

*JUNE 04 - 10, 2018 – ISSUE 29*



**Hermes Institute of  
International Affairs,  
Security & Geoeconomy**

# ***SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AT A GLANCE***



***SOUTHEAST EUROPE DIRECTORATE***

***PROVIDING KNOWLEDGE TO THOSE WHO SHAPE THE FUTURE***

“SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AT A GLANCE” is a weekly review of the most significant current political, economic, energy, defense, and security news of Southeastern Europe. It covers 14 countries; Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Greece, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey. However Greece enjoys its own weekly review for a more detailed presentation of its current affairs (GREECE AT A GLANCE).

This ambitious newsletter aspires to become an informative “tool” for anyone who is interested in the region and wishes to have knowledge of the non-stop current developments and challenges. “HERMES” Institute is not a news agency and it is not one of its ambitions to become one but it is strongly believed that today’s events provide the necessary material to understand the future and to analyze situations that may affect in peace, stability, and growth of the region.

### **“HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE**

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**ALBANIA:** June 5<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria Boyko Borisov announced that a coordination center for former ISIS fighters returning to the Balkans will be built in Albania. His statement was made in a joint press conference with the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama in the context of a conference against violent extremism, which took place in Tirana with the support of the King of Jordan Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein. The Bulgarian Prime Minister added that he had *“Proposed that every country should send a liaison officer so that the joint fight will be more organized.”* Neither Prime Minister offered additional details, such as who is pushing this plan or with whom it is being negotiated. This vagueness generated criticism that Rama had not only failed to consult with the Parliament on this matter of grave importance to his country but perhaps he himself was not fully consulted. The former Prime Minister Sali Berisha reacted against such plans claiming *“The news that Rama has accepted the establishment of a camp for all those returned from the ISIS terrorist group was made public by the Bulgarian Prime Minister Borisov. By this plan, Rama has two goals: To cover his links with crime and drugs, capture of justice, and trafficking of terrorists to Italy by Albanian mafia directly linked with him.”* Berisha urged the EU states to reject Rama’s *“hypocritical proposal”* which creates enormous problems to the country. (www.albaniannews.com, www.exit.al)

- June 7<sup>th</sup>, the company Transoil Group AG, whose shareholders include Russian company Gazprom Neft and Serbian company NIS, has won the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy tender for the use of the oil deposits found in the south of the country. Transoil Group is registered

in Switzerland and its owners are yet unknown. Its Albanian branch is run by Shefqet Dizdari and has business ties to Gazprom Neft, owned by the Russian Gazprom. 50.23% of Gazprom’s shares are currently controlled by the Russian government. Transoil Group AG was founded in 2011 in the Swiss canton of Zug, and operates in Russia, Belarus, and Tirana. It is the full owner of Transoil Group Sh.a., an Albanian company that has been using the oil field of Visoka since 2011, via an oil agreement with Albpetrol. In February 2018, Albpetrol opened the tender bidding process for the use of three oil fields, Cakran-Mollaj, Gorisht-Cokul and Amonica. There were nine bidders participating in the tender including Bankers Petroleum, Transoil Group AG, Shandong Kerui Petroleum Equipment, Letho, Verssa Versatile, Pennine, Alcan, Fluid Oil and Zennith Energy. Pennine and Zennith Energy were disqualified as they failed to pay the 6500 dollars per oil deposit fee, demanded by Albpetrol. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 via order no. 495, Minister Damian Gjiknuri announced that Transoil Group AG won the tender and formed a negotiation team to sign the oil agreement with the company. However the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) raised questions over the legitimacy and transparency of the tender procedure. (www.exit.al, www.reporter.al)

- June 10<sup>th</sup>, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) released its 2018 European Drug Report. Although the newly-published report does not include Albania, focusing instead on EU Member States, Laurent Laniel scientific analyst for drug supply reduction in an interview to the Albanian *“Monitor”* confirmed that for third time in a row, Albania remains the main source of the cannabis that is then trafficked throughout the EU. Laniel said

*“Albania remains a source of cannabis that is brought into and consumed in the EU, and this is a certainty. Two years ago, according to Albanian and Italian authorities, cannabis cultivation in Albania had decreased significantly, however it seems to have made a comeback last year, going off of the cannabis plants (and other products) that were seized in Albania. In the previous year 75 tonnes of cannabis were seized in Albania, and this is no small amount. It would take a miracle for all this to go away within a single year.”* Meanwhile, the report stresses that Western Balkans countries are especially important, not only as cannabis producers, but also as gateways for cocaine and heroin. The two main pathways drugs traverse to reach the EU are: Turkey-Bulgaria-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-Albania, and Turkey-Bulgaria-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-Kosovo-Albania. Albania, as part of the southern Balkans gateway, plays an important part in both of them. The annual EMCDDA country drug report for Albania is expected to be published at the end of the year. ([www.exit.al](http://www.exit.al), [www.monitor.al](http://www.monitor.al))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*The Albanian Government tries to accelerate its reforms towards the European integration. However a lot must be done while the EU is closely monitoring situation. Corruption and organized crime remain the most significant problems of the state. Security situation stable without major incidents or challenges.*



**BOSNIA &**

**HERZEGOVINA:** June 7<sup>th</sup>, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia &

Herzegovina (B&H) Denis Zvizdic was met with the Minister of Security of B&H Dragan Mektic, the Minister for Human Rights and Refugees Semi Borovac, the Prime Minister of the Una-Sana Canton Husein Rosic, the FB&H Prime Minister Fadil Novalic and the Mayor of Bihac Suhret Fazlic on the subject of an increased number of migrants in the Una-Sana Canton (Unsko-sanski kanton – USK) area. Zvizdic said *“We will continue to act in accordance with current domestic laws and asylum procedures. We will continue to strengthen and secure our borders towards eastern neighbors from where migrants come to prevent any illegal crossings. In recent days, one or two illegal crossings have opened. Police officers from Brcko and Republika Srpska secured today these crossings and we will keep the border under full control.”* He pointed out that the focus areas of the migrants are Sarajevo and Una-Sana Canton. Zvizdic focused on the necessary infrastructure for refugees especially in Bihac and Velika Kladusa in order to provide assistance to the immigrants and maintain public order and peace. He underlined that *“We will treat refugees according to human values, but we will monitor the situation in the region...but B&H will not become a collection center for migrants in the Balkans. Our priority is the security of B&H citizens, public order and peace, but also the human aspects of health care, housing and food for migrants.”* ([www.klix.ba](http://www.klix.ba))

- June 8<sup>th</sup>, Bosnia & Herzegovina's (B&H) main Croatian party, the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine – HDZ BiH) elected its President Dragan Covic as the candidate for member of B&H tripartite Presidency at the upcoming general election on Friday in Vitez, a city some 75 kilometers northwest of Sarajevo. Covic who

was proposed for the candidacy unanimously said *“I will work primarily to strengthen position of Croatian people as constituent element of the state and for HDZ BiH to remain a force that can lead B&H on its European path.”* Moreover he expressed his hope that B&H will achieve its accession to the EU next year. The Central Electoral Commission (CIK) announced earlier this month that the state’s general election will be held on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

- June 8<sup>th</sup>, Britain will send about 40 military personnel to join an EU-NATO mission in Bosnia & Herzegovina (B&H) to help prevent Russian meddling in the coming presidential and parliamentary election in October 2018, the Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson announced today. The announcement was made during a meeting of NATO Defense Ministers in Brussels and according to comments released in advance by the Ministry of Defense the move demonstrates the important role played by the UK in European security. *“This deployment demonstrates our commitment to making sure the elections in Bosnia are free and fair — and take place uninterrupted from malign external influence,”* the Defense Secretary said avoiding to name Russia and adding that *“Our Armed Forces are playing a leading role in protecting the stability, prosperity and way of life for millions of people in the Western Balkans and across Europe.”* The troops will contribute to a *“specialist surveillance and intelligence task force”* comprised of EU and NATO allies that will cover the run-up to the election,” the Ministry of Defense said. They will be in the Western Balkans for six months as part of the 600-strong European Union Force mission called Operation “ALTHEA” and commanded by NATO. The

deployment will be a marked increase to the UK contribution to the mission of only four officers at present. (www.thetimes.co.uk)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Country faces several functional and institutional problems. Consequently political fragility maintains permanent uncertainty and institutional mistrust. The state’s road towards its Euro-atlantic integration is full of obstacles and opening of negotiation talks with the EU should not be expected earlier than 2022. RS rhetoric for greater autonomy remains active. Security situation stable; no major threats.*



**BULGARIA:** June 7<sup>th</sup>,

construction of Belene Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) comes back in the forefront since the Parliament approved a motion in giving the Government a mandate to hold talks with potential investors in the shelved project. The Cabinet was also given a deadline until October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 to prepare an international tender for a strategic investor in the project. The MPs backed the cabinet’s view that any future investor in BNPP would have to agree that the plant is built without any state guarantees to finance the project or long-term electricity purchase contracts. The Energy Committee of the state announced that four companies expressed their interest for the project naming the Chinese National Nuclear Corporation, CNNC, the Russian Rosatom and the French Framatome reactor business. However the Committee avoided to name the fourth company. According to Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov BNPP will only be constructed if it attracts a strategic investor and if it abides by market principles. Moratorium on the

construction of the plant was imposed by Borissov's first cabinet in March 2012 and confirmed by the Parliament in February 2013. ([www.balkaninsight.com](http://www.balkaninsight.com), [www.sofiaglobe.com](http://www.sofiaglobe.com))

- June 8<sup>th</sup>, the Bulgarian Parliament has approved two high priority modernization projects of the Armed Forces. The first one is about enhancing operational capabilities of infantry and it will be completed in two phases. Phase one foresees purchase of 150 armored vehicles for the equipment of three infantry Battalions while phase two includes additional systems and equipment, as well as training for the infantry force. Time schedule for realization is 12 years and the estimated cost is about 748 million Euros. The Parliament also approved modernization of Bulgarian Air Force by deciding acquisition of 16 fighter jets in two phases too. According to phase one it is planned to be purchased no less than eight jets with estimated cost of 920 million Euros. Package also includes ground handling, training, and three-year initial integrated logistics support. ([www.novinite.com](http://www.novinite.com))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Bulgaria tries to have an active and constructive role in the context of the EU Presidency promoting various initiatives and policies in various topics (Cyber-security, air – marine transport, EU electoral law etc). Modernization of its Armed Forces according to the NATO standards is a state's top priority policy. Security situation stable; no major threats.*



**CROATIA:** June 4<sup>th</sup>, initiative of a conservative group called “People Decide” for conducting a referendum regarding state's electoral system raises questions and disputes in

Croatia. The campaigners aim at reducing Parliament seats from 150 to 120, increasing voters' options to choose specific candidates from party lists at elections, and restricting minority MPs' voting rights. The initiative has gathered 370,000 signatures which represent 10% of the electorate body allowing them to submit its referendum proposal. After this, the Constitutional Court has 30 days to decide whether the questions in the proposed referendum are in line with the Croatian Constitution. The President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic offered its support to the initiative stating “*the will of the people must be respected.*” On the other hand the Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic has said that the referendum questions are irresponsible. “*This kind of encroachment on the rights of minorities is for me, as the leader of the Croatian Democratic Union and the Croatian Government, completely unacceptable,*” Plenkovic said. Croatian Serb leader Milorad Pupovac said that the Serbian community and his Independent Democratic Serb Party (Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka – SDSS) believe questions of the referendum aim at reducing the rights which enjoy ethnic minorities in the country and segregating parliamentary members of ethnic minorities from the other MPs. ([www.balkaninsight.com](http://www.balkaninsight.com), [www.total-croatia-news.com](http://www.total-croatia-news.com))

- June 5<sup>th</sup>, the Croatian Journalists' Association (HND) strongly condemned threats expressed by the Minister of War Veterans Tomo Medved against the Index News portal reporter Vojislav Mazzocco. HND stated through a press release that such threats represent a dangerous attack against journalists' rights and media freedom which are guaranteed by the Constitution and Media Act. The Association added that threats

against journalists who just do their job (and in this case questioning the way a Minister's son was employed by a state-run company) could not be tolerated. According to Index News portal since Mazzocco published his article about Medved's son, the Minister called him and threatened him; *"If you continue to mention my son it might awaken my military spirit"* is according to the journalist the words Medved used against him. Furthermore it is claimed that the Minister threatened Mazzocco that he will release alleged documents in the possession of his Ministry that would allegedly compromise the reporter. HND speaks about inclination of the Minister to abuse his position for private interests asking from the Government and all relevant institutions to condemn the incident. Medved published a press release claiming he was sorry to see his conversation with Mazzocco to be perceived by his interlocutor as an attempt to intimidate him and adamantly rejected the interpretation of the conversation as a threat against the journalist. (www.total-croatia-news.com)



Croatian Minister of War Veterans Tomo Medved  
(Photo source: www.vlada.gov.hr)

- June 9<sup>th</sup>, The Croatian Ministry of Defense announced that the Croatian Minister of Defense Damir Krsticevic and his British colleague Gavin Williamson confirmed following talks on the margins of a NATO meeting in Brussels that the

two countries will continue to strengthen defense cooperation. The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the growing cooperation between the countries' armed forces and agreed on concrete steps in further strengthening that cooperation on a strategic basis. It was agreed that expert teams from the two Ministries will develop concrete proposals for further cooperation by October 2018 which will be decided by the Defense Ministers from both countries during their next bilateral meeting, which is planned to be held in Croatia. According to the Croatian Ministry of Defense, at the beginning of 2017 Croatia and the United Kingdom signed an agreement of understanding, after which stronger defense cooperation between the two countries began. Thus a few months ago the Croatian Army conducted an exercise with members of the Royal Marines from the United Kingdom's Armed Forces, while cooperation also took place between the Navies and Air Forces of both countries. Secretary of State for Defense Gavin Williamson pointed out the progress of Croatia as a positive sign for Southeast European countries and expressed an interest for the experiences of the Republic of Croatia in the process of increasing security and stability in the region. (www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr )

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*Initiatives and actions against ethnic minorities' rights and freedom of media may increase tension regarding co-existence of people and human rights. Border dispute on Piran Bay remains active but no concrete actions and initiatives are expected due to political instability in Slovenia. Security and political situation stable.*





## **CYPRUS:** June 5<sup>th</sup>, Stephane

Dujarric, Spokesperson for the United Nations announced that the UN will not propose an envoy, mediator or a negotiator between parties for Cyprus if both parties do not agree to that person. The UN official said he was not going to “*get into whatever discussions*” relating to a UN attempt to send an envoy to Cyprus. The press remark referred to Jean-Marie Guehenno who was rejected on the grounds that he hails from an EU member state. The spokesman was asked whether the UN accept that one of the parties of interest in the Cyprus question now determines that EU members cannot be envoys. However, he said it is “*an obvious answer that the UN will not propose an envoy or a mediator or a negotiator between parties if both parties don’t agree to that person. But on Mr. Guehenno, I have no specific comment,*” adding that every case is looked at. Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci have given their consent to the request submitted by the UN, for Jane Holl Lute to be sent as Antonio Guterres’ personal envoy for exploratory meetings with the two leaders and the three guarantor powers. The UK and Greece, two of the three guarantor powers (the third being Turkey), have also agreed to Lute’s appointment. ([www.cyprustimes.com](http://www.cyprustimes.com))

- June 6<sup>th</sup>, a US State Department official said the harassment of drilling vessels by Turkey inside Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) would not go unnoticed, as he reiterated his country’s support for a bizonal federation as the form of the island’s reunification. “*I think what we have to do on Cyprus specifically, and I was just there recently meeting with leaders on both sides of the island, is to remain engaged in the process towards a bizonal, bicomunal federation, that*

*remains a priority, we’re very actively involved there, and I will be going back there this fall,*” said Wess Mitchell, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. Mitchell was also asked about the heightened tension in the area due to Ankara’s refusal to recognize Cyprus’ right to carry out hydrocarbon exploration within its EEZ. “*We’ve been clear in our messaging with Turkish officials that harassment of drilling vessels in the Cyprus EEZ is not something that we will allow to go unnoticed or not speak up about,*” Mitchell said. His comments were welcomed by the Government in Cyprus, with spokesman Prodromos Prodromou saying the message Mitchell sent out was “*very important.*” Meanwhile, media in the north reported that the Turkish drillship FATIH, formerly DeepSea Metro II, had arrived at Antalya in Turkey with the intention of heading at some point soon for the Eastern Mediterranean to begin deep-sea drilling, possibly close to or inside Cyprus’ EEZ. The reports said FATIH would likely begin its first drilling mission at the end of the summer just as US giants ExxonMobil are due to drill around October in block 10 of the EEZ, though this is one block Turkey does not lay any claim to. Prodromou said they were willing to restart negotiations from where they left off in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, after the elections in Turkey are over. ([www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com))

- June 8<sup>th</sup>, a delegation from the US energy giant ExxonMobil led by the company’s Vice-President for Europe, Russia, Asia, the Pacific and the Middle East, Tristan Asprey was in Cyprus for talks with the Government. According to the Energy Minister George Lakkotrypīs, speaking on the sidelines of the casino groundbreaking ceremony in Limassol, the delegation met with Foreign Minister Nicos Christodoulides in the

morning, which was followed by a meeting with the energy ministry in Nicosia. Lakkotrypīs said the sides were discussing the forthcoming drilling in Cyprus' EEZ which, as planned, would commence in the fourth quarter of 2018, he said. *"Two drills are planned or one after the other in block 10, and the geological, geophysical studies that were necessary were completed recently,"* he added. The Minister said block 10 had resulted in the biggest participation in the third licensing round, *"so we have expectations."* (www.cyprus-mail.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*There is much activity over energy issues. Cyprus promotes drills in its EEZ while Turkey is ready to react if it assesses that its EEZ (or the Turkish Cypriot EEZ) is violated by the Cypriots. Tension may rise significantly if Turkey begins its own drills in the region and especially if it takes action within the Cypriot EEZ. The US has sent a strong message to Turkey to avoid any aggressive action against drills but did not hesitate to underline that it seeks a solution of bizonal bicomunal federation. Talks may start soon after the Turkish elections.*



**F.Y.R.O.M:** June 4<sup>th</sup>, four Ministers newly elected by the Parliament took their posts in the Government. Arber Ademi (Democratic Union of Integration – DUI) took over as Minister of Education and Science from Renata Deskoska (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia – SDSM), who is now the Minister of Justice following resignation of Bilen Saliji. Asaf Ademi (Besa Movement) took the post of Minister of Culture from Robert Alagjovzovski. Finally Bardul Dauti (Democratic Party of

Albanians – DPA) took over as Minister without portfolio. Moreover the Parliament appointed four Deputy Ministers; Asim Musa as Deputy Minister of Health, Andrej Zernovski as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gonul Bajraktar as Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Policy, and Sadik Beqiri as Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications. This is the first government reshuffle since Prime Minister Zoran Zaev was elected in April 2017, aiming at strengthening its power in the Parliament. Two small Albanian parties; BESA Movement (Движение на Беса) and Democratic Party of Albanians (Демократска партија на Албанците – DPA) entered the Government supporting Zoran Zaev's fragile Government. (www.mia.mk)

- June 5<sup>th</sup>, F.Y.R.O.M's Prime Minister Zoran Zaev urged once again the state's President Gjorge Ivanov to sign the Law on the Use of Languages. Zaev told reporters that he has tried to convince the President during several meetings to sign the law, since the Parliament is blocked from further action so far. *"The President can decide whether he wishes, and for whatever law, to use the so-called 'pocket veto'. This is not a functional democracy and the responsibility is too big,"* Zaev said. According to Zaev, competent institutions such as the Constitutional Court and the Venice Commission should be consulted as well. *"Constitutional Court says what is constitutional and what is not. If there is something problematic it can be changed,"* Zaev said. The Law on Use of Languages would extend the official use of Albanian language to the entire country implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement, signed 17 years ago by Slavomacedonians and ethnic Albanians of the country. (www.mia.mk)

- June 7<sup>th</sup>, F.Y.R.O.M's Prime Minister Zoran Zaev has stated that the "name" dispute between his country and Greece would be resolved very soon. However he claimed that he does not know when he is going to call his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras in order to forward the process. "Maybe Skopje will call Athens and I hope it will happen very soon," Zaev said. He underlined that "Any agreement should be sustainable and permanent securing 100% the future generations." Zaev said to reporters that he remains optimistic although it is a difficult and sensitive issue. The Prime Minister wished he could call Tsipras as early as tomorrow but "There is time until the European Council summit scheduled for June 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018, preceded by the summit of Ministers on June 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. These dates could be considered as deadlines and because of these deadlines the name dispute should be resolved anytime soon." (www.mia.mk)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*The Prime Minister Zaev is headed of a fragile majority in the Parliament which sets obstacles in his efforts to implement political initiatives. However he develops flexible political maneuvers aiming at strengthening his governance and political power. Apart from that cooperation with the President Ivanov is rather problematic and in fact Ivanov works as an insurmountable obstacle against Zaev policies. It seems that an agreement between F.Y.R.O.M and Greece is close accelerating state's Euro-Atlantic process. But is a big question how Zaev will handle any agreement with Greece not only in the Parliament but also with the President (given he would be against any agreement with Greece). Taking into consideration the current situation neither*

*political stability, nor national cohesion should be taken for granted.*



**GREECE:** June 4<sup>th</sup>, All eight Turkish Officers and Non-Commission Officers held in custody after arriving in Greece aboard a Turkish military helicopter – due to the unsuccessful July 2016 coup in the neighboring country - have been released, given that the 18-month temporary pre-trial incarceration period has expired. According to the Greek law eighteen months is the maximum someone can be held in pretrial detention in the country. All eight Turkish nationals will be hosted at an undisclosed residence in the greater Athens area and under tight security, amid fears of their possible abduction. Turkish reporters pounced on the development, as most pro-government and pro-AKP media in the neighboring country accuse the eight of being directly involved in the 2016 military coup attempt. One of the eight militaries has already been granted political asylum by Greece's highest administrative court, which rejected the latest motion by the Greek Government to block the request. (www.naftemporiki.gr, www.ekathimerini.com)

- June 4<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>, members of the anarchist group "Rouvikonas" (Roubicon) intensified their actions against the state's infrastructure and private sector struggling for the release of the convicted "November 17" (N17) terrorist organization's assassin Demetrios Koufontinas. Koufontinas, who is serving 11 life sentences for his role in the N17, went on hunger strike demanding regular furloughs and the abolition of the Supreme Court prosecutor's veto power over his requests for prison leave. On June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018 members of the group burst into the offices of the General

Secretariat for Trade in central Athens. In a second attack in one day, members of the anarchist group barged into the Athens office of Dimitris Kaliambakos, a professor at the National Technical University of Athens. In a statement posted on an anarchist website, the group expressed its opposition to oil exploration in Epirus, a subject on which Kaliambakos has spoken on extensively in public. On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 members of the group invaded in the office of Miltiades Varvitsiotis, MP of the main opposition party New Democracy (Νέα Δημοκρατία - ND). The masked individuals wrote slogans on walls and threw pamphlets in demand for a furlough for Koufodinas. In the meanwhile the same day a group of “*anti-establishment assailants*” has claimed responsibility for June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 firebomb attack in Thessaloniki, northern Greece, against a riot police unit van guarding the Turkish Consulate which put the lives of some 20 officers at risk. On June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Police officers holding banners protested against what they called “murderous attacks” against their colleagues and accused the state of “indifference” claiming that since 2010, riot Police units guarding the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki have been attacked at least 17 times without anyone ever getting arrested. Following the attacks by anarchists in Athens and Thessaloniki opposition ND accused the left-led Government for failing to curb an upsurge of violence and lawlessness in the country. In a statement ND attacked the Government for “*downplaying – or, worse even, fomenting – the activity of [anarchist] groups in universities and all sorts of no-go areas.*” Leader of ND Kyriakos Mitsotakis said the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras was personally responsible for the situation. (www.naftemporiki.gr, www.ekathimerini.com)

- June 10<sup>th</sup> Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M) are in a race against time to complete the negotiations over the latter’s name before the coming European Union summit at the end of the month, with Greek Government spokesman Dimitris Tzanakopoulos saying that he is confident of a positive outcome. In an interview with “Nea Selida” newspaper, Tzanakopoulos said Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias have secured all the necessary safeguards to ensure that Skopje will implement everything it agrees to. According to reports, 95 percent of the negotiations have been completed and only a few details, albeit significant ones, remain before a final agreement is clinched. If everything goes as planned, the deal will be put to a Parliament vote in Skopje before the EU summit. It will then be put to a referendum, most likely in September 2018. If Parliament approves it, then Athens, as part of the agreement reached so far between the two sides, will send a letter to the EU and NATO to “unblock” Skopje’s accession course to the EU and NATO. If the deal is approved in September’s referendum then the way will be paved for the revision of FYROM’s constitution – a key Greek demand. If the referendum has a negative outcome then the deal between Athens and Skopje will collapse. (www.ekathimerini.com, www.neaselida.gr)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Greece is almost reached an agreement with F.Y.R.O.M regarding the “name” dispute amid strong public reactions by the citizens. It is assessed that a possible announcement of the agreement will raise public tension testing cohesion of the governmental coalition which may lead to political developments. Although Turkey*

*faces its coming elections it keeps on “low level” tension in the Aegean Sea (violation of F.I.R and/or territorial sea by fighter jets and navy or coast guard vessels respectively), while release of eight Turk officers is also an issue of tension between the two countries.*



**KOSOVO:** June 4<sup>th</sup>, the Parliament of Kosovo has decided to postpone a debate on dialogue with Serbia. MPs were expected to debate and vote today a Government’s platform on the final phase of the dialogue with Serbia which gives President Hashim Thaci a leading role in the dialogue. The Government’s proposal for mandating President Hashim Thaci as chief negotiator in the final phase of the dialogue with Serbia is being opposed by the opposition parties. The Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës – LDK) in a press release announced that the Government’s platform is “*not serious*” and its MPs will not support it. The Self-Determination (Vetevendosje) claimed that the President has no competencies to lead the dialogue with Serbia and ask establishment of a Parliamentary commission on assessment of all agreements reached with Serbia so far. The Social Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Socialdemokratike e Kosovës – PSD) representatives stated that they will not support any Government’s plan on dialogue with Serbia which disregards the Parliament. As a consequence the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, Skender Recica, on behalf of the Government has proposed on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 a motion on withdrawing the platform on dialogue with Serbia, in order as he said “*On behalf of the Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj I ask for your understanding to withdraw the platform on finalization of the dialogue between Kosovo and*

*Serbia on normalization of relations between the two countries, proceeded at the Parliament on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 in order to give more time in building a national consensus and to further continue consultations,”* said Recica in the Parliament. ([www.gazetaexpress.com](http://www.gazetaexpress.com))

- June 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>, Kosovo Parliament has voted a resolution on unification of customs with Albania. The vote came only a few days after MPs voted two resolutions on scrapping roaming charges and removing controls at the border. Kosovo MPs with 67 votes out of 69 MPs present at session voted a resolution obliging the Government to work on unification of customs with Albania. This is the third resolution which has been voted by Kosovo Parliament over the last week in a bid to simplify border procedures and scrap roaming charges. Kosovo citizens are the most frequent tourists in Albania with over one million Kosovars travelling to Albanian Adriatic and Ionian coasts every year. However on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Kosovo Serb political representatives protested against the Parliament’s decision saying that customs unification is unacceptable. Serb List (Српска листа) a political entity representing Serbs in Kosovo Parliament claims that unification of customs between Pristina and Tirana shows manifestation as they say of the “*Greater Albania Politics*.” Serb List asked an urgent meeting with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic to discuss this issue. According to Serb List customs unification is “*completely unacceptable*” and the ratification of the agreement on merging customs between the two countries in Kosovo Parliament, according to Kosovo Serbs, was a product of “*political violence*.” ([www.gazetaexpress.com](http://www.gazetaexpress.com))



- June 8<sup>th</sup>, Kosovo has arrested two people, including a Belgian national, suspected of planning attacks on NATO troops and the public in Kosovo, Belgium and France, the state prosecutor announced. The prosecutor's office said in a statement that on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 the pair, a man and a woman, spoke by telephone of preparing "terrorist attacks and commit suicide attacks with explosives with a car against KFOR (NATO-led Kosovo Force) soldiers in Kosovo and to attack places frequented by citizens." The man, identified only as a 26-year-old Belgian national, was living with the woman, identified as a 25-year-old residing near the capital Pristina. According to the prosecution the man was also preparing suicide attacks in public places in Belgium and France. A senior police officer told Reuters that the probe had been expanded and more suspects were being investigated. The official said police were able to record telephone conversations between the suspects in which they were planning attacks. Some 300 Kosovo nationals went Syria to fight for Islamic State and more than 50 have been killed there. This has raised concerns that some could return and pose security threats, Kosovo authorities said. In May Kosovo court jailed eight men for plotting to attack the Israeli national soccer team in Albania in a World Cup qualifying match in 2016. (www.reuters.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration moving in the opposite direction towards the EU and NATO integration. It seems that the state is not ready to develop an effective dialogue with Serbia due to internal political rivals. Interethnic*

*incidents raise concerns over peaceful co-existence of Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities. Apart from that the state is under a security alert due to potential terrorist threats. Kosovo which is not a UN member is quite far from the Euro-Atlantic path due to structural and institutional problems.*



**MOLDOVA:** June 4<sup>th</sup>, The Constitutional Court has acknowledged as constitutional the latest amendment to the Broadcasting Code regarding the provision of information security of the state. The case was filed by the President Igor Dodon. He claimed that the law prohibiting broadcasters and distributors of mass information services from transmitting information and analysis on military and political content programs produced in countries other than those that have ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television is against to the Constitution. According to the Court contested provisions could help counter hostile information operations against the state and ensure that its citizens are properly informed. The Court claimed that these purposes are in line with the Constitution which foresees that the state should ensure national security and protect the rights of citizens. This decision is final, cannot be subject to any appeal, enters into force on the date of its adoption and is published in the Official Journal of the Republic of Moldova. (www.moldpres.md)

- June 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup>, leader of the Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat din Moldova – PDM), Vlad Plahotniuc, paid a visit to the USA where he met political leaders, members of civil society and American academics. Among the topics was discussed are the one aimed at

Moldova's energy interconnection with the West. Firstly PDM leader met in Houston the Texas Congressman Pete Olson who is also the Chairman of the USA - Moldova Parliamentary Group. *"We discussed various topics in the economic and social sector, the reforms, as well as a very important issue for Moldova; its energy security. We also talked about the next parliamentary elections and Moldovan-American relations in general,"* Plahotniuc said. According to him Moldova is currently working to ensure the country's energy alternative. He informed the US Congressman about the construction of the Ungheni-Chisinau gas pipeline. *"Congressman Olson is a well-known of the energy themes and was interested in Moldova's efforts to diversify energy supply. Definitely our country needs the energy alternative and efforts continue very seriously in this direction,"* he added. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Plahotniuc met with the Texas Congressman Ted Poe stating the PDM is committed to maintain the pro-Western course of Moldova. *"We also talked about the Transnistrian issue and the need to fight propaganda coming from Russia. Another topic was focused on strengthening our energy security,"* Plahotniuc said. (www.moldpres.md, www.pdm.md)



Meeting of PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc with the USA Congressman Pete Olson  
(Photo source: www.pdm.md)

- June 6<sup>th</sup>, Ion Ceban announced he resigned as Secretary and Spokesman of the President Igor Dodon. Ceban said he took the decision following several discussions with the President and noted that in the future he will devote himself exclusively to the activity within the Chisinau city hall. *"Starting Monday, at 8:00, you find me every day, including weekends, at the city hall. I will get citizens, I will work on municipal projects and I will devote myself entirely to the activities related to Chisinau,"* he said. He added that the party he leads in the municipal council will support the good initiatives that will come to the capital city hall. *"I guarantee that the Socialists will not block anything in the city hall. We will back all good initiatives of newly-elected mayor,"* he said. (www.moldpres.md)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Political life is "hostage" of the pro-Russian President Igor Dodon and pro-Western Government rivalry which undermines the institutional function of the country. In the wider framework Moldova is between the Euro-Atlantic structures on the one hand and the Russian influence on the other. The "Transnistria case" is always a "running sore" for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.*



**MONTENEGRO:** June 4<sup>th</sup>, the agreement on border demarcation between Montenegro and Kosovo entered into force. According to the Montenegrin Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kosovo Ambassador to Montenegro Skender Durmishi submitted a "Note Verbale" (letter of protest) to the General Director of the International Legal Affairs Directorate, Tatjana Raspopovic, informing her that Kosovo

finally ratified the Agreement on border demarcation between Montenegro and Kosovo, signed in Vienna, on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Montenegro ratified border demarcation deal on December 2015. ([www.cdm.me](http://www.cdm.me))

- June 5<sup>th</sup>, NATO Allies Italy and Greece have begun NATO air patrols over Montenegro. Montenegro joined NATO in June 2017. As the country does not have its own fighter jets, it has asked Allies to help secure its airspace in the context of NATO air policing missions. Montenegro contributes to the Alliance's shared security by providing troops to NATO's training mission in Afghanistan and financial support to the Afghan security forces. In a sign of Allied solidarity, Italy and Greece help in Montenegrin airspace protection. Italian and Greek fighter aircrafts will continue to be based in their home countries, taking to the skies as necessary. Air policing is not a response to any specific threat, but an essential component of how NATO provides security for its members. Alternatively, Allies with no air force can seek multinational solutions to guard their airspace. Spain, Portugal and France are currently part of the Baltic Air Policing over Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Hungary and Italy also routinely help protect Slovenian airspace, while Greece and Italy support air patrols over Albania. NATO air policing jets take to the skies in response to military or civilian aircraft in distress, or that does not follow international flight regulations and approach the airspace of NATO Allies. Often, these aircraft fail to properly identify themselves, communicate with air traffic control or file flight plans. ([www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int))



Montenegro's Minister of Defense Predrag Boskovic and Commander of Italian Air Force Combat Forces Major General Silvano Frigerio watch a simulated intercept of a Montenegro's

Government aircraft

(Photo source: [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int))

- June 7<sup>th</sup> - the Council of the Radio and Television of Montenegro (Radio i Televizija Crne Gore – RTCG) dismissed director general Andrijana Kadija. Six members of the RTCG Council voted to dismiss Kadija, while two were against. The initiative for her dismissal quoted alleged illegal contracts signed with some local NGOs for the production of investigative stories which “*endangered the editorial independence*” of the public broadcaster. Kadija claims that the contract with the NGO Center for Civic Education (CCE), for which she is being dismissed, did not cost RTCG a cent, and that therefore, she felt she was not obliged to inform the Council about its precise contents. However, according to media organizations in Montenegro Kadija's dismissal was a plan by the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (Demokratska Partija Socijalista Crne Gore - DPS) to regain its influence over the broadcaster. For months, RTCG has been under huge pressure after a new editorial team that started work in March 2017 distanced itself from the ruling party and tried to produce more balanced content. Meanwhile, hundreds of Montenegrin journalists, NGO activists and opposition leaders protested in Podgorica as the managing council voted to sack Kadija. Media Center invited representatives of



Non-Governmental Organizations and independent media to protest against the “*Illegal and politically motivated dismissal of Kadija.*” Protests called for Council members to resign and show that they do not serve parties but citizens. “*My only sin is that I am apolitical...I wanted a professional public service for all citizens, and while I was running it, our public service was truly independent. You are not dismissing me as incompetent, but as politically unsuitable,*” she said. Kadija’s dismissal was commended by the US Department of State in a rather hard statement; “*The USA is very disappointed with the dismissal of Andrijana Kadija. Montenegro has to do more in order to protect the freedom of the media and editorial independence of its public broadcasting service*” it was announced. (www.cdm.me, www.balkaninsight.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Major reforms should be implemented in order the country to come closer to the EU. Apart from that Kadija’s dismissal sends disappointing messages regarding freedom of media. However the EU expressed its satisfaction with Montenegro’s efforts to join the Union. Montenegro intensifies its presence in NATO by strengthening its participation in military exercises and peacekeeping missions while NATO guarantees Montenegro’s airspace security.*



**ROMANIA:** June 7<sup>th</sup>, former Development and Tourism minister Elena Udrea, one of the most influential Romanian politicians during Traian Basescu’s presidential mandate, is now internationally wanted after the High Court of Cassation and Justice sentenced her to six years in jail in a corruption case. The former Minister

was convicted for bribery and abuse of office for approving the illegal state financing of a boxing gala starring Romanian champion Lucian Bute, in 2011. Udrea is currently in Costa Rica, where she allegedly received political refugee status, according to her lawyer. However, Udrea could be extradited from Costa Rica although Romania does not have an extradition agreement with this country, according to Justice Minister Tudorel Toader. Romanian authorities triggered the international pursuit procedure against Udrea and will inform the authorities in Costa Rica about her conviction. Then, the Justice Ministry will try to achieve her extradition based on legal documents. Toader said that Romania has not had any case of extradition from Costa Rica so far but that another such procedure is currently pending. He did not mention who the targeted person is in the second case. Former Chief Prosecutor of the Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) Alina Bica, who is under trial in Romania for corruption, is also in Costa Rica. (www.romania-insider.com)

- June 7<sup>th</sup>, Constitutional Court of Romania (CCR) added a new “chapter” in the long dispute between the state’s President Klaus Iohannis and Justice Minister Tudorel Toader by publishing the motivation of its decision forcing the President to sign the order of revoking the Chief Prosecutor of the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) Laura Codruta Kovesi. Iohannis had refused to revoke Kovesi claiming that the Minister’s arguments had not convinced him. However, the Constitutional Court ruled that the prosecutors are under the Justice Minister’s authority and that the President does not really have a say in this matter. Iohannis said he would wait for the CCR’s motivation before making his final decision. According to him the CCR’s

decision is not just about revoking or not the DNA Chief Prosecutor but about the independence of prosecutors in Romania. The CCR ruled that the President has no right to analyze how the Justice Minister motivated his proposal for revoking the DNA Chief but can open a dialogue with the Justice Minister to clarify his motives. The Court also explained that, by evaluating the Justice Minister's evaluation, the President placed himself above the Justice Minister's authority, which is unconstitutional. If the President refuses to revoke the DNA Chief, he can be accused of breaking the Constitution, which is ground for suspension. (www.romania-insider.com)

- June 9<sup>th</sup>, more than 100,000 supporters of the ruling coalition of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) and the Alliance of Liberal and Democrats for Europe (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE) assembled in the capital dressed in white to protest against the so-called “shadow state” and the alleged abuses committed by anti-corruption prosecutors. The Prime Minister Viorica Dancila and the Ministers of her cabinet, PSD leader Liviu Dragnea, Senate President and ALDE leader Calin Popescu Tariceanu, and Bucharest Mayor Gabriela Firea joined the rally. Protesters had banners with slogans against President Klaus Iohannis and the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) chief Laura Codruta Kovesi. Tariceanu told the crowd that the “shadow state” was, in fact, the new “Securitate”, which was established by the former President Traian Basescu and is now used by the current President Iohannis to eliminate his political opponents. However Office of the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor successfully prosecuted 713 officials in 2016, including 28 Mayors and a Senator.

Critics say the Government rally is planned to intimidate judges and Romanian President Iohannis, who support the anti-corruption fight. (www.romania-insider.com, www.romaniajournal.ro)



Romanians protest in Bucharest

(Photo source: www.psd.ro)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Not only the EU but also opposition and civic society of Romania raise questions over justice independence. Dismissal of the Chief Prosecutor of the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) Laura Codruta Kovesi has been developed into a strong dispute between the state's President and the Justice Minister namely the Government. Romania might face a serious institutional and constitutional crisis if the President refuses to respect the CCR's decision. However Romania as member of the EU and NATO enjoys security and stability.*



**SERBIA:** June 5<sup>th</sup>, the newly elected leader of Democratic Party (Демократска странка, ДС - DS) on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 Zoran Lutovac creates fruitful soil for a united opposition against the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (Српска напредна странка – SNS). Lutovac, a former ambassador and political

adviser to the assassinated Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, signaled a change of party course when he claimed that he was open to collaboration with the nascent political bloc Alliance for Serbia. *“Opposition parties must make an agreement and do what the citizens expect them to do, which is to join, form a synergy and work together,”* Lutovac said adding *“The party must be one of the pillars of the future alliances that would regenerate Serbia.”* In March 2018, the party won only 2.2% of the vote in local elections in Belgrade, the Serbian capital that was for years a Democratic Party bastion. The party’s failure to enter the city assembly forced the resignation of leader Dragan Sutanovac who had alienated some of the opposition leaders. The initiator of the Alliance, former Belgrade mayor Dragan Djilas, said he expected to meet Lutovac by the end of this week and that he had been in touch with members of DS that he too once led. *“They all think that the Democratic Party belongs in the Alliance for Serbia, together with parties that want to see change in Serbia,”* Djilas said. (www.balkaninsight.com, www.beta.rs)



DS leader Zoran Lutovac  
(Photo source: www.ds.org.rs)

- June 5<sup>th</sup>, commenting Pristina-based media reports that Serbia's regular army and Gendarmerie were deployed in the morning of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 near the Jarinje administrative crossing the President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic said that no outsider would ever make any decision about military units' movements. *“It was by chance that the Serbian army and Gendarmerie were not where the (Kosovo) Albanian media had said they would be, but I won't make any excuses when they do get there, nor do I care what they might write or think,”* Vucic said answering a journalist's question in Zemun. Vucic noted that the Supreme Commander of the Army has a constitutional right to deploy the Army and Gendarmerie where he wanted to, and that no outsider would have a say in their movements. Apart from that Vucic did not hesitate to stress that he has been personally warned regarding the idea of returning troops to Kosovo *“If you try to enter Kosovo with your army and your police, NATO will treat it as a hostile act,”* the President conveyed the warning he received. However the Serbian President claimed that dialogue is the only solution for Serbia and Kosovo although the negotiating platform recently presented in the Kosovo Assembly, makes talks in Brussels *“More difficult - but it also shows Pristina's true intentions.”* (www.b92.net)

- June 7<sup>th</sup>, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic received the Russian Ambassador Federation to Serbia Aleksandr Chepurin. They discussed the results of Vucic's recent visit to Moscow, noting it was very important for further development of comprehensive bilateral cooperation. Vucic told Chepurin he was highly honored by President Putin's exceptional hospitality during his visit to Moscow for Victory Day celebrations and the

Immortal Regiment march, in particular by the fact that he was the first foreign statesman whom the Russian President received in his new mandate. Vucic also expressed his great concern about the frequent attacks on Serbs in Kosovo pointing out the need to achieve a real compromise, not a solution that would only put pressure on Serbia. Chepurin emphasized that Russia's support to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia is unquestionable, and will continue in the UN and in any other international organization. (www.b92.net)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Relative political stability. Security situation is stable. The EU and U.S strengthen their pressure towards Serbia and Kosovo for a mutual accepted solution. However it seems that Serbia – Kosovo dialogue has reached a stalemate. The Kosovo issue creates a fragile balance on permanent basis. Russian influence towards Serbia is also a question which affects state's relations with the West.*



**SLOVENIA:** June 4<sup>th</sup>, Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska Demokratska Stranka – SDS) is the winner of yesterday's elections receiving almost a quarter of the votes. However it is still a big question if SDS's leader Janez Jansa will achieve to form a Government. Nine parties entered the Parliament, while six of them before the elections rejected the possibility of cooperation with SDS. Turnout reached almost 52% of the voters; almost the same as it was at the elections four years ago. SDS received 24.96% of the votes while List of Marjan Sarec (Lista Marjana Šarca - LMS) got 12.66%. The Social Democrats (Socialni Demokrati – SD) got the

third place by receiving 9.92% of the electoral body. Modern Centre Party (Stranka Modernega Centra – SMC)/ 9.75%, The Left (Levica)/9.29%, New Slovenia – Christian Democrats (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati - NSi)/7.13%, Party of Alenka Bratusek (Stranka Alenke Bratušek - SAB)/5.12%, Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (Demokratska Stranka Upokojencev Slovenije - DeSUS)/4.91%, and Slovenian National Party (Slovenska Nacionalna Stranka - SNS)/4.20% are the rest of the parties which achieved to enter the Parliament. Leader of SDS Janez Jansa invited all parties to join talks regarding the formation of a coalition Government. "We are ready to talk seriously on the basis of a program" said Jansa inviting all parties to talks; "Bring your programs and let's start talking about real problems as soon as possible," he emphasized. In the meanwhile the President of the Republic, Borut Pahor, indicated that he will give Jansa the mandate to form the new Government. (www.dnevnik.si, www.sta.si)

- June 7<sup>th</sup>, the President Borut Pahor reiterated his intention to give mandate for formation of the Government to Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska Demokratska Stranka – SDS) Janez Jansa. "The winner of the election should have the opportunity to achieve the highest consensus towards a coalition Government," he said after the unofficial talks with the SDS leader. Pahor added "It would be better if the winner of the election succeeded in forming a Government. Of course, someone else may have the chance to form a Government, but from experience we know that this is the second best option." Jansa emphasized "We will try to form a coalition for Slovenia, not a coalition against Marjan Sarac, Dejan Zidan or Miro Cerar." Leader of List of Marjan Sarec (Lista Marjana Šarca - LMS)

Marjan Sarec has undertaken his own initiative by sending invitation for talks to all parliamentary Parties for the formation of a "coalition for the future." Taking into consideration all the given facts it seems difficult for Jansa to ensure support of 46 MPs in the Parliament forming a new Government. In such a case Jansa indicated that he will not accept Pahor's mandate giving space to some other parliamentary majority to form a Government. ([www.dnevnik.si](http://www.dnevnik.si), [www.sta.si](http://www.sta.si))

- June 7<sup>th</sup>, the Chief of General Staff of Slovenian Armed Forces Major General Alan Geder issued a decree by which military personnel salary will be increased due to workload. Personnel assigned in missions abroad is excluded by this decree. Geder's decision is based on the Law for service in the Slovenian Armed Forces which allows him to increase salaries up to 30% of the basic salary for militaries who are assigned in units with special missions (units join NATO collective defense missions, high readiness units etc). However, the Chief of Staff adopted increase of wages for all military personnel. Army's spokesperson Simon Korez claimed *"In order to carry out all the legal tasks as well as those added extra such as protection of the green border, maintenance of technical barriers, search and rescue, helicopter emergency medical assistance, transport of human organs military personnel perform an increased amount of work."* The Left (Levica) Party strongly opposed against Geder's decision while the Defense Minister Andrej Katic welcomed Chief's initiative. According to the Ministry of Finance Geder's decision is not included in state's budget and necessary funds will be transferred from the Armed Forces one. ([www.dnevnik.si](http://www.dnevnik.si))

*Political developments are ongoing due to parliamentary elections results which do not allow one Party Government. SDS got the first place in the electoral body but it is doubtful whether it will succeed to form a coalition Government. The country may enter into political instability while new elections may not be excluded. Armed Forces leadership undertakes initiatives in order to improve conditions within the Army.*



**TURKEY:** June 6<sup>th</sup>, after months-long preparations and advances in northern Iraq, the Turkish Army is ready to launch an extensive operation against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê – PKK) headquarters on Mount Qandil, aiming at eliminating its leadership. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Turkey is determined to completely eradicate terrorism from the country; *"We are going to reach the source of terrorism before it comes to us,"* Erdogan said in northern Zonguldak province, where he addressed electorates at a Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP) election rally. Erdogan said the Army will go to Qandil and to Sinjar, a northwestern region in Iraq's Nineveh province, which has also been an area of PKK activity since 2016. The Army has already invaded about 25 kilometers into northern Iraq towards Mount Qandil as it took control of the Bradost region and entered the Barazgir valley, which is considered a gateway to Qandil. Also, Turkish Special Forces, who participated in Operation "OLIVE BRANCH" against Kurds in Afrin, reportedly relocated to Qandil to join operations. In addition to this, the Army recently set up bases for tanks and helicopters in the region. It has also established another base for

**COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**  :



unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and armed drones. The domestically produced UAVs have been effectively used against PKK since 2015 in Turkey and in cross-border operations. Deputy Prime Minister and Government spokesperson Bekir Bozdag said in a televised interview that PKK has substantially lost its capacity to conduct operations, adding that a ground offensive would be launched on Qandil when it is necessary. He also stressed that the fight against terrorism could not be halted because of the upcoming elections on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that Turkey, the U.S., Baghdad, and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil will cooperate when the operation is launched in Qandil. *“PKK is an enemy of Erbil as well,”* he said. He pointed out the significance of Iraq's support regarding the issue. Aydin Selcen, former Turkish consul general in Erbil, the capital of KRG, said *“The Turkish military has been inside Iraq since the early 1990s [in various forms], including liaison points, bases, forward operational bases, seasonal deployments around bases ... and various larger-scale operations from time to time,”* adding that information did not yet suggest that an operation *“to conquer Qandil”* was underway. According to him *“I think such an operation would be neither a realistic nor a rational objective in terms of scope, topography and regional politics. I don't believe an operation on such a scale could be launched and conducted without the consent of Baghdad and the support of Tehran and against the will of Erbil and the KRG public.”* Several reports have suggested that the possible operation will be commanded by Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Lieutenant General İsmail Metin Temel, who also commanded Operation “OLIVE BRANCH”. The possible operation raised controversy among politicians from the ruling AKP and the main opposition

Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP). CHP Vice Chairman, Ozgur Ozel said that the Government seeks to take advantage of a possible military operation to boost votes in the upcoming elections. ([www.dailysabah.com](http://www.dailysabah.com), [www.al-monitor.com](http://www.al-monitor.com))

- June 8<sup>th</sup>, Turkey's ambitious policy to emerge as an influential actor in the international community reaches another far corner of the globe. Officials announced yesterday that a research base would be set up in 2019 in Antarctica. The Turkish Scientific Research Base will be located on Horseshoe Island, and Istanbul Technical University will coordinate the project. In Ankara Minister of Science, Industry and Technology Faruk Ozlu received a delegation from the first official Turkish mission to the region and said they were awaiting a feasibility report on the possible location of the base. Turkey's first polar research center, the Istanbul Technical University Polar Research Center, also known as PolRec, was established in 2015. The mission of the center is to carry out research in the Antarctic and develop Turkey's visibility in the international scientific community. Speaking to Sabah newspaper, Associate Professor Burcu Ozsoy, leader of the latest mission, said *“We work to transform Turkey to Consultative Country status because this is important to have an area of influence in Antarctica among other countries. Then, we wish to conduct more studies in the region and train scientists in Turkish universities so that more people would contribute to the process of studying Antarctica.”* The Turkish base will be *“a green base,”* Ozsoy said, noting that it will use solar panels for energy needs, as logistics of transporting fuel to the region is very challenging. She said the interest of Turkish scientists in the region has increased and some 60

researchers presented study projects this year compared to only 20 in 2017. (www.dailysabah.com)

- June 8<sup>th</sup>, the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the state of emergency may be lifted after the presidential and parliamentary elections on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Erdogan said his Government will deeply analyze situation and make necessary assessments to lift the state of emergency imposed after the coup attempt on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Parliament voted in April 2018 to extend the state of emergency imposed on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016, by another three months for seventh time in a row.

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Turkey faces several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs and journalists are in custody or convicted by the state Courts. The new extension of the country's state of emergency maintains or even strengthens the abnormality of current political life. The country moves towards an authoritarian regime with thousands of persecution of citizens. Presidential and parliamentary elections are ahead scheduled for June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Erdogan seeks to establish a new presidential model of governance which will give him extensive powers. In southeastern region of the country there is an ongoing armed conflict between the state's security forces and Kurd guerillas. Turkey is about to be engaged in another military operation against PKK in Iraq challenging security in the region since multiple actors such as Iraq, Iran, the U.S., Iraqi Kurds, and Turkey are involved in one way or another.*

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## NOTE

-  Stable situation. No security risk
-  Rather stable situation. Security risk is monitored
-  Major concerns over stability and security. significant security risk in specific regions
-  Imminent major incidents regarding stability and security. High security risk
-  Evolving or ongoing crisis or violent/armed conflict