



Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➡ **Kosovo** Kosovar and Serb leaders failed to resume EU-mediated talks on normalisation, and govt sparked criticism over land expropriation in Serb-majority north.

EU-mediated meeting between Kosovar and Serb leaders fell through. EU High Representative Joseph Borrell 26 June said trilateral meeting between him, PM Kurti and Serb President Vučić on normalising relations, scheduled for that day, had not taken place. According to Borrell, Kurti refused to attend because Vučić had failed to meet Pristina’s conditions on key issues, including handing over Milan Radoičić, prominent figure on Kosovo Serb scene, who admitted role in paramilitary group that clashed with Pristina’s forces in 2023. Speaking after separate meetings with both leaders, Borrell warned that sides “remain far apart” on normalisation. Chief negotiators are set to meet again in Belgian capital, Brussels, in early July.

International actors criticised Pristina for land expropriation in north. Pristina 6 June drew criticism from Quint states – France, Germany, Italy, UK and U.S., Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and EU for moving ahead with 30 May decision to finalise expropriation of over 100 parcels of land in northern Serb-majority municipalities. Govt same day defended move, saying construction of infrastructure, “including police stations”, will contribute to “ensuring the safety of citizens who have long been subjected to violence and terror by criminal gangs led by the chief terrorist Milan Radoičić”.

Caucasus

➡ **Armenia** Yerevan and Baku remained at odds on key issues in peace process amid spike in reported incidents along frontline; Armenia pushed to deepen cooperation with West.

Lack of consensus with Baku on key issues could hinder efforts for peace deal. Armenia and Azerbaijan exchanged draft peace treaty during month amid recent positive momentum in peace process. Yet sides remain far apart on important issues, including withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops from Armenia and opening of road that connects Azerbaijan with its exclave, Nakhchivan. Pointing to another sticking point, Azerbaijani President Aliyev 20 June once again said Yerevan needed to amend its constitution, which includes references to former Nagorno-Karabakh. Day before, local media revealed that PM Pashinyan had instructed Council of Constitutional

Reforms to draft new constitution by end of 2026. With these issues entering public domain and parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan approaching (see Azerbaijan), it remains unclear whether sides can sign peace treaty before Nov Cop29, which will be held in Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, small-scale protests against border deal continued in Armenia.

Baku reported multiple incidents along frontline. Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defence mid-June alleged several times that Armenian troops opened fire at military positions, mostly in direction of Nakhchivan. Yerevan denied involvement as PM Pashinyan 15 June suggested new bilateral mechanism to investigate border incidents, 22 June reiterated proposal after Baku reported another incident in its Kelbajar district, key flashpoint along frontline since 2020 war; Baku had not responded to proposition by end of June.

Armenia's ties with West deepened as relations with Russia and its allies cooled. Yerevan 11 June held strategic dialogue meeting with U.S., 11-12 June hosted Armenia-EU Partnership Committee meeting amid efforts to forge closer ties with West. Meanwhile, Pashinyan 12 June reiterated that Armenia could withdraw completely from Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, next day announced he would not visit Belarus as long as Lukashenko remained president after *Politico* report revealed Minsk sold weapons to Baku (see Belarus).

In other important developments. Pashinyan and Turkish President Erdoğan 18 June confirmed readiness to continue with normalisation process. Yerevan 21 June announced its recognition of State of Palestine.

➡ **Azerbaijan Baku and Yerevan remained at odds on key issues in peace process amid spike in reported incidents along frontline; Azerbaijan and Iran conducted military drills.**

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In other important developments. President Aliyev 28 June signed decree scheduling snap parliamentary elections for 1 Sept. On international front,

Azerbaijan and Iran 13 June conducted joint military exercise in latter's West Azerbaijan province amid thawing relations; Paris 18 June announced deal to sell around 30 CAESAR self-propelled howitzers to Armenia amid deteriorating relations with Baku; top Italian officials 26 June met Aliyev and FM Bayramov in Baku, resulting in agreement to bolster ties; and top U.S. official James O'Brien 28 June met with Aliyev to discuss COP29 and peace deal, indicating possible warming of relations following tensions in recent months.

➡ **Georgia Parliament enacted contentious 'foreign agents' legislation, prompting West to impose punitive measures; South Ossetia held parliamentary elections.**

Parliament enacted "Foreign Agents" bill and other controversial legislation. Parliament speaker Shalva Papuashvili 3 June signed into law 'foreign agents' bill, which compels NGOs and independent media receiving over 20% of their funding from abroad to register as entities "representing the interests of a foreign power"; law comes into full force in August. Many of Georgia's most prominent NGOs continued to vow defiance, dubbing measure the "Russian law" for its resemblance to Moscow's own bill used to stifle dissent. Meanwhile, ruling Georgian Dream party moved ahead with other controversial legislation. Notably, Papuashvili 4 June ratified "offshore law" easing movement of offshore assets to Georgia and raising fears country could become hub for illicit funds benefiting Georgian Dream's billionaire founder, Bidzina Ivanishvili, and his allies; parliament 27 June adopted bill limiting rights of LGBTQI+ community in first reading.

West imposed punitive measures on ruling party. In response to foreign agents law, U.S. State Department 6 June announced visa restrictions on dozens of ruling party members and their families, hinted that more sanctions would follow unless Georgia's leaders "reconsider their actions". EU High Representative Joseph Borrell 24 June announced EU will "downgrade our political contacts" with Georgia and reconsider financial assistance, all while reiterating threat to country's EU path.

South Ossetia held legislative elections, among most competitive yet. Thousands of voters in breakaway region South Ossetia 9 June headed to polls to elect legislature. Nykhas party, led by current de facto president Alan Gagloyev, secured majority with 10 out of 34 seats; opposition United Ossetia party, led by Anatoliy Bibilov, came second with seven seats. Polls among most competitive since Russia recognised region's independence in 2008, with high participation from various political parties, raising hopes for more vibrant political scene going forward. Georgia, U.S., EU and other Western countries dismissed election as illegitimate.

➡ **Russia (Internal) Dagestan witnessed deadly terrorist attack, while Putin issued maximalist ceasefire demands to Ukraine and threatened reprisals after U.S. allowed Kyiv to use its weapons on Russian soil to defend Kharkiv region.**

Terrorist attack in Dagestan left at least 21 dead. Gunmen 23 June targeted Orthodox churches, synagogue and police post in two cities in impoverished Dagestan region, killing at least 21, including priest and 16 police officers; five gunmen were also killed. No group claimed responsibility for violence, which came three months after ISIS carried out deadly attack on Crocus City Hall in Moscow. UN

human rights experts 27 June urged authorities to address issues that help fuel “extremist ideologies”, including “strengthening rule of law, tackling impunity for past and present human rights violations (and) addressing socioeconomic inequalities” in region.

President Putin issued ceasefire demands to Ukraine. Putin 14 June promised to order “immediate” ceasefire and talks if Kyiv withdrew troops from four regions annexed by Russia in 2022 (comprising fifth of Ukraine’s territory) and abandoned plans to join NATO; other demands included ‘denazification’ and lifting of Western sanctions. Kyiv same day dismissed conditions as “absurd”. Meanwhile, Putin continued campaign to delegitimise Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, 7 June claiming he “usurped” power and that Moscow will only negotiate with Ukraine’s legislature.

U.S. allowed Kyiv to use its weapons on Russian soil to defend Kharkiv. Drone attacks targeting key infrastructure in Russia occurred almost daily. Meanwhile, Ukraine began using U.S.-supplied weapons to strike Russian borderlands after U.S. President Biden loosened restrictions for defence of Kharkiv region late May (see Ukraine); Washington still prohibits use of U.S.-supplied long-range missiles on Russian territory. Putin 5 June threatened “asymmetric response”.

West imposed more sanctions on Russia as Putin strengthened alliances. U.S. Treasury 12 June announced sweeping secondary sanctions on third parties supporting Russia’s war economy; EU 24 June adopted 14th sanctions package. Meanwhile, Putin 14 June called for creation of ‘Eurasian security architecture’, claiming that “Euro-Atlantic Security system” was collapsing; 19 June signed defence pact with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un (see Korean Peninsula); and 19-20 June strengthened ties with Vietnam.

Eastern Europe

➡ **Belarus Minsk conducted more nuclear drills with Moscow, UN condemned govt repression, and Western neighbours sought to tighten borders.**

Belarus conducted nuclear drills with Russia. Belarus and Russia 12 June launched second stage of non-strategic nuclear weapons drills, following first exercises in May. Meanwhile, Minsk 29 June accused Ukraine of amassing troops near Belarussian border; Chief of General Staff next day said Belarus could use nuclear weapons if “sovereignty and independence are endangered”.

UN condemned Belarus’ human rights record. In report produced ahead of UN Human Rights Council session 18 June-12 July, UN special rapporteur warned that human rights situation in Belarus had deteriorated further in past year. Meanwhile, U.S. 24 June designated Belarus a “state sponsor of human trafficking” in its annual human trafficking list.

In important international developments. Armenian PM Pashinyan 13 June announced he would not visit Belarus as long as Lukashenko was president after leaked documents published in *Politico* revealed Belarus sold weapons to Azerbaijan between 2018 and 2022. Latvian Defence Ministry 18 June announced allocation of

€10mn to help fortify border with Belarus and Russia. Polish FM 23 June said Warsaw was considering closing border with Belarus amid fears about illegal migration. EU 29 June adopted new trade restrictions on Belarus to curb Russian sanctions evasion.

➡ **Moldova U.S. sanctioned pro-Russian governor of Gagauz autonomous region, while EU launched accession talks with Chişinău.**

U.S. 12 June imposed sanctions on pro-Russian governor of Gagauz autonomous region, Evgenia Gutul, accusing her of facilitating “fugitive convicted oligarch Ilan Shor and his Shor Party, and their Kremlin-backed illegal political interference efforts”. Meanwhile, EU 25 June launched accession talks with Moldova after European Commission 7 June announced country met all necessary criteria to begin negotiations.

➡ **Ukraine Ukraine’s forces stemmed Russian assault into Kharkiv region, stabilising northern frontline as fighting in east continued; Zelenskyy stepped up efforts to rally international support.**

Ukraine contained Russian offensive in north as fighting in east persisted. Ukraine managed to contain Russia’s ground assault into Kharkiv region, helped by use of U.S.-supplied weapons in Russian borderlands after restrictions on their use on Russian soil loosened late May (see Russia). In east, Russian forces exploited relocation of Ukrainian troops north by stepping up attacks in Donetsk region, notably pursuing efforts to seize strategic town of Chasiv Yar.

Russian airstrikes persisted as Ukraine targeted Crimea. Russian strikes continued to target Ukrainian cities and energy infrastructure amid lack of air defence, with Kharkiv bearing brunt of attacks; notably, bomb 22 June struck apartment building, killing three and wounding dozens. Meanwhile, Kyiv 23 June targeted Russian-annexed Crimea; Russian Ministry of Defence same day blamed U.S.-supplied ‘ATACMS’ missile, diverted by air defence, for killing at least four and wounding over 150 on busy beach in Crimea’s Sevastopol city near air base.

Peace summit took place in Switzerland. President Zelenskyy 15-16 June held peace summit in Switzerland in hopes of persuading critical mass of non-Western countries to back his ten-point ‘peace formula’. 78 of 92 participants signed joint communiqué on three of ten points, though signatures of key non-Western countries, including China, India, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Brazil, were missing. Earlier, Putin 14 June laid out Kremlin’s conditions for ceasefire and negotiations, which Kyiv called “absurd” (see Russia).

Foreign partners bolstered support to Kyiv. Notably, Group of Seven (G7) leaders 13 June agreed on \$50bn loan for Ukraine, to be repaid using interest from some \$300bn in frozen Russian assets. U.S. President Biden and Zelenskyy same day signed ten-year bilateral security agreement, while several countries pledged more air defence. South Korea 20 June said it would consider sending arms to Ukraine after North Korea and Russia day earlier signed treaty containing mutual defence article; move would represent radical departure from Seoul’s long-standing policy of not supplying weapons to countries at war. EU 25, 27 June launched accession talks and signed security agreement with Kyiv.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➡ Cyprus UN personal envoy continued efforts to resume talks between parties ahead of mandate expiry and Hizbollah threatened to strike Cyprus should it support Israel's war in Gaza.

Efforts to relaunch formal talks remained stalled. UN Sec Gen's Personal Envoy Maria Holguin's efforts to find common ground between Republic of Cyprus and Turkish Cypriot leadership for return to formal talks remained fruitless; during month, Türkiye and Turkish Cypriots appeared opposed to extension of Holguin's mandate beyond 5 July, while Greece and Greek Cypriots appeared open to idea. Speaking at event marking 50th anniversary of Turkish invasion of Cyprus, Turkish Defence Minister Yaşar Güler 5 June called for two-state solution in Cyprus. Holguin 21 June said "no visit" to Cyprus was planned but that she would meet Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders separately outside Cyprus in coming weeks. Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly 27 June adopted resolution denouncing Türkiye and Turkish Cypriot leadership's unilateral reopening of fenced-off area of Varosha city since Oct 2020 and calling for Varosha's immediate return "to its lawful inhabitants"; Republic of Cyprus next day welcomed resolution.

Hizbollah threatened to strike Cyprus. Hizbollah in Lebanon 19 June threatened to strike Cyprus if it allowed Israel to use airports and ports to strike Gaza; Republic of Cyprus govt next day clarified "Cyprus is not involved, and will not be involved" in any military operations in Middle East. Turkish FM Hakan Fidan 24 June alleged Republic of Cyprus serves as military base for Israel's operations in Gaza, warned of risk of regional escalation; Republic of Cyprus govt next day denied claims.

➡ Türkiye Military targeted Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Iraq, Syria and south-eastern Türkiye, authorities continued to arrest alleged ISIS supporters, and normalisation with Greece remained on track.

Operations against PKK continued. Ahead of expected summer offensive against PKK in northern Iraq, military appeared to fortify supply lines, secure operational support from Baghdad and reinforce existing military outposts. Military also continued strikes on PKK militants. Notably, defence ministry 15-18 June and 26 June said security forces "neutralised" 11 PKK militants in northern Iraq and another 16 in northern Syria; National Intelligence Organization 26 June reportedly "neutralised" PKK leader in Jazira region of Syria, Ali Dinçer, who is wanted by Interpol. Security forces 20-21 June also carried out operations against PKK in south-eastern provinces Şırnak, Batman, and Ağrı.

Authorities targeted alleged Islamic State (ISIS) members. Detentions during June on ISIS-linked charges continued at lower pace with police arresting at least 62 suspects. Notably, police 10 June detained 11 suspected of financing ISIS; security forces 14 June detained relative of former ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi reportedly attempting to flee Türkiye; police next day detained two ISIS members in Istanbul city allegedly planning attack.

Türkiye floated BRICS membership, looked to mend ties with Greece, Syria. During China visit, FM Fidan 3 June said Türkiye was considering BRICS membership; Russian President Putin 11 June welcomed interest, and Fidan same day attended

BRICS summit in Russia. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Güler 1 June hailed “positive period” in Turkish-Greek relations. Media reports 20 June revealed that Türkiye and Greece had made joint nominations for Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) appointments. However Greek Defence Minister Nikos Dendias 24 June said ongoing disagreements, including over eastern Mediterranean/Aegean maritime zones, cast doubts on sustainable normalisation. Syrian President Assad 26 June affirmed Syria’s “openness” to relations with Türkiye conditional upon respect for Syrian sovereignty over its territory; President Erdoğan 28 June told reporters there is “no reason” not to restore diplomatic ties with Syria.

Central Asia

➡ **Kyrgyzstan Court acquitted activists detained for opposition to border deal with Uzbekistan; Bishkek signed transport deal with Beijing and Tashkent, and strengthened ties with EU.**

Month saw progress and setbacks for freedom of expression. Court in capital Bishkek 14 June acquitted over 20 activists and politicians detained in Oct 2022 for protesting border deal with Uzbekistan, in which govt handed over Kempir-Abad reservoir in return for land. Meanwhile, court hearings for 11 current and former staff from Temirov Line media outlet, detained in Jan for allegedly calling for “mass riots”, began 7 June; watchdog Committee to Protect Journalists 13 June warned that sentencing the journalists “would mark a terrible watershed in a country historically seen as Central Asia’s ‘island of democracy’”.

Bishkek signed regional economic deal with Uzbekistan and China. Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and China 6 June signed deal on railway project. All three leaders attended ceremony via video link as Beijing’s Minister of Transport said “project demonstrates the common aspiration for cooperation and development shared by the three countries”; President Japarov said project would enhance regional connectivity and economic ties.

EU and Kyrgyzstan bolstered ties. EU and Kyrgyzstan 25 June signed Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in Belgian capital Brussels, which EU described as “an important milestone in strengthening bilateral relations”.

➡ **Tajikistan U.S. authorities arrested eight Tajik nationals with suspected ties to ISIS, and China’s president prepared for July visit to country.**

Media 11 June reported arrest of eight Tajik nationals in U.S. with possible ties to Islamic State (ISIS); according to U.S. media, arrests raised concerns among national security officials about potential terror attacks on U.S. soil. Russian authorities previously arrested number of Tajik nationals for alleged role in deadly attack at Moscow concert hall in March. Meanwhile, China’s Foreign Ministry 30 June announced that, beginning 2 July, Chinese President Xi Jinping would attend Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Kazakh capital, Astana, and visit Tajikistan.

➡ **Uzbekistan Tashkent signed deal with Beijing and Bishkek on railway project.**

Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and China 6 June signed deal on railway project as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. All three leaders attended ceremony via video link as Beijing's Ministry of Transport said "project demonstrates the common aspiration for cooperation and development shared by the three countries"; President Mirziyoyev said railway would boost regional trade ties and cooperation.