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Russia Commented On Israel-Hamas War

Russian President Vladimir Putin, on 11 October, [stated](#) that Israel-Hamas war is a “clear example of the failure of U.S. policy in the Middle East”. He called for “unhindered access” for humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that the creation of a Palestinian state is the “most reliable” solution for peace in Israel. He added that Moscow was in contact with both Israel and Palestine to help bring an end to the hostilities. Notably, Hamas representatives [met](#) with Russian officials in Moscow on 27 October.

President Putin Attended BRI Summit

In a two-day visit to China, Russian President Vladimir Putin [said](#) that global conflicts “strengthen” Russia’s partnership with China. He also praised the “[unprecedented](#)” energy cooperation between Moscow and Beijing, evident by the fact that over 75 per cent of Russia’s exports to China are energy-linked. Russia has also emerged as China’s main oil supplier in 2023, overtaking Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, bilateral [trade](#) is expected to reach US\$ 220 billion by the end of 2023.

President Putin Signed A Law Revoking Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

On 2 November, President Putin [signed](#) into law Russia’s de-ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), a landmark agreement that aims to completely ban all nuclear tests. Russia and the United States had signed the treaty in 1996, but while Moscow ratified it in 2000, Washington never took the final step of codifying it into law. Meanwhile,

Russia’s Foreign Ministry stated that Russia intends to stick to a nuclear test ban moratorium despite withdrawing its ratification of CTBT.

IMF Lowered Russia’s 2024 GDP Growth Forecast

According to the IMF’s World Economic Outlook [report](#), Russia’s economy is set to grow by 1.1 per cent in 2024. This updated forecast was released against the backdrop of an increased Russian defence spending which will outpace spending in other sectors. At more than 6 per cent of the country’s GDP, military spending of US\$ 115 billion will hit its highest share of the economy since the 1990s. Meanwhile, Russia’s [Central Bank](#) has also raised interest rates from 13 to 15 per cent, as it warned of higher inflation.

CSTO Military Drills In Kyrgyzstan

The Indestructible Brotherhood 2023 joint [peacekeeping drills](#) comprising five CSTO members took place in the Issyk-Kul district of Kyrgyzstan on 9 October. Participating countries included Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Armenia was the notable absentee which opted out. The drills were aimed at perfecting the practical skills of peacekeeping forces’ command staff and personnel, and enhancing coordination between military units while fulfilling peacekeeping tasks in the region.

Tajikistan-Iran Defence Ministers Meeting

On 17 October, Tajikistan Minister of Defence, Colonel-General Sherali Mirzo met his Iranian [counterpart](#) Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Gharaei Ashtiani

in Dushanbe. The meeting focused prospects for expanding cooperation between the armed forces and developing military technology. The ministers exchanged views on various issues of mutual interest, including combating terrorism and extremism. Brigadier General Ashtiani also met the Tajik President Emomali Rahmon during his official visit.

EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting

On 23 October, foreign ministers of the 5 Central Asian Republics met their counterparts from the European Union in Luxembourg for the [EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting](#). Participants decided to continue their strategic partnership by deepening cooperation and connection between the regions. They also focused on steps to advance inter-regional cooperation on common security challenges, connectivity, economic and trade.

Dr S Jaishankar Attended SCO Meeting

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited the Kyrgyz Republic on 25-26 October for the [SCO](#) Council of Heads of Government meeting. The discussions revolved around trade, economics, and humanitarian cooperation between members, as well as global and regional developments.

Baltic Connector Gas Pipeline Sabotaged

On 8 October, the Baltic connector gas pipeline transporting around 30 gigawatts (GWh) of gas per day between Finland and Estonia showed a [sharp drop](#) in pressure. This bi-directional [pipeline](#) has a maximum capacity of transporting 7 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas per day. It was opened in December 2019 with the

aim to integrate gas markets in the region, giving Finland and the Baltic nations more flexibility of supply. Authorities are now focused on a Chinese and a Russian [vessel](#) which coincided with the time and area of the damage.

Robert Fico Appointed Slovakia's PM

On 25 October, Robert Fico was [appointed](#) Slovakia's prime minister for the fourth time. In pre-election campaigns, his political party, Smer, pledged to end military aid to Ukraine, slash immigration and defend Slovakian sovereignty. The EU [apprehends](#) that Slovakia under Fico will move closer to Orbán-led Hungary. His coming to power reflects the growing discontent among the European public for militarily supporting an unending war in Ukraine. Fico [voiced](#) his dissent for providing military aid at the EU summit held on 27 October 2023. He also opposes western sanctions on Moscow and wants the EU to force peace talks, a line similar to Hungary's Victor Orbán.

Tirana Hosted Berlin Process Summit

The [Berlin Process Summit](#) was held on 16 October in Tirana, Albania. This initiative was started in 2014 with the aim increasing cooperation between the six Western Balkan states. During the summit, the EU presented its [Growth Plan](#) for Western Balkans that opens parts of the EU single market to them in return for deep reforms, ahead of their full membership to the bloc. The Growth Plan is an addition to the EU's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans. Currently, the six Western Balkan countries are at different stages of integration into the bloc.