



CLOSE-UPS

June 2024



Close-ups is a Med-Or monthly update. Gathering together the daily work of our situation room, *Close-ups* covers the main events of the Broader Mediterranean countries, offering to a wide audience, not only experts, a close and analytical look at the main issues that affect all the countries that Med-Or oversees on a daily basis. On our interactive map you can click on the single countries and their specific in-depth analyses.

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Algeria

Algeria ramps up investments in the hydrocarbon sector. With a few months left before early presidential elections – which incumbent president Abdelmadjid Tebboune scheduled for next September –, **Algerian parastatal Sonatrach signed an agreement with Chevron for joint exploration of the Ahnet and Berkine basins**, hailed as “historical” by Energy minister Mohamed Arkab. The deal marks Chevron’s first true foray into the Algerian market and follows a similar deal struck by Sonatrach and ExxonMobil over Ahnet and the Gourara basins. In May, Baker Hughes had already obtained a license for Hassi R’Mel, which holds most of Algeria’s discovered hydrocarbon reserves.

US interest in the Algerian upstream – which would help secure Europe’s growing demand for North African gas – is balanced by China’s growing presence in the sector. At Shenzhen, **Sonatrach and Huawei signed a memorandum of understanding on digitalization, telecommunications, and cloud computing**. Meanwhile, **Sonatrach and Sinopec signed a new memorandum to enhance cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector**: the Chinese group operates in Algeria since 2022, when it obtained a license for the Zarzaitine site. The increase in foreign activity mirrors Algiers’ commitment to strengthen its oil and gas production, which aims to reach a target of 200 bcm within the next five years according to Arkab.

Algeria keeps up cooperation with Italy. Following Tebboune’s return from the Bari G7 summit, **Algiers and Rome announced a 420-million-euro agricultural partnership**, which will see Bonifiche Ferraresi (BF)’s Algerian subsidiary develop 36.000 ha of arable land in the Timimoun wilaya. The project – which is the largest BF has ever undertaken in Algeria – aims to boost the national wheat supply as the country’s agricultural sector, accounting for roughly 12,4% of GDP, struggles with near-permanent drought and growing import dependency. On this backdrop, the Algerian government has sought to facilitate foreign investment in the sector by granting long-term land concessions to foreign enterprises.

Finally, Algeria deepens ties with Türkiye. Following a visit to Ankara by Algerian Foreign minister Ahmed Attaf, **Türkiye’s deputy president Cevdet Yılmaz met Algerian Prime minister Nadir Larbaoui in Algiers**. Turkey and Algeria have been looking to overhaul economic cooperation: ranking among Türkiye’s main LNG suppliers, the North African country has repeatedly stated its intention to double bilateral trade from 5 to 10 billion dollars per year.



Morocco

Rabat and Washington's military partnership continues apace. **US group Collins Industries struck a 265-million-dollar deal with the Moroccan armed forces (FAR)** to supply Moroccan F16 fighters with DB and MS-110 reconnaissance systems. On the backdrop of a deal with Lockheed Martin to maintain and upgrade its aerial forces, Morocco had also bought the Viper Shield electronic system from L3 Harris last November. In April, moreover, the US Department also greenlit the kingdom's request for 40 JSOW AG154 missiles for 250 million dollars. This month, **the Pentagon notified to Congress the sale of 18 Himars rocket launchers for 524 million dollars**, which the kingdom had also requested in April through US company Raytheon.

Relations with Europe also seem to be in full swing. **Interior minister Abdelouafi Laftit met in Rabat with his Italian counterpart, Matteo Piantedosi**, to discuss migration and border security; later this month, **Italian minister of University and Research Anna Maria Bernini visited the Moroccan capital** and signed a memorandum of understanding with Moroccan counterpart Abdellatif Miraoui in the framework of the Mattei Plan for Africa. Meanwhile, the Moroccan and German Foreign ministers, Nasser Bourita and Annalena Baerbock, met in Berlin for the first Morocco-Germany Strategic Dialogue forum. A joint declaration on renewable energy and climate policy cooperation was also signed on the sidelines of the meeting, with particular attention to the development of a Moroccan green hydrogen supply chain, of which Germany is a strong advocate. Finally, **the head of Moroccan national security, Abdellatif Hammouchi, met in Paris with his French counterparts from the police forces and the external and internal security services**. Organized by France, the meetings follow a call for early elections by president Macron and likely aim to reinforce security cooperation with Morocco.

More news, finally, in the energy sector. **Türkiye and Morocco signed two agreements to expand cooperation in mining, oil, and gas and renewable energy**: the deal took place in Rabat under the auspices of the Moroccan minister for Energy transition, Leila Benali, and Turkish Energy minister Alparslan Bayraktar. Meanwhile, British group Energean announced it would divest from his assets in Italy, Croatia, and Egypt to focus on development of gas resources in Morocco. Energean, which sold his assets to Carlyle for 945 million dollars, will reportedly focus on the Anchois field, one of the few gas deposits discovered in Morocco so far.

The kingdom, however, keeps striving to diversify its energy sources. This month, **Belgian group Jan de Nul and West Australian Fortescue signed a deal to transport green hydrogen through a 1000-km undersea cable linking Morocco to Europe**. Under embargo from neighbouring Algeria – who shut off gas supplies from the Morocco-Europe pipeline in 2021 –, the kingdom aims to satisfy 52% of its energy needs through renewable sources by 2030. Morocco also aims to exploit his high solar and wind potential to synthesize hydrogen, bypassing inflationary pressures on methane gas (which is traditionally used to produce “grey” hydrogen) and reducing climate emissions in the process.



Tunisia

The country seeks to bolster its digital sector. **The Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies launched a tender for the installation of a national 5G network**, open to both domestic and foreign enterprises. Complete coverage will be achieved, according to minister of Information Nazir ben Neji, by the end of 2024. Tunis already boasts one of the most efficient telecommunications networks in Africa, with ICT services currently accounting for 7,5% of national GDP. The growth of Tunisia's ICT sector mirrors the country's status as a central node for telecommunications, with three optic-fibre cables connecting Kelibia to Sicily (Didon, Hannibal, KELTRA-2) and a tranche of the trans-Mediterranean Medusa cable set to connect Bizerte to Marseille by 2025. Moreover, Bizerte recently inaugurated a new extension of the PEACE, and SEA-ME-WE cable systems, crossing Suez to connect the Mediterranean to the Pacific Ocean. Italy has also showed interest in Tunisia's digital potential, with **minister of Entreprises and Made in Italy Adolfo Urso signing a memorandum of understanding with ben Neji** during his visit in Tunis at the end of May.

Meanwhile, **tensions in Ras Ajdir deepened ties between Tunisia and western Libya (Tripoli)**. Following a phone call between Tunisian president Kais Saied and Tripoli's Prime minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, officials from the two countries met on June 11th to discuss the implementation of custom procedures and ensure the reopening of the border crossing. The issue was at the centre of the in-person meeting between Saied and Dbeibah on the sidelines of the China-Arab States cooperation forum, which Beijing had hosted at the end of May.

News in domestic politics, finally, as **Saied announced a 7% raise of the minimum private sector salary**. The measure – which Saied announced after a meeting with minister of Social Affairs Kamel Maddouri – will enter into force by next month and will be retroactively applied up to May 2024. A new salary increase up to 7,5% is scheduled in 2025. The announcement also raises doubts due to the state of the Tunisian economy, which suffers from high public debt, unemployment, and inflationary pressures on food staples. It should be noted that Saied's statement also comes as he faces its first elections as incumbent, scheduled for October 6th, 2024.



Libya

The docking at Tobruk of two Federation warships – the frigate *Admiral Shaposhnikov* and the cruiser *Varyag* – **underscored the increase of Russian activity in eastern Libya**. Meanwhile, Italian press sources have reported the seizure of an arms shipment from the container ship MSC Arina at the port of Gioia Tauro. The ship – which was inspected by the Italian authorities on the recommendation of the United States – had reportedly departed from the port of Shenzhen carrying a shipment of Chinese Wing Loong drones bound for Benghazi to support the Libyan National Army of Khalifa Haftar.

With a formal protest addressed to the Sudanese consul in Benghazi, **the government in Sirte refuted accusations that field marshal Khalifa Haftar** – head of the Libyan National Army and *de facto* leader of eastern Libya – **is backing the rebel Rapid Support Forces of Mohamed Dagalo “Hemedti”**, who since April 2023 has been fighting general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan for control of Sudan. The widely rumoured allegations were expressed during a UN Security Council meeting by the Sudanese representative at the UN, Al-Harith Idris, who argued that documents given to the Council by the Sudanese government also proved the involvement of the United Arab Emirates on Dagalo’s side. Idris’ statement echoes those of several international observers. In the same days, **clashes occurred in southern Libya between pro-RSF militia and forces affiliated to Minni Minawi**, former Darfur strongman who currently opposes Dagalo.

Meanwhile, internal tensions surged in western Libya. **Amazigh protestors from the nearby city of Zuwara blocked the reopening of the Ras Ajdir border crossing, which had been scheduled for June 23rd after several delays**. The crossing, a strategic trade route connecting Libya and Tunisia, had been closed since last March, following clashes between the Zuwaran militias overseeing traffic and government forces sent by Tripoli’s minister of the Interior, Emad Trabelsi, to take control of the customs on the Libyan side. The renewed protests this month also saw sporadic clashes as government forces reportedly attempted to enter Zuwara. Following a new meeting between Prime minister Dabaiba and local notables, however, both **Tunisian and Libyan authorities announced the reopening of Ras Ajdir on June 1st**. During the negotiations, Dabaiba reportedly agreed to address the grievances of employees in Mellitah, the main gas plant in western Libya at a short distance from the crossing, as well as to undertake electrification and desalination projects for the benefit of the nearby coastal towns.



Egypt

Regarding the Gaza conflict, Egypt has maintained its balanced stance since the beginning. On one hand, Cairo continues to play a crucial role in facilitating negotiations between Hamas and Israel, hosting talks between the parties. On the other hand, President Al-Sisi is actively working to minimize the negative impacts of the ongoing conflict. This balanced approach has remained steadfast despite the early June crisis when two Egyptian soldiers were killed at the Rafah crossing during the onset of the Israeli offensive on the last enclave of Hamas in the Strip. Tensions were promptly defused by both sides, who announced a joint investigation to determine the facts, thereby limiting the risk of escalation. In this context, and despite limited diplomatic progress in the Hamas-Israel conflict, Cairo has remained fully focused on delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. The Egyptian Air Force, in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates Air Force, has maintained an airlift to Gaza, which has become even more crucial for delivering aid after the closure of land borders at the crossing. These borders were temporarily reopened thanks to Cairo's diplomatic efforts for children needing medical care.

As widely anticipated, the onset of summer has put pressure on the Egyptian economy. Heatwaves have caused several blackouts, which have become increasingly frequent and prolonged in the country's major urban centres. In an extraordinary press conference broadcast on national television, Prime Minister Madbouly officially apologized for the inconveniences caused by power outages, reassuring the public that the government has a plan to resolve the energy emergency by the third week of July. Madbouly also promised investments of 1.18 billion dollars to improve the efficiency of the electrical grid. Meanwhile, despite the government's reassurances, the Prime Minister's office issued an ordinance that halves the opening hours of shops and shopping centers. This measure, presented as purely precautionary, highlights the country's ongoing energy challenges. Additionally, there are growing concerns about the impact of rising temperatures on the cost of living. Despite a new decrease in inflation in May, Cairo authorities fear that the summer period, with its associated energy consumption, could lead to a new rise in inflation. The month concluded with the signing of new economic agreements between Italy and Egypt. The total value of the agreements signed between Egypt and Italian companies is close to one billion euros (920 million to be exact). These agreements are part of the new strategic partnership launched by Brussels and Cairo last March and the Italian government's Mattei Plan for new relations between Africa and Italy. The agreements cover a wide range of sectors, from sustainable mobility to financial guarantees for Italian exports.



Israel

The month of May ended with a proposal from American President Joe Biden for a plan aimed at the release of hostages and a ceasefire. After days of discussion and negotiations, the issue remained unresolved: Netanyahu remains firm on his decision not to end the war in Gaza until Hamas is destroyed, while the Palestinian Islamist movement demands the end of the war in exchange for the release of the hostages. June, however, saw a positive moment after the IDF managed to free four hostages held in the town of Nuseirat, in the center of the Gaza Strip. The intervention was made possible thanks to intelligence provided by the USA. Nonetheless, the operation did not dissipate the concern for the men and women still in the hands of Hamas and other Palestinian groups, nor did it mitigate social and governmental tensions. Throughout the month, demonstrations continued for the release of prisoners and calls for Netanyahu's resignation, often followed by arrests and excesses by the police.

Meanwhile, as threatened in May, Benny Gantz resigned from the war cabinet due to the lack of a plan for the post-Gaza period. The resignation, however, did not affect the executive, which retains the majority. There are also turbulent waters within the coalition. Netanyahu accused Itamar Ben Gvir, Minister for National Security and leader of the far-right Jewish Power party, of leaking state secrets, and members of Likud, the ultra-Orthodox parties, and the national-religious parties had heated exchanges over a law on the appointment of rabbis that was supposed to be discussed in the Knesset. Netanyahu withdrew it and urged his colleagues to "behave" and avoid partisan positions.

Tensions also exist between the Prime Minister and the IDF. The armed forces granted Rafah 11 hours of pause in combat per day to allow more humanitarian aid to enter, but it seems neither Netanyahu nor Defense Minister Gallant were aware of it and had not given the green light. Tensions between the Prime Minister and the armed forces seemed to have intensified further when IDF spokesman Daniel Hagari stated that thinking of destroying Hamas is a mistake. Netanyahu, however, clarified that it is the army's "duty" to do so, since the government ordered it. The Prime Minister also decided, after Gantz's resignation, to dissolve the war cabinet. Meanwhile, the IDF announced that it needs another 7,000 soldiers, while the combat periods for reservists are getting longer.

As a result of this situation, the Israeli Supreme Court unanimously decided that even the ultra-Orthodox must be conscripted and that yeshivas, the religious schools, will not receive government funds if their students do not comply with the decision. The nine judges of the Court declared that, amid such a difficult war, the inequality of treatment among citizens is more burdensome than ever and needs to be remedied. Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara therefore ordered the defense establishment to immediately conscript 3,000 religious school students, a number that, however, "does not fully meet the current needs of the army" and does not ensure that the burden of war is equally distributed among citizens. This is a blow for the government, whose ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism have harshly criticized the decision.

Meanwhile, concerns are growing about the risk of a total war between Israel and Hezbollah. The exchange of fire on the border between the Jewish state and Lebanon continues unabated, and in an Israeli airstrike, Taleb Abdullah, a senior commander of Hezbollah forces, was killed. The reaction was immediate. US envoy Amos Hochstein traveled to Jerusalem for talks. Although no details of the discussions have been disclosed, it is well known that the entire international community fears an escalation in the region and calls for a diplomatic solution.



Saudi Arabia

The gradual process of easing relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran continues. On Monday, June 24, the 19th Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) was held in Tehran, an event attended by representatives of over 40 Asian countries. Representing Saudi Arabia at the event was the Deputy Foreign Minister, Waleed bin Abdulkarim Al-Khuraiji that, in his speech, emphasized the need to improve coordination mechanisms among Asian countries (particularly in the Middle East) to address the challenges of energy security and food security. The Deputy Minister also highlighted Riyadh's commitment to regional cooperation regarding new technologies, especially AI, to address the challenge of climate change that threatens the security of the area.

A year ago, Riyadh and Tehran reached an agreement to restore diplomatic relations after seven years. Since then, the two countries reopened their mutual embassies, and held several high-level meetings. Although the tone of the dialogue has softened and efforts have been made to reinvigorate the economic agreements of 1998 and security agreements of 2001, no significant progress has been made in this regard. Additionally, it is worth mentioning at least two cases in the Middle East where Saudi and Iranian differences emerge: the Red Sea, where Tehran continues to support Houthi actions; and Lebanon, where Hezbollah, backed by Iran, and Israel continue to exchange fire along the Blue Line. A destabilized Middle East certainly does not serve Riyadh's interests, as it needs regional stability to advance its development projects.

On the economic side, the energy company Saudi Aramco has put up for sale a 0.64% stake in its shares through a public offering; the company aims to raise between \$11.5 billion and \$13.1 billion from the sale. The Saudi kingdom aspires to increase its capital for the realization of the ambitious Vision 2030 projects, but it has to contend with diminished oil revenues and a reduction in foreign direct investment (FDI), which in the first half of the year recorded a 40% drop compared to the same period in 2023.



Türkiye

On June 3 the Turkish Foreign Minister, Hakan Fidan, traveled to China for a three-day visit. The most significant meeting was with the Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi: the focus of the talks was Ankara's intention to join the BRICS. Fidan also met several prominent members of the Turkish business community in China; after the meeting, the minister noted that Beijing is Ankara's top trading partner in Asia and the third in the world, with a trade exchange of over \$47 billion in 2023. Finally, the Turkish minister visited Xinjiang, an autonomous region in northern China where the Uyghur minority (a Muslim, Turkic-speaking population subject to a strong Chinese assimilation campaign) resides. Türkiye is known to host a considerable number of Uyghur dissidents. On the sidelines of the visit, Fidan declared that Türkiye supports China's territorial integrity – a way to reassure Beijing that the Uyghur issue will not hinder relations between the two countries. Fidan's trip to China marked the first visit by a senior Turkish official since 2012, when Erdoğan went to the country.

On June 17, Fidan also met in Ankara the Somali President, Hassan Sheikh. Although details on the visit were not disclosed, the presence of the Somali Defense Minister, Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur, suggests that the focus of the talks was on security issues, such as Ethiopian pressures for access to the Red Sea and the fight against Al-Shabaab. This was the fourth high-level meeting between representatives of the two countries in 2024; particularly noteworthy is the February meeting, when an agreement on maritime security was signed, establishing that Türkiye will rebuild and equip the Somali navy, receiving in return 30% of the profits from the exploitation of Mogadishu's exclusive economic zone. Shortly after the conclusion of the agreement, the two countries signed another deal in the energy sector, identifying Ankara as a partner for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons off the Somali coast. It is worth noting that Erdoğan supported Somalia during one of the most challenging periods in its recent history, during the famine of 2011-2012, when the African country felt largely abandoned by the international community.

Lebanon

The exchange of fire between Israeli forces and Hezbollah continues and the Shiite movement, “in support of their Palestinian brothers”, strikes Israeli communities and outposts daily; the IDF’s counterattacks are always timely. To date, the skirmishes on the border have caused the deaths of 10 civilians and 15 Israeli soldiers, as well as the displacement of thousands of people. About 340 Hezbollah militants, 62 from other terrorist groups, and dozens of Lebanese civilians have been killed. In this dangerous scenario of possible escalation, on June 11, the Israeli armed forces launched an airstrike in southern Lebanon, killing Taleb Abdullah, a senior Hezbollah commander. He is the most important member of the group eliminated by Israel in these eight months of hostilities. In response to the Israeli raid, the Shiite movement launched more than 200 rockets and numerous missiles across the border, the most massive attack launched during this period against Israel, promising to intensify the offensive. Abdullah’s killing has only exacerbated the already tense relations between the two parties. Several times, the Israeli government and the IDF have stated they are ready to intervene forcefully in Lebanon. The danger of the conflict spreading to the Land of the Cedars from Gaza is one of the main causes of concern for the countries of the region and the entire international community. During his recent trip to the Middle East, US Secretary of State Blinken stated that “no one is looking to start a war and that many believe that following the path of diplomacy is the best way to resolve the issue”. Nonetheless, mutual threats between Israel and Hezbollah continued throughout the month. Hezbollah leader Nasrallah warned the Jewish state that, in case of war, its entire territory would be hit. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, during a visit to the United States, stated that his country could bring Lebanon back to the Stone Age, although it does not want to. And no one wants a total war between the Jewish state and the Land of the Cedars, although the tones between the contenders suggest otherwise. The international community does not want it, so concerned that Germany, the Netherlands, and Canada have advised their citizens to leave Lebanon. The UN does not want it, declaring that the conflict would be an apocalypse. The USA certainly does not want it, fearing more direct involvement from Iran and the failure of Israel’s Iron Dome if there were to be a high-intensity attack from Lebanon. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told his Israeli counterpart Gallant that another war with Hezbollah could have terrible consequences for the Middle East and reiterated the importance of a diplomatic solution. Lebanese politicians are also concerned. Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces Party, the largest in parliament, stated that the Shiite movement, backed by Iran, is leading the country into dangerous territory and that the government has abandoned the nation. He also added that the conflict in southern Lebanon is not only connected to the war in Gaza because, due to Hezbollah’s ties, the country is now “entangled” in the Red Sea, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, in Iraq and Syria. Meanwhile, the Arab League declares it no longer considers Hezbollah a terrorist group and is preparing to resume contacts with the Shiite group.

Sahel

Burkina Faso is increasingly plagued by instability and internal tensions. The month began with reports of the first defections from the pro-government militias, the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland, and ended with the resurgence of tensions between the armed forces and the transitional government. Despite the support of Russian mercenaries and a significant increase in military spending over the past year, Burkinabé security forces have not yet managed to reverse the conflict's momentum. The massacre in Mansila at the beginning of the month further highlighted this grim reality. Following the killing of a hundred servicemen stationed at the Mansila outpost, the government took precautionary measures by imposing a new crackdown on French media, suspending broadcasts of France24 for a month. However, this censorship failed to quell the discontent, with Burkinabé barracks once again in revolt, accusing the government of incompetence at best and corruption at worst. In response, President Traoré has sought assistance from allies in Russia and Mali. A mixed contingent of Malian troops and members of the Africa Corps arrived in Ouagadougou at the end of the month to support the transitional government, with President Traoré currently in a secret and safe location.

Simultaneously, the government of Niger is on a collision course with neighboring countries. Following last month's Chinese mediation, tensions between Niamey and Porto-Novo regarding the Niger-Benin pipeline have returned. Beninese security forces arrested five Nigerien citizens, later revealed to be members of Niamey's security forces, accused of illegally entering the north of Benin to conduct sabotage acts against the infrastructure. Legal proceedings against the remaining prisoners continue despite the release of two detainees. Meanwhile, to galvanize public opinion – which is increasingly critical of the government's economic management – the Niamey government has revoked the license granted to the French parastatal Orano for managing the mega-mining plant in Imouraren. This long-anticipated measure, officially justified by the Nigerien government due to plant production delays, has sparked controversy. Orano warns against the negative effects on the country and region's economic development resulting from the plant's confiscation. At the same time, the junta celebrates the action "as a defense of the people's will".

Horn of Africa

In the context of the war in Sudan, General Hemedti's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have tightened their grip on El-Fasher. As capital of Western Darfur, this city holds significant strategic and symbolic importance in the ongoing conflict. Strategically, El-Fasher represents the last stronghold in the region still under the control of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Its capture would grant Hemedti's paramilitary forces control over the entire region, potentially allowing them to establish an autonomous geopolitical entity. According to some sources, seizing the region would also strengthen the RSF's logistics chain, securing supply lines from eastern Libya and Chad.

Symbolically, El-Fasher was the epicenter of the Darfur genocide, and the international community fears that its recapture could lead to renewed ethnic cleansing. The RSF's tactics in their bid to take the city leave little doubt in this regard. Bombardments of healthcare facilities have become constant, and the suffering of the civilian population has prompted the UN Security Council to pass a resolution calling for a humanitarian ceasefire amid the offensive. Despite the dire news from El-Fasher, the regular armed forces do not appear to be focusing their efforts on retaking Darfur at the moment. Instead, the SAF continues to mobilize the bulk of its men and equipment towards the city of Omdurman, the main route to recapturing the capital, Khartoum. Al-Burhan's plans hinge on this move to ensure the total recognition of the Sovereign Council as the only legitimate government of the country. In this context, the regular forces aim to capitalize on the Russian arms supplies expected to arrive at Port Sudan in the coming weeks, following an agreement with Moscow for the use of a port on the Red Sea. Meanwhile, the UN has officially recognized Sudan as an area affected by a major food crisis.

June also saw significant protests in Kenya. After weeks of demonstrations against the government of William Ruto, the toll includes more than 200 arrests, 24 deaths, and dozens of injuries. The protests, led by Kenyan Gen Z, called for the cancellation of the financial bill proposed by Ruto's government, which included substantial tax increases, including those on fuel and digital transactions. The demonstrations culminated in an assault on the Kenyan parliament on June 25, when protesters broke through police security and occupied parts of the building for several hours before being evicted. The protests were met with widespread violence by law enforcement, who in some cases opened fire on the crowd, drawing harsh condemnation from the international community.

In this context, the Kenyan judiciary has taken a stand against the use of force by the police, opening several investigations into the security forces. In response to the protests, Ruto initially sought to calm the situation by acknowledging the reasons behind the demonstrations and expressing his willingness to work with his opponents. However, he later described the protesters as wealthy, bored youths or even criminals. The president then deployed the army to defend key state buildings, while the international community, led by the USA, pressured the government to stop the violent repression of the protests and listen to the people's grievances. Ruto eventually withdrew the financial bill, leaving the public finance dilemma unresolved. Given the current state of Kenya's finances, the government will need to find additional liquidity for the treasury, a crucial prerequisite for unlocking International Monetary Fund aid. Meanwhile, the mobilization continues, with protesters, emboldened by the withdrawal of the budget bill, now calling for the president's resignation.

India

The month of June opened in India with the publication of the results of the elections of the Lokh Saba, the Lower House (or House of the People). The electoral process, which lasted a month and a half, brought almost a billion citizens to the polls to elect the 543 Members of Parliament.

There were two major contenders: the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), an alliance among the major Bharatya Janata Party and various regional parties, and the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), which brought together almost all the opposition parties, mostly center-left/left (including 3 national parties, the Indian National Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party and the Communist Party of India and over 20 parties representing the various states).

The results of the vote confirmed the victory of the ruling alliance, which gained 293 seats. The BJP, the coalition's hegemonic party, emerged victorious from elections, but it did not independently reach a relative majority of seats, and therefore needs, for the first time in 10 years, MPs from allied parties to govern.

The new government took office in the days immediately following the count, confirming most of the Ministers, especially those in key positions (Interior, Foreign Affairs, Defense, Finance, Trade). The swearing-in ceremony was attended by the Heads of State and Government of neighboring countries (with the obvious exception of Pakistan), confirming the "Neighborhood First" policy of Indian foreign policy – a strategy also witnessed by the fact that the first State visit to India after the inauguration of the new Modi government was carried out on 21 and 22 June by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Asina.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first visit abroad after the elections was to attend, on 13 and 14 June, the G7 Outreach Summit in Borgo Egnazia, at the invitation of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. Among the bilateral meetings, those with President Meloni, and with the leaders of France, Great Britain, Japan and Ukraine were significant. During the summit, Modi discussed AI, among other things, and renewed his commitment to prioritise the Global South, and Africa in particular, recalling that during India's Presidency, the African Union became a permanent member of the G20.

In the meeting with Giorgia Meloni, Modi emphasized the relations between Italy and India in the framework of the Strategic Partnership. Both called for the development of collaborations on topics such as clean energy, manufacturing, space, science and technology, telecommunications, artificial intelligence and critical minerals. Further discussions were made on defence and security and a wish was expressed to strengthen cooperation in the field of defence industry.

On the domestic front, the Vadnavan Port project, a massive infrastructure on the Arabian Sea in the north of the state of Maharashtra, was approved during the month; expected to be finished in 2039, it will be built in two phases. The port is of double interest to Indians: it will serve as the main hub for the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and will be crucial for the International North South Transportation Corridor (INSTC), promoting the movement of goods to the port of Chabahar in Iran (managed by India following the agreement signed last May), which has a strategic value as it is a vital artery for commercial traffic to Afghanistan, Central Asia, Russia and Europe.

On the domestic policy front, the appointment of Rahul Gandhi, heir to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, as leader of the opposition, should be highlighted. This role is only granted to the party that has reached 10% of the MPs, a situation that had not occurred in the past 10 years.