



Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➔ **Bosnia and Herzegovina State-level Constitutional Court temporarily suspended controversial Republika Srpska (RS) election law, as concerns about RS secession persisted.**

Constitutional Court temporarily suspended RS election law. Self-governing RS entity's election law, which RS National Assembly adopted on 19 April, 17 July entered into force after RS Constitutional Court 25 June ruled law does not violate vital national interests; Ambassadors of Peace Implementation Council's Steering Board day prior warned law could establish parallel legal and electoral system that "pose risks to the conduct of the upcoming elections", and said "the international community retains the necessary instruments" to protect Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) sovereignty and territorial integrity. State-level Constitutional Court 24 July held extraordinary plenary session where it temporarily suspended election law while it assesses constitutionality concerns.

RS govt circulated proposal for "peaceful separation" from BiH. RS govt 2 July published proposed agreement on entity's "peaceful separation" from BiH, which RS National Assembly was scheduled to discuss on 9 July, though session was cancelled at last minute. Earlier, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan 1 July said U.S. is "concerned by the increased threats" to BiH's "territorial integrity from Republika Srpska President Dodik".

➔ **Kosovo Normalisation efforts with Serbia remained stalled.**

Pristina's and Belgrade's chief negotiators 2 July held trilateral meeting with EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák in effort to resume normalisation talks, but did not reach agreement. PM Kurti 17 July discussed opening bridge across Ibar River, which divides Serb-majority North Mitrovica and Albanian-majority South Mitrovica, during meeting with QUINT (U.S., UK, Germany, France, Italy) and EU ambassadors; Kurti later said bridge could serve as "symbol of normalisation", facilitating free movement and economic development. Meanwhile, President Osmani 31 July brought together various parliamentary political parties to discuss possible date for elections in early 2025; representatives from neither ruling party nor Serbian List – largest Serb political party in Kosovo – attended.

Caucasus

➔ Armenia Efforts to reinvigorate deadlocked peace talks with Azerbaijan foundered, while tensions along border persisted; relations with West deepened.

Baku accused Yerevan of provocations at border amid faltering peace talks. U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 10 July facilitated meeting between his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts on margins of NATO summit in U.S. capital Washington, D.C.; meeting only lasted 30 minutes, however, and led to no announcements or detailed follow-up statements amid reports of opposition to talks from Baku, which wants to maintain bilateral format established after its victory in Nagorno-Karabakh. One week later, PM Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Aliyev were due to hold UK-facilitated meeting on 18 July, but talks fell apart at last moment. Baku subsequently started accusing Yerevan of “provocations” along border, including 21 July incident using heavy weapons in Kelbajar district and two incidents late July involving quadcopters in Tovuz and Lachin directions; Armenia denied allegations.

Sides remained at odds on peace treaty. Aliyev 20 July claimed 80-90% of draft peace treaty was ready but reiterated that Baku would only sign document if Armenia removes references to Nagorno-Karabakh in its constitution. With Armenia’s state commission expected to table new provisions by end of 2026, senior Azerbaijani official 21 July suggested sides could sign document outlining basic principles of future treaty as interim measure. Although Yerevan has never publicly rejected idea, it has signalled preference for clarifying provisions on more contentious issues before anything is signed, such as opening of road connecting Azerbaijan with its exclave, Nakhchivan. Meanwhile, sides late July reportedly finalised demarcation of small section of border, though concerns persisted about future of demarcation process amid stuttering peace talks and disagreement about what maps to use.

In other important developments. European Council 22 July endorsed talks with Armenia on visa liberalisation and provided Yerevan with €10mn in military assistance within framework of European Peace Facility. Armenia and U.S. 15-24 July held joint military drills. Turkish and Armenian special envoys 30 July met at shared border to resume discussions aimed at normalising ties.

➔ Azerbaijan Efforts to reinvigorate deadlocked peace talks with Armenia foundered, while tensions along border persisted; relations with Iran thawed.

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In other important developments. Preparations for Sept parliamentary elections continued; in absence of free media and strong opposition, coupled with Aliyev's popularity following victory in Nagorno-Karabakh, elections likely to deliver ruling party decisive victory. Azerbaijan 6 July hosted summit of Organization of Turkic States, focused on deepening cooperation in defence, energy and transportation between Turkic nations. Azerbaijani Embassy 15 July resumed operations in Iran as rapprochement gained momentum.

➔ **Georgia** **Array of actors filed motions against contentious Foreign Influence law with Constitutional Court, relations between West and ruling party cooled, and electoral campaign kicked off.**

Constitutional Court received legal challenges to Foreign Influence law. President Zourabichvili 15 July filed lawsuit in Constitutional Court against Foreign Influence law, which requires NGOs and media outlets that receive foreign funding to register with govt or face fines. 121 civil society and media organisations, over 30 opposition lawmakers, and largest opposition party United National Movement 17, 22 and 29 July respectively submitted similar appeals to Georgia's top court, emphasising law's incompatibility with constitution, which mandates constitutional bodies "take all measures [...] to ensure the full integration of Georgia" into EU and NATO.

West imposed more punitive measures on ruling party due to Foreign Influence law. Notably, Head of EU Delegation to Georgia, Paweł Herczyński, 9 July announced EU had decided to freeze €30mn of military assistance and halt Georgia's EU accession process; U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 31 July announced it was pausing over \$95mn in assistance "that directly benefits the Government of Georgia". Meanwhile, U.S. 5 July postponed annual Noble Partner military exercise, and for first time since 2008, declaration at 9-11 July NATO summit omitted traditional clause regarding Georgia's membership, suggesting possible end to country's decades-long security and defence cooperation with West.

Electoral campaign kicked off. As Oct parliamentary elections drew closer, fragmented opposition parties began forming coalitions, while Zourabichvili 11 July inaugurated civil society movement, dubbed Vote for Europe, to mobilise pro-EU voters. Georgian Dream's founder, Bidzina Ivanishvili, 16 July launched ruling party's campaign. Meanwhile, State Security Service 24 July announced investigation into alleged "plot" to assassinate Ivanishvili and overthrow govt involving "former high-ranking officials and former employees of law enforcement agencies in Ukraine".

➔ **Russia (Internal) Putin reiterated maximalist demands for ceasefire in Ukraine as strikes into Russia persisted; courts handed down tough prison sentences to journalists as crackdown continued.**

Putin reiterated conditions for holding ceasefire talks with Ukraine. President Putin 4 July said ceasefire talks with Ukraine would be “impossible” without “irreversible” agreement on latter’s demilitarisation. Hungarian PM Orbán next day held talks with Putin in capital Moscow on “ways to achieve peace”, having earlier visited President Zelenskyy in Ukrainian capital Kyiv (see Ukraine); Orbán admitted that sides’ “positions are very far apart” but promised to continue peacemaking efforts. In two letters sent 12 July to EU Council President Charles Michel but partially leaked to media, Orbán suggested EU leaders launch peace initiative without U.S. involvement and proposed dialogue with China about future peace conference.

Ukraine continued to launch drones and artillery into Russia. Notably, attack in southern Krasnodar region 5 July hit power substation and apartment building, killing one; drones 20 July struck military airfield in Rostov region, while on 27 July Ukraine targeted three airfields in Saratov, Ryazan and Murmansk regions, including oil refinery in Ryazan. Drones 22-23 July also struck ferry in southern Port Kavkaz, killing one. Meanwhile, Belgorod region 23 July began restricting access to 14 settlements and installed checkpoints in effort to protect civilians from shelling.

Crackdown on dissent continued. Notably, court 8 July jailed playwright Svetlana Petrichuk and theatre director Yevgenia Berkovich for six years for “justifying terrorism” in play. Court 19 July convicted Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich to 16 years in maximum penal colony for “espionage”. Kazan city court same day sentenced journalist Alsu Kurmasheva to over six years in prison for spreading disinformation about army.

In important international developments. Washington and Berlin 10 July agreed to deploy long-range missiles to Germany from 2026; Putin 28 July warned that, in response, Russia would consider itself “free from our unilateral moratorium on deploying intermediate- and shorter-range strike weapons”. Russian and Chinese bomber aircrafts 24 July staged joint patrol over north Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea, coming within about 320km of U.S. coast.

Eastern Europe

➔ **Belarus President Lukashenko released 19 political prisoners, Belarussian troops withdrew from Ukrainian border, and Minsk boosted ties with Beijing.**

Lukashenko signed amnesty law on prisoners’ release. President Lukashenko 2 July signed amnesty law allowing release of prisoners with serious health issues; as of 31 July, 19 political prisoners had been released. EU 4 July said it was “relieved” by the news, while calling for “unconditional release” of over 1,400 others still in prison.

Troops withdrew from border with Ukraine. After Defence Ministry late June announced it was bolstering troops at border with Ukraine in response to stepped-up Ukrainian presence there, President Lukashenko 13 July announced tensions had subsided and that Belarussian troops were withdrawing.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) admitted Belarus as new member. SCO – Eurasian regional security organisation – 4 July admitted Belarus as its 10th member during 3-4 July summit in Kazakh capital, Astana; Lukashenko lauded “historic” move and declared need to “destroy the unipolar world”. China and Belarus 8-19 July conducted joint military exercises near city of Brest.

➔ **Ukraine** **Fighting raged in eastern Donetsk region as Russian forces targeted Chasiv Yar and Pokrovsk towns, deadly airstrikes killed dozens of civilians across Ukraine, and NATO allies shored up military support.**

Russian offensive in east continued, while northern frontline stabilised. Eastern Donetsk region saw fierce fighting, with Kyiv 4 July announcing troop withdrawals from Kanal district of Chasiv Yar as Russia pummelled strategically important town. Russian troops also pushed toward Pokrovsk town, a key logistics hub, while heavy fighting continued around Toretsk city. In southern Kherson region, officials 17 July announced troops had abandoned vulnerable bridgehead at Krynky village on eastern bank of Dnipro River. Meanwhile, President Zelenskyy 18 July announced that Russia’s diversionary offensive in north east Kharkiv region had “failed” as frontline stabilised, though fighting persisted.

Russia continued strikes across Ukraine and pulled its Black Sea fleet from Crimea. Moscow continued striking critical infrastructure, killing civilians across Ukraine and causing rolling blackouts. Notably, Russia 8 July launched massive aerial attack, killing at least 37 and striking children’s hospital in capital Kyiv; authorities 31 July said Russia earlier had launched most extensive drone attack on capital in 2024. Meanwhile, Ukrainian Navy 15 July announced Moscow had relocated its last remaining Black Sea Fleet patrol ship from Russian-annexed Crimea following Kyiv’s concerted military campaign there.

NATO allies drummed up support for Ukraine, Hungarian PM visited Kyiv. NATO summit propelled Zelenskyy back onto world stage as alliance 10 July declared Ukraine was on “irreversible path” to membership, pledged \$43bn additional military aid and opened new coordination centre to provide more reliable flow of assistance. Kyiv 31 July received first batch of long-awaited F-16 fighter jets. Meanwhile, Hungarian PM Orbán, EU’s biggest sceptic of military aid to Ukraine, 2 July travelled to Kyiv for first time since full-scale invasion, calling for ceasefire during talks with Zelenskyy; Orbán also made surprise visits to Moscow and Beijing in proclaimed “peace mission” (see Russia).

In another important development. FM Kuleba 23-25 July visited China to press for “ways to stop Russian aggression”, 24 July said Kyiv was open to talks but saw no readiness from Moscow to negotiate in good faith.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➔ **Cyprus** **Inflammatory rhetoric soared as Cyprus marked 50th anniversary of Turkish troop presence.**

Anniversary of Turkish troop presence highlighted persistent gap between parties. “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”) and Republic of Cyprus (RoC) 20 July held separate ceremonies to mark 1974 arrival of Turkish soldiers in Cyprus. In

“TRNC” ceremony, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar reiterated “equal sovereignty and equal international status” must be granted to RoC and “TRNC” as condition for return to formal talks; Turkish President Erdoğan said federation was no longer possible and expressed support for international recognition of “TRNC”. In RoC commemoration, President Christodoulides denounced “barbaric Turkish invasion”, while Greek PM Mitsotakis expressed Greece’s “unwavering support” for unified, bizonal, bicomunal federation. Erdoğan 21 July accused Greece of planning to build naval base in Cyprus, saying Türkiye was ready to construct base and naval structures in north. “TRNC” Foreign Ministry 30 July said U.S. warships that arrived in RoC port of Limassol 27 July served “no purpose other than increasing tensions”, adding it viewed U.S.-RoC military cooperation as “threat”. Earlier in month, Greek Defence Minister Nikos Dendias 15 July visited capital Nicosia, condemned “illegal presence for half a century of Turkish invasion army”; Turkish defence ministry 17 July called Dendias’ statement “false and slanderous”.

UN Secretary General personal envoy’s mandate expired. Mandate of UN Sec Gen personal envoy María Holguín Cuéllar 5 July ended; in parting letter, Holguín 7 July called for Cypriots to “think differently” to find solution to Cyprus problem. Greek and Cypriot media reports in July speculated Holguín was pursuing efforts to hold three- or five-member summit in Sept.

➔ **Türkiye Anti-Syrian violence erupted across country, inflammatory rhetoric over Cyprus and military manoeuvres in eastern Mediterranean slowed détente with Greece.**

Violent anti-Syrian riots erupted. After nationalist mobs late June attacked Syrian-owned shops, homes and vehicles in Kayseri province amid reports of Syrian refugee sexually abusing child, riots early July spread to cities of Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Bursa, Kilis, Konya, Adana, Gaziantep, Izmir, and parts of Istanbul; no casualties reported. Calm returned around 2 July. In response to violence and talks of normalisation between Türkiye and Syria, large-scale anti-Türkiye protests 1 July erupted in Syria’s north west (see Syria). Nevertheless, President Erdoğan 7 July said Ankara will invite Syrian President Assad for talks to “restore Türkiye-Syria relations to the same level as in the past”.

Détente with Greece faced challenges. Erdoğan and Greek PM Mitsotakis 10 July met on sidelines of NATO summit in U.S. capital Washington, D.C., reportedly agreeing that positive momentum in Türkiye-Greece relations should prevail. Inflammatory rhetoric over Cyprus intensified, however, around 50th anniversary of Türkiye’s troop presence (see Cyprus). Tensions heightened in south-eastern Aegean Sea as Türkiye and Greece 22-23 July sent warships to disputed continental shelf after Greece announced exploratory work for future deployment of undersea electric cable in area; intense diplomacy between Ankara and Athens 25 July eased tensions.

Operations continued against Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), Islamic State (ISIS). Amid ongoing operations against PKK in south-eastern Türkiye, northern Iraq and Syria, Erdoğan 13 July reiterated plans for major offensive, saying Ankara will soon be “locking down the area of operation in northern Iraq” and will complete “missing links of the security belt” along Syria-Türkiye border (see Iraq, Syria). Meanwhile, authorities in July detained at least 170 individuals on ISIS-linked charges. Notably, police 5 July detained 45 suspects in 16 cities, 25 July detained 72

across 13 provinces including suspected perpetrator of Moscow attack in March 2024.

In other important developments. Erdoğan 28 July for first time suggested Türkiye could consider using military force against Israel in support of Palestinians, sparking war of words with Israeli officials. Turkish and Armenian special envoys 30 July met at shared border to resume discussions aimed at normalising ties.

Central Asia

➔ **Kyrgyzstan** UN Secretary General António Guterres expressed optimism about future Kyrgyz-Tajik border deal, and President Japarov attended various regional summits.

UN secretary general expressed hope for Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border deal. UN Sec Gen Guterres 2 July met with President Japarov in Cholpon Ata city as part of regional tour. Pair discussed progress on sustainable development goals and regional peace and security issues. Guterres praised Bishkek's border delimitation deal with Uzbekistan in 2023 and expressed confidence in resolution of border issue with Tajikistan through diplomatic means.

In important international developments. President Japarov 3-4 July attended two-day summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) – Eurasian regional security organisation – in Kazakh capital, Astana, which saw Belarus' admittance into bloc; members also signed flurry of documents, including declaration lauding emergence of "fairer and multipolar world order". Days later, Japarov 6 July attended summit of Organization of Turkic States in Azerbaijan's Shusha city, which focused on deepening cooperation in defence, economy, energy and transportation between Turkic nations.

➔ **Tajikistan** UN Secretary General António Guterres expressed optimism about future Tajik-Kyrgyz border deal, as Bishkek deepened ties with Beijing.

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➡ Uzbekistan President Mirziyoyev attended various regional summits.

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