



## Europe and Central Asia

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### Balkans

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↓ **Bosnia and Herzegovina**    **Lawmakers in Republika Srpska voted to reject state-level court rulings amid growing fears of secession.**

*Bosnian Serb lawmakers voted to reject top court rulings.* National Assembly of self-governing entity Republika Srpska (RS) 27 June voted to suspend rulings by Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitutional court. Serb leader Milorad Dodik, who had long threatened to withdraw from state institutions, 23 June initiated vote after court 19 June changed rules to allow it to convene sessions and make decisions without judges from RS (same rules apply for Bosniak or Croat judges), a move Dodik dismissed as "unconstitutional". National Assembly's decision prompted widespread condemnation amid fears RS is moving toward secession. Notably, House of Representatives Speaker Denis Zvizdic 27 June called decision "a direct attack" on constitution and "the beginning of secession"; other govts, notably U.S., same day denounced "reckless attack on the Dayton Peace Agreement", while EU 28 June said decision is "without legal basis" and marks "clear departure from the expectations that accompanied the granting of EU candidate status".

*RS National Assembly voted to no longer recognise rulings of high representative.* RS lawmakers 21 June amended laws allowing entity to no longer recognise decisions made by Bosnia and Herzegovina's High Representative, Christian Schmidt, international overseer who enjoys broad powers over local authorities. Schmidt 19 June had warned them not to take such measures, saying "they will be sailing in heavy waters".

↓ **Kosovo**    **Tensions continued to spiral in Serb-majority northern municipalities as European Union (EU) and U.S. ratcheted up pressure on Pristina and Belgrade to defuse situation.**

*Situation deteriorated further in northern Kosovo.* Following protests late May in four northern Serb-majority municipalities, which broke out after authorities seized municipal buildings and installed newly elected ethnic Albanian mayors, protests and violent clashes continued. Notably, Kosovo Serbs 13 June targeted police with stones following arrest of an individual accused of organising attack on NATO forces 29 May. Month also saw increase in explosions and other attacks, primarily targeting govt institutions: notably, two bombs 19 June exploded near police station in Zvečan town. Meanwhile, PM Kurti 14 June announced Serbian armed forces had detained three Kosovo police officers, fuelling tensions further, though Serbia 26 June released them. EU High Representative Josep Borrell 23 June expressed alarm at

reports of extrajudicial arrests of Kosovo Serbs and subsequent “heavy rhetoric from Serbia”, warning escalation is “becoming dangerous”.

*Month saw flurry of EU and U.S. diplomatic activity aimed at defusing tensions.* International actors urged de-escalation between Kosovo and Serbia, with particular pressure exerted on Pristina to suspend police operations in north and have mayors temporarily perform duties “in premises out of the municipal buildings”. EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák and U.S. Special Envoy Gabriel Escobar 5 June also reiterated calls for fresh polls to elect new mayors in northern municipalities during talks with Kurti, who 12 June sent Borrell five-point plan to calm tensions. Borrell 14 June warned Kurti’s plan had failed to address “key elements that triggered the current crisis”, 22 June hosted series of crisis management meetings with Serb President Aleksandar Vučić and Kurti, without immediate breakthrough. EU 28 June warned Kosovo it is preparing number of punitive measures, which are “temporary and reversible” if sufficient steps are taken to de-escalate situation; Kurti 29 June announced willingness to “decrease Kosova Police presence” and “organise early elections”.

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## **Caucasus**

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➔ **Armenia Yerevan continued high-level talks with Baku, as exchanges of fire along border and in Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) caused injuries.**

*Leaders reached impasse during talks in Moldova, FMs met in Washington.* PM Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev 1 June held meeting with European Council President Charles Michel, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Moldova’s capital Chişinău; participants agreed to attend follow-up meeting in Brussels on 21 July but achieved little else. During meeting with members of Armenian community in Moldova, Pashinyan 1 June indicated willingness for an enclave exchange on condition sides use mutually agreed-upon map to draw border. U.S. 27-29 June hosted fresh negotiations between FMs of both Azerbaijan and Armenia, with U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 29 June saying sides made “further progress” toward peace agreement but that “hard work” remains to be done.

*Clashes with Azerbaijan continued along border and in NK.* Armenia 14 June claimed Azerbaijani gunfire injured two Indian nationals in Yeraskh village in Ararat region on border; Azerbaijan same day denied accusation and blamed Armenian troops for “intensive fire” in Sadarak district of Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan exclave on 13-14 June. In NK, Azerbaijan 15 June claimed gunfire from Armenian territory injured soldier in Lachin corridor connecting NK with Armenia, prompting Baku to tighten its blockade of corridor (see Nagorno-Karabakh); Armenia claimed one of its soldiers was injured when Azerbaijani forces sought to advance into its territory.

*In other important developments.* Pashinyan 3 June visited Turkish capital Ankara to attend inauguration ceremony of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, marking first visit to Türkiye by Armenian leader in over decade; leaders 28 June called for “confidence-building measures” to continue during phone call. After EU 21 June approved 11th sanctions package against Russia, Deputy FM Mnatsakan

Safaryan same day expressed concern, claiming sanctions “make it unbearable for Armenia economy-wise and security-wise”.

➡ **Azerbaijan Baku continued high-level talks with Yerevan, as exchanges of fire along border and in Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) caused injuries.**

*Leaders reached impasse during talks in Moldova, FMs met in Washington.* Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan and President Aliyev 1 June held meeting with European Council President Charles Michel, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Moldova’s capital Chişinău; participants agreed to attend follow-up meeting in Brussels on 21 July but achieved little else. During meeting with members of Armenian community in Moldova, Pashinyan 1 June indicated willingness for an enclave exchange on condition sides use mutually agreed-upon map to draw border. U.S. 27-29 June hosted fresh negotiations between FMs of both Azerbaijan and Armenia, with U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 29 June saying sides made “further progress” toward peace agreement but that “hard work” remains to be done.

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*In another important development.* Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan 13 June visited Azerbaijan to discuss further military and political cooperation, as well as to express readiness to open Turkish general consulate in Shusha city, reclaimed by Baku in 2020 war.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh Azerbaijan’s blockade of Lachin corridor continued to fuel tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) as sides exchanged fire across territory.**

*Tensions ran high amid Baku’s restrictions along Lachin corridor.* Russian Foreign Ministry 14 June urged Azerbaijan to “completely unblock” Lachin corridor connecting NK to Armenia and “not to hold Karabakh’s population hostage”. Azerbaijan 15 June reported injury of soldier at its border checkpoint on Lachin road after shots were allegedly fired from Armenian territory; Armenia same day reported injury of its soldier in same incident, alleging Azerbaijanis sought to advance into Armenian territory to plant flag. Following incident, Azerbaijan closed all traffic on Lachin road; de facto NK authorities 16 June accused Azerbaijan of fully shutting corridor for food and medical supplies, including for “all humanitarian transport”, while International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) same day confirmed inability to pass with medical patients. EU 23 June said “near total blockage” of corridor “directly threatens the livelihoods of the local population”. Azerbaijan 25 June restored passage through Lachin checkpoint, allowing ICRC to go into Armenia with 31 patients. Reopening came days ahead of scheduled talks between Azerbaijan and

Armenia in Washington. Risk of military escalation remains elevated notwithstanding dialogue (see Armenia and Azerbaijan).

*Azerbaijani and de facto armed forces exchanged fire.* Azerbaijan reported several clashes in NK during June, including in Fuzuli, Agdam, Shusha and Khojaly regions, and accused “illegal Armenian armed detachments” (military forces reporting to de facto NK authorities) of seeking to construct fortifications. De facto NK authorities 22 June reported an injury from clashes in Martakert region and rejected accusations of building fortifications. Azerbaijan 27 June accused de facto NK authorities of “wounding” one soldier; Armenia and de facto NK authorities next day returned accusation, alleging Baku’s forces killed four de facto NK soldiers near Martakert region. De facto NK parliament same day called on Armenia to cease Washington dialogue, but negotiations continued.

➡ **Georgia UN General Assembly adopted Georgia’s resolution on rights of internally displaced people and refugees from breakaway regions, while EU welcomed gov’t positive political steps.**

*Georgia won overwhelming support for UN resolution on breakaway regions.* In notable triumph for Georgian diplomacy that underscored Moscow’s growing isolation on global stage, Georgia 8 June secured support of 100 countries for UN General Assembly resolution that, while not legally binding, asserts rights of internally displaced persons and refugees from breakaway regions South Ossetia and Abkhazia to return to their homes, emphasising importance of protecting their property rights and condemning any instances of “forced demographic changes”; similar vote in 2008 had secured only 14 votes in favour. Russia, which 8 June said resolution undermined “normalisation in the region”, voted against it alongside nine other states, including Belarus, Syria and Nicaragua; Russian-backed de facto authorities of South Ossetia and Abkhazia 15 June claimed resolution was “another act of repeated political farce”.

*Govt took steps aligned with EU accession path.* PM Garibashvili 21 June announced he had “clearly confirmed” to European and U.S. partners that ruling Georgian Dream party would not renew attempts to adopt foreign influence bill, which triggered widespread domestic opposition and tensions with Western countries in March. EU 22 June welcomed announcement; it also praised Georgian Dream’s 21 June decision not to pass controversial de-oligarchisation law, and 22 June pardoning of former minister Nika Gvaramia, whom authorities had accused of abuse of power.

⚡ **Russia (Internal) In most serious challenge ever to Putin’s grip on power, Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin spearheaded insurrection, advancing within 200km of capital before abruptly aborting mission.**

*Wagner leader left Russia after short-lived mutiny rocked country.* Amid months of escalating tensions between military leaders and head of paramilitary Wagner Group Yevgeny Prigozhin, most recently over attempts to bring Wagner forces under military command structure, Prigozhin 23 June claimed defence ministry had killed around 30 Wagner fighters at a camp in Ukraine and vowed to topple military leadership. In dramatic escalation that raised questions about stability of Putin’s rule, Wagner forces 23-24 June entered southern Rostov-on-Don city, seizing control of key sites before advancing toward capital Moscow in armoured convoys,

passing through Voronezh city. Putin 24 June decried Prigozhin's "betrayal" and vowed to punish those involved as Wagner mercenaries shot down six helicopters and military airplane, killing 13. As Prigozhin's forces entered Moscow region, he abruptly called off rebellion and reportedly went into exile following negotiations allegedly brokered by Belarussian leader Aleksandr Lukashenka (see Belarus). Kremlin same day said it would not prosecute Wagner members or Prigozhin; Putin 26 June said Wagner mercenaries can either go to Belarus or sign contract with Ministry of Defence.

*Attacks on Belgorod persisted.* Ukrainian shelling and attacks by Ukraine-aligned Russian combatants continued to target southern Belgorod region. Notably, combatants 1 June shelled Shebekinsky town, prompting evacuations from there and other vulnerable districts. Putin 13 June suggested he could order troops to seize more land in Ukraine to create "sanitary zone" protecting Russia from attack. Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu 20 June accused Kyiv of plans to strike Russia with U.S.-made HIMARS and UK-made Storm Shadow Missiles, warning this would be considered "full-fledged [Western] involvement" and promising "retaliation". Meanwhile, Putin 16 June announced first tactical nuclear weapons had arrived in Belarus (see Belarus).

*Crackdown on dissent continued.* Anti-war activist Anatoly Berezikov 14 June died in detention centre in Rostov-on-Don; his lawyer hinted death could be result of torture. Trial against imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who faces extremism charges, 19 June began behind closed doors. Authorities 21, 28 June declared World Wildlife Fund and news outlet *Novaya Gazeta Europa*, respectively, "undesirable".

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## **Eastern Europe**

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➡ **Belarus** Authorities continued to stifle dissent, Russian nuclear weapons started arriving, and prospect of Wagner presence in Belarus following mutiny prompted concern among its western neighbours.

*Repression of independent media and opposition continued.* Vyasna Human Rights Centre 2 June reported court had sentenced union activist Alyaksandr Kandratsyuk to over three years in prison for insulting President Lukashenka, discrediting country and inciting hatred. Court 6 June sentenced activist Yana Pinchuk to 12 years in prison on multiple charges, including creating extremist group. Police 12 June arrested eight journalists in south-eastern Svetlahorsk city on extremism charges. Court in Minsk 21 June sentenced 15 people to between two and 21 years in prison; sentenced three others in absentia. Other trials continued amid clampdown.

*First deployment of Russian nuclear weapons arrived in Belarus.* Following Russia's March announcement to store tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Lukashenka 13 June declared country had already received some, which Russian President Vladimir Putin 16 June confirmed, adding that deployment would be completed by end of summer.

*Prospect of Wagner exiles in Belarus raised fears among western neighbours.* Moscow 24 June announced Lukashenka had brokered talks to end short-lived

mutiny in Russia launched by paramilitary Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin (see Russia), who Lukashenka 27 June confirmed was in Belarus. Putin 26 June said Wagner mercenaries can either go to Belarus or sign contract with Ministry of Defence, raising fears among Belarus' western neighbours of possible Wagner "infiltration" into their countries. Reports 26 June claimed base, which would accommodate up to 8,000 Wagner troops, was already under construction in Mogilev region. Polish officials 28 June announced plans to strengthen eastern border, deputy Polish FM 29 June said Poland "expects" EU to help fund these measures.

➔ **Moldova Court dissolved opposition Shor Party, which spearheaded months of anti-govt protests.**

Constitutional Court of Moldova 19 June declared "unconstitutional" opposition Shor Party, which pro-EU govt had accused of illegal funding and destabilising activities in favour of, and with support of, Russia. Court ruled party "was acting contrary to the principles of the rule of law and posed a threat to the sovereignty and independence of the country". Party's exiled leader Ilan Shor 26 June announced new political bloc to replace Shor.

↓ **Ukraine Collapse of Kakhovka dam killed dozens, displaced thousands and raised fears of lasting ecological damage; Kyiv launched long-awaited counteroffensive, achieving modest gains as hostilities escalated.**

*Dam in Kherson collapsed, causing humanitarian and ecological crisis.* Nova Kakhovka dam in Kherson region 6 June collapsed, causing catastrophic flooding on lower reaches of Dnipro River, whose right bank Ukraine controls and whose left bank Russia controls. Reservoir upstream from dam largely emptied. Kyiv and Moscow traded blame for incident, with Ukraine's envoy to UN 6 June claiming it was "impossible to blow [dam] up from the outside by shelling"; media outlet *The New York Times* 16 June suggested large detonation from within Russian-controlled dam caused collapse. Flood killed at least 52 people, displaced tens of thousands and destroyed homes and farmland. Dam's destruction will likely have lasting ecological consequences, including water contamination and destruction of irrigation systems, and will affect safety of Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

*Ukrainian counteroffensive advanced slowly but steadily.* Ukraine's long-anticipated counteroffensive began early June without announcement as its forces shifted from deep strikes into Russian rear to probing attacks on Russian fortifications in east and south. President Zelenskyy 10 June confirmed offensive had begun, while military same day published footage of its soldiers in two liberated settlements on boundary between Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions, where Ukrainian forces subsequently liberated six more villages. Ukrainian forces 19 June confirmed liberation of Piatykhatky village (Zaporizhzhia), 26 June captured Rivnopil village and gained ground around Bakhmut city (Donetsk). Fighting likely to intensify in coming weeks, with risk of high casualties, as Ukrainian forces advance toward Russia's main defence lines. Russian airstrikes continued, notably killing 12 at restaurant in Kramatorsk city 27 June.

*Kyiv and Moscow showed little interest in African peace plan.* Delegation of leaders from seven African countries led by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa 16

June visited Ukraine, presenting ten-point peace plan. Zelenskyy later said launching talks “while the occupier is on our land is to freeze the war [and to] freeze pain and suffering”. Delegation 17 June travelled to Russia, where President Putin portrayed their propositions as misguided.

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## **Western Europe/Mediterranean**

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➡ **Cyprus** Republic of Cyprus continued push to reignite reunification talks with European Union (EU) involvement, while Turkish President Erdoğan reiterated support for two states.

*Greek Cypriot leaders sought return to 2017 dialogue, as Türkiye reiterated position.* Republic of Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides 7 June expressed readiness to meet with “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”) leader Ersin Tatar “even tomorrow” to discuss reunification talks. President of House of Representatives in Republic of Cyprus Annita Demetriou 13 June underscored “the Greek Cypriot side will continue to exert every effort for the resumption of negotiations from where they stopped in Crans Montana [in 2017]”. During his first foreign trip following his re-election, Erdoğan 12 June met Tatar in “TRNC” and reiterated support for two-state solution, adding “Cyprus does not have another 50 years to lose” and urging international community to recognise “TRNC”. In his address to EU parliament next day, Christodoulides continued efforts to involve EU and asserted “EU has every interest and obligation to actively contribute to the final settlement of the Cyprus problem”. European Council 25 June pledged to continue to have “active role” in supporting peace process; Republic of Cyprus FM Constantinos Kombos welcomed inclusion of reference. UN Special Representative Colin Stewart 26 June met Tatar, describing “positive exchange of opinions”.

*In other important developments.* Spain and Poland suspended their participation on first day of 5-16 June military exercises with Türkiye and “TRNC”-dubbed Anatolian Phoenix naval drills following protest by Republic of Cyprus. News on social media 7 June reported Greek Cypriot man had allegedly attacked Turkish Cypriot woman in holiday resort Ayia Napa in Republic of Cyprus; “TRNC” 5 June denounced “racist attack” and called for justice.

➡ **Türkiye** Hostilities intensified most notably in Syria after Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) ended four-month unilateral ceasefire, raising spectre of further escalation.

*Attacks rose between Türkiye and PKK and its affiliates.* PKK 10 June terminated unilateral ceasefire announced in Feb following devastating earthquakes, citing ongoing Turkish operations against group’s members in northern Syria and northern Iraq. Following termination, rate of violence increased, particularly in northern Syria, with risks of further escalation looming (see Syria and Iraq). Notably, PKK-linked People’s Defence Units (YPG) 12 June allegedly launched cross-border rocket attacks into Türkiye’s Kilis province from Syria; in response, Turkish forces next day struck YPG positions. Amid attacks on Turkish bases in Syria, Turkish forces 14 June struck Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Syrian regime positions in Tel Rifaat and Manbij areas, killing at least eight Syrian soldiers, over dozen SDF/YPG fighters and several civilians. In northern Iraq, PKK blamed Türkiye for killing of PKK member

in Sulaymaniyah 9 June; IED explosion 12 June killed two Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq.

*Security forces continued crackdown on Islamic State (ISIS).* Turkish security forces during June detained at least 90 individuals with alleged links to ISIS. Notably, security forces in Istanbul 10 June detained former Mosul “judge” of group, and 23 June arrested foreign national allegedly plotting attack on Turkish soil.

*Ties with Greece remained on even keel.* Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis 7 June said he will work to settle outstanding disputes, including Aegean maritime zones, with President Erdoğan; Mitsotakis 13 June clarified discussion on demilitarised status of eastern Aegean islands was out of question. Defence Minister Yaşar Güler 15 June met Greek counterpart on sidelines of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conference; Erdogan and Mitsotakis will meet on the sidelines of NATO summit in July. After boat carrying migrants 14 June capsized near Greek island Morea, killing at least 79 with hundreds missing, Ankara 16 June called for “fair burden sharing” in refugee problem.

*In other important developments.* Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan 3 June attended Erdoğan’s inauguration ceremony in capital Ankara. Erdoğan 15 June called for new “civilian constitution”. Sweden and Ankara held talks on former’s NATO membership bid; Sweden 1 June formally promulgated revised terrorism laws.

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## Central Asia

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➡ **Kyrgyzstan Human rights group warned draft law on “foreign representatives” threatened civic space; EU and Central Asian leaders sought to strengthen regional cooperation.**

*Draft law on “foreign representatives” raised concerns.* NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) 9 June called on parliament to reject “highly repressive draft law”, which would require organisations to register as “foreign representatives” if they receive funding from abroad and engage in political activity. Noting similarities to Russia’s controversial 2012 “foreign agents” law, HRW warned law “could have a chilling effect on the country’s civil society”.

*High-level EU-Central Asia meeting took place in Kyrgyzstan.* Following China-Central Asia summit late May, European Council President Charles Michel 2 June gathered with Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek leaders, alongside representative from Turkmenistan, in Kyrgyz town of Cholpon-Ata for high-level meeting. In joint press communiqué, leaders reaffirmed importance of deepening ties and used opportunity to express “continued commitment to uphold the UN Charter, particularly the principles of respect for the independence, sovereignty [and] territorial integrity of all countries”; they also discussed climate change, emphasising need to continue dialogue on “open water-energy cooperation in Central Asia”.

➡ **Tajikistan EU and Central Asian leaders sought to strengthen regional cooperation.**

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➡ **Uzbekistan Legal proceedings over Karakalpakstan unrest continued; EU and Central Asian leaders sought to strengthen regional cooperation.**

*Supreme Court upheld lengthy prison term for Karakalpak activist.* Supreme Court 6 June rejected leading Karakalpak activist’s appeal of 16-year prison sentence for role in July 2022 protests in autonomous Karakalpak region, during which 21 people were killed. Court gave 14 other defendants reduced sentences or suspended prison terms.

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