

Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➔ **Bosnia and Herzegovina German govt promised military reinforcements for EU mission to support country's stability, while tensions over bid for EU candidacy status flared.** In first troop contribution in ten years to Operation Althea (EU-led military mission overseeing 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement), German govt 15 June approved deployment of up to 50 soldiers to join operation amid concerns over country's stability; deployment, which awaits parliamentary approval, would last until 30 June 2023. Following European Commission's decision 17 June to back Ukraine and Moldova for EU candidate status, Slovenia 20 June said it would seek same offer for Bosnia during EU leaders summit 23-24 June in Belgian capital Brussels to "reaffirm the EU's commitment to the Western Balkans"; statement followed comments made by Croatian President Milanović during Prespa Dialogue Forum in North Macedonia 16-18 June that "constant postponement is destroying that country". Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik 22 June threatened to pull out of agreement made 12 June between top Bosnian politicians to work together toward EU membership if country did not receive candidate status. EU leaders, however, did not grant candidate status and said country must first implement commitments set out in agreement and finalise constitutional and electoral reform; Dodik 24 June accused some EU leaders of seeing "Bosnia and Herzegovina as a colony".

➔ **Kosovo Authorities struck long-awaited energy deal with Serbia to support Serb municipalities, but restricted entry for Serbs entering country, sparking Belgrade's condemnation.** Following Nov 2021 announcement that Kosovo would cut energy supply to Serbian municipalities, Kosovo and Serbia 21 June signed agreement in EU-facilitated dialogue to implement previous energy deal signed in 2013; deal paves way for Belgrade-backed company to supply energy to Serbian municipalities, which have not paid for electricity since end of Kosovo-Serbia war in 1999. EU Special Representative Lajčák same day called deal "major step forward". Govt 29 June announced that citizens with Serbian ID cards entering country would be given temporary Kosovo-issued documents; stipulated that cars with Serbian licence plates must re-register with Republic of Kosovo plates by 30 September. Belgrade accused Pristina of seeking to "expel Serbs" from territory and of launching "general attack on northern Kosovo". During visit by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to capital Pristina, PM Kurti 10 June announced plan to submit EU membership application by end of 2022; Scholz reiterated that Kosovo and Serbia could only become EU members if they found "political solution" to dispute over Kosovo's independence "with a comprehensive, sustainable agreement that also contributes to regional stability". European Council President Charles Michel 15 June visited Pristina, calling for "rapid progress in implementing past agreements" within EU-led Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, which "is essential for advancing on the EU path". At EU Western Balkans summit, President Osmani 24 June claimed she had received "strongest [support] so far" from EU leaders on Kosovo's EU perspective and visa liberalisation.

Caucasus

➡ **Armenia Transport corridor remained central sticking point between Yerevan and Baku, while opposition continued protest over PM Pashinyan's perceived readiness to soften stance on status of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK).** Russia 3 June mediated talks on transport corridor between Deputy PM Mher Grigoryan and Azerbaijani counterpart Shahin Mustafayev in Russian capital Moscow, where pair agreed to continue efforts to unblock transport links. Russian FM Sergei Lavrov 9 June visited Armenia's capital Yerevan, said that "simplified" border crossing procedures would be used on railway and motorway connecting mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan exclave via Armenia. While providing few details, Lavrov did not exclude possibility of route being under Armenia's jurisdiction. Pashinyan 14 June told media outlet Al Jazeera that "narrative about the so-called corridor [between Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan exclave] is unacceptable", referencing 2020 agreement that mentioned only Lachin corridor, which connects NK to Armenia via Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani President Aliyev 23 June again accused Armenia of failing to provide transport link connecting Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan exclave, as per 2020 agreement. Disagreements over status of NK persisted, hindering peace talks (see Nagorno-Karabakh). Speaking to local media, Pashinyan 27 June accused Azerbaijan of undermining diplomatic efforts in order "to legitimise a new war". Meanwhile, defence ministry 20 June said one soldier was killed 18-19 June on border with Azerbaijan. Since mid-April, Armenia has reported two soldiers killed at military positions between Azerbaijan's Kelbajar district and Armenia's Gegharkunik region, which have seen particularly deadly skirmishes since 2020. Opposition leader Ishkhan Saghatelian 14 June announced switch from daily anti-govt demonstrations, which opposition had been staging since late April, to weekly rallies, saying it will bring "new impetus" to "our resistance movement"; added that opposition's main aim was still to ouster Pashinyan and prevent new "capitulation agreement" with Azerbaijan, referring to possible treaty on status of NK (see Nagorno-Karabakh). Pashinyan 15 June told parliament that "any status" guaranteeing security, rights and freedoms of NK people should be considered "real solution" and claimed alternative would be "annihilation not only of Nagorno-Karabakh, but of Armenia as well".

➡ **Azerbaijan Transport corridor remained central sticking point between Baku and Yerevan.** Russia 3 June mediated talks on transport corridor between Deputy PM Shahin Mustafayev and Armenian counterpart Mher Grigoryan in Russian capital Moscow, with parties agreeing to continue efforts to unblock transport links in region. Russian FM Sergei Lavrov 9 June visited Armenian capital Yerevan, said that "simplified" border crossing procedures would be used on railway and motorway connecting mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan exclave via Armenia; while providing few details, Lavrov did not exclude possibility of route being under Armenia's jurisdiction. Armenian PM Pashinyan 14 June told media outlet Al Jazeera that "narrative about the so-called corridor [between Azerbaijan and exclave Nakhichevan] is unacceptable", referencing 2020 agreement that mentioned only Lachin corridor, which connects Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) to Armenia via Azerbaijan. President Aliyev 23 June again accused Armenia of failing to provide transport link connecting Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan exclave, as per 2020 agreement. Disagreements over status of NK persisted, hindering peace talks

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➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh While security situation remained calm, diplomatic process between Yerevan and Baku did not advance significantly.** Situation in NK remained calm throughout month: no reports of clashes, shootings or new casualties. Yet talks made little progress. Speaking to local media, Armenian PM Pashinyan 27 June accused Azerbaijan of undermining diplomatic efforts in order “to legitimise a new war”. Amid ongoing protests organised by Armenian opposition over govt’s stance regarding future status of NK, Pashinyan 15 June addressed parliament, saying that “any status” guaranteeing security, rights and freedoms of NK people should be considered “real solution”; he claimed alternative would be “annihilation not only of Nagorno-Karabakh, but of Armenia as well”. Azerbaijani President Aliyev next day accused Armenian govt of raising NK’s future status despite “verbal agreement” to refrain from discussing topic; also used opportunity to criticise Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, saying it had achieved “zero results” in NK conflict settlement and that there was no need for it. Other parties insisted it remained important international format for negotiations. Notably, U.S. official 20 June praised Minsk Group’s continued relevance and highlighted U.S. readiness to cooperate with Russia on NK; Pashinyan 28 June echoed support for OSCE Minsk Group. Russian FM Sergei Lavrov 24 June once more accused U.S. and France of trying to dismantle Minsk group. Disagreements over resumed operations of transportation route between mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan exclave via Armenia persisted (see Armenia and Azerbaijan).

➡ **Georgia European leaders recognised country’s European “perspective” and conditioned candidacy status on reforms amid largest pro-EU rallies in decades.** Following 3 March EU membership bid in response to Russia’s war in Ukraine, EU member states 23 June recognised Georgia’s “European perspective”, conditioned candidate status on fulfilling “outstanding priorities” regarding political polarisation, judicial system, human rights and anti-corruption as per European Commission’s recommendation announced 17 June; PM Gharibashvili same day confirmed readiness “to implement all priorities”. Decision came as disappointment to many in capital Tbilisi, although not surprise; ahead of vote, European Parliament 9 June adopted critical resolution on Georgia, citing concerns about media and political environment. Gharibashvili 11 June said resolution was “full of lies” and “insulting”. Several Georgian NGOs 12 June criticised Gharibashvili in joint statement, saying he was downplaying importance of candidate status, which could feed into “Euro-sceptic attitudes” and which echoed “Russian narratives”. President Zourabichvili 16 June tried mobilising public, all political parties and EU ambassadors to pro-Europe rally in Tbilisi; turnout was poor. Yet more than 100,000 people 20 June rallied in Tbilisi in support of candidacy status decision in Belgian capital Brussels, chanting: “I am Georgian, and therefore

I am European”; demonstration was one of largest in country’s 31 years of independence.

➡ **Russia (internal) North Caucasus crackdown on dissenting voices continued, border attacks from Ukraine increased, Western states and allies introduced more sanctions.** NGO OVD-Info said authorities 12 June detained at least 67 people during Russia Day celebrations, many previously seen protesting war in Ukraine (see Ukraine). Foreign ministry 28 June announced that two Swedish organisations must cease operations. State Duma next day passed bill expanding criteria for individuals and organisations who can be listed “foreign agents”. This follows European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decision 14 June to condemn law on foreign agents adopted in 2012; President Putin 11 June signed law on non-execution of ECHR decisions made after 15 March. Lawmakers 30 June approved legislation allowing fast-track bans on foreign media outlets. Govt continued crackdown on opposition. Court in capital Moscow 8 June handed prison term to politician Lyubov Sobol; news surfaced 14 June that authorities had transferred imprisoned opposition leader Alexey Navalny to Penal Colony No. 6, known for harsh conditions, in Vladimir region; court in Moscow 24, 28 June jailed politicians Mikhail Lobanov and Ilya Yashin respectively, both for 15 days. Authorities reported more attacks from Ukraine in border regions. Governor of Bryansk region 14 June said missile struck Zaimishche village in Klinty district; governor of Kursk region 19 June reported strike in Belov district; drone 22 June struck Novoshaktinsk oil refinery. Western states and allies continued sanctions. Notably, EU 3 June imposed sixth sanctions package; U.S. 28 June unveiled new sanctions, including ban on imports of Russian gold. Bloomberg media company 27 June reported that Russia defaulted on its foreign debt for first time since 1918. In response to sanctions, Gazprom 14 June announced it would reduce gas supplies to Europe through Nord Stream 1 pipeline by 40%. Foreign ministry during month banned hundreds of British, Australian, Canadian and U.S. citizens from entering country, including U.S. President Biden’s wife and daughter on 25 June. Lithuania 18 June banned transit of EU sanctioned goods through its territory, cutting off Russian exclave Kaliningrad; Russia warned Lithuania of tough retaliatory measures. Russian hacking group Killnet 27 June claimed responsibility for cyberattack on Lithuania’s govt agency websites.

Eastern Europe

➡ **Belarus Authorities continued crackdown on dissent.** Repression of independent media and opposition persisted amid flurry of arrests and jail sentences. Notably, Supreme Court 1 June rejected appeal by bloggers and opposition activists, including Siarhei Tsikhanouski — imprisoned husband of exiled opposition leader Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya — who was sentenced in Dec 2021 for allegedly organising mass disorder, inciting social hatred and disrupting social order; court in capital Minsk 14 June designated news outlet Tut.by Media “extremist” and banned it; Minsk court 23 June sentenced philosopher Uladzimer Matskevich to five years in prison for disrupting “social order”, creating extremist group and insulting President Lukashenko. Outgoing U.S. special envoy for Belarus 9 June said “release of all political prisoners will ease sanctions”.

➔ **Ukraine** Russian forces captured eastern Severodonetsk city, Ukrainian partisans stepped-up insurgency in Russian-controlled areas, and European leaders granted Ukraine EU candidate status. After weeks of bombardments and street fighting, President Zelenskyy 25 June confirmed that Russian forces had fully occupied Severodonetsk city, giving Russia control of almost all of Luhansk region in east. Severodonetsk's twin city Lysychansk suffered heavy shelling as Russian forces attempted to encircle it, but city remained in Ukrainian control by late June. Elsewhere in east, Russian forces stepped up attacks on Kharkiv city; shelling began 21 June, killing at least 15. Ukrainian strikes in Russian-controlled Donbas cities increased. Notably, Russian-backed separatists 13 June claimed Ukrainian shelling killed at least five in Donetsk city. Ukrainian partisans in Russian-controlled areas accelerated insurgency. Notably, explosion 12 June occurred in Melitopol city in south-eastern Zaporizhzhia region and 18 June in southern port city of Kherson; car bomb 24 June killed Ukrainian official who joined Russian occupation administration in Kherson. In south, Ukrainian forces crossed Ingulets river as part of counteroffensive to retake Kherson and forced Russian troops to withdraw 8-10km by 8 June. In important victory, Russian forces 30 June withdrew from Snake Island in Black Sea following days of Ukrainian strikes. In north, Russian forces 5, 26 June fired missiles in Kyiv, first strikes on capital in over one month. In centre, missile strike 27 June on shopping centre in Kremenchuk city killed at least 20. International Organization for Migration 16 June reported over 5.1mn refugees and 7.1mn internally displaced. Russia and Türkiye 8 June concluded talks on grain exports from Ukrainian ports without Kyiv's participation; Russian-appointed official 30 June said ship carrying grain left Russian-occupied port of Berdyansk in Zaporizhzhia region, first such shipment since Feb invasion. Leaders from Germany, France, Italy and Romania 16 June visited Kyiv; European Commission next day backed Ukraine for EU candidate status, which European leaders 23 June approved. U.S., UK and others 15, 17, 23 June announced further military assistance. Amid concerns of widespread sexual violence in conflict with Russia, parliament 20 June ratified Istanbul Convention on violence against women. Ukraine and Russia 29 June separately announced biggest prisoner swap since Feb invasion.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➔ **Cyprus** Republic of Cyprus protested Türkiye's new measures supporting Turkish Cypriots, while assisting "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC") in dousing wildfires. De facto tourism minister of "TRNC" 2 June announced Türkiye would designate Turkish Cypriot Ercan airport as domestic flight route; announcement followed Türkiye's financial package for "TRNC", which was agreed in April and made public in May, that triggered debate during month; Turkish officials claim measures are aimed at decreasing cost of flights to Cyprus and supporting north of island that remains economically isolated and faces serious economic strains. Republic of Cyprus (RoC) reacted harshly to measures; President Anastasiades 6 June said country will lodge complaint with UN over what he described as Türkiye's ambition to exert "complete control" over "TRNC". Tensions over such issues further reduced prospects of relaunching formal negotiations between communities, while room to discuss confidence-building

measures also shrinks. Meanwhile, RoC assisted “TRNC” in combating widespread wildfires that broke out toward end of month after latter requested help; RoC sent two firefighting aircrafts and one helicopter, while UK and Israel also supported efforts. After RoC issued navigational advisory 19 June-3 July to install fiber optics inside Türkiye’s exclusive economic zone, Türkiye issued counter-advisory to block plan, insisting areas are inside its continental shelf.

➡ **Türkiye Authorities pursued plans for military operation against Kurdish militants in Syria and detained dozens of Kurdish party members at home; meanwhile, tensions with Greece rose.** President Erdoğan 1 June announced fifth cross-border operation into northern Syria, hoping to clear Tal Rifaat and Manbij of People’s Protection Forces (YPG) militants – Syrian affiliate of Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) – and extend 30km “safe zone” south of border (see Syria); U.S. and Russian opposition appeared, for now, to stall operation. Military also continued PKK operations in northern Iraq and, to lesser extent, south-eastern Türkiye, albeit at slower pace compared to May. At home, authorities increased pressure on pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP). Notably, police 3 June detained over 40 HDP members, including party’s provincial co-chairs in Istanbul, Bingöl, and Edirne cities; 8 June detained over 20 Kurdish journalists in south-eastern majority Kurdish province of Diyarbakır, 16 of whom were later arrested on terrorism propaganda charges. Authorities detained at least 110 individuals with alleged Islamic State links during month. Tensions escalated with Greece over Eastern Mediterranean/Aegean Sea disputes. After complaining in May about Turkish military flights over Greek islands, Athens 1 June put its military on high alert and 6 June protested Türkiye’s actions at UN; Turkish officials accused Greece of militarising eastern Aegean islands in contravention of international treaties. Greek defence minister 7 June said Athens was “dangerously close to its limits”, while FM Çavuşoğlu same day questioned Greek sovereignty over some Aegean islands, which drew harsh reactions from Athens. NATO Sec Gen Jens Stoltenberg 14 June called on sides to de-escalate and resolve disputes; tensions and military manoeuvres in Aegean Sea raise risk that small incident could spark escalation. Defying expectations at NATO summit, Ankara 29 June lifted veto on Finland and Sweden’s accession in return for measures from both countries addressing its concerns. Ankara continued efforts to establish safe corridor to ship over 20 tonnes of grain from Ukraine, critical for global food security (see Ukraine). Govt remained invested in diplomatic efforts to normalise ties with regional adversaries, receiving Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman 22 June (see Saudi Arabia).

Central Asia

➡ **Kazakhstan Kazakhs voted overwhelmingly in support of constitutional amendments in referendum, which offer greater parliamentary powers.** Following nationwide protests in Jan that left 232 dead, Kazakhs 5 June voted in referendum on President Tokayev’s proposed constitutional amendments, seen by some observers as attempt by Tokayev to prevent former President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his relatives’ return to political sphere; referendum proposed 56 amendments, including limits to presidential powers, ban on Nazarbayev’s relatives from holding govt positions and more parliamentary

powers. Central Election Commission chairman 6 June said 77.18% voted in favour of changes. Some activists and human rights campaigners said changes included “very few limits to presidential power”, given that president will “retain the right to appoint the prime minister, to appoint key ministers in the cabinet, to veto laws and all the other powers that the president has enjoyed”. During 19th EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council held 20 June, EU welcomed referendum results but highlighted need for independent investigation into Jan unrest. Meanwhile, in 17 June plenary session with Russian President Putin, Tokayev rejected Putin’s claim that former Soviet Union was “historical Russia”; also rejected recognition of so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics in Ukraine’s east as independent states, despite Russia declaring them independent countries in Feb (see Ukraine).

➡ **Kyrgyzstan Skirmishes erupted along border with Tajikistan.**

Border Guard Service 3 June said clashes broke out along border with Tajikistan after Tajik border guards reportedly entered Kyrgyz territory; authorities same day reported unspecified number of wounded on both sides. Kyrgyz and Tajik border guards 14 June exchanged gunfire, reportedly killing one Tajik guard. Authorities from both sides reportedly held talks, while situation along border remained tense.

➡ **Tajikistan Skirmishes erupted along border with Kyrgyzstan, while police carried out arrests in restive Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO).**

Kyrgyzstan’s Border Guard Service 3 June said clashes broke out along border with Tajikistan after Tajik border guards reportedly entered Kyrgyz territory. Kyrgyz authorities same day reported unspecified number of wounded on both sides. Tajik and Kyrgyz border guards 14 June exchanged gunfire, reportedly killing one Tajik border guard. Authorities from both sides reportedly held talks, while situation along border remained tense. Police made number of arrests in GBAO following violent anti-govt protests in May. Notably, authorities 11 June said three “leaders of organised criminal groups of the city of Khorugh” had been detained, accused of murder, illegal trafficking and “the creation of a criminal community”; authorities 12 June arrested brother of fugitive opposition politician Alim Sherzamonov, wanted for allegedly organising and financing protests.

➡ **Uzbekistan President Mirziyoev sought constitutional amendments that could allow him to seek third term.**

President Mirziyoev 20 June proposed constitutional amendments that, among other things, could allow him to seek third term in office; current election laws stipulate two five-year term limits. Delegation from Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 15 June released report that concluded presidential election held in Oct 2021 lacked competition and that significant procedural irregularities were observed. Kunz.uz media platform 1 June reported dramatic increase in price of bread, at times by up to 75%, in some stores in capital Tashkent and other regions since war in Ukraine (which has impacted global food supplies) began (see Ukraine).