" and spreading conspiracy theories about the building of detention camps in the Falklands for rioters. Musk has also reduced content moderation on X and ended the platform ban on Tommy Robinson, a far-right activist. In an interview with BBC News, social media

expert Matt Navarra said that tech companies are more concerned with maintaining their user base, rather than taking political stances. Keir Starmer, UK Prime Minister has stated that the role of social media will be looked at more, and the Online Safety Act set to be implemented next year will provide the government with more power to regulate social media. (Graham Fraser, "A week of unrest- and a week of silence from big tech," *BBC News*, 10 August 2024)

King Charles appeals for calm and peace after week of violence

On 10 August, Charles III, King of the United Kingdom offered his thanks to police and emergency services trying to restore order in violence-affected areas in phone conversations with Keir Starmer, UK Prime Minister, and police chiefs, according to Buckingham Palace. King Charles also hoped that "shared values of mutual respect and understanding will continue to strengthen and unite the nation." The King acknowledged the resilient community spirit and compassion that had been displayed during these riots and is believed to have been involved in initiatives to bring together violence-affected communities. Visits to the affected areas will be undertaken by the King after the violence is over, keeping in line with his role as a politically neutral head of state. (Sean Coughlan, "King in call for unity after 'aggression' of riots," *BBC News*, 10 August 2024)

China appeals in WTO against European tariffs on EVs

On 09 August, China filed an appeal to the World Trade Organisation against the extra duties that the European Union has applied on Chinese manufactured electric vehicles and the accusations it has made that China is flooding the EV market. Spokesperson of the Chinese Commerce Industry said that the EU's ruling lacks factual and legal basis and it undermines global cooperation on climate change. The appeal comes after the EU increased tariffs on Chinese EVs to 38 per cent. The EU argued that since the PRC government provided subsidies to Chinese

EV makers, they sell it for cheaper price and it does not give a level playing field for EU EV makers. China is giving subsidies to companies in green technology and therefore the EU has been cautious of importing solar panels from China as well. This reflects the politics of green technology that are in play on a global level. ("China appeals to WTO over European tariffs on electric cars," *Deutsche Welle*, 09 August 2024)

Heatwaves risk pushes for EU protection mechanism

On 02 August, an opinion in *Euronews* indicated the increased heatwaves and how the EU's emergency mechanism was addressed. According to the report, the EU would activate its "emergency mechanism" for on-ground assistance against increasing heatwaves and risk of fires. The heatwaves were observed to be spread across Europe increasing the risk of wildfires. The flames were seen across Croatia, Italy, Greece and other countries. To counter, the EU uses the EU Civil Protection Mechanism formed in 2001. It consists of three branches with a fleet of 28 water bomber planes and four helicopters from its EU member states. It has allotted EUR 600 million to acquire 12 water bombers which are expected to be functional by the end of 2030 and distributed among the six member states. Balazs Ujvari, spokesperson for the European Commission said: "More than 500 firefighters are pre-positioned in four southern EU Member States—France, Portugal, Spain, and Greece—and can be called upon to assist local teams if needed." (Gregoire Lory, "How does the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism combat wildfires?," *Euronews*, 02 August 2024)

Plans to pressure Global South in COP29 over climate aid

On 01 August, Politico reported that since the UN Climate Conference, also known as COP29, will be centred around financing, the European Union plans to put pressure on emerging economies such as China to increase their funding for climate change. Until 2026, countries have decided to collect USD 100 billion for the cause.

According to the UN Climate Treaty, the fund is financed by industrialised countries. The EU plans to continue its aid but expects countries that have become wealthier since signing of the Treaty to step up and start funding. China is of special interest since it has become the second wealthiest country in the world and the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. (Zia Weise, "[EU prepares for COP29 showdown with China over climate aid.](#)" *Politico*, 01 August 2024)

Balkans region faces forest fires

On 01 August, *Euronews* reported a prolonged wildfire in the forests of the Balkan region due to the persisting heatwave. Bulgaria and Albania have called for firefighters from the EU Support System. Serbia has sent helicopters to North Macedonia to beat the wildfires. The forest fires in North Macedonia have caused internal displacement at a mass level among the citizens and destroyed several homes. In Albania, an army Cougar helicopter and two Italian Canadair planes have been deployed. Croatia has deployed 775 firefighters and 10 Canadian planes to contain 122 fires. The Croatian army was able to contain the fire. Spain has issued an orange warning for citizens of nine municipalities. According to the World Health Organization, the heat wave in Europe has claimed around 1,75,000 lives. ("[Balkans battle wildfires from prolonged heatwave in Europe.](#)" *Euronews*, 01 August 2024; Angela Simons, "[Spain, France, Germany: Heatwaves sweep across Europe with devastating consequences.](#)" *Euronews*, 01 August 2024)

INTERNATIONAL

Indian Prime Minister Modi holds talks with Putin after his call to Biden and visit to Ukraine

On 27 August, an article in *The Hindu* informed that following his return from Ukraine, Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India had held a call with Vladimir Putin, President of Russia. According to the Government of the Russian Federation, Modi "shared insights" from his Ukraine trip and meeting with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine; and confirmed his participation in the upcoming

BRICS summit to be held in Russia. The call with Putin came a day after a call between Modi and Joe Biden, US President. The White House released the readout of the call, stating that Biden had commended Modi for his "message of peace and ongoing humanitarian support for Ukraine." Similarly, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation released the readout of the call between Modi and Putin. It stated that Modi had emphasised his commitment to bringing about a diplomatic settlement to the Ukraine war, while Putin had highlighted Russian approaches towards ending the conflict. While there has been no official announcement from any side, speculation is rife that the Government of India is attempting to bring the Russian and Ukrainian governments together in peace talks to end the war. Modi's visit to Ukraine, months after a visit to Russia has added to the speculation. On 09 July, Vinay Kwatra, the Foreign Secretary of India at the time stated that India was ready to take all steps towards ensuring peace and stability in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. (Sahasini Haidar, "[After Ukraine visit and call from Biden, Modi speaks to Putin.](#)" *The Hindu*, 27 August 2024)

China retaliates against EV tariffs with a probe into dairy products

On 21 August, the Chinese government initiated an anti-subsidy investigation against European dairy products. This probe has been launched three weeks after the EU imposed anti-subsidy tariffs on Chinese EV manufacturers. The products that the Chinese government will be investigating include fresh cheese, curd, processed cheese, blue cheese, milk and cream as per the Chinese Commerce Ministry. China has threatened the EU with a probe into its dairy products in June, if the tariffs on EVs are imposed. France will be impacted the most. France contributes up to 40 per cent of the total dairy exports to China from the EU. France was also the most vocal on EV tariffs on Chinese EV makers. China will be quantifying the monetary impact of 20 subsidy programs on dairy products exported to China. Out of 20, seven are under Common Agriculture

Policy (CAP) while the rest 12 fall under national programs of countries. The EU has made a statement that it will continue to protect the interests of its dairy farmers. (Alessandro Ford, "[China hits back at electric vehicle tariffs with probe into EU dairy](#)," *Politico*, 21 August 2024)

Iran closes German Language Institute in Tehran

On 20 August, *Mizan* reported that the Iranian government closed two branches of the German Language Institute (DSIT) on the allegations of breaching Iranian law and extensive financial violations, calling them "illegal centres affiliated with the German government." Iran's ambassador to Germany has been summoned to Berlin as a response. The Institute was founded in 1995 by the German Embassy. Germany's Foreign Office has demanded immediate reopening of the Institute. However, *Nournews* reported that the closure of DSIT was a reciprocation to the closure of the Hamburg Islamic Centre in Germany (IZH) in July. German Interior Minister [Nancy Faeser](#) called the IZH an "important Iranian propaganda centre in Europe." In July, the Iranian Government also summoned the German ambassador as a response. German-Iranian diplomatic relations have severed after some individuals holding dual citizenship of Iran and Germany were arrested in Iran on the charges of espionage. ("[Iran orders closure of German language institute in Tehran](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 20 August 2024)

Kazakhstan President calls Central Asia to act as link between Asia and Europe

On 13 August, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of Kazakhstan urged Central Asia to position itself as a link between Asia and Europe. In an opinion piece titled "The Renaissance of Central Asia: Towards Sustainable Development and Prosperity," Tokayev stated that the Central Asian countries had defied expectations that they would become "failed states." He highlighted the growing political prominence of the region in global politics, such as the popularity of the "CA Plus"

format. Tokayev also emphasised the "Central Asian Five" countries following pragmatic foreign policies wherein they promote their ideas and cooperate in fields such as energy, industry and agriculture to mutually trade with each other. Tokayev also advises building comprehensive strategies to deal with security threats and ensuring stability for prosperity. His next points are developing transportation logistics and transit hubs to make Central Asia a global centre of transportation; alongside inter-university cooperation and transitioning to a green economy. Tokayev concludes by saying that Kazakhstan is ready to help in integration processes. He says that a successful Central Asia is a successful Kazakhstan. (Xhoi Zajmi, "[Kazakhstan president calls for Central Asia renaissance as an Asia- EU bridge](#)," *Euractiv*, 13 August 2024)

The UK, France and Germany call for ceasefire in the Middle East

On 12 August, the leaders of the UK, France and Germany issued a joint statement calling for immediate ceasefire in Gaza, release of Israeli hostages and prevention of escalation. The statement is particularly directed towards Iran and its allies, Hezbollah and Houthis, to stop the war. The joint statement came after an Israeli airstrike killed more than 90 people sheltering under a school. They also said that whoever escalates the conflict will have to take the responsibility of jeopardising the situation in the region. Olaf Scholz, the Chancellor of the Federation of Germany, called Masoud Pezeshkian, Iran's President, separately to appeal to prevent any further escalation and said that anything except ceasefire "will pose an incalculable risk to countries and people in the region." The joint statement praised the mediators, Qatar, the US and Egypt, who have been working towards diplomatic solutions between Israel and Hamas. The US President, Joe Biden, had also laid out a plan for the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners to rebuild Gaza. ("[Middle East: Germany, France, UK demand 'urgent' cease-fire](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 August 2024)

MMO offers opportunity for protecting inshore fisheries

The Marine Management Organization (MMO) is on the lookout for General Members to the Inshore Fisheries and Conservancies Authority (IFCA) Committees who can utilise their knowledge and experience towards the sustainable management of the inshore marine area of their respective IFCA district. These appointees are legally required to consider all the local fishing and marine conservation interests in their area, not prioritising only one area. The appointees will also be responsible for driving the growth of sustainable inshore fisheries in their region and protecting the marine resources from exploitation. The objective is to strike a fine balance between the usage of sea resources and protecting it from exploitation. The MMO is carrying out a rolling campaign which means applications for all regional IFCAs will be accepted throughout the year. Applications will also be accepted from current and former IFCA members nearing the end of their term alongside those who have already served their term for the designated ten-year period, with a selection process carried out based on merit. ("[A chance to manage and conserve inshore fisheries](#)," *Gov.UK*, 09 August 2024)

UK Armed Forces conduct exercises to boost Indo-Pacific security

On 09 August, personnel from the United Kingdom Armed Forces were sent to participate in multinational exercises across air, sea, and land in the Indo-Pacific region. Royal Air Force jets have flown for training exercises in Australia called Exercise Pitch Black alongside over 140 aircraft from more than 20 countries. The British and French military forces carried out the journey to Australia called Griffin Strike together, showcasing the strong defence ties between the nations. Exercise Pitch Black involved potential offensive and defensive combat operations in the air being practised through the scenarios of air-to-air combat engagements and intercept scenarios. Another exercise carried out was Exercise Predators Run wherein the Royal Marine

Commandos practised moving into military positions from small boats in a land assault, through amphibious warfighting exercises with Australia, the Philippines and the United States. British aircraft also took part in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises for their longest-range exercise ever. These military exercises are a part of the UK government's resolve to ensure the economically valuable Indo-Pacific region remains stable, for the benefit of the UK's security, including the national defence industry which supports more than 200,000 jobs. Additionally, it is an opportunity for the British armed forces to collaborate effectively with their allies. John Healey, UK Secretary of State for Defence showcased this commitment saying, "Euro-Atlantic security is inextricably linked to stability in the Indo-Pacific. These deployments of the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Royal Marines strengthen our bonds and interoperability with our important partners." (*The Rt Hon John Healey MP, "[UK shows commitment to Indo-Pacific following major exercises](#)," *Gov.UK*, 09 August 2024)*

US deploys missiles in Germany

On 04 August, Annalena Baerbock, the Foreign Minister of Germany, wrote an opinion piece for a German weekly magazine wherein she defended the government's decision to allow the deployment of American missiles on their territory. She cited European defence against Russia as a reason. The US has stationed long-range cruise missiles in the country. The Missiles include SM-6, Tomahawk and developmental hypersonic weapons. The range of these missiles is longer than those in European militaries. Several parliamentarians, including those in the government, have criticised it and called for the plan to be debated and ratified in the parliament. This is the first, since the unification of Germany, that the US has done so. Most countries consider deterrence as peaceful and a way to avoid a full-scale war. ("[Baerbock calls US missiles in Germany a 'credible deterrent'](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 04 August 2024)

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