



## MAIN TAKEAWAY of the month

Ukraine has intensified strikes deep within Russian territory, using U.S.-approved ATACMS, UK-supplied Storm Shadow missiles, and drones targeting critical infrastructure, including oil facilities in Ufa, Kaluga, and Staroskol. Russia retaliated with record drone and missile attacks, including 188 drones on November 26, and territorial gains in the Donbas, but suffered heavy losses, with 1,950 soldiers killed in a single day. New threats include KN-23 ballistic missiles from North Korea, with Western components, targeting Ukrainian infrastructure. Despite these challenges, Ukraine has successfully repelled Russian advances in places like Kupyansk. Ukraine's defense is bolstered by a \$53.7 billion defense budget for 2025, international military aid, and new laws to sustain manpower. Humanitarian efforts focus on economic recovery and energy restoration, while Western sanctions target Russian oil revenues, defense suppliers, and allies like Iran and North Korea. Concerns over U.S. aid under a potential Trump administration have surfaced, with fears his appointment of Keith Kellogg as special envoy to Russia and Ukraine could compromise Ukraine's security in negotiations. In Russia, in response to Ukrainian strikes, Russia launched an "Oreshnik" hypersonic ballistic missile, which Putin claims is immune to current air defense systems, and ordered its mass production. In addition, Putin approved a new nuclear doctrine which includes conditions of non-nuclear aggression supported by nuclear states, territorial isolation attempts, military coalitions near Russia's borders and threats targeting Belarus. Economically, The recent U.S. sanctions on Gazprombank have led to a sharp devaluation of the ruble, now at its weakest in two years. Arms and energy exchanges with North Korea deepen, with Russia delivering over 1 million barrels of oil as payment for troops and weapons. Amid rising inflation and labor shortages, defense costs have surged to \$8.1 billion, exacerbating economic strain.

In Romania, The first round of Romania's presidential election took place on November 24, in which far-right, pro-Russia candidate Calin Georgescu has emerged as the surprise leader. Georgescu secured 22,94% of the vote, followed by Elena Lasconi of the centre-right Save Romania Union, with 19.17%, and populist Social Democrat (PSD) Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu, with 19,14%. Romania's Constitutional Court has requested the country's central election authority to recount and check ballots from the first round. On December 1, parliamentary elections were held, with the Social Democratic Party (PSD) winning 22.5%. Sovereignist, anti-Western parties secured nearly 40% of the vote. Voter turnout was 52.5%, up from 31.84% in 2020. The new government coalition will depend on the results of the second presidential round, making it crucial for Romania's future.

In the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu secured a second term as president with 55.3% of the vote, despite Russian interference, earning praise for the country's democratic resilience. Deputy PM Mihai Popsoi attended Brussels meetings to discuss Moldova's European integration and security, including airspace violations by Russian missiles and drones, leading to talks on new radar systems. Moldova strengthened EU ties with France and the UK, focusing on border security and public sector development.

In the Balkans, Albania faces migration challenges with Italy, while improving governance through OSCE-led human rights training and anti-crime efforts with Belgium. Bulgaria deepened regional ties and EU alignment, supporting Ukraine and countering disinformation. Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo persist, with NATO urging stability.

Ukraine has intensified its campaign to disrupt Russia's military logistics and industrial infrastructure through precision strikes deep within Russian territory. Most importantly, [Ukraine's forces launched six ATACMS](#) missiles, reportedly marking their first deployment since [receiving approval from the United States](#). In addition, Ukrainian drones have recently targeted multiple locations, [including an oil refinery in Ufa, Bashkortostan](#), an [oil depot in Kaluga](#), and an [oil storage facility in Staroskol](#), causing fires and explosions. Ukrainian Storm Shadow missiles, [supplied by the UK](#), were also used for the first time in targeted operations, signifying an escalation in their tactical response. Ukrainian forces currently [control approximately 620 square kilometers in the Kursk region](#) of Russia, despite facing repeated assaults bolstered by North Korean reinforcements. These reinforcements, [numbering 11,000 soldiers according to estimates](#), have already suffered casualties in confrontations with Ukrainian troops. Highlighting its growing capabilities, [Ukraine has destroyed over 1,000 Russian anti-aircraft missile systems during the conflict](#), including a recent strike on a BUK-M1 system. Meanwhile, Ukrainian operatives have conducted bold actions, such as [a car bombing in occupied Sevastopol that killed](#) a high-ranking Russian naval officer. These developments underscore Kyiv's resolve to counter Russia's aggression by leveraging advanced weaponry, intelligence operations, and strategic counter offensives.

On the contrary, Russia has escalated its assaults on Ukraine, deploying record numbers of drones and missiles in recent months. On the night of November 26, Russia launched 188 drones, targeting civilian infrastructure and energy systems, [its largest attack recorded](#). Ground offensives have also intensified, with [Russian forces advancing in the Donbas region](#) and claiming control over settlements like [Rivnopil, Antonivka, and Maksimivka](#). However, these gains come at a steep cost, with Russia suffering record daily troop losses, [including 1,950 soldiers in a single day](#). Meanwhile, [missile attacks have targeted Ukraine's thermal power plants](#) and other critical infrastructure, compounding challenges for civilians and the energy sector. Russia's attacks have also introduced new threats, [such as the use of KN-23 ballistic missiles sourced from North Korea](#), equipped with Western-manufactured components. Despite these efforts, Ukrainian defenders [have successfully repelled Russian advances in key areas](#), such as Kupyansk, and inflicted significant damage on Russian armored vehicles and troops. The evolving tactics and ferocity of Russia's campaign underline its determination to secure strategic gains while continuing to rely on unconventional and escalatory measures.

Ukraine has taken significant internal measures to strengthen its military capabilities and national resilience amidst the ongoing conflict. The parliament approved a [2025 budget allocating 26% of GDP \(\\$53.7 billion\) to defense](#), reflecting a strong commitment to military funding. To address gaps in military policy, the Defense Ministry is [drafting a law to establish procedures for demobilization](#), expected to be finalized by December 18, and a new bill now permits [first-time deserters to return to service](#), maintaining military manpower. President Zelensky also announced the [Internal Resilience Plan](#), a 10-point strategy to bolster sovereignty and cultural unity.

In November, Ukraine received substantial military aid and forged new international defense partnerships to bolster its capabilities amidst ongoing conflict. Key agreements included a memorandum with [Lithuania](#) for [joint production of drones](#) and electronic warfare technologies, and a partnership with Belgian company Thales to [manufacture air defense missiles](#), including the FZ275 LGR, to combat hostile drones. The United States pledged over [200 Stryker armored vehicles](#), while [South Korea hinted at potential arms supplies](#) in response to North Korean troops' involvement in Ukraine. [Estonia](#) and [Germany](#) provided additional [air defense systems](#), with [Estonia transferring missiles for testing](#) and [Germany](#) delivering IRIS-T units and advanced kamikaze drones. The UK expanded its support with [Storm Shadow missiles](#) and a [£7.5 million](#) contribution to the International Drone Coalition, while [Denmark donated \\$138 million](#) to Ukraine's weapons industry. Training initiatives also advanced, with 50,000 Ukrainian [recruits completing UK-led programs](#) and a brigade [trained in France](#) returning with enhanced capabilities.

On the humanitarian front, The World Bank provided a [\\$750 million SURGE](#) package for economic resilience, a [\\$4.8 billion PEACE loan](#) for social spending, and nearly [\\$600 million for the RISE program](#), targeting SMEs, digitalization, and green initiatives. The [European Commission allocated €4.1 billion](#) for reforms, while [Finland pledged €20.5 million](#) for education reform and student welfare. The [UN World Food Program](#) earmarked \$2.1 billion for humanitarian assistance, demining, and agricultural exports between 2025 and 2027. Energy restoration efforts included [\\$112 million for DTEK](#) from the EU and US and €65 million from Germany. Ukraine also partnered with the [U.S.](#) and [Germany](#) on energy infrastructure restoration projects, in light of Ukraine's urgent energy needs.

Donald Trump's return to the White House has [raised uncertainty about the future of U.S. support for Ukraine](#), with concerns that his administration might reduce aid or push for a conflict freeze. [Ukrainian leaders expressed](#) cautious optimism, emphasizing bipartisan U.S. backing and hopes for swift action under Trump. [Retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg was appointed as special envoy](#) to Russia and Ukraine, tasking him with leading negotiations to end the war. Kellogg, a former national security adviser to Vice President Mike Pence, is a long-time ally of Trump. Trump expressed confidence in Kellogg's ability to achieve "peace through strength." The appointment has raised concerns among European allies, who worry that Trump's approach might compromise Ukraine's long-term security, potentially pressuring Kyiv to concede territory or accept insufficient security guarantees against Russian aggression. Kellogg, 80, has been skeptical of U.S. support for Ukraine, previously advocating for conditional aid tied to Ukraine's willingness to engage in peace talks with Russia. He recently co-authored a Ukraine policy proposal emphasizing such conditions.

In response, the Biden administration is accelerating aid, including planning to [rush \\$6 billion in security assistance](#), a [\\$275 million weapons package](#), \$7.1 billion in [expedited arms deliveries](#), and [anti-personnel mines](#) for Ukraine's defense. Biden has also requested \$24 billion in [additional aid and weapons replenishment](#) and secured [\\$1.35 billion in humanitarian grants](#) while putting forward to Congress the [request to cancel \\$4.7 billion in Ukrainian debt](#), aiming to bolster Ukraine's resilience before the leadership transition.

This month, Western allies intensified sanctions to weaken Russia's war capabilities and isolate its global supporters. The [UK led with its largest sanctions package since May 2023](#), targeting 73 ships in Russia's "ghost fleet" responsible for transporting over \$4.3 billion in [oil revenues](#), alongside defense suppliers and Russian mercenary groups. The [United States imposed new sanctions on Gazprombank](#), freezing its U.S. assets and banning energy transactions through the U.S. financial system. In Europe, [Germany banned Russian LNG deliveries](#) at its terminals, while [Slovakia signed a pilot gas deal with Azerbaijan](#), signaling a shift from reliance on Russian energy. The [EU extended sanctions against Iran](#), focusing on drone and missile supply chains aiding Russia, and its forthcoming [15th package](#) will target 30 entities and 50 individuals from countries including China, Iran, and North Korea for supporting Moscow. Simultaneously, G7 nations are drafting measures to increase [diplomatic pressure on China](#), reinforcing unified efforts to isolate Russia and its allies economically and diplomatically.

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## **RUSSIA - internal and external dynamics**

Russian authorities are intensifying efforts to ensure a steady flow of personnel to the front, in light of [record losses](#) sustained in October, with estimates indicating a daily average of up to 1,500 Russian soldiers wounded or killed. Since October, at least 11 regions in Russia [have significantly increased](#) signing bonuses for military contracts. In regions such as [Novosibirsk](#), [Kirov](#), [Rostov](#) and [Saratov](#), payments for signing a military contract increased significantly, reaching up to 2 million rubles in some cases. [Desertions remain a problem](#), with more than 1,000 soldiers from the 20th Motorized Guards Division refusing to fight and leaving their units, according to an investigation published by "Important Stories."

By the end of 2024, Russian regions and occupied territories [are projected](#) to allocate a total of 800 billion rubles (≈ \$8.117 billion) for war-related expenses, marking an 83% increase over the initially

planned budget. In parallel with the military action, Russia is stepping up its drone production at a factory in the Alabuga special economic zone in Tatarstan. These drones are equipped with [thermobaric munitions](#) and are used in conjunction with decoy drones to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses.

Moscow continues to escalate the nuclear dimension of the war in Ukraine, aiming to deter Western states' support for Kyiv. On November 19, shortly after the Western media [reported](#) that the US and the UK had allowed Ukraine to use long-range missiles to strike targets deep inside Russian territory, Vladimir Putin approved [a new nuclear doctrine of](#) the Russian Federation by presidential decree.

Compared to the 2020 version, the 2024 nuclear doctrine stipulates that any aggression against the Russian Federation and/or its allies initiated by a non-nuclear state with the support or involvement of a nuclear state will be considered a joint attack. The doctrine also [expands the scope of nuclear deterrence](#) by applying it also to states that permit the use of territory, airspace, maritime or other assets under their control for the preparation and conduct of aggression against the Russian Federation. Among the new military threats mentioned in the doctrine, the neutralization of which may involve nuclear deterrence, are: the creation of new military coalitions - blocs or alliances - or the expansion of existing ones by bringing their military infrastructure close to the borders of the Russian Federation; actions by a potential enemy aimed at isolating part of the territory of the Russian Federation; the planning and conduct of large-scale military exercises near the borders of the Russian Federation by potential adversaries; the controlled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as of the technologies and equipment necessary for their production. The new doctrine expands the framework within which the Russian Federation may resort to the use of nuclear weapons, introducing additional provisions such as the existence of an "aggression" against Russia and Belarus that threatens their "sovereignty and territorial integrity".

Following the use by Ukrainian forces on November 20 of British [Storm Shadow](#) missiles to strike Russian territory, Vladimir Putin [announced](#) on November 21 that the Russian military had responded by launching an "Oreshnik" ballistic missile in a non-nuclear hypersonic configuration. It [hit](#) a factory of the Ukrainian military-industrial complex in Dnipro, known for producing medium-range and intercontinental missiles during the Soviet era. According to the Russian leader, modern air defense systems cannot intercept the "Oreshnik" missiles because they attack targets at a speed of Mach 10 (2.5-3 kilometers per second). Vladimir Putin has [ordered](#) the serial production of the "Oreshnik" missile system, estimated to cost [\\$40 million](#) per unit, though stock levels remain unclear.

Despite a high interest rate of 21%, inflation in Russia continues to follow an upward trend, with consumer prices [rising](#) by 0.36% in the period November 19-25, following a 0.37% advance in the previous week. Thus, there is a high likelihood that the Central Bank [will resort](#) to another key rate hike of at least [one percent](#) in December. In contrast, Sergei Chemezov, CEO of Rostec, a company that supplies 80% of the Russian military's needs, emphasized that rising interest rates [are particularly detrimental](#) to the defense industry. Central Bank of Russia Governor Elvira Nabiullina [told](#) the State Duma on November 26 that the economy is using almost all available resources. According to her, the situation is unprecedented, marked by an unemployment rate that has fallen to an all-time low, while the labor shortage is growing. According to research by the central bank, 73% of businesses face an acute shortage of labor.

The new US sanctions, which include the disconnection of Gazprombank from the SWIFT financial system, [have caused](#) a significant devaluation of the Russian rouble, the sharpest in two years. On November 27, the dollar/ruble exchange rate on the forex market rose by 8.5% to 114.53 rubles, the highest level since March 2022. The Kremlin [has described](#) the US sanctions imposed on Gazprombank as an attempt to obstruct Russia's gas exports. Dmitry Peskov, Russian presidential spokesman, said that alternative solutions will be found for gas settlements, but their implementation could take time.

Russian natural gas [may gain easier access to Europe](#) through a Turkish gas trading hub launching in 2025 under a Botas-Gazprom partnership, though European interest in Russian gas, even under



Turkish branding, remains uncertain. Russia might also pursue gas swaps with Azerbaijan to boost flows to Türkiye, where officials are negotiating preferential pricing as their gas contract with Russia expires in 2025. Simultaneously, Russian [coal exports have seen significant declines](#): from January to September 2024, shipments to China fell 9.5% (53.7 million tons), India dropped 23% (20.1 million tons), and Türkiye decreased 35% (15.3 million tons), contributing to a 14% overall decline to 132.5 million tons. However, exports to Belarus surged 17-fold (5.7 million tons), while Vietnam's imports grew 4.7 times (1.1 million tons), highlighting shifting trade dynamics amidst geopolitical challenges.

Despite the reduction in coal imports, the trade volume between Russia and China [increased by 2.8%](#) from January to October 2024 compared to the same period the previous year, reaching \$202.2 billion. Russian exports to China grew by 1.1%, totaling \$108.07 billion, while imports from China rose by 4.7%, amounting to \$94.14 billion. Additionally, in the first eight months of 2024, trade turnover between Russia and India [increased by 9%](#), positioning India as Russia's second-largest external trading partner.

Russia [has delivered](#) more than one million barrels of oil to North Korea since March 2024 as a form of payment for the supply of weapons and troops, according to a *BBC News* report, based on an analysis by the UK-based *Open Source Centre*. The report indicates that about 10 North Korean tankers made 43 shipments between the Russian port of Vostochny and North Korean ports over eight months. In addition, Russia [has](#) also [reportedly supplied](#) North Korea [with](#) air defense systems and missiles, according to Shin Won-sik, South Korea's senior security adviser. In parallel, a *Reuters* analysis shows North Korea is [expanding a strategic factory](#) dedicated to the production of weapons, including the KN-23 short-range ballistic missile used by Russia in the Ukraine conflict.

## PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN ROMANIA

The first round of Romania's presidential election took place on November 24, in which far-right, pro-Russia candidate Calin Georgescu has emerged as the surprise leader. [Georgescu secured 22.94% of the vote](#), followed by Elena Lasconi of the centre-right Save Romania Union, with 19.17%, and populist Social Democrat (PSD) Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu, who resigned following the first round, with 19.14%. Together with Ciolacu, Nicolae Ciuca, secretary of the National Liberal Party (PNL), which governs in Bucharest in coalition with the PSD, stepped down as well after winning only 8.79 percent of the vote – the worst result obtained for the PSD and the PNL, the two largest parties in Romania. Lasconi narrowly edged out Ciolacu by approximately 2,740 votes, securing her place in a December 8 run-off against Georgescu. Georgescu, who campaigned primarily on TikTok with the slogan "Restore the dignity of the Romanian nation," has drawn significant attention and received enthusiastic coverage from Russian media. His [criticism of NATO's](#) ballistic missile defense shield at Romania's Deveselu base, which he labeled "a disgrace," as well as his lack of an external policy agenda, has raised alarm among European allies, heightening concerns about the potential shift in Romania's foreign policy should he win the presidency.

Romania's Constitutional Court has requested the country's central election authority to [recount](#) and check ballots from the presidential election's first round. The top court also decided to postpone the decision of the request to annul the election's results, a decision that means the two candidates cannot start their campaigns. During their meeting, the members of the Supreme Council of Defense of the Country found that there were [cyber attacks](#) with the aim of influencing the accuracy of the first round of the presidential elections, the Presidential Administration announced. The statement also highlighted that a presidential candidate received preferential treatment from TikTok, which failed to label his content as political, violating electoral laws requiring the identification of campaign materials with a unique code from the Permanent Electoral Authority.

On Sunday, December 1, Romanians [went to the polls to elect members of Parliament](#), with voter turnout reaching 52.5%—a significant increase compared to the 31.84% participation in the 2020 elections. The elections were won by the Social Democratic Party (PSD), currently the main governing party, securing 22.5% of the votes for the Senate and 22.15% for the Chamber of Deputies. The second-largest party is the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR), a sovereigntist party with anti-

Western rhetoric, which garnered 18.2% for the Senate and 17.91% for the Chamber of Deputies. Two newly established sovereignist parties with strong anti-Western rhetoric also entered Parliament: SOS Romania (7.66% in the Senate, 7.36% in the Chamber) and the Young People's Party (POT), with 6.31% and 6.37%, respectively. The National Liberal Party (PNL), part of the current government, secured 14.36% in the Senate and 13.33% in the Chamber, while the pro-Western Save Romania Union (USR), whose leader Elena Lasconi advanced to the second round of the presidential elections, obtained 12.17% in the Senate and 12.30% in the Chamber. The Hungarian minority party (UDMR) also passed the 5% threshold, obtaining 6.43% in the Senate and 6.39% in the Chamber, largely supported by minority voters.

The distribution of parliamentary mandates will determine possible governing coalitions. Notably, sovereignist formations will control nearly 40% of Parliament, likely fueling political tensions and legislative challenges in the next four years due to their anti-Western rhetoric and confrontational political behavior. It remains to be seen whether a PSD-PNL coalition, possibly including UDMR, will form. While such a coalition has existed in the past, it is unlikely to secure a majority (50% +1 of mandates) without support from USR parliamentarians. Romania may instead lean toward a minority government, leading to potential political instability. A clearer governance structure will emerge after the presidential elections, scheduled for December 8.

The new president—either pro-Western USR leader Elena Lasconi or independent candidate Calin Georgescu, known for anti-Western statements and pro-Russian positions—will heavily influence the government formation. The president must consult parliamentary parties, propose a prime ministerial candidate, and submit the government and program for parliamentary approval.

A Constitutional Court decision is awaited to determine whether the first round of the presidential elections will be validated or annulled. A repeat of the elections would push the electoral calendar to late December, with government formation delayed until January.

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## Evolutions in the Republic of MOLDOVA

In the Republic of Moldova, on November 3rd, Maia Sandu secured a [second term as President of the Republic of Moldova](#), winning 55.3% of the vote in the presidential runoff against Alexandr Stoianoglo, [who received 44.67%](#), with nearly 1.7 million Moldovans participating. While the election was internationally recognized, [Russia dismissed the results as unfair](#), citing claims of voting restrictions for Moldovans in Russia. Moscow protested alleged "[discriminatory actions](#)" against its election observers, which [Moldova denied](#). Meanwhile, the [U.S. President Joe Biden congratulated Sandu](#), emphasizing the resilience of Moldova's democratic processes against external interference.

Deputy Prime Minister Mihai Popsoi attended [meetings in Brussels with EU officials](#) to discuss Moldova's European integration and security concerns. On the security front, Moldova responded to a series of drone discoveries in its districts, followed by confirmation that [Russian missiles and drones had violated its airspace](#) during an attack on Ukraine. In response, Moldova is considering the acquisition of advanced radar systems to [enhance its airspace defense capabilities](#).

On the other hand, Oleg Serebrian, Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration of Moldova, met with EU officials and the EU Special Representative for the [Transnistrian Settlement](#), Dorota Dlouchy-Suliga, to discuss key issues related to the Transnistrian conflict and Moldova's European integration. Serebrian further engaged with Chisinau and Tiraspol representatives in Bender, addressing matters such as [education, human rights, and Moldova's EU progress](#). Furthermore, on November 25, Energy Minister Victor Parlicov and Gazprom President Alexei Miller met in [St. Petersburg to discuss natural gas deliveries to the Transnistrian region](#), the approval of a new Moldovagaz board, and Moldovagaz's debt to Gazprom. Parlicov revealed that Gazprom conditioned the continuation of gas deliveries on [Moldova's repayment of a disputed \\$700 million debt](#), which Moldova denies based on an independent audit. Parlicov warned that without progress on the debt issue, gas deliveries could be reduced, leading to a potential crisis. He also pointed out Russia's shift in approach, citing recent missile attacks that disrupted power to key facilities in Transnistria. While [Gazprom proposed alternative gas routes](#) through Turkey, Parlicov confirmed that Moldova is preparing for all scenarios but will need

international support to mitigate the consequences of any supply disruptions. Uncertainty surrounds the continuation of Russian gas supplies after the expiration of the current [transit agreement through Ukraine on January 1](#).

This month, the [United Kingdom reinforced its cooperation with Moldova](#) by signing a new readmission agreement, aimed at [enhancing border security](#) and ensuring the prompt removal of Moldovans who lack legal status in the UK. Moldova also advanced its European integration efforts, with the Bureau for European Integration and France's General Secretariat for European Affairs formalizing a [cooperation program to strengthen institutional capacities and improve public sector competencies](#), thereby supporting Moldova's EU accession ambitions.

Moldova has reinforced its alignment with European standards through the "[Basic Course on Security Sector Reform](#)," aimed at preparing national security structures for EU integration. This initiative aligns with the outcomes of the [8th EU-Moldova Security and Defence Dialogue](#), where both parties strengthened their partnership by addressing capacity-building measures. Furthermore, Moldova and Turkey have signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to cooperate in the energy sector. The agreement, signed in Istanbul by [Energy Ministers Victor Parlicov and Alparslan Bayraktar](#) during an energy forum, focuses on knowledge exchange, joint projects, investment attraction, and enhancing energy security.

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## The Balkans

[Balkan leaders](#) congratulated Donald Trump on his presidential victory, emphasizing shared values and strategic alliances. Meanwhile, at the [COP29 summit in Baku](#), the primary outcome for Balkan leaders has been the announcement of [new gasification plans](#), which have faced criticism from environmentalists and some European nations for being neither renewable nor carbon-free.

In Albania, European partners are cooperating on migration, though it faces challenges in managing asylum claims. In a related development, Italy's decision to outsource [migrant processing to Albania](#) encountered [setbacks](#), as [Italian judges rejected the detention of migrants from Italian-run centers](#) in Albania, referring the case to the European Court of Human Rights. Meanwhile, [the OSCE](#) conducted a [training seminar on human rights standards](#) for prison officials, and Albania's prosecutor's office signed a [new protocol with Belgium](#) to combat organized crime.

Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivan Kondov held a meeting with Germany's Manuel Sarrazin to discuss [strengthening regional cooperation](#), with a focus on deepening economic integration and aligning the Western Balkans with EU values. Furthermore, Kondov met with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard R. Verma in Sofia, where Bulgaria's support for Ukraine and progress in bilateral cooperation, including combating foreign information manipulation and strengthening Ukraine's defense against Russian aggression, [were emphasized](#).

The relationship between Serbia and Kosovo remains tense, marked by ongoing border disputes and mutual accusations of provocations. Serbia claims Kosovo has engaged in [unauthorized border crossings](#), while [NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo \(KFOR\)](#) didn't confirm these allegations.

### *In the meantime...*



The next meeting of the [NATO-Ukraine Council](#) is scheduled for 3 December, coinciding with the Alliance's foreign ministers' session in Brussels. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha is expected to attend, following a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte.



Romania is preparing for the second round of presidential elections scheduled for December 8, 2024. The first round of Romania's presidential elections on November 24 delivered unexpected results, with independent candidate [Calin Georgescu](#) securing first place and Elena Lasconi, the leader of the Save

Romania Union (USR), taking second. Georgescu rode a wave of public discontentment with the political establishment combined with an intensive, social media campaign filled with anti-Western rhetoric.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is set to visit [Malta on December 5-6 for the OSCE Council of Foreign Ministers meeting](#). If confirmed, this will mark Lavrov's first visit to a European Union member state since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, despite being under sanctions from the EU, the United States, and the United Kingdom.