



Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

↓ **Bosnia and Herzegovina** Lawmakers in Republika Srpska adopted Election Law, escalating confrontation with High Representative and threatening constitutional order; draft UN resolution commemorating Srebrenica fuelled tensions.

Lawmakers in Republika Srpska (RS) voted to adopt entity-level Election Law. National Assembly of self-governing entity RS 19 April adopted Election Law transferring state-level competencies for elections and referendums to entity; move came amid escalating tensions between Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik and High Representative Christian Schmidt over latter's 26 March decision to impose changes to state-level Election Law using his executive powers. Ahead of RS vote, EU 18 April warned of "serious consequences" if any action is taken to undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) territorial integrity, while U.S. Embassy in capital Sarajevo 12 April vowed to respond as Dodik "pursues his secessionist agenda and pushes BiH toward conflict". Bosniak delegates in RS People's Council 29 April claimed law violates their vital interests and appealed to RS constitutional court.

Upcoming UN vote on commemorating Srebrenica ignited tensions. Draft UN resolution to declare 11 July as "International Day of Reflection and Remembrance of the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide" fuelled tensions. Dodik 18 April organised rally in RS city Banja Luka — with 50,000 people and top Serbian officials in attendance — against draft, which UN General Assembly will vote on in May. During rally, Dodik acknowledged "crime" at Srebrenica but denied it was genocide; he also vowed RS would become one country with Serbia "as soon as the first opportunity arises".

➔ **Kosovo** Kosovo Serbs boycotted vote on removal of ethnic Albanian mayors in north, Serbia conducted military drills close to border, and vote in Council of Europe brought Kosovo step closer to membership.

Kosovo Serbs boycotted referendum on ouster of ethnic Albanian mayors in north. Kosovo Serbs 21 April boycotted referendum on removing ethnic Albanian mayors from office in Serb-majority northern municipalities after political party Serbian List 7 April announced it would not participate; party previously boycotted April 2023 poll that resulted in election of four Albanian mayors and subsequent unrest. EU and U.S. 11 April expressed regret over decision to call for abstention. Incumbent mayors set to remain in place, hampering efforts to de-escalate tensions.

Serbia conducted military drills near border with Kosovo. Over 2,000 Serb soldiers 8-21 April participated in military exercises near border with Montenegro and

Kosovo. PM Kurti 19 April accused Serbia of threatening “the security and safety of the region and Europe”.

Kosovo inched closer to Council of Europe (CoE) membership. Parliamentary Assembly of human rights body CoE 16 April voted in favour of Kosovo’s membership; Serbia’s FM Ivica Dačić same day vowed Belgrade would “fight to prevent” Kosovo from joining. CoE’s executive body Committee of Ministers 16-17 May will vote on final decision.

Caucasus

➡ **Armenia** **Yerevan agreed to return four villages to Baku under delimitation deal, triggering protests; U.S. and EU pledged to bolster economic support to Armenia.**

Tensions flared along Armenia-Azerbaijan border early month. Azerbaijan and Armenia traded accusations over series of border incidents in early April. Azerbaijan 2 April said Armenian troops fired at troop positions in its Nakhichevan exclave, which Armenia denied. Azerbaijan 5 April claimed Armenia was strengthening fortifications and concentrating its forces; Armenia 6 April denied allegation, EU Monitoring Mission in Armenia same day reported no unusual military movements. Shooting 10 April wounded one Azerbaijani soldier; Armenia 12 April acknowledged its soldiers violated rules that caused incident and expressed “regret”.

Yerevan and Baku struck border delimitation deal, triggering protests in Armenia. Armenia and Azerbaijan 19 April announced agreement to restore section of Soviet-era border between Tavush region and Azerbaijan’s Qazakh district, meaning Armenia will return four villages to Azerbaijan that came under its control in 1990s. EU, U.S. and UN all welcomed agreement. Residents in Tavush region 19 April began protesting decision amid fears it will deprive them of access to farmlands; protests 24 April spread across Armenia, including capital Yerevan. Meanwhile, Armenia 26 April confirmed reception of “9th edition” of draft peace treaty from Azerbaijan.

EU-U.S.-Armenia meeting resulted in economic pledges for Armenia. Trilateral meeting between Armenia, U.S. and EU 5 April took place in Belgian capital Brussels, culminating in promises of economic support for Armenia’s reform initiatives. EU promised €270mn and U.S. committed \$65mn in economic assistance, while both vowed to continue aiding Armenia’s integration of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh. Ahead of meeting, U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken and European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen 3, 4 April respectively sought to reassure Azerbaijani President Aliyev that talks would focus on economic development; Aliyev voiced concerns about inclusivity and military assistance to Armenia. Russia 5 April described meeting as Western attempt to embroil “South Caucasus into geopolitical confrontations”.

➡ **Azerbaijan** **Yerevan agreed to return four villages to Baku under delimitation deal, President Aliyev raised concerns about EU-U.S.-Armenia meeting, and France recalled its ambassador.**

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Baku raised concerns about EU-U.S.-Armenia trilateral meeting. Meeting between Armenia, U.S. and EU 5 April took place in Belgian capital Brussels, culminating in promises of economic support for Armenia’s reform initiatives (see Armenia). Ahead of meeting, U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken and European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen 3, 4 April respectively sought to reassure President Aliyev that talks would focus on economic development; Aliyev voiced concerns about inclusivity and military assistance to Armenia. Russia 5 April described meeting as Western attempt to embroil “South Caucasus into geopolitical confrontations”.

In other important developments. Authorities 22 April placed opposition politician Gubad Ibadoglu, detained in July 2023, under house arrest. Azerbaijan and Russia 17 April announced early withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from former Nagorno-Karabakh (see Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict). France 16 April recalled its ambassador to Azerbaijan for consultations amid rising bilateral tensions.

➡ **Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict Russia began withdrawing its peacekeepers from former Nagorno-Karabakh.**

In surprise move, Azerbaijan and Russia 17 April confirmed sides had reached agreement for early withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from now former Nagorno-Karabakh (NK); troops had deployed in 2020 under Moscow-brokered ceasefire deal between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyev 17 April confirmed process had already started but did not say when it would be completed. Azerbaijani public largely welcomed news, having long feared that once installed, Russian forces would never leave; still, some opposition media voiced concern about lack of clarity around process and cost Baku incurred to achieve early withdrawal. Meanwhile, Turkish Ministry of National Defence 18 April announced that Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Centre, tasked with monitoring ceasefire violations in NK, would soon be terminated; closing ceremony for centre was held 26 April, marking end of its existence.

↓ **Georgia Ruling party Georgian Dream reintroduced “Foreign Agents” law, triggering protests and harsh police response; EU warned of implications for accession process.**

Ruling party reintroduced “Foreign Agents” law, prompting major backlash. Georgian Dream 3 April revived draft “foreign agents” law, having withdrawn bill in March 2023 after massive street protests and international opposition; law would

require media and NGOs to register as organisations serving “interests of a foreign power” if they receive over 20% of their funding from abroad, which critics have warned mimics repressive Russian legislation. Parliament committee hearing on legislation 15 April led to brawl among MPs, while thousands took to streets in protest, prompting tough police response; rights group Amnesty International 17 April criticised “excessive force”. Thousands 28 April staged “March for Europe”. Ruling party next day passed law in second reading, organised pro-govt counter-rally; in speech to protesters, Georgian Dream founder and billionaire Bidzina Ivanshvili expressed support for draft law and accused Western “global party of war” of meddling in Georgia through opposition and NGOs. Protests 30 April led to harsh crackdown as police used tear gas, while reportedly beating and arresting scores. Meanwhile, EU and U.S. 17, 18 April respectively urged ruling party to retract law, with EU warning it could “compromise Georgia’s EU path”; European Parliament 25 April threatened revision of visa-free scheme and sanctions against Ivanshvili.

Political tensions continued to rise amid forthcoming elections. Georgian Dream 4 April voted to abolish gender quota for political parties in Oct parliamentary elections; opposition party Girchi proposed initiative in exchange for backing ruling party’s nominee for chairperson of Central Election Committee. President Zourabichvili 18 April vetoed amendments on gender quotas. Meanwhile, authorities 8 April revoked registration of pro-Kremlin Conservative Movement amid corruption allegations; party same day said move was politically motivated.

Latest round of Geneva International Discussions took place. 60th round of Geneva International Discussions – multilateral forum to address security and humanitarian consequences of 2008 Russo-Georgian War – 4-5 April took place without new announcements. Participants scheduled next round for June.

➔ **Russia (Internal) Russia launched spring military conscription, Ukrainian strikes on energy infrastructure and industrial facilities continued, and West imposed more sanctions.**

Russia launched spring conscription. Russia 1 April launched spring conscription after President Putin late March signed off on biannual order; decree sets target for 150,000 military inductees by 15 July, marking largest conscription push since 2016. Meanwhile, Ministry of Defence 3 April reported spike in recruitment following 22 March terrorist attack in capital Moscow, with about 16,000 citizens signing military service contracts in ten days. Russian officials continued to claim Ukrainian involvement in terror attack, though Kyiv has denied any role.

Ukrainian strikes persisted. Kyiv continued targeting energy infrastructure and industrial facilities, striking deep into Russian territory. Notably, 2, 17 April launched drone strikes at industrial facilities in Tatarstan region – some 1,300km from border – in attempt to damage Russia’s third-largest oil refinery and drone factory. Military 19-20 April reported shooting down 50 Ukrainian drones in eight regions; attack killed two in Belgorod region and hit energy infrastructure in Bryansk and Kaluga regions. Over 60 drones 27 April attacked Krasnodar region, including military airfield and oil refinery. Meanwhile, news agency Reuters 15 April reported that Russia and Ukraine nearly reached deal in March to ensure free and safe navigation of merchant vessels in Black Sea, but Ukraine unexpectedly withdrew at last minute.

Western countries imposed additional punitive measures. U.S. House of Representatives 20 April approved bill allowing confiscation of frozen Russian assets in U.S. banks worth \$4-5bn to be used for Ukraine's defence and recovery; Russian officials 28 April threatened "severe" response if assets are confiscated. Meanwhile, joint UK and U.S. action 12 April widened ban on metal imports, clamping down on Russia's second largest export commodity after energy.

In other important developments. U.S. officials 12 April reported that China is exporting equipment, technology and shared space imagery to Russia for use in war against Ukraine; U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 19 April condemned actions. Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu 26 April met his Iranian counterpart on sidelines of regional forum Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Kazakhstan, expressed readiness to expand military and technical cooperation.

Eastern Europe

➡ Belarus Minsk withdrew from arms control treaty and announced arrival of Russian nuclear weapons, crackdown on dissent continued, and West imposed more sanctions.

Belarus left arms control treaty and nuclear weapons arrived. Parliament 17 April voted to suspend participation in Conventional Forces in Europe treaty, arms control agreement that Russia withdrew from in 2023. Parliamentary Assembly 25 April adopted new military doctrine, which defines deployment of Russian nuclear weapons on Belarusian soil as strategic deterrent; during assembly, President Lukashenko announced arrival of "several dozen nuclear weapons" from Russia. Meanwhile, govt 25 April said it thwarted attack on capital Minsk by "combat drones from the territory of Lithuania"; Lithuania same day denied allegation.

Crackdown on dissent continued. Notably, Vyasna human rights group 2 April said authorities had arrested former Green Party leader Dzmitry Kuchuk for allegedly "organising activities that grossly violate public order". Wife of imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Byalyatski 9 April said Byalyatski's health had deteriorated in solitary confinement, urged UN to "act". Authorities 29 April banned German media organisation Deutsche Welle.

West imposed more punitive measures. U.S. 15 April imposed sanctions on Belarusian entities and individuals for "continuing support for Russia's war against Ukraine"; Canada same day introduced measures in response to "ongoing human rights violations in Belarus since the fraudulent presidential election of 2020".

➡ Moldova Opposition deputies formed anti-European bloc as ruling party received greenlight for referendum on European integration.

Court approved vote on EU membership as opposition politicians met in Russia. Constitutional Court 16 April approved ruling party's request to hold referendum on EU membership in October, same month as presidential election. Days later, pro-Russian opposition politicians 21 April met in Russian capital Moscow for congress organised by businessman and fugitive Ilan Shor; leaders from autonomous Gagauz region also attended. Meeting culminated in decision to form anti-European political

bloc dubbed Victoire, as Russia sought to consolidate its supporters in Moldova before elections and referendum.

Drone reportedly struck military unit in breakaway Transnistria. De facto authorities in breakaway Transnistria 5 April claimed that drone struck military facility in Rabnita region near Ukrainian border, but did not assign blame for attack; Moldova's Bureau for Reintegration Policies same day said incident aligns with "a pattern of provocations" in Transnistria designed to "incite panic and tension".

➔ **Ukraine Russian forces intensified offensive to seize strategic town of Chasiv Yar, govt passed mobilisation reform bill, and U.S. approved long-awaited military aid package.**

Moscow targeted Chasiv Yar town as airstrikes continued. Russian forces focused their assaults on Chasiv Yar in eastern Donetsk region; Ukrainian military 22 April said up to 25,000 Russian troops were trying to storm area in attempt to capture town by Victory Day on 9 May. Capture of Chasiv Yar would allow Russian troops to advance toward string of strategically important settlements in Donetsk region, which form backbone of Ukraine's remaining industrial and military infrastructure in region. Further south, Russian forces continued slow advance west of Avdiivka after capturing town in Feb, with top commander Oleksandr Syrskyi 28 April announcing troops had withdrawn from three villages; Syrskyi also warned of possible Russian offensive against Kharkiv city in north east. Meanwhile, Russian strikes on key infrastructure continued amid dwindling Ukrainian air defence systems. Notably, Russia 11 April destroyed major power plant near capital Kyiv; for first time since full-scale invasion, Russia also targeted gas storage and transfer facilities used to transport its own gas exports to Europe.

Ukraine passed watered-down version of mobilisation law. President Zelenskyy 16 April signed mobilisation reform bill to expand conscription, improve training and offer financial incentives amid recruitment difficulties. However, Syrskyi 9 April convinced govt to remove provisions on demobilisation and rotation of long-serving soldiers. Meanwhile, Zelenskyy 2 April signed bill lowering draft age from 27 to 25 in another attempt to replenish exhausted troops.

U.S. approved military assistance for Kyiv. U.S. President Joe Biden 24 April signed into law long-awaited military aid package for Ukraine; announcement may prompt Russia to escalate attacks in coming weeks before arrival of new capacities. Meanwhile, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz 13 April announced Berlin will provide Kyiv with Patriot air defence system; NATO Sec Gen Jens Stoltenberg 19 April said NATO members would follow suit.

Switzerland prepared to host peace summit. Switzerland 10 April announced Ukraine peace summit on 15-16 June in Luzern city. Zelenskyy 6 April said 80-100 countries will likely join; Russia ruled out participation, though Bern is reportedly courting other BRICS states, including Brazil, India, China and South Africa, to send delegations.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➔ **Cyprus UN personal envoy maintained her search for common ground between parties, aiming for return to formal talks.**

Ahead of expiration of UN Sec-Gen's Personal Envoy to Cyprus Maria Holguin Cuellar's mandate in early June, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar 5 April met UN Sec-Gen António Guterres in New York City, after which Tatar reiterated his scepticism toward envoy by saying he did not believe Cuellar could find common ground between sides; Tatar urged all parties to recognise existence of "two peoples, two democratic states, two authorities" and also warned against flare-up of tensions on island, saying "little misunderstanding" such as accidental shooting of Turkish soldier could "turn the situation into a new Gaza". Republic of Cyprus next day described Tatar's remarks as incompatible with future of their "mutual" homeland. Republic of Cyprus FM Constantin Kombos 11 April voiced readiness to resume formal talks but said Turkish Cypriots and Türkiye had imposed new conditions. Holguin 29 April visited Belgian capital Brussels for meetings with high level EU officials, including European Council President Charles Michel. Meanwhile, EU Council's declaration 18 April hinged enhancement of ties with Türkiye in part on progress on Cyprus issues; Ankara same day accused EU of "reductionism" in tying broader cooperation to Cyprus.

➔ **Türkiye Military targeted Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Syria and Iraq, opposition won local elections for first time in two decades, and Turkish-Greek diplomacy continued despite evidence of tensions.**

Ahead of potential summer offensive, limited operations against PKK continued. In northern Syria, Turkish defence ministry 14 April announced killing of three militants. In northern Iraq, clashes with PKK 9 April killed Turkish soldier; military 15 April launched airstrikes in mountains Asos and Hakurk areas of north. President Erdoğan late March reiterated plans for summer offensive against PKK in Iraq, stating determination to prevent "terror corridor" and permanently eradicate group. Erdoğan 22 April made first visit to Iraq in over decade, signing over 25 cooperation agreements with Baghdad (see Iraq).

Authorities targeted alleged Islamic State (ISIS) members. Security forces during April detained at least 410 individuals with alleged links to Islamic State (ISIS). Following deadly ISIS terror attack in Russian capital Moscow in March, perpetrated by Tajikistan nationals, govt 5 April revoked visa-free travel for Tajikistani nationals.

Opposition edged out ruling party in local elections. In first election defeat for ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) since rising to power in 2002, opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) won 31 March local elections with 37.7% of vote to AKP's 35.5% on 78% voter turnout; CHP secured victories in seven out of eight largest and most economically significant cities, including Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

Diplomacy with Greece inched ahead. Türkiye and Greece continued preparations for Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis's visit to capital Ankara scheduled for 13 May. In step to boost confidence, Greece 1 April launched seven-day visa-free travel scheme for Turkish tourists visiting ten eastern Aegean islands. Underscoring lingering maritime tensions, Ankara 3 April condemned Greece's declaration of two marine park zones in Ionian and Aegean Seas, claiming Athens sought to disguise its territorial claims with environmental concerns; Greece responded by accusing govt of politicising environmental issues. Defence Ministry 13 April released footage of Greek Coast Guard vessel releasing two migrants into waters of Aegean near

Samos/Sisam island. Turkish and Greek delegations 22 April met to discuss progress on confidence-building measures.

Central Asia

➔ **Kyrgyzstan President Japarov signed law on foreign representatives, sparking international condemnation; UK's FM visited Kyrgyzstan during regional tour.**

Kyrgyz leader signed controversial "foreign representatives" bill. President Japarov 2 April signed "foreign representatives" bill into law, which many human rights organisations have warned mirrors Russia's repressive legislation; law grants authorities oversight over non-profit and non-governmental organisations, and allows them to designate those that receive foreign funding and engage in "political activity" as "foreign representatives". Move sparked outcry: notably, EU 2 April said legislation could have "a negative impact on Kyrgyz society and their cooperation with international partners", while UN Commissioner for Human Rights 5 April said it poses "serious threat to the work of numerous civil society organisations in the country". Media watchdog Committee to Protect Journalists 2 April said legislation threatens to erase country's status as "relative haven of free speech and democracy in post-Soviet Central Asia".

In important international developments. UK FM David Cameron 22 April embarked on five-day tour of region, beginning in Tajikistan before heading for Kyrgyzstan; trip sought to deepen diplomatic and economic ties in region, and to address concerns about circumvention of sanctions on Russia. Meanwhile, defence minister 26 April attended regional forum Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in Kazakhstan amid efforts to boost military cooperation.

➔ **Tajikistan Authorities contended with aftermath of terrorist attack in Russia, and UK's FM visited Tajikistan during regional tour.**

Tajikistan continued to deal with aftermath of Moscow terrorist attack. By end of April, Russian authorities had detained twelve people in connection with March terrorist attack in capital Moscow, eleven of whom hail from Tajikistan. Senior Russian official Nikolai Patrushev 3 April claimed Ukraine's embassy in capital Dushanbe was recruiting mercenaries to fight against Russia; foreign ministry 6 April dismissed allegation, saying it "has no basis". FM Muhridin 12 April criticised torture of four detained Tajik suspects and decried rising anti-Tajik sentiment in Russia. Meanwhile, Russia and Tajikistan 15-18 April held joint military exercises in southern Khatlon region, which borders Afghanistan, after sides late March pledged to intensify joint counterterrorism efforts.

In important international developments. Uzbek President Mirziyayev 18-19 April visited Tajikistan, meeting with Rahmon and other high-level officials and signing slew of cooperation agreements. UK FM David Cameron 22 April embarked on five-day tour of region, beginning in Tajikistan; trip sought to deepen diplomatic and economic ties in region, and to address concerns about circumvention of sanctions on Russia. Defence minister 26 April attended regional forum Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in Kazakhstan amid efforts to boost military cooperation.

➔ **Uzbekistan Authorities stepped up measures against “religious extremism”, while Tashkent welcomed top officials from China and UK.**

Authorities cracked down on “religious extremism”. Following terrorist attack in Russian capital Moscow, claimed by Islamic State, authorities intensified efforts to tackle “religious extremism”. Notably, police 7 April conducted raids on homes of dozens of people allegedly linked to “radical extremist groups” and reportedly prevented imams from leaving country.

In important international developments. President Mirziyoyev 2 April met with China’s State Councillor and Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong in capital Tashkent, culminating in signing of security cooperation agreement. UK FM David Cameron 22 April embarked on five-day tour of region, 23 April visiting Uzbekistan; trip sought to deepen diplomatic and economic ties, and to address concerns about circumvention of sanctions on Russia. Defence minister 26 April attended regional forum Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in Kazakhstan amid efforts to boost military cooperation.