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President Putin Visited China

Russian President Vladimir Putin [paid](#) a highly symbolic state visit to China on 16-17 May. The trip, Putin's first since assuming the office of President for the fifth time, inevitably reflects the qualitative strengthening of the Russia-China partnership. Putin labelled the official discussions 'very meaningful and very substantive' and insisted on 'relations having now reached the highest level in history'. While no big-ticket announcements were made during this visit, the key takeaway was signing the 7,000-word joint statement, highlighting the extraordinarily multifaceted bilateral relationship.

President Putin Visited Uzbekistan

Russian President Vladimir Putin [paid](#) an official visit to Uzbekistan on 27 May. One of the key takeaways was the agreement to build small-scale nuclear reactors in Uzbekistan. With an estimated price tag of around US\$ 13 billion, the project is expected to be financed mainly through a Russian loan. Russia and Uzbekistan also agreed to increase trade to US\$ 30 billion from the current US\$ 10 billion, apart from switching to settlements in national currencies. It was [reported](#) that work is underway to increase the capacity of the Central Asia–Centre gas pipeline system, which will increase gas supplies to Uzbekistan to 11 billion cubic metres by 2025.

Russia Said Western Weapons Striking Russia Would Have 'Serious Consequences'

Russian President Vladimir Putin [warned](#) the West of "serious consequences" if Western countries allowed Ukraine to use their weapons to strike Russia. Speaking in Uzbekistan, Putin's comments came in response to calls within some NATO member states to allow Ukraine to hit targets inside Russia. Putin said – “In Europe, especially in small countries, they should be aware of what they are playing with”.

Russia Preparing New Tax Hikes

Russia's Finance Ministry [submitted](#) a major tax reform plan in May 2024, which seeks to introduce a progressive tax system and increase corporations' contributions to the state budget. The reform, if passed, promises to generate nearly US\$ 33.2 billion per year at a time when government spending on the war in Ukraine continues to soar. President Vladimir Putin said Russia's tax system needed an overhaul to make it “fairer,” adding that “corporations, legal entities and individuals who earn more should contribute more.”

Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan sign MoU on Interconnecting Energy Grids

The energy ministers of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan [signed](#) a MoU on 1 May at the Tashkent International Investment Forum. The MoU is a

significant step towards interconnecting the energy grids of the three countries. One of the critical components of the deal is to explore the feasibility of laying a high-voltage cable along the seabed of the Caspian Sea alongside ventures within the territories of other countries. The three nations seek to optimise the trade in green energy.

Protests against the leadership in Armenia

On 9 May, tens of thousands of [protestors](#) reached Yerevan's Republic Square to protest against the process of delimitation of the borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The delimitation process was related to the four districts (Baghanis, Voskepar, Kirants, Berkeber) within the Tavush region. The Tavush for Homeland Movement organised the protests, lead by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, the Primate of the Diocese of Tavush. The protestors mainly demanded Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan resignation, as the delimitation process was considered illegal. This has led to widespread protests across Yerevan and even has resulted in the detention of several individuals.

Foreign Students being targeted in Bishkek

The Indian Government on 18 May [advised](#) Indian students to stay indoors amid reports of violent clashes involving foreign and local students in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek. External Affairs Minister, Dr S. Jaishankar also advised Indian students in Bishkek to stay in regular touch with the

embassy. The violence is said to have erupted after videos of a fight between local students and medical students from Egypt were shared online.

Kazakhstan Hosts SCO Foreign Ministers Council Meeting

On 21 May, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states [met](#) in Astana. They signed 22 resolutions on multilateral cooperation in the political, diplomatic, trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian sectors. During the meeting, delegation heads discussed the international and regional situation, security, and the advancement of SCO cooperation in the political, trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian domains. They further stressed the SCO's power and influence in a difficult geopolitical context.

China's President's Visit to Europe

Xi Jinping embarked on his first [trip](#) to Europe in 5 years from 5-10 May. He started his journey from France, meeting President Emmanuel Macron and EU Commission Chief Ursula Von der Leyen. His visit marked the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and France. Serbia was the next stop of his visit, which also coincided with the 25th anniversary of the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during Serbia's war on Kosovo. Xi Jinping's last stop was in Hungary, where he declared the onset of a "golden voyage" between Hungary and China.

Weimar Republic Countries Release Joint Weimar Agenda

The foreign ministers of Weimar Triangle countries, France, Germany and Poland, released a joint [Weimar Agenda](#) 2024 for a “strong and geopolitical European Union” on 22 May 2024. The joint statement focuses on the objectives of the EU’s priority in the next five years. The agenda explicitly mentions strengthening European security and defence by underlying the importance of a strong European pillar within NATO. It also mentions the need to close capability gaps in European security in the spheres of air defence, and combat capabilities, mobility and logistical capabilities, ammunition stocks and investments in future technologies.

Poland Plans Border Fortifications

The Polish government says Russia and Belarus are targeting it via cyberattacks, attempted arson and illegal migration, with the intention to destabilise the country. In response, the Tusk government has planned various [security measures](#), including cyberspace and around \$2.5 billion in investment into eastern border security, known as Shield-East. The border protection enhancement details include modern blockades, fortifications and surveillance that seek to deter any potential aggressor. This system will be an element of regional defence infrastructure built jointly with the Baltic states, forming NATO’s eastern flank.

Germany Announces Military Support for Ukraine

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius announced a €500 million military support package for [Ukraine](#) during a trip to the southern port city of Odesa on 30 May. The military aid package includes ammunition for Ukraine’s medium-range air defence system, shorter-range SLS missiles, spare parts and barrels for artillery systems, and around one million rounds of small ammunition. Ukraine's frontline troops continue to face ammunition shortages in the face of a renewed Russian offensive in the northern region of Kharkiv. This was Pistorius' third visit to Ukraine since the war began.