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CYPRUS

On 2 June, Mustafa Akıncı and Nikos Anastasiades met in the first bicomunal event organized by the Technical Committee of Education. Although unofficially, it was the first time the leaders had met since the upsetting events of the Istanbul Summit held in late May. During the meeting, the Leaders announced an agreement that will lead to the resumption of negotiations in resolving the Cyprus Problem.

On 7 June, UN Secretary General’s Special Advisor on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide, said Cyprus talks were now entering a more intensified period. He also indicated this phase as critical as such there would be difficulties at times as there were still a number of bridges to cross. He added that both leaders were devoted to the peace process.

Furthermore, Mustafa Akıncı in a phone conversation with Nicos Anastasiades talked about the opening of the Deriya and Aplic crossings. They both shared views on accelerating the process.

On the other hand, the Bishop of Cyprus Orthodox Church, Hrisostomos, has added his voice to the Greek-Turkish Cypriots situation saying, there isn’t animosity between the Greek and the Turkish communities. According to him, external powers should not intervene in Cyprus including UN’s peacekeeping forces.

The end of June saw Cyprus being shaken by a huge forest fire where two firefighters died. While President Anastasiades expressed his ‘great sorrow’, Greece, the UK, and
REGIONAL UPDATES: CYPRUS

Israel also contributed aircrafts in extinguishing the huge fire in the Troodos Mountains.
EGYPT

Political Developments

In the early stages of June, the Arab Observatory for Media Freedom (AOMF) condemned the decision of the Egyptian public prosecutor to impose a significant financial bail for the release of the journalist union chairman Yahya Qalash, union under secretary Khalid Albashi and union secretary-general, Abdel-Rahim. They maintained forcing them to pay 30,000 Egyptian Pounds for their release pending investigations is a penalty that violates the law which prevents ‘remand in custody’ in press and publication cases.

Also, Egypt’s former corruption auditor Hisham Gneina has been charged with disturbing public order. He has been under investigation by Egypt’s homeland security prosecutor since March when President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi fired him by presidential decree.

Additionally, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi chaired a National Defence Council Meeting where they discussed the army’s 2016-2017 budget alongside pending domestic and regional issues. The Egyptian Parliament also approved a loan from Saudi Arabia to help it fund development of the Sinai Peninsula.

Furthermore, UN body of human rights experts called for the release of nine journalists that Egypt is holding in connection with the bloody clearing of Cairo’s Rabaa Square in August 2013. Their detention is arbitrary and a violation of their human rights they said.
REGIONAL UPDATES: EGYPT

Again, former president of Egypt Mohamed Mursi has been given another life sentence after a court found him guilty of espionage and leaking state secrets. An Egyptian Court also annulled a maritime border accord that would have ceded control of two islands, Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia. Judge Yehia el-Dakroury ruled that Egypt’s maritime border would not be redrawn, meaning that the islands of Tiran and Sanafir would remain under Egyptian sovereignty. Ali Ayoub who brought the lawsuit together with Khaled Ali said, “Today’s verdict will be implemented and the appeal will not stop its implementation.”

Towards the end of June, the family of Ibrahim Halawa, a 20 year–old Irish who was jailed in Egypt during protests that led to the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood were to reapply for a presidential decree to secure his freedom.

International Developments

Egypt received the first of two advanced warships from France in a deal worth $1bn dollars on 2 June. Meanwhile, the Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry in a meeting with the Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said Egypt looks forward to holding talks with the Visegrad Group. Meanwhile, a boat which set off from Egypt with about 350 people capsized off the Greek Island of Crete with 320 migrants feared dead on 7 June.

Added to the above, Egypt said it is prepared to assist in creating ‘appropriate Palestinian environment’ to facilitate an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement according Egypt’s envoy to Israel Hazem Khairat. On the other hand, reconciliation talks stalled after Hamas movement blamed Fatah for the failure of their meeting in Doha, regarding the issues of employment and legislative council. Commenting on the issue, Abu Zuhri, Hamas Spokesperson said that Fatah officials had allegedly recounted on previous agreements made in past meetings, a situation which Fatah Officials rejected.
He also added that Fatah Officials did not sit throughout the day’s meeting and withdrew during the second session.

Meanwhile, Palestinians have begun talks with Egypt on setting out the borders of the Mediterranean; the roughly 25-mile-long coast of Gaza, the strip bordering Israel and Egypt where about 1.8 million Palestinians live according to Riyad H. Mansour, Palestinian Ambassador to the UN.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt also have initiated measures to resume bilateral energy relations. The Deputy Head of the Association of Petrochemical Industry Corporation (APIC) has said Cairo has given green light to Iran to transfer crude oil to European countries through Egypt’s SUMED pipeline. Also, in order to boost tourism, the tombs of Queen Nefertari and King Seti I in Luxor with over 3000 years of history reopened in the middle of June, Egyptian antiquities officials reported.

Finally towards, the end of June, Egypt was accepted to join the United Nations Human Rights Council, a membership that will last from 2017 to 2021.
ISRAEL–PALESTINE

On 8 June, Tel Aviv was shaken by a shooting attack carried out by two Palestinian gunmen at a food and shopping center resulting in the killing of four people with six others wounded. One shooter was captured by the police and has been taken in for questioning. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu subsequently called a security briefing in Tel Aviv.

The attack was condemned by the UN Security Council. The condemnation is significant as being the first time since the current wave of violence that begun in the fall.

In mid June, Prime Minister Netanyahu told Likud ministers that Israel would never accept Arab Peace Initiative as basis for talks with the Palestinians. He added “if they bring the proposal from 2002 and define it as 'take it or leave it', we’ll choose to leave it” according to two sources in the meeting. Meanwhile, Israel’s opposition leader Isaac Herzog has implied that Israel should hold a public vote on the prospect of a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On 16 June, Israel’s plan to build a concrete Wall along Gaza above and below the ground was revealed. The plan will cost an estimated $568 million. The wall is planned to go tens of yards underground as well as above ground along the Gaza Strip border.

Concerning Israel- Turkey relations, there are positive developments. In order to improve the ties between Israel and Turkey, Ksenia Svertlova (Zionist Union), Member of Knesset came to Turkey to participate in a conference organized by Global Political Trends Center and The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies.
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This appearance is important as it is the first time that a Member of Knesset appeared publicly in Turkey in over six years.

Also, on 27 June, Israel and Turkey officially announced a rapprochement deal to end the diplomatic crisis that erupted following the Mavi Marmara incident in May 2010. The rapprochement agreement was initiated by the negotiating teams on Sunday night. For the first time since the negotiations began, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent his personal adviser and closest confidante, Ibrahim Kalin, to the final round of talks in Rome, to personally oversee the final stage.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim announced on 27 June that the signing of the deal had been scheduled for the next day. The deal includes a 20$ million compensation fund for Turkish families and the exchange of ambassadors to restore the diplomatic ties. Following the agreement, it is also expected to initiate the talks about the possible natural gas pipeline. Benjamin Netanyahu said “the agreement opened the way for possible Israeli gas supplies to Europe via Turkey.”

According to the deal, Turkey will end all criminal and civil claims against Israeli military and the state of Israel. However, the blockade on the Gaza Strip remains though Turkey will be able to deliver humanitarian aid through the Ashdod port in Israel. Binali Yildirim said that a Turkish ship carrying 10,000 tons of aid would be delivered through Ashdod in the upcoming days.

U.S. Secretary John Kerry welcomed the deal and said “We are obviously pleased in the administration. This is a step we wanted to see happen.”
LEBANON

In early June, Christos Stylianides, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management paid a visit to Lebanon to monitor the progress of EU funded humanitarian projects which are providing support to refugees. He also held meetings with Prime Minister Tammam Salam and Minister of Social Affairs Rashid Derbas. During his visit, he indicated that EU provided €87 million for the humanitarian projects in Lebanon which reaches around 665,000 people in need.

On 12 June, an explosion took place in Beirut outside the headquarters of the Lebanese Blom Bank. The explosion slightly injured two people, however, no group has claimed responsibility. The Bank is reported to have shut down accounts linked to Hezbollah recently.

During the month too, Sij’aan Qazzi, Minister of Labour and Alain Hakim, Minister of Economy and Trade resigned from the Cabinet in protest over corruption and government inefficiency. Their resignation was announced by the Phalange Party, a Lebanese Christian party which has been complaining about the government’s handling of the trash crisis. The resignations intended to bring a positive shock on Lebanon and to push for a permanent solution for the garbage crisis which affects many negatively.

In the end of the month, Lebanon was shaken by the two waves of suicide bombings in the village of Qaa, situated a few kilometers off the border with Syria. During the eight bombings which took place on 27 June, five people were killed with 28 others injured. No one has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The attacks took place in
the village of Qaa where the inhabitants are majorly Christian, raising security concerns.
LIBYA

Political Developments

In early June, the Islamic State was reported to be seeking to expand its operations in Libya after suffering setbacks in both Iraq and Syria recently according to Aljazeera, meanwhile Libyan forces have lost 10 men in clashes with the Islamic State near Sirte. On the other hand allied fighters of UN’s backed unity government captured two coastal towns from the Islamic State.

Additionally, Libyan forces liberated Al-Gardabiya Airport near the city of Sirte from Islamic State control. Also, Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj rejected a Turkey-style refugee deal with the EU. In other developments he reiterated that a victory over the Islamic State was near.

On 12 June, Libya’s unity government ordered investigation into the killings of 12 Gaddafi loyalist in the country’s capital, Tripoli only days after they were released from prison. Meanwhile on 16 June, a clash between allied forces of UN’s backed unity government and the Islamic State in Sirte left 16 members of the former dead according to the Associated Press. Meanwhile the Islamic State failed in their attempt to break siege in their last strongholds in Sirte as allied forces of the UN backed unity government continues to push them farther.

A militia group, The Benghazi Defense Forces launched an attack on eastern military units nearer to oil facilities in the country. The facilities included three oil terminals north of the country’s major oil fields resulting in the death of three individuals as reported on 20 June. Also, an explosion in an ammunition store in Garabulli near
REGIONAL UPDATES: LIBYA

Tripoli left at least 25 people dead after clashes between locals and militia fighters from the city of Misrata

Migration Issues

At least the bodies of 85 migrants were washed ashore according to Red Crescent on 2 June. Also on 4 June, over 110 bodies of migrants were pulled from the Mediterranean off Libya’s shores due to the sinking of a smuggling boat carrying migrants. 340 people were saved with 9 bodies additionally recovered. Moreover, over 100 migrants were apprehended 12 miles off Libya’s coast in an attempt to cross the Mediterranean. According to Amnesty International, migrants to Italy will soar due to increased abuses in Libya, meanwhile, 19,000 migrants arrived in Italy in May.

On 27 June, Italian coastguards reported that close to 10,000 migrants were rescued from smugglers’ boats off Libya, a development attributed to a break in bad weather conditions on the Mediterranean. Also, at least 10 people drowned and more than 100 others were rescued when an inflatable boat carrying migrants capsized 32km (20 miles) off Libya. In other developments, a car bomb that went off outside Jalaa hospital in Benghazi killed five people and wounded 14 according to officials with Brig-Gen. Abdul-Salam al-Hassi blaming the attack on Islamic militants.

Economic Developments

Libya’s rival central banks joined efforts as a team to design a unity plan attempt to arrest its financial crisis. Ali Hebri, Boss of Beida based CBL and Saddek Elkaber of Tripoli based CBL met in Tunis along with unnamed members of the House of Representatives’ Finance Committee. Libya’s $67bn national fund is also seeking damages in excesses of $1.2bn from Goldman Sachs as they say the bank facilitated its involvement in complex, money-losing investments.
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International Developments

Donald Trump reversed his stance on Libya saying; he would have conducted a surgical strike to take Gaddafi out. This comes off the backdrop after months of telling voters Libya would have been better off were Gaddafi to be alive. Meanwhile there is no overall strategy in confronting the Islamic State in Libya says Marine Lt. Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, the nominee for the Commander of the US Africa Command.

According to Amnesty International, the EU’s plans to collaborate with Libya on migration more closely can trigger an increased ill-treatment and indefinite detention in horrific conditions of thousands of refugees and migrants. The UN Security Council also unanimously adopted a resolution permitting the EU’s maritime force off Libya’s coast to seize illegal weapons that are helping to fuel violence and instability. Additionally it has extended the presence of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya until a phased return in 16 December.
RUSSIA

1. Following the meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on 7 June in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin said they talked about energy cooperation, anti-terrorism activities, as well as the Israeli-Palestine conflict and other topics. Putin supported Israeli attempts to normalize relations with Turkey, he noted Russian stance towards this issue as ”exclusively positive”.

2. Russia will take decisive measures to protect its security and interests, if NATO decides to deploy new forces in Eastern Europe, Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on 14 June. Earlier in June, Peskov criticized an update of Germany’s security policy guidelines which lists Russia as potential threat to” the world order established in Europe after the cold war". The security update also called White Paper was published by German newspaper Die Welt, according to this document Russia will not be considered anymore as a German partner but rather as one of the top ten global threats

3. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu met with his Azerbaijani counterpart Zakir Gasanov on 15 June, they discussed the security situation in Transcaucasia and the Caspian Sea, as well as other international security issues. The decline in bilateral trade between Russia and Azerbaijan due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were the main reasons for the meeting between the two countries’ presidents Vladimir Putin and Ilham Aliyev on 20 June in Moscow. The falling prices on energy products and fluctuations in the exchange rate negatively affected bilateral trade, Putin said during
the meeting. Earlier in June too, Moscow confirmed that preparations were underway for the three-party summit on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

4. On 16 June, Speaker of Russia’s State Duma Sergei Naryshkin met with Japanese PM Shinzo Abe in Tokyo, at the meeting Naryshkin delivered a message from Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Japanese Prime Minister. Naryshkin expressed his contentment after the meeting with Abe, stating that Russia and Japan are developing a positive new agenda for their relations, but he said to Russian press that a third-party could try to distort Russian-Japanese relations.

5. After German parliament approved a resolution which describes events from the last years of the Ottoman Empire in which many Armenians lost their lives as genocide, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Germany has got closer to Russian position on this issue.

6. On 23 June, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the sealing of Turkish-Syrian border in order to stop all illegal weapons deliveries and the infiltrations of militants.

7. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit was held in Tashkent from 23 to 24 June, where leaders of the member countries discussed on enhancing economic cooperation, the fighting against terrorism, as well as India, Pakistan and Iran admission to the organization. Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed India and Pakistan joining the SCO will make the organization a more’ ’powerful, influential and popular association in the region and worldwide”. These two country will become members of the SCO in 2017. Regarding Iran, Putin said there were no obstacles in including it to the SCO, he mentioned that sanctions against Iran were lifted and this country contributes to the SCO’s work as observer.
8. On 24 June, Russian President Vladimir Putin commenting the results of the British referendum said that the consequences will be global, and they will be both positive and negative. Putin pointed out that Russia will not interfere in UK relations with the EU, and he rejected the British Prime Minister David Cameron’s claims on Russian attempts to shape British public mind stance towards the EU. According to Putin, the UK vote will not affect Brussels’s policy of sanctions against Russia, he also added that Moscow is ready for the constructive dialogue with the EU under certain circumstances.

9. On 24 June, President Vladimir Putin arrived on an official visit to China where he had talks with the Chinese leaders on bilateral and international issues. Furthermore, Russia and China signed a draft of energy deals including joint investments in petrochemical projects in Russia and an oil supply contract. According to the statement on the Kremlin official site, Russia and China agreed that all states should respect international laws, keep their military capacities at the level necessary for national security and abstain from expanding existing military-political alliances.

10. Towards the end of June President Erdogan of Turkey in a letter to his counterpart President Vladimir Putin of Russia apologized for the death of the Russian Pilot. His death occurred when Turkey downed a Russian jet in the Syria-Turkish border in November, 2015. He also expressed readiness to restore relations with Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.
SYRIA

US-backed Kurdish and Arab fighters opened up a new front against Islamic State in Northern Syria, close to the Turkish border. The attacks by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) directed at Manbij, an IS controlled town led to 15 civilian deaths according to UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

On 2 June, there were 8 casualties and at least 2 people dead in a bomb blast in the Syrian coastal city of Latakia according to Official News Agency SANA. Meanwhile, the US-led coalition, which says it is fighting the Takfiri Daesh group in Syria, airdropped arms for militants fighting the Syrian government in the Arab country’s northwest.

Russian President Vladimir Putin may send special operation forces on the ground in Syria according to Andrei Fyodorov, former deputy minister for foreign affairs on 3 June. In other developments, the Syrian Army backed by Russian Air Strikes made advances towards Islamic State controlled province of Raqqa.

On the other hand, renewed airstrikes, with barrel bombs, unguided explosive devices in Aleppo have led to several deaths. Besides these, a leading Syrian Kurdish commander, Abu Layla who commanded a brigade in the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces was killed by sniper fire on the outskirts of Manjib.

On 6 June, almost 50 airstrikes hit rebel held areas in and around Aleppo resulting in at least 32 deaths with a further 18 pulled from rubbles in Qatriji. Meanwhile British Forces were reportedly on the ground alongside the New Syrian Army against rebels.
REGIONAL UPDATES: SYRIA

in Syria. The Islamic State has also claimed responsibility for a deadly blast in Sayeda Zeinab Shrine in the capital of Syria.

Furthermore, President Bashar al-Assad acknowledged the efforts of Russia, Iran and China for assisting his nation in their fight against the Islamic State whilst vowing to liberate ‘every inch’ of Syria. Meanwhile the Syrian Army and US-backed forces have advanced separately towards the Islamic State in Raqqa. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu on meeting his counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow has told Jewish Community leaders that Israel does not intervene in Syria war, also he doubts if Syria will survive its war as a single state.

In the middle of June, 51 State Department officials signed a confidential document calling for targeted military strikes in Syria alongside lobbying for a regime change. On the other hand a UN panel said the Islamic State is committing genocide, crimes against humanity and other war crimes against the Yazidi community in Iraq and Syria.

On June, President Bashar al-Assad met with Sergei Shoigu, Russian Defence Minister in Damascus to discuss “military cooperation” in Syria’s conflict.

The UN Commission of Inquiry Chief Paulo Pinheiro told the UN Human Rights Council that widespread, targeted aerial attacks on hospitals and clinics across Syria resulted in scores of civilian deaths including over 700 doctors and other much needed medical workers. On the hand Jordan has sealed its last entry point for Syrian refugees after cross-border suicide attack killed six members of the Jordanian security forces, alongside a further 14 wounded people.

On 22 June, strikes blamed on Syrian and Russian forces targeted at the Islamic State’s de facto capital of Raqqa killed at least 18 civilians. Also, the Islamic State released
images from mobile phones alleged to be that of three Russian soldiers they have killed in Syria.

The UN Mediator for Syria Staffan de Mistura said he hopes that stalled Syrian peace talks can resume in July, but only if the security and humanitarian situation on the ground shows clear improvement. Besides these, the US Department of Defense has confirmed that Coalition Airstrikes continue to target the Islamic State and Levant in Syria and Iraq by the Combined Joined Task Force Operation Inherent Task Resolve.

Aside the aforementioned, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah said they would be sending more fighters to Syria’s Aleppo’s province, ‘the greatest battle’ in Syria’s six-year civil war, he said. In other developments, Islamic State Militants have reportedly abducted 900 Kurdish civilians in the northern Syrian province of Aleppo.

Russian and Syrian Airstrikes on the town of al-Qurayyah in Deir-Ezzor province killed at least 31 civilians with several other casualties according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Finally, towards the end of June Aid reached all the 18 besieged parts of Syria since the war began this year according to the ICRC. Aside this, Syrian armed forces conducted massive military operation against Takfiri terror groups on the outskirts of the northern city of Aleppo killing over 100 militants. Over 2300 Syrian refugees have also been accepted in US during the month of June putting the government on track to surpass President Obama’s goal of 10,000 by the end of September.
UKRAINE

Ukraine has signed a historic trade deal with Canada giving Ukrainian goods a significant reduction of tariffs in their access to the Canadian market.

"Canada is the 54th Ukrainian trading partner, this is a very low level. But this Agreement provides for the elimination of all tariffs from the side of Canada, except for some tariffs for agricultural products and vehicles immediately upon entering into force," Ukraine's Trade Representative, Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Trade Nataliya Mykolska has said.

In other developments, NATO has stood in solidarity with Ukraine and has condemned Russia’s War at the just ended Warsaw Summit. The 28 allies issued a unanimous condemnation for Russia to end its war against Ukraine and return Crimea.
1. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnian top officials could not agree on the adoption of a coordination mechanism between state institutions, according to the news agency BIRN. The creation of a functional coordination mechanism is one of the key conditions that BiH need to fulfill to become an EU candidate. The Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Johannes Hahn paid an official visit to Sarajevo on 15 June, where he met with Chairman of the Presidency of BiH Bakir Izetbegovic and other Bosnian high officials. Commissioner Hahn with his interlocutors discussed the remaining conditions that BiH have to meet in order to receive the EU’s questionnaire. On 13 June, President of Republika Srpska (RS) Milorad Dodik said the Constitution of RS lists the “language of Bosniak people” thus only this language Bosniak can be taught in Republika Srpska’s schools. Dodik’s statement follows ongoing dispute on the name of the language spoken by Bosniaks in Serb-dominated entity, a problematic scenario citing how the language will be named in the report cards of Bosniak students. On 27 June, the former president of Uruguay Jose Mujica received the Order of Republika Srpska, the highest decoration of the Serb-dominated entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The decoration was presented to Mujica by RS’s President Milorad Dodik who explained this act as a recognition for “a unique world politician, for the triumph of the idea of equality, as a wise man and the restless fighter for social justice…”.

2. Kosovo

The strongest opposition party, Self Determination officially declared on 6 June its return to the Assembly of Kosovo, which they left due to the discordance with ruling coalition over the ratification of the Agreement for the Border Demarcation with
Montenegro and the creation of the Association of Serb Communes. President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor called on Kosovo’s recognition by all the countries of the region and EU member countries, at the opening of the Economic Forum between Kosovo and Slovenia in Ljubljana on 8 June. Kosovo MPs voted in favour of extending the EU’s rule-of-law mission, EULEX, mandate in Kosovo on 17 June. Additionally, Kosovo’s assembly approved a new law that shifts current EULEX’s goals towards mainly monitoring and advising activities. On 16 July, Kosovo’s government submitted to the EU the periodical report that assesses the progress and the challenges in the Brussels dialogue. According to this report Kosovo has met all its obligations arising from the Brussels dialogue, on the contrary Serbia made ‘no important movements in delivering its obligations”. On 21 June, President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci met with the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schultz, in Brussels. Thaci emphasized the importance of the visa-free regime for Kosovo citizens and he added that Kosovo has met all the necessary criteria. Earlier in June, EU officials declared that Kosovo, Georgia and Ukraine’s visa-free access to EU need to be delayed after some member states raised new concerns over its possible security implications. Pristina condemned Serbian government intention to build 300 homes in the North of Kosovo within the returnee settlement project named ”Sunny Valley”. Minister for Dialogue, Edita Tahiri marked this project as ”political one aimed to change the structure of the population in the northern part”. Kosovo’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Enver Hoxha said on 23 June that Russia is the main obstacle for Kosovo’s accession to the international organizations, especially to the UN.

3. Macedonia

On 6 June, Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov has revoked all 56 pardons of top politicians and their associates involved in the wire-tapping scandal after the EU and
USA criticized their previous decision to withdraw just 22 pardons. The opposition motion for Ivanov’s impeachment due to the controversial pardons was rejected by parliamentary majority on 22 June. Following the MPs vote, Ivanov stated pardons aimed to prevent civil conflict in Macedonia. In the course of June also, the anti-government rallies called the “Colourful Revolution” continued to be organize in major Macedonian cities. Protest leaders gave the government a deadline of 18 June to meet their demands which include the guarantees that the Special Prosecution would not be dissolved and that police will stop arresting protesters. Macedonian government did not positively reply on these demands, prompting some protesters to throw paint at governmental buildings and also trying to demolish a statue in Skopje on 20 June.

4. Montenegro

In his interview with Reuters on 3 June, Montenegro Minister of Defence Milica Pejanovic-Djurisic confirmed government’s intention to not hold a referendum on joining NATO. Furthermore, she called Russia not to interfere in Montenegrin plans related with NATO membership. On 17 June, Montenegrin parliament supported the resolution on the country’s accession to NATO, according to the Montenegro’s media, the resolution confirms country strong commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration and the European perspective. The MPs of Kosovo’s Self-Determination Party set a plaque reading "Republic of Kosovo" and Albanian flag inside Montenegrin territory on 27 June, claiming that this territory was seized from Kosovo in the process of demarcation with Montenegro. According to Montenegrin interior ministry this act represents a violation of the state border with Kosovo, meanwhile the opposition party NOVA condemned government reluctant reaction on “a threat that comes from Albanian extremists.”
5. Serbia

Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic named Serbian Progressive Party leader Aleksandar Vucic as a Prime Minister-designate on 2nd June. Vucic who is the current Serbian PM won 48 percent of the votes in the April general election. On 13 June, Serbian media announced that PM Aleksandar Vucic cancelled a visit on 21 June to Brussels and all bilateral meetings with senior US officials scheduled for 23 June. PM’s cabinet did not issue an official statement clarifying the exact reasons for Vucic’s decision. Chinese President Xi Jinping was in a state visit to Serbia from 17 to 19 June, where he met with Serbian high official in order to improve mutual cooperation. Chinese president said on 19 June that ”Serbia could play a significant role in Beijing’s ambitious plan for a new “Silk Road” to increase trade with Europe, Asia, and Africa”. During the visit the delegations of two states signed a 22 agreement on cooperation including: a statement on establishing a comprehensive strategic partnership, and an agreement applicable in the sectors of infrastructure, telecommunications, media and defense. On 20 June, Serbian PM Aleksandar Vucic and President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic signed a declaration on enhancing relations, the declaration contains a six point focus on minority protection, the demarcation between two countries, the fight against terrorism and the migrant crisis. The EU will not open chapters 23 and 24 in their negotiations with Serbia due to the lack of consensus between state members, Serbian media reported on 30 June. According to media reports earlier this week Croatia announced that it will block Serbia due to the ”essential” reasons, also the United Kingdom declared that, Serbia did not meet technical conditions for a chapter opening.
Global Political Trends Center (GPoT Center) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research institution established under the auspices of Istanbul Kültür University in 2009.

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