



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

## ***SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE***

### ***AT A GLANCE***



***SOUTHEAST EUROPE DIRECTORATE***

“SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AT A GLANCE” (ISSN: 2654-0304) 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, Greece, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, 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.

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*ISSN: 2654-0304*





**ALBANIA:** July 17<sup>th</sup>, after a five hour meeting of the Socialist Party of Albania (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë – PS), the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, declared that there will be no elections on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019. “*The elections were held on June 30<sup>th</sup>. We are committed to start the local Government process positively. I do not know anything about October 13<sup>th</sup>. Maybe it is Sunday, but it is just like all the other Sundays,*” Rama said. According to him, the Socialists are now focusing on the central elections. (www.top-channel.tv)

- July 18<sup>th</sup>, opposition seems to be following the advice of the international community, and are filing a complaint about the June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 elections. Although the Constitutional Court is non-functional, due to the Vetting Law, the Association of Albanian Municipalities went to Court to challenge the validity of these elections. The acting Mayor of Shkodra, Voltana Ademi, filed a complaint at the Constitutional Court to invalidate the elections held without the President’s decree. The second complaint was against the validity of the electoral activities of the Democratic Conviction. (www.top-channel.tv)

- July 20<sup>th</sup>, leader of the opposition, Lulzim Basha, reacted after the Courts confirmed the mandate for the new Mayor of Durres. Basha said that through Vangjush Dako and the organized crime, Rama is controlling the local administration and every other institution in Durres. “*The collaborator of the criminal Avdylaj gang, the man who released Lul Berisha from prison, and who launders the criminal money in Durres, should have been in prison by now, but he*

*controls those who should have sent him to prison,”* Basha wrote. (www.top-channel.tv)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*Local elections held on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 are rejected by the opposition maintaining a tense situation. Opposition leader, Lulzim Basha has called Mayors of his party to remain in their positions until new local elections to be held. Situation is further deteriorating and the time for uncontrolled domestic violence is not far. President Ilir Meta proposed presidential and local elections on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in an effort to resolve current political crisis, but Prime Minister Edi Rama has rejected the date. The country has entered in an endless crisis undermining its democratic function according to the European values and standards. Rama’s efforts to dismiss the President, Ilir Meta are ongoing. In other words, Albania is under a political and constitutional chaos. Questions for a potential civil conflict have been raised showing that situation is totally disappointing. Such situation strongly affected Albania’s EU perspective. Combination of political instability, ties between politics and organized crime, and corruption made the EU to postpone the opening of accession negotiations for Albania for the near future. According to the Enlargement Commissioner, situation will be re-examined by October 2019. Rama’s Government collapse and snap elections is a possible scenario. The Government is accused of having links with organized crime and current situation raises questions over the power of “Albanian mafia” in the country and its influence in state’s politics. Undoubtedly, corruption and organized crime*

*remains the most significant state's problem undermining its strategic goal of opening accession negotiations with the EU. The EU closely monitors progress of reforms especially in justice sector. Albania monitors Kosovo – Serbia negotiations and definitely has a role as a "mother nation." The state maintains its leading role in the Albanian world providing guarantees and support to Albanian population in the region namely Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. In this context, the Albanian Prime Minister and his Government work on promoting Kosovo interests in international community using any forum they have access.*



#### **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:**

July 16<sup>th</sup>, the NATO and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) are looking forward to further intensify and deepen their cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Tod D. Wolters told Bosnia's Defense Minister Marina Pendes on Tuesday in Sarajevo. After meeting with Bosnia's top Defense Ministry and Armed Forces officials, Wolters said that many joint activities were implemented in 2019, adding that he is satisfied with the level of cooperation and future activities planned for 2020. He also praised the engagement of Bosnia's Armed Forces in peacekeeping missions, especially the one in Afghanistan where Bosnia currently has 60 people. Pendes said they talked about intensifying cooperation between the Ministry and NATO as well as the Ministry's new legal obligations regarding the participation in peacekeeping missions and other issues important for Bosnia's defense sector. The two also talked about various

defense issues and models of help for Bosnia and its Defense Ministry for the sake of further strengthening of regional stability and security. Pendes rated the talks as constructive, thanking the General for visiting the country at the start of his mandate. ([www.ba.n1info.com](http://www.ba.n1info.com))

- July 20<sup>th</sup>, Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency member Zeljko Komsic has accused Croatia of refusing to resolve outstanding issues between the two countries, the Sarajevo-based Oslobodjenje daily said on Friday. Komsic, who will assume the rotating Chairmanship of the Presidency on Saturday, said in an interview with the daily that there is a long list interview of outstanding issues and that, aside from Croatia's unwillingness to resolve them, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine - HDZ BiH) party's members in the BiH Council of Ministers are obstructing work on those issues. He highlighted the border issue, BiH companies' assets in Croatia, and plans to build a nuclear waste dump in Croatia near the BiH border. "There's no interest on Croatia's part to resolve them," he was quoted as saying, adding that "we have the desire and the good will" to resolve them. He also said BiH is "very fair and concrete" in dealing with the assets of Croatian companies and private citizens in BiH, "without the condition of reciprocity." Komsic said Croatia is treating the assets of BiH companies and people as its own and is leasing them, Hina reports. ([www.sarajevotimes.com](http://www.sarajevotimes.com))

- July 21<sup>st</sup>, Milorad Dodik, the Serb member of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Presidency, said he would again impose a veto and ask the Serb entity's Parliament to reverse any decision

whereby the Presidency's two other members might outvote him concerning the Peljesac Bridge in Croatia. “If I am outvoted again and Sefik Dzaferovic and Zeljko Komsic create certain conclusions on the Peljesac Bridge again, I will invoke vital interests again,” he was quoted as saying for Bosnian print media on Sunday. Earlier this week, Republika Srpska’s entity Parliament revoked by a two-thirds majority a decision by Dzaferovic and Komsic, the Presidency's Bosniak (Muslim Bosnian) and Croat members, after Dodik vetoed their demand that construction on the Peljesac Bridge be stopped and that the two countries resolve the sea border issue, or they would file an international lawsuit. Dodik said all outstanding issues with Croatia should be resolved through talks but without setting conditions or creating “new disputes that will last ten years or more.” Komsic assumed the rotating Chairmanship of the State Presidency from Dodik on Saturday, saying he would look for any way to implement the sea border demarcation and that he would insist on the country’s access to the high seas. (www.ba.n1info.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** :

*Political instability and uncertainty continues in Bosnia because it has not formed a Government since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 general elections. The three main parties representing the three constituent entities (Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats); HDZ (Bosnian Croatian party), SDA (Bosnian Muslim or Bosniak party), and SNSD (Bosnian Serbian party) although they have reached an agreement to cooperate in forming a Government, it seems that they still cannot overcome Bosnia’s accession process towards NATO. Bosnian Serbs*

*insist that the country should remain neutral staying out of NATO, Bosniaks remain committed to NATO accession as a precondition for supporting a Government, while Bosnian Croats appears neutral on the issue wishing to overcome the deadlock (although they are in favor of joining NATO) . Country faces several functional and institutional problems. Consequently political fragility maintains permanent uncertainty and institutional mistrust blocking any attempt for economic growth and major reforms. Croatia and Serbia keep on intervening in Bosnia’s internal affairs destabilizing the state. Of course, both entities (Croats and Serbs) take in advantage “Dayton Peace Agreement” weaknesses and malfunctions. Russia pays special attention in Serbia and Bosnia in order to maintain its influence in the region. Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, Albania, and Montenegro have already entered NATO, while North Macedonia would join the Alliance within 2019. These two countries (Serbia and Bosnia) are the only “vehicles” for Russia to maintain a narrow influence in Southeastern Europe. Apart from external influence and intervention the country has to confront several internal “threats” which undermine its sovereignty, cohesion, and viability. EU path is too far for Bosnia and only for geopolitical interests it could have chances entering the EU. Election of ultra nationalist pro-Russian Serb Milorad Dodik in the tripartite Presidency is a strong sign of more nationalistic rhetoric and more obstacles towards Bosnia’s EU and NATO (mostly) integration. Dodik is a person who does not actually believe in B&H viability and is expected to promote (actually, he has already started) his own political agenda. Bosnia faces a significant problem of illegal migration*

which may lead in new disputes between state's ethnicities. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and other Muslim countries approach the country mainly through "investments" and/or funding ethnic or religious groups according to their interests.



**BULGARIA:** July 16<sup>th</sup>, Bulgarian officials confirmed that a cyber attack on the National Revenue Agency gained access to the personal and financial data of millions of Bulgarians. The attack was first reported a day earlier, when several Bulgarian media said that they received emails with data allegedly lifted from the Bulgarian Finance Ministry's servers. Bulgaria's National Revenue Agency said in a statement that its databases had been compromised by "unauthorized access to about three per cent of the information contained in the agency's databases." The agency said that all its services were functioning normally, with the sole exception of the service to refund value-added tax paid abroad. A vulnerability in that system is believed to have been exploited in the cyber attack, the agency's Spokesperson Rossen Bachvarov said, as quoted by Bulgarian National Radio. Finance Minister Vladislav Goranov described the leak as "highly unpleasant," but sought to reassure that the stolen data was not enough to give the full picture of an individual's financial state. Goranov was one of several officials, including Interior Minister Mladen Marinov, who participated in the Government's Security Council meeting on the cyber attack, called by Prime Minister Boiko Borissov. Marinov said that the investigation was still underway, but measures were already taken to minimize the damage. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

- July 19<sup>th</sup>, Bulgaria's Parliament voted to approve amendments to the 2019 Budget Act to cater for the 1.25 billion dollars acquisition of eight US-made Lockheed Martin F-16 Block 70 fighter jets. The vote, at first and second reading stage, followed one earlier in the day to approve the four contracts between Bulgaria and the United States to enable the F-16 acquisition to go ahead. The Budget Act amendments were approved at second reading by 113 votes for, 72 against, with two abstentions. The amendments were supported by Prime Minister Boiko Borissov's Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (Граждани за европейско развитие на България – GERB) party, by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Dvizhenie za Prava i Svobodi - DPS) and Defense Minister Krassimir Karakachanov's IMRO – Bulgarian National (VMRO – Bulgarsko Natsionalno Dvizhenie) party. The Budget Act amendments increase the Defense Ministry's budget by 2.1 billion leva. The third item on Parliament's agenda on Friday was approval of the industrial co-operation agreement between Lockheed Martin and Bulgaria's Economy Ministry. This was ratified at second reading with 116 votes in favour, 38 against and with three abstentions. Bulgaria's Government intends paying the price for the F-16s, which amounts to about 2.1 billion leva, in one go. Finance Minister Vladislav Goranov told journalists that the payment is a "significant fiscal effort" but could be made without Bulgaria breaking its own laws or EU rules. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

- July 20<sup>th</sup>, Bulgaria's Defense Ministry says that requests for proposals are to be sent to four companies to bid to supply 150 new combat

vehicles for the Army. The companies are Artec GmbH of Germany, Patria of Finland, Nexter Group of France and General Dynamics Land System (MOWAG) of Switzerland. The Ministry announcement came after Bulgaria's Parliament approved a 1.25 billion dollars deal to buy eight Lockheed Martin F-16 fighter jets from the United States. The increased price tag for the F-16s, higher than the ceiling first approved by Parliament, means that no payments on Bulgaria's other two major military modernization projects – the combat vehicles and two new naval patrol vessels – will be made this year. Defense Minister Krassimir Karakachanov, however, insisted to Parliament that all three modernization projects would be completed within the term of the current Government, while the same day Prime Minister Boiko Borissov said that the order for the naval vessels would go ahead. Bids to supply the patrol vessels were opened months ago, but publicly nothing has been heard since then. As to the combat vehicles, the Defense Ministry said an interdepartmental task force on the choice should finish its work by December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at the latest. The projects envisage the Bulgarian Army getting 150 vehicles, along with special equipment and training, for three battalion groups. The estimated value of the contract is 1.464 billion leva with VAT. A complication for the combat vehicles project has been the requirement that at least part of the vehicles should be manufactured in Bulgaria, with the participation of Bulgarian companies. There are also said to be differences of opinion over the technical requirements for the vehicles. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** ■ :

*Junior partner of the ruling coalition, United Patriots remains the vulnerable and unpredictable piece of the inter-governmental stability; none could predict when a new incident or dispute will break out. Thus, Bulgaria has entered in a period of rather stable political situation. After European elections, opposition BSP appears weakened facing internal problems. The country strengthened its efforts towards entering the Eurozone achieving a positive decision of the Eurogroup. However, the EC made clear that Bulgaria could not enter the Eurozone before 2022. Apart from that the European Parliament adopted a resolution for the accession of Bulgaria (and Romania) in Schengen Zone. However, it is questioned if the European Council will receive a unanimous final decision for Bulgaria under the current migration pressure. Corruption and organized crime remain significant obstacles and should be addressed decisively. Although modernization of Armed Forces is a top priority for Bulgaria and huge armament projects are ongoing (fighter jets, armored vehicles, vessels etc) military operational capability of the state is questioned especially in the Air Force. Bulgarian Armed Forces are far from NATO standards. The latest report on defense situation confirmed the major problems the Bulgarian Armed Forces are facing. Security situation stable; no major threats.*



**CROATIA:** July 18<sup>th</sup>, Croatian President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic said that she supports Vukovar's Mayor, Ivan Penava, who has claimed that the extension of Serb minority rights in the town would harm ethnic relations; despite a Constitutional Court ruling saying this must be



done soon. Penava's statement came after the Constitutional Court ruled that the use of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script for official purposes should be extended in Vukovar, which was besieged and devastated by Serbian forces in 1991, but now has a sizeable Serb minority. After a meeting with Penava in Zagreb on Thursday, Grabar Kitarovic's office said that the President believes that the necessary preconditions for "extending special rights" have been yet not met, although the changes should not be delayed for too long. Grabar Kitarovic said that Penava's opinion cannot be seen as disrespect for the decision of the Constitutional Court. "I do not want separation or conflict between Croats and Serbs, but I am calling for patience and consideration, which implies accepting the fact that Vukovar is tending its wounds," she said. Grabar Kitarovic's office also said that she "finds it extremely important to provide support to Mayor Penava and the citizens of Vukovar who have suffered injustice for more than a quarter of a century due to the inexplicably slow and inefficient actions of institutions." Her comment was a reference to unhappiness in Vukovar about the slow pace of prosecuting Serbs who committed war crimes in the town. Grabar Kitarovic argued that this "also cannot be delayed indefinitely." According to a Constitutional Court decision on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 Vukovar city councilors from the Serb ethnic minority should have be given the same conditions as councilors of Croatian ethnicity. (www.balkaninsight.com)

- July 19<sup>th</sup>, the INA oil company has reported the commercial discovery of a natural gas source at the Severovci-1 drill hole in the DRAVA-02 research area to the Agency for Hydrocarbons.

Testing in two natural gas saturated intervals measures natural gas amounting to a total of 53,000 cubic metres per day. The research drilling site is near INA's Molva, Kalinovac and Ferdinandovac exploitation fields. Drilling and construction of drill hole canals lasted four months and a final depth of 3,410 meters was achieved. INA plans to continue activities in order to bring the newly discovered natural gas reserves into production in the next few years, while achievement of the plan will depend on the time it takes to issue licenses, said INA. "We are happy about the positive result at the Severovci-1 drill hole because it is a confirmation of the quality work, knowledge and experience of INA's experts. Croatia is our most important area in research activities and production of oil and natural gas. It is our goal to put all existing potentials in the country into production. We are interested in further investments in research activities that could lead to discoveries and consequent production and that is related to smaller sources of hydrocarbons," said Tvrtko Perkovic, INA's Operations Director for Research and Production. (www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr)

- July 19<sup>th</sup>, following some tense discussion in parliamentary Committees earlier in the day, the parliamentary majority confirmed seven new Ministers and two Deputy Prime Ministers on Friday. Gordan Grlic-Radman is now the new Foreign and European Affairs Minister, while Ivan Malenica is Administration Minister. Mario Banozić has taken over at the State Assets Ministry, while Marko Pavichas moved from the Labor and Pension System Ministry to the Regional Development and EU Funds Ministry. Replacing Pavic as Labor and

Pension System Minister is Josip Aladrovic. Marija Vuckovic is the new Agriculture Minister, while Vesna Bedekovic is the new Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy Minister. Finance Minister Zdravko Maric and Interior Minister Davor Bozinovic have also taken on the roles of Deputy Prime Minister. Opposition, which abstained from the voting, tried to bog down the confirmation process in the parliamentary Committees, where earlier in the day the Prime Minister presented his ministerial candidates. (www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*The country enjoys political stability and support from EU towards its Eurozone goal. Prime Minister, Andrej Plenkovic reshuffled his Government aiming at giving some “fresh air” in the cabinet. Croatia follows a tough regional policy with neighboring countries. It is openly intervene in Bosnia’s internal affairs, while it maintains open disputes with Slovenia, Serbia, and Bosnia. One should take into consideration that Croatia shows its military strength and capabilities quite often not only in international, but also in national level sending strong messages to neighboring countries. Apart from that, Croatia pays special attention in energy strategy and security announcing ambitious projects. The state accelerates its efforts towards accession in Schengen zone. It implements a policy of Armed Forces’ modernization trying to form a reliable and well equipped force according to NATO standards. Failure to complete successfully the purchase of a modern fighter jet maintains a long period of an ineffective and weak Croatian Air Force.*



**CYPRUS:** July 16<sup>th</sup>, Greek Cypriot political parties on Tuesday rejected the proposal by Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci to set up a joint committee on hydrocarbons. Political party leaders were briefed by President Nicos Anastasiades at a meeting in Limassol that lasted almost three hours. Speaking afterwards, Undersecretary to the President Vassilis Palmas read a joint statement from party leaders saying the proposal from Akinci could not be accepted “as it distracts from the essence of the Cyprus problem and the need for immediate resumption of substantive negotiations with a view, if there is sufficient will from all concerned, to achieve a sustainable and functional solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of United Nations resolutions, and the principles and values of the European Union.” “Moreover, the proposal of Mr Akinci contains provisions that do not serve the best interests of the Republic of Cyprus and the Cypriot people as a whole,” the statement added. Speaking later, Akinci expressed regret that his proposal was rejected by the Greek Cypriot side. He said his proposal on hydrocarbons concerned co-operation and mutual benefit, instead of the current situation of the Greek Cypriot side handling the matter unilaterally. Party leaders authorized the President to answer the Turkish Cypriot leader in writing and to send the answer to the recipients of Akinci’s proposals such as the UN Chief, and the EU leadership. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- July 21<sup>st</sup>, during President Nicos Anastasiades’ meeting with Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci scheduled to take place before the middle of August, the two men will make an effort to

restart talks, Government Spokesman Prodromos Prodromou said on Sunday. *“There has been an understanding with Mr Akinci and this is why it has been announced that before the middle of August there will be an informal meeting of the President with the Turkish Cypriot leader,”* Prodromou told the press. The President’s wish, he continued, *“is to discuss freely and go over all the subjects in order to reach the resumption of the talks,”* noting that this has to take place *“within an appropriate climate, without Turkey’s provocations or illegal interventions.”* Prodromou said that talks must restart from the point they stopped in Crans Montana, Switzerland, based on the framework of the UN Secretary-General, the so-called Guterres framework, with its six parameters, the relevant decisions and resolutions and EU’s principles and values. He added that the final agreement must take into account the issue of security. The Spokesman said that it was not clear yet whether UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy Jane Holl Lute would be present at the meeting of the two leaders. *“We hope that the meeting will revolve around the real issues of the Cyprus problem without any effort to include other issues that might be a factor of obstruction or distraction,”* he added. Replying to a question, the Spokesman said that talks cannot restart as long as the other side continues to provoke, to violate rights and to cause tension. Invited to comment on the statement of Turkish Vice President that talks will not restart from the point they stopped, the Spokesman said that the Greek Cypriot side’s intention is to begin talks from the point they left off to utilize the progress that has been made rather than beginning from scratch, but also to avoid any attempts to divert the procedure from the UN framework. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- July 21<sup>st</sup>, Turkey will continue its drilling activities with determination, Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay said on Sunday from Kyrenia. *“Whoever intends to limit the Turkish continental shelf in the Gulf of Antalya should be aware that Turkey will pursue its exploration and drilling activities with determination,”* Anadolu news agency quoted him as saying. *“Every centimeter of our land is valuable and essential,”* he added during the launch of a rescue ship called Gemi Kurtaran. Turkey currently has two drill ships stationed off the coast of Cyprus with Turkey saying this week that more would be dispatched. The rescue ship will be used in possible sea accidents in the Mediterranean and also to prevent pollution, Oktay said. *“Turkey defends the eastern Mediterranean so it is a sea of peace and it is right to extract the natural resources and thus to share them.”* Oktay is in the north as part of celebrations to mark the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Turkish invasion on Saturday. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** ■ :

*Cyprus has reached a deadlock in the ongoing crisis with Turkish invasion of drillship Fatih (while the second one Yavuz is also ready to start drills) within its EEZ. Fatih is there almost four months, while Turkish administration declares that offshore drilling will continue until an agreement between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities will be reached regarding exploration and exploitation of gas. In other words, Turkey’s objective goal is to force (by the presence and activity of drill ships) Cyprus to compromise reaching an agreement with the occupied north part. Cypriot party leaders*

unanimously rejected leader of the Turkish Cypriot community Mustafa Akinci's proposal for co-management of hydrocarbons to the Cypriot administration, and the UN. Despite international calls to Turkey for abandoning its plans of violating the Cypriot EEZ and its sovereign rights, Turkish actions remain "unanswered." Announcement of Cypriot administration that arrest warrants have been issued against workers in the drillship are interpreted as spasmodic actions of a trapped state which cannot act decisively and effectively for protecting its sovereignty. Actually, Cyprus is trapped because it does not have a mechanism of power (military, diplomatic, economic etc) to force Turkey to withdraw its ships. Cyprus lacks of naval and air forces which could deter Turkey of violating Cypriot sovereign rights, while Greece appears reluctant in sending naval units in the region showing presence and exercising deterrence. The EU prepared a draft with sanctions against Turkey but the latter rejected them claiming that it will continue its activity. Turkish message is very clear; we are present in Cyprus, we are present in the energy "game" and nothing works leaving Turkey aside. In other words, energy security includes Turkey; otherwise eastern Mediterranean is not a stable and secure sea. A "hot" incident cannot be excluded. Despite current situation, Cyprus works systematically in order to become a major part of the East Mediterranean energy hub. It is favored not only by its natural gas deposits, but also by its strategic position in the "heart" of East Mediterranean Sea and of course of being an EU member state. The strategy of multilateral cooperation seems to be fruitful. Cyprus seeks to negotiate and reach agreements with its

neighboring countries regarding their EEZ expanding maritime cooperation and energy security. Turkey looks like being isolated from the energy game and its current aggressive reaction is attributed to this situation. It is certain that Turkey will not accept "fait accompli" in a region considered as part of its strategic interests. Cyprus improved its bilateral relations with the US, strengthened its defense cooperation with France, UK, and lately develops its defense and security relations with Germany. One could say that Cyprus strengthens defense cooperation with NATO leading countries. The US senate voted on the abolishment of the arms embargo in Cyprus but the term of forbidding Russians vessels from using Cypriot ports may create more problems than it would solve. As long as part of Cyprus remains under Turkish occupation and Turkish troops (equipped with heavy weapons) are deployed in the island, Cyprus faces an existing direct threat against its national security and sovereignty.



**GREECE:** July 15<sup>th</sup>, following talks with European Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis had another meeting with key cabinet officials whom he asked to focus on six key areas in curbing the impact of migration inflows. Topping the list of priorities outlined by Mitsotakis during his meeting with Citizens' Protection Minister Michalis Chrysochoidis, Alternate Migration Policy Minister Giorgos Koumoutsakos, and Shipping and Island Policy Ministers Yiannis Plakiotakis is the immediate improvement of living conditions in the country's reception centers for migrants and refugees with a

key focus on the protection of unaccompanied minors. Second priority is bolstering the guarding of the common borders of Greece and the EU, particularly its sea borders, with a comprehensive plan that puts European forces clearly under Greek control. Thirdly, Mitsotakis asked Ministers to overhaul the system of granting asylum by the end of the year with the aim of making it quicker and more effective. The fourth priority relates to the proper implementation of an agreement signed between the EU and Turkey in 2016 for migrant returns with the aim of easing pressure on the islands of the eastern Aegean. The fifth goal is related to the completion of works to improve an overcrowded migration reception center on Samos. Finally, Mitsotakis wants Greece to adopt European regulations relating to citizens' security. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- July 19<sup>th</sup>, the results of the two-day visit by Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias to Washington, where he met with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Adviser John Bolton and senior officials, have been welcomed in Athens as yet another indication of ever deepening US - Greek relations. In Dendias' comments after his meeting with both Pompeo and Bolton stressed the importance of further "*strengthening the strategic relationship*" between the two countries while, reports said, both fully understand Greece's concerns regarding Turkey's recent behavior. Moreover, influential Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, who also met Dendias, reportedly slammed Turkey Thursday for violating the rights of its own people by illegally drilling off Cyprus, violating Greek airspace, causing problems to the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarchate and

purchasing a Russian missile system despite Washington's objections. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- July 20<sup>th</sup>, Greece's new Defense Minister, Nikos Panagiotopoulos said Turkey's illegal gas drilling off Cyprus is testing the EU's credibility as a guardian of its members' energy interests in the Mediterranean. Panagiotopoulos said after talks with the Defense Minister of Cyprus on Friday that Greece is monitoring Turkey's activity in waters where Cyprus has exclusive economic rights with "*great concern*." He said the Turkish Government's "*expanding provocative and unlawful behavior*" in the island nation's territory leaves "*no room for complacency*." A Turkish vessel is drilling west of Cyprus and another is poised to start east of the island, which is ethnically divided between Greeks and Turks. The Turkish Government says it is acting to preserve its own energy reserve rights and those of Turkish Cypriots. The EU imposed sanctions on Turkey this week. (www.ekathimerini.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■:

*The new conservative Government looks well prepared for taking over power in the country. Ministers have presented immediate responses to sensitive fields such as security, healthcare, foreign affairs, and education. The new majority Government ensures political stability in a "strange" time period that security, diplomatic, and economic issues challenge Greek administration. The new Foreign Minister visited the US during the first week of his office demonstrating a strong relationship between the two states. Greek – Turkish relations are in a critical point due to Turkey's decision to violate*

*Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) aiming at conducting oil and gas drills. Moreover, Turkey maintains a hard rhetoric against Greece regarding its territorial and maritime sovereign rights. However, the Prime Minister has shown willingness to downsize tension by stating that “we have to live with Turkey, we are neighbors.” On the other hand, Turkish President Tayyip Recep Erdogan said that he is waiting for Mitsotakis “first move.” A crisis to Cyprus means a crisis to Greece forcing Armed Forces to deploy military, naval, and air units. Taking into consideration that Cyprus lacks of naval and air power it is Greece which will support the small and vulnerable island located in the East Mediterranean heart. Turkish fighter jets keep on violating Greek airspace. It is a fact that Greek political and military leadership is concerned over a potential incident with Turkey, especially if its drill ships appear within Greek waters. Strengthening of military cooperation between Greece and the US upgrades Greece’s strategic role in Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East as a western (US, EU, NATO) forward military base. On the other hand, Greece is concerned that this upgraded relation with the US may reinforce Turkish aggression in the Aegean Sea. Furthermore, Greece seeks to modernize its Armed Forces by receiving US military aid. It is a fact that Greek military force has been affected by the long economic crisis threatening the balance of power with Turkey. Security situation is of high risk due to an accidental or preplanned incident by Turkey and the complicated current situation in Cypriot EEZ (not likely within the summer touristic period).*



**KOSOVO:** July 19<sup>th</sup>, Kosovo Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, has on Friday offered his irrevocable resignation after being summoned as a suspect by the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office (SPO) for his role as former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) Commander during Kosovo war. Haradinaj, who during the war in Kosovo was KLA Commander of the Dukagjini region, made the announcement while addressing media after regular Government’s meeting on Friday. “I just informed the Government, that I have offered my irrevocable resignation as the Head of Government. The reason is because I have been summoned by the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office for questioning as a suspect,” Haradinaj said. He confirmed that he will appear before Hague Prosecutors next week for questioning, adding that he cannot travel to the Hague as Head of Kosovo Government, but only as ordinary citizen of Kosovo. “I will be questioned next week, and I have assessed that I cannot appear there as Head of Government, but only as citizen of Kosovo. To preserve the credibility of the Prime Minister’s post, I thought resignation is a right decision,” Haradinaj said adding that he will respect the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor’s office established to prosecute and try alleged crimes committed by KLA. “I will perform my duties and defend Kosovo as a warrior of my country,” he said. Haradinaj said that his Government will continue working until next election, explaining that all his obligations according to the Constitution are transferred to country’s President. This is the second time Haradinaj resigns as Prime Minister to face international justice. In 2005 Haradinaj resigned as after 100

days serving as Prime Minister after he was indicted by the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. After years of trial Haradinaj was acquitted of all charges. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- July 19<sup>th</sup>, the US Ambassador to Kosovo, Philip Kosnett, said the Kosovo Accreditation Agency's decision to withdraw accreditation from several higher education institutions *"was difficult, but correct."* Kosnett wrote on social media that universities exist to educate students for their benefit and that of society; not to provide jobs to unqualified individuals with connections. *"Why this political interference with the Accreditation Agency? Universities exist to educate students for their benefit and that of society – not to provide jobs to unqualified individuals with connections. The country needs a merit-based education system fair to all,"* Kosnett said, Gazeta Express reported. He said the US Embassy supports the decision of State Quality Council not to accredit three public universities – in Peja, Prizren and Mitrovica, and four private higher education institutions. *"The Kosovo Accreditation Agency's decision to withdraw accreditation from several higher education institutions was difficult, but correct. It is their role to make objective, standards-based decisions to ensure Kosovo's students get the quality education they deserve,"* Kosnett said. US Ambassador's reaction came after Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj announced actions to challenge the proposal of the Accreditation Agency and called members of the State Quality Council as *"mercenaries"* and *"bandits."* The EU Office in Kosovo reacted urging politics not to interfere the work of independent institutions. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- July 20<sup>th</sup>, Kadri Veseli, Speaker of Kosovo Parliament and Chairman of the biggest ruling coalition party, Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Kosovës - PDK), says his party accepts the resignation of Ramush Haradinaj as Prime Minister adding that early general election is inevitable. Veseli addressing media a day after Haradinaj offered his irrevocable resignation after being summoned by the Hague-based Specialist Prosecutor's Office for questioning as a suspect on war crimes said that the outgoing Prime Minister Haradinaj has not consulted his coalition partners on the decision to resign. Veseli said that Haradinaj's decision to resign is his personal decision adding that as leader of the biggest coalition party he will accept the resignation. Veseli said that Haradinaj has not consulted coalition partners on his surprising move. During a press conference on Saturday Veseli said that early general election is inevitable adding that his party (PDK), is ready for the election. Veseli said that he will consult other coalition partners and other opposition parties to set the election date. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT      :

*Rapid political developments in Kosovo due to Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj's resignation. Haradinaj has been summoned before the Kosovo Specialist Chamber based in Hague. Early parliamentary elections will be next step, according to the Parliament's Speaker Kadri Veseli. Kosovo keeps tension with Serbia in high levels excluding any chance for restarting Belgrade – Pristina talks. Ban of Serbian officials to enter north Kosovo populated mostly by Serbs,*

*Police operation in the north arresting Serbs, 100% tax on Serbian and Bosnian products, Kosovo Assembly resolution that Serbs committed genocide during 1998-1999 war, establishment of Kosovo Army, request for a special Court for Serbs undermining any possibility of negotiations with Serbia. As long as the EU (namely Germany) and US “spoil” Kosovo allowing it to act beyond accepted rules and international laws and agreements there is no chance of a peaceful mutual accepted resolution of the Kosovo case. There is a sense that the EU does not actually seek progress in the dialogue process between Serbia and Kosovo. Pristina does not hesitate to escalate tension even with an armed conflict. Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci stated that his state could be unified with Albania including parts of south Serbia (Presevo, Bujanovac and Medveja). Such statements are not only immature, but also put under risk peace and stability in the region. Thaci openly speaks for border change and more specific violent change. Only through normalization of relations with Serbia, Kosovo will be able to move forward namely to enter the UN, NATO, EU and to achieve a normal status of a state. Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration. Path towards the EU and NATO will be long and hard. Kosovo seeks its Army to be operating all over the country pushing NATO towards such direction. The presence of Kosovo Army in the north it is assessed of high security risk which may lead in armed violence.*



**MOLDOVA:** July 15<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister Maia Sandu had a meeting with

representatives of the mediators and observers in the “3+2” negotiation team. The discussions focused on the evaluation of the current stage of the Transnistrian settlement process. Sandu requested assistance from the group’s representatives in determining the Transnistrian party to eliminate in the near future the ban on traveling to the left bank for all citizens of Moldova. According to a Government communiqué, the Prime Minister stressed that the “5+2” negotiation group for the Transnistrian settlement should become a platform to help fight corruption and smuggling. “We have also discussed this in Kiev and I am glad that we have the same position in relation to this issue. The fight against corruption and smuggling in the Transnistrian region must be a priority. We will ensure that both state institutions and Government officials will no longer be involved in corruption and smuggling schemes with Tiraspol, as it had happened in the past. As long as the Transnistrian region will be a major source of illegal enrichment for some people, there will be no real progress in identifying a political solution,” Sandu said. In this context, Sandu mentioned the need to prolong the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM). Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Claus Neukirch, reiterated that securing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova, with a special status for the Transnistrian region, is the key factor in the mission’s work, but also the main goal of the “5+2” group. (www.moldova.org)

- July 27<sup>th</sup>, authorities in Chisinau intend to change Moldova from inside so as to be accepted into the EU as a reliable member with functional



democratic institutions, the Prime Minister, Maia Sandu said from Berlin after meeting German Chancellor, Angela Merkel. *“We want to relaunch the idealist project on development of Moldova. We shall not only say that we are Europeans. What we are proposing is to change Moldova from inside so that we can be accepted into EU as a trusted member with functional democratic institutions. More than ever, we rely on your support for transformation of Moldova into a European state that puts the interests of citizens at the top of the list of priorities,”* Sandu said. The Prime Minister said that the new Government has had a difficult task to rebuild the state and restore the trust of Moldovan citizens and strategic partners of Moldova. The Head of the Chisinau Government has also specified the need to clean Moldovan corruption and money laundering schemes, so that the state institutions function in the best interest of people. *“None of the transition states can immediately achieve these goals. What matters now is the direction we are heading and the reasons that guide us,”* Sandu said. (www.moldpres.md)

- July 20<sup>th</sup>, the extraordinary congress of the Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat Din Moldova - PDM) has been postponed for September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the national political council took a decision to this effect today. Following conferences held by the PDM territorial organizations, we have reached a conclusion that *“the Democratic Party needs a deeper reorganization, modernization, which must be prepared thoroughly and a longer period of time is necessary for this,”* it was announced. At the same time, the participants in the PDM national political council discussed the need to attract

personalities, specialists from various sectors, who will share the Democrats’ values and vision of Moldova’s development, so that the citizens are in the focus of the cares of the politicians from the Democratic Party. *“PDM needs a deep party reform, a process of cleaning, as well as of strengthening both in the territory and at the central level,”* the acting leader of the Democrats, Pavel Filip, said. The Council members ruled to postpone the summoning of the congress for September 7<sup>th</sup> and empowered the Standing Bureau to set up a working group due to prepare a draft on the modernization of the Democratic Party. Initially, the congress was convened for July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Another mandate received by the Standing Bureau deals with starting PDM’s preparations for the local elections, including the organization of the electoral staff. In this respect, the Council members referred also to strengthening the Democrats’ local teams and identifying potential candidates of PDM for eligible offices. (www.moldpres.md)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**  :

*Prime Minister Maia Sandu is rapidly promoting her agenda; strengthening of relations with Ukraine, implementation of Association Agreement with the EU, and closer cooperation with the US. Of course Russia will not remain just a passive observer in Moldova’s approach to the West; especially when Moldova is considered as a pivotal country for Russian national security. State institutions’ changes move rapidly by the Government in an effort of re-democratization of the country. Sandu has characterized her country as “a state in transition” implying that it has a democratic deficit which will be restored by the*

*new Government. It is expected that the EU tough policy against Moldova will also soften as a signal of support to the new Government which includes a pro-western agenda. Such support could be expressed by restarting micro-economic assistance. The ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine may affect Moldova; First of all Russia maintains military forces in Transnistrian ground and secondly it shares common borders with Ukraine which cannot be unnoticed by international stakeholders. The “Transnistria case” is always a “running sore” for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.*



**MONTENEGRO:** July 18<sup>th</sup>, banking sector is stable, while public debt level still poses a great challenge, said the Governor of the Central Bank of Montenegro, Radoje Zugic presenting Central Bank of Montenegro Annual Report for 2018 in the meeting of the Economy Committee. Commenting on the purchase of Societe Generale shares, Zugic said that the transaction would not produce market monopoly. Governor pointed out that the Central bank was committed to strengthening financial stability. *“Public debt level is still a challenge but consolidation measures are expected to produce a twist in 2020. Current public expenditure is being financed from the original revenues and that is a favorable circumstance,”* pointed out Zugic. Commenting on the third, *“vulnerable”* bank, Governor said that the bank’s solvency has soared to above 12%. *“We are carefully monitoring everything considered vulnerable. Previous experience will not happen again,”* he concluded. (www.cdm.com)

- July 20<sup>th</sup>, majority of the Montenegrin opposition parties, although already announcing boycott of the forthcoming parliamentary elections, are actually preparing for the new performance for the citizens by stating that they are going to require a technical Government which would be in charge of preparing the elections. Committee for Further Reform of Electoral and Other Legislation, on the other hand, functions without the opposition members and it is unknown whether they [members of the opposition parties] would ever join the Committee. In addition, the EU representatives are continuously insisting on the opposition to join the Committee. Political analyst Srdan Vukadinovic, believes it is good that the opposition parties accepted the fact that there will be no extraordinary parliamentary elections and that they should prepare themselves for the regular ones which are going to be held next year. *“Ever since 2016 the opposition has been continuously mentioning the new, extraordinary elections. Now they know that will not happen and they accepted the fact that the electoral cycle lasts for 4 years. I do not think opposition is going to boycott the elections, and I also think there will not be any technical Government.”* Vukadinovic continued *“opposition should return to the Committee on Further Reform of Electoral and Other Legislation, and it should do it for its own sake. Even if they do not return, the Committee will continue with its work, but there are some decisions which must be made by a two-thirds majority.”* Leader of the Civic Alliance (Gradanska Alijansa), Boris Raonic, claims the opposition is guilty of its own bad situation and that its negotiation position is now even worse than several months ago. *“It is incredible how it*

*[the opposition] managed to bring itself to such an unfavorable negotiation position. Maybe it was caused by the unaligned actions, coalitions, stories about seat divisions and internal disagreements,”* Raonic said. (www.cdm.me)

- July 21<sup>th</sup>, Independent MP Aleksandar Damjanovic invited the Government and the state’s President to come up with a proposal on a technical Government, which primary goal would be to implement a new electoral legislation and prevent the abuse of state resources for election purposes as soon as possible. *“It would be responsible for the Government and the state’s President,”* he said. According to him, coming autumn is the deadline for negotiations between the Government and the opposition in connection with the formation of a technical Government and changes in electoral legislation. He recalled that all opposition MPs signed a boycott of next elections unless they become fair and free. (www.vijesti.me)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Although EC Progress Report is assessed as a positive one, it raises specific concerns over media freedom, corruption and organized crime. Report is elaborating on specific cases signaling detailed research. Montenegro enters in a crucial crossroad regarding its EU future and specific reforms and actions should be implemented if it remains committed in its goal to access the EU by 2025. Political stability is re-establishing again since opposition has weakened its stance and ruling DPS rejected any idea of a technical Government claiming that elections will be held on time. Protesters movement has lost dynamics and ruling DPS is more stable. Nevertheless,*

*opposition insists on demanding establishment of a technical Government and early parliamentary elections. The EU and US strongly supports the President Djukanovic and the Montenegrin Government despite corruption accusations as being the only loyal partner committed to the Western orientation of the state. In other words the west is closing its eyes in lack of democratic values and rule of law due to geopolitical interests namely Russian influence. The Government promotes state’s political and economic stability which creates an almost ideal investment environment; However, the state needs more concrete reforms in the field of justice, rule of law, fight against corruption, money laundering, and organized crime, public administration transparency and accountability in order to become a stable and attractive investment environment. Montenegro shows activity within NATO trying to prove that it is an equal partner of the alliance with military capacity according to NATO standards. Moreover, it tries to modernize and strengthen its operational capabilities and in this context it raised its defense budget aiming at purchasing new assets such as armored vehicles.*



**NORTH MACEDONIA:** July 15<sup>th</sup>, the Head of the Special Prosecutor’s Office (SPO), Katica Janeva announced her resignation on Monday, saying it would be activated once political parties reach agreement over the Law on the Public Prosecutor’s Office and elect her successor. *“When all political parties in Parliament elected me Special Prosecutor, I promised to myself and the citizens of North Macedonia to do the job in the interest of the rule*

*of law, fight against crime and corruption in the country. I took the post in exceptionally difficult circumstances, fully aware of the task as hand,”* said Janeva in a press release published on the website of the Special Prosecutor’s Office. She said it was an honor to serve the country and head a professional team of Prosecutors, investigators and staff committed to their tasks. *“I have been following the media reports on the negotiations by political parties on the future of the SPO for months. Today, I would like to inform the public that I will not allow my name to be used as someone’s alibi, holding the destiny of SPO and my country’s European integration hostage,”* said Janeva. The Prosecutor said the resignation would be activated once political parties come to an agreement over the law and elect her successor. (www.nezavisen.mk)

- July 17<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is preparing a draft law aiming at reforming its diplomatic service due to numerous changes which have caused a legal confusion and a distortion of the whole system. *“With the new law, the diplomatic service will be completely reformed. It will establish a new professional diplomatic service in accordance with the Vienna convention for diplomatic and consular relations, and in accordance with all international regulations regarding diplomacy,”* the Ministry announced. (www.meta.mk)

- July 19<sup>th</sup>, meeting of political leaders was canceled by the Government announced today due to the absence of the leader of the largest opposition party, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација –

Демократска партија за македонско национално единство - VMRO-DPMNE), Hristijan Mickoski. Government sources said that they do not concede to ultimatums. The meeting in question was supposed to discuss issues such as Special Prosecutor’s Office, census and the electoral code, but Mickoski had declared that the only thing he would be willing to discuss was snap elections. (www.nezavisen.mk)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*VMRO-DPMNE hardens its rhetoric demanding early elections, while the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev tried to show somekind of compromise by calling leaders of parliament parties in a meeting to discuss various topics. VMRO-DPMNE leader refused to join the meeting claiming that the only topic for talks is snap elections. Under these circumstances, it should be noted that Zaev and his Government are not fully stable, although there are not thoughts for early elections. Following the European “cold shower” citizens have started to focus on Government’s failures in fight against corruption and organized crime, social care measures, and foreign policy. In other words, domestic politics are not in favor of ruling SDSM and Zoran Zaev. He based his political survival and dominance in the triptych “resolution of name issue with Greece – NATO accession – opening of EU accession talks.” Although the first one was successfully accomplished and the second is proceeding rapidly the third one has stuck. Consequently, VMRO-DPMNE is increasing its pressure for a caretaker Government and snap elections. The threats of nationalism and political instability are covering North Macedonia’s sky. The country*

*should focus on its economy and major administrative and judicial reforms, fight against corruption and impunity aiming at reaching the EU standards.*



**ROMANIA:** July 15<sup>th</sup>, eight Ministers from the current cabinet are to be replaced as the ruling Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) was met today in an Executive Committee to discuss the topic, Rfi.ro reported. One of the Ministers that are said to be replaced is the Foreign Affairs one, Teodor Meleşcanu. Calin Popescu Tariceanu, the leader of the junior governing coalition partner Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE) confirmed in a TV show that Meleşcanu would be replaced. He could be replaced by Ramona Manescu, according to political sources quoted by Rfi.ro. Manescu, a former MEP of the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal - PNL), was tasked last year with organizing the visit of Prime Minister Viorica Dancila in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Other cabinet members that could be replaced are the Education Minister Ecaterina Andronescu, Development Minister Daniel Suci, Internal Affairs Minister Carmen Dan, Transport Minister Razvan Cuc, and Agriculture Minister Petre Daea, according to sources quoted by Rfi.ro. The junior coalition part ALDE holds four seats in the cabinet, namely those of the foreign affairs ministry, occupied by Teodor Meleşcanu, the Environment Ministry, led by GrațIELA GavriLEscu, the Energy Ministry, led by Anton Anton, and the Ministry for the Relationship with the Parliament, led by Viorel Ilie. PSD brought changes to the Government in

April this year, when it decided to replace Justice Minister Tudorel Toader, EU Funds Minister Rovana Plumb and Diaspora Minister Natalia Intotero. (www.romania-insider.com)

- July 17<sup>th</sup>, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has decided to appoint Romanian Mircea Geoana as the next Deputy Secretary General. Geoana will replace Rose Gottemoeller from the United States, who took up her position in October 2016, according to a NATO announcement. The change will become effective in mid-October 2019.



Next NATO Deputy Secretary General,  
Mircea Geoana  
(Photo source: www.nato.int)

Mircea Geoana will thus become the Romanian with the highest position in an international organization. *“I am happy to announce the appointment of Mircea Geoana as the next Deputy Secretary General. He is a staunch advocate of the transatlantic bond and will bring long experience as a statesman and diplomat to this post. He will be the first Romanian to hold this senior office,”* Stoltenberg said. Mircea Geoana is the founder and President of the Aspen Institute Romania. He previously served as President of the Romanian Senate, Foreign Affairs Minister, and Romania’s Ambassador to

the US. Geoana was the leader of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD), the biggest political party in Romania, from 2005 until 2009. He also ran for President in 2009 (defeated by Traian Basescu). (www.romania-insider.com)

- July 19<sup>th</sup>, Romania's Constitutional Court rejected two initiatives for amending the Constitution promoted by the ruling party Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) and the main opposition parties National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal - PNL) and Save Romania Union (Uniunea Salvați România - USR), Mediafax reported. The Court's judges unanimously decided that forbidding amnesty and pardoning for corruption crimes, which was included in both projects, exceeds the limits for amending the Constitution. The ruling coalition PSD - Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE) and the main opposition parties PNL and USR drafted two legislative initiatives for amending the Constitution which they submitted to the Constitutional Court at the beginning of July. Both projects aim to implement the results of the referendum for justice initiated by president Klaus Iohannis, which was validated by the Romanian voters on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Romanians said at the referendum that they agreed to banning amnesty and pardoning for corruption and that they also agreed to ban the Government from changing sensitive justice legislation by emergency ordinances. In their draft bill for amending the Constitution, PNL and USR added that people convicted to jail should be banned from being elected in the Parliament, European Parliament and from running for President. A

somehow similar provision was included in the draft bill initiated by PSD-ALDE. However, after the Constitutional Court's decision on Thursday, both projects will return to the Parliament, where they will be changed. Senate President and ALDE leader Calin Popescu Tariceanu had a harsh reaction after the Court's decision saying that President Klaus Iohannis should resign immediately, as his initiative was unconstitutional. (www.romania-insider.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** ■ :

*Romanian politics are in a non-stop dynamic move. The Prime Minister Viorica Dancila is reshuffling the Government once again by changing at least eight Ministers. It could not be excluded that change of Ministers could become a new field of confrontation between Dancila and the President Klaus Iohannis. Political parties are on talks and backstage movements in order to choose candidates for the coming presidential elections scheduled for November 2019 (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the first round and November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the second one). Ruling coalition (PSD – ALDE) looks for a strong candidacy against current President Klaus Iohannis. Defeat of PSD in recent European elections makes things more complicated for Socialists. The EU Justice Commissioner said recently that triggering of article 7 of the EU Treaty against Romania it is not an option at the moment strengthening the idea that something has changed in Romanian politics. Both, ruling coalition PSD and ALDE on the one hand and opposition PNL and USR on the other presented draft laws for amending the Constitution banning amnesty and pardoning for corruption crimes, as*

Romanian citizens decided on the May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 referendum. However, the Constitutional Court rejected both drafts as unconstitutional raising questions for Iohannis initiative to call the referendum. Romania according to NATO strategic and operational planning has become an advanced base close to Russia. Its strategic importance and role has been upgraded and high level NATO exercises take place in its territory. Consequently, Russia reacts mainly against the NATO military base in Deveselu where anti-missile defense systems have been deployed. Temporarily deployment of THAAD system, a modern high-capability system, may raise tension in the region. Romania keeps strengthening its Armed Forces; in this context it was announced that 5 more F-16 fighter jets will be purchased added to the existing 12 (operational request for a total of 36 fighter jets).



**SERBIA:** July 15<sup>th</sup>, the representatives of Serbia and their guests from France who arrived as a part of the French President Emmanuel Macron's delegation signed 18 deals on Monday, including agreements on the delivery of Mistral air defense missiles, an infrared homing MANPAD, and a letter on intentions for the realization of the Belgrade Metro, the FoNet news agency reported. Other documents include cinematography and the status of the French school in Belgrade. Also, the two delegations signed agreements on cooperation between the notaries and the public executors. The other signed documents include one on cooperation between Serbia's Education Ministry, French Embassy and French Institute in Serbia in fighting prejudices and discrimination in

education, and the agreement on teaching French in Serbia. Speaking in Serbian next to the monument of Gratitude to France at the Belgrade's central Kalemegdan Park, Macron, said France would never forget what Serbia did during the First World War, N1 reported. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- July 17<sup>th</sup>, the Defense Minister Aleksandar Vulin told the Commander-in-Chief of the NATO Joint forces in Europe General Todd Walters that the "optimal level" of cooperation between Serbia and NATO is the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program and that his country would remain militarily neutral, the Beta news agency reported on Wednesday. The two talked about the possibilities for further cooperation within the PfP and the adopted Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). Vulin told Walters that the "army of Kosovo" and "the attempts to create the Greater Albania" are the most dangerous threats to the Balkans peace. General Walters praised the Defense Ministry and the Armed Forces of Serbia contribution to multinational operations under the EU and UN auspices, particularly the participation of Serbia's soldiers in the mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and reiterated that NATO respects Serbia's neutrality. Walters also met with Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic and the Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff General Milan Mojsilovic. The NATO General said that communication between the Alliance-led KFOR force in Kosovo and respective Serbia's authorities "is possible at every moment, without delay," because that "is important for preserving regional stability." (www.rs.n1info.com)

- July 20<sup>th</sup>, President Aleksandar Vucic said on Saturday that resignation of Kosovo Prime

Minister, Ramush Haradinaj was a political ploy by which he wanted to gain more popularity in Kosovo and he added that Serbia must react calmly and steadily to these developments, without euphoria. Kosovo Prime Minister resigned on Friday after he was summoned as a suspect by The Hague-based Special Court for war crimes committed by Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during the 1998 - 1999 Kosovo war. He said he was not indicted by The Hague court, but was called to give a statement as a suspect, and he decided to leave the post because as the Prime Minister he could cause damage to Kosovo. But, Serbian President deems that there is no reason for euphoria after these developments. “We believe that there is no reason for euphoria, not because we think positively of Haradinaj, but because we review all facts and all consequences coming after this, especially how will Albanians and the international community act towards the Serb people and the Serb community in Kosovo,” he stressed. According to Vucic, the continuation of Belgrade - Pristina dialogue on stabilization of the relations is crucial for peace and stability. “But, we are afraid that political developments in Kosovo will further delay dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. He will go to the Hague next week, then he will be released after 48 hours to return as a great hero of the Albanian people and his popularity will double,” said Vucic. “He wants to secure in this way, and I’m not sure if this is only his own wish, a landsliding victory of the hardest Albanian option in the election which will, as it seems, take place in the end of September or in October,” Vucic continued. In the meantime, said Serbian President, creating a majority without the Serb List will become a priority. He deems that Serbia will be pressured to

recognize Kosovo’s independence and that “people in Serbia should know that.” (www.rs.n1info.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** :

*The country has entered in a period of fragile political stability due to citizens’ reactions against governmental practices regarding human rights, media freedom, and elections transparency. Although protesters insist on organizing protests, it seems that opposition reactions have lost momentum. President Alexandar Vucic announced that elections (parliamentary and local) will be held on March or April 2020. Opposition said that if its requests will not be fulfilled, elections will be boycotted. Apart from that Vucic said that he will withdraw from his party (SNS) leadership next year. Regarding Belgrade – Pristina dialogue there is nothing to be expected in the near future; the whole process has reached a deadlock. French President Emmanuel Macron paid a two days visit in Belgrade seeking to restart Serbia – Kosovo dialogue. Finally it was said that next Belgrade – Pristina meeting will be held on September. Macron’s visit could be interpreted as an effort of putting Germany to background (but still having a leading role) in order to make things move again. Armed Forces are in high operational readiness without any deployment of units across Serbia – Kosovo border. Serbia strengthens its relations with Russia (and China) seeking stronger support regarding Kosovo case. Security situation is complex and uncertain especially after Police operations in Northern Kosovo (with Serbian majority population) which endangers the possibility of armed violence. None*



*could predict Serbia's reaction in a possible accidental or pre-planned (provocation including) incident in Northern Kosovo against local Serbs. One should have in mind that top state officials have said repeatedly in public that Serbia will protect Kosovo Serbs by any means including security and military force. At the moment, Serbia looks like acting in accordance with the international law aiming at reducing tension in the region. In other words state's leadership is acting in a "reasonable" and "wise" way avoiding mistakes of the past which have isolated Serbia from the international community. Serbia pays special attention in improving operational capabilities of its Armed Forces declaring towards all sides that they are the power of the state.*



**SLOVENIA:** July 15<sup>th</sup>, the parliamentary Home Policy Committee discussed joint Slovenian - Italian border Police patrols at an emergency session with the opposition arguing that these were misguided and could give an excuse to Italy to carry out its threat and put up a border fence. Jernej Vrtovec, Deputy of opposition New Slovenia – Christian Democrats (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski Demokrati - NSi), which called the session, labeled joint border patrols as a mistake with long-term consequences. He argued that in this way Slovenia would give Italy an excuse to consider other, stiffer measures to control migration, including erecting a fence on the most exposed sections of the border. *“Italy is a sovereign country, it can build, but this is not in the European spirit. Slovenia must send a clear message to Italy that such surveillance would seriously impact on people's lives on the border,”*

he said. Concerns about Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini's threat to erect a fence and reinstate Police checks on the border with Slovenia were also raised by the Mayors of border communities of Nova Gorica and Rence-Vogrsko, Klemen Miklavic and Tarik Zigon. However, Interior Minister Bostjan Poklukar rushed to assure everyone present that joint patrols were not reinstating border controls, saying that most citizens would not even notice them. Foreign Minister Miro Cerar labeled opposition's claims as misleading and he said that this measure was a step to prevent Italy from introducing border checks. Slovenia cooperates with Police forces of all neighboring countries and continues to conduct joint border patrols with Croatia and Hungary. Italy maintains such patrols with its other neighbors as well. The initiative for joint border patrols was made by Italy in late April and four joint patrols became operational on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. Although most ruling coalition Deputies argued that joint patrols are an effective way to provide security, Masa Kociper from the coalition Party of Alenka Bratusek (Stranka Alenke Bratušek - SAB) does not favor joint patrols. Minister Poklukar argued that Slovenia has already exercised effective control of the Schengen border, something that he said was confirmed by FRONTEX and EUROPOL in their assessments, as well as by the fact that Italy returned a mere 169 migrants to Slovenia this year. The border with Croatia is being secured by various Police units, backed up by troops, drones and helicopters. The Committee failed to endorse the NSi's proposals to call on the Government to take all measure needed to effectively secure the border with Croatia, and to take steps to restrict Slovenia's asylum law. ([www.sta.si](http://www.sta.si))

- July 18<sup>th</sup>, the Slovenian Government has adopted a framework of migration strategy that addresses both legal migration as a major source of much needed labor, as well as illegal migration as a source of security threats and challenges with regard to integration. The strategy -the first such document in Slovenia- deals with migration “*over a long-term horizon in a multi-faceted and comprehensive way, prioritizing a better understanding of all aspects of migration,*” the Government said. In illegal migration, Slovenia plans to focus on fast verification of eligibility for international protection, effective return of such people, and elimination of sources of risk to national security. The Government said that “*orderly and safe*” migration is beneficial for everyone, while illegal migration “*threatens lives, security, health, and basic human rights of migrants*” strengthening the anti-immigration feelings in host countries. For legal migration, the strategy aims to focus on eliminating structural imbalances on the labor market by attracting foreign workers as well as adopting concrete measures to entice Slovenians who have moved abroad to return. The document was drafted by a task force that included Ministries, law enforcement and intelligence services and will be followed up by action plans as well as a more detailed strategy for economic migration. Non-Governmental Organizations dealing with migration welcomed the adoption of the strategy and said they had been involved in the drafting of the document. (www.sta.si)

- July 18<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister, Marjan Sarec put forward Janez Lenarcic, Slovenia's Permanent Representative to the EU, as candidate for European Commissioner. The Government is

expected to discuss the nomination tomorrow but it is unclear what will happen, as the Social Democrats (Socialni Demokrati, Slovene - SD) were very critical of the decision, while other partners refused to comment. “*He is experienced, he knows how the EU operates, and he has been working in diplomacy for a long time. This is what we presently need,*” Sarec said about Lenarcic. A seasoned diplomat, Lenarcic has also served as Ambassador to the OSCE, as Director of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, as Secretary of Slovenia's UN Permanent Mission, and as Diplomatic Adviser to the highest state officials. He also noted that his List of Marjan Sarec (Lista Marjana Šarca - LMS) and the fellow coalition SD had each secured two MEP seats as the most successful coalition parties in the recent EU election, which is why he would not have found it fair to have the candidate come from either of the two parties. Sarec is confident that the fellow coalition parties will also recognize the national interest of Slovenia and the importance of unity. While the coalition partners Modern Centre Party (Stranka Modernega Centra - SMC), the Alenka Bratusek Party (Stranka Alenke Bratušek - SAB) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (Demokratična Stranka Upokojencev Slovenije - DeSUS) have declined to comment, SD is openly critical. “*The unilateral decision by the Prime Minister is an unpleasant message,*” SD said in a press release. Party leader Dejan Zidan said that Lenarcic did not enjoy the party's support. He said that the SD's reservations will be evident “*in all votes. There was an agreement that talks would still be conducted this afternoon, but we were faced with this information, his decision,*” SD was promoting nomination of its MEP Tanja Fajon as candidate

for European Commissioner. Sarec said that he could hardly imagine Fajon being a member of the Commission after having denied support to new Commission President Ursula von der Leyen publicly. The party believes that “*democratic legitimacy*” is the key in nominating European Commissioner; anything else is unacceptable to the SD, the party said in a press release. Meanwhile, Franc Trcek, a Left Party (Levica) MP, the minority Government's partner in the opposition, said that Lenarcic is not enough as a “*political and stately name for the demanding times the EU faces.*” Opposition parties are yet to respond, however, the response of MEP Romana Tomc of the Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska Demokratska Stranka - SDS) is an indication that they may not approve. She found it unacceptable that this nomination was a unilateral decision by the Prime Minister. (www.sta.si)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** ■:

*Although Slovenia enjoys a relative political stability, the minority Government of Marjan Sarec has entered in a period of fragile balance due to the Left party announcement that it will re-assessed its support towards the ruling coalition. Left party is the key factor for Government's stability and viability by supporting it in the Parliament. Without the Left's support the Government would be toppled and early elections should be called. Apart from that, the Prime Minister has to address the strong criticism of his ruling coalition partner SD which reacts in Sarec's unilateral decision for the European Commissioner candidate. Under these circumstances Prime Minister Marjan Sarec does*

*not exclude a confidence vote together with the 2020 – 2021 budget adoption by the Parliament. Sarec seeks to bear his partners responsibilities towards the Government's support and either to stabilize his ruling coalition or to call early elections. At the moment it is assessed that none of the ruling coalition parties wish snap elections, however political developments in coming autumn could not be excluded. Sarec has been proved of being flexible in Slovenia's politics so far achieving to balance adequately between different political trends. Looking in the future and next parliamentary elections he seeks to unify political forces belong to the ALDE family against SDS which keeps on being the most powerful political force in the country. The Government has to address several internal social issues (increase of minimum wage, health care, pensions etc). Border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia remains active with low scale skirmishes not excluded periodically. Slovenia implies that the ongoing border dispute may affect its decision regarding Croatia's membership candidacy in Schengen Zone. European Court of Justice (ECJ) has started its hearing for the case and both countries presented their arguments. It is stressed that relations between Croatia and Slovenia are in low level and an “underworld war” is ongoing (at political, diplomatic and intelligence context). The issue of illegal migrants entering Slovenia mainly from Croatia is high in the agenda lately. The Government deployed military force to support Police tasks. Announcement of the Italian Minister of Interior that he plans to build a fence in the Italian – Slovenian borders has brought several reactions. The Slovenian Armed Forces face problems mainly in the field of modern equipment and manning. The annual report on the*

*Armed Forces operational readiness released by the Armed Forces Chief of Staff is disappointing since it assessed that the Armed Forces have limited operational capabilities in war time namely they cannot accomplish their mission. The med-term 2018 – 2023 defense program it could improve situation, but under current political situation it is doubtful if it will be implemented to the end.*



**TURKEY:** July 16<sup>th</sup>, Turkey has said punitive EU measures against it will not deter it from continuing to search for oil and gas off the coast of Cyprus. On Monday, the Foreign Ministers of the EU agreed to call off high-level political meetings, suspend negotiations on an aviation deal and reduce EU accession funding earmarked for Turkey. The Ministers of the 28-member bloc, of which Cyprus is a member, also invited the European Investment Bank to review its lending activities in Turkey, notably with regard to sovereign-backed lending. In a statement on Tuesday, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said the EU's moves *“will not affect in the slightest our country's determination to continue hydrocarbon activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.”* The Ministry said that the bloc's failure to mention Turkish Cypriots in its decisions *“showed how biased and partisan the EU is on the subject of Cyprus.”* In recent years, the discovery of huge gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean has set off a race to tap underwater resources, sparking a dispute between Turkey and Cyprus which joined the EU in 2004. Turkey claims to have exploring rights off the island, either through its own continental shelf or in zones where Turkish Cypriots have equal rights

over any finds with Greek Cypriots. Cyprus rejects the claim, saying that assertion is not only inconsistent with international law, but that Turkey would not accept any international dispute settlement mechanism where its claims could be put to the test. *“Turkey seems to be decisive about its political position in the Eastern Mediterranean and says that it will continue its activities in there like the other players in the region,”* Al Jazeera's Sinem Koseoglu, reporting from Istanbul, said. Turkey's Yavuz ship recently arrived off eastern Cyprus, becoming the second ship to conduct energy exploratory activities off the coast of Cyprus. The other Turkish vessel, the Fatih, is located off the western coast of the island in an area the Republic of Cyprus claims is its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the maritime zone in which it has rights over its natural resources. ([www.aljazeera.com](http://www.aljazeera.com))

- July 18<sup>th</sup>, NATO's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg praised Turkey's role in the Alliance hours after the US formally announced excluding Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet program due to the purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system, noting that relations between Turkey and the bloc are not restricted to the program. Speaking at the Aspen Institute's annual security forum in Colorado, Stoltenberg said he is concerned over Turkey's expulsion, as he highlighted the country's countless contributions to the bloc. *“I am concerned about the consequences of the Turkish decision because it means Turkey will not be part of the F-35 program,”* he said. *“It is not good; bad for all of us,”* he added. The US announced it is removing Turkey from the F-35 stealth fighter program, following through on threats to do so over

Ankara's purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system. Ankara called on Washington to correct its decision, which it said will irreparably damage relations between the two countries. *"Turkey's contribution to NATO runs much deeper and much broader than the F-35. That is important,"* said Stoltenberg, adding the international coalition in Syria was able to defeat DAESH *"because of the contributions of Turkey. We used the bases, infrastructure and Turkey played a key part in that fight."* He added Turkish troops are contributing to different missions and operations, citing Kosovo and Afghanistan. He also said that no other NATO member has raised the exclusion of Turkey from the F-35 program *"because we all see that we are dependent on each other."* Stoltenberg reiterated that the S-400 could not become part of NATO's shared missile defense but Turkey has aircraft and radars that would remain part of the system. *"S-400, is not possible to integrate into the integrated NATO air defense and missile system, which is about sharing radar image, about joint air policing, which is about shared capabilities. And Turkey has not asked for that,"* Stoltenberg said. *"My responsibility is partly to try to help solve the issue. But as long as the issue is not solved, we need to minimize negative consequences,"* he added. The White House announced on Wednesday that it is no longer possible for Turkey to be a part of the F-35 program and that the Turkish personnel taking part in the program would soon leave the country. (www.dailysabah.com)

- July 18<sup>th</sup>, US President Donald Trump said on Thursday his administration has not ruled out imposing sanctions on Turkey over its purchase of

a Russian air defense system. *"It is a very, very difficult situation for a lot of reasons,"* he told reporters in the Oval Office before a meeting with Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands. *"So, we are looking at it. We will see what we do. We have not announced that yet."* His remarks came a day after his administration said it was removing Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet program, a move that had been long threatened and expected after Ankara began accepting delivery of Russia's S-400 air defense system. The White House said on Wednesday that Turkey's decision to buy the Russian S-400 air defence system *"renders its continued involvement with the F-35 impossible."* *"The F-35 cannot coexist with a Russian intelligence-collection platform that will be used to learn about its advanced capabilities,"* the White House statement said, referring to the S-400 air defense system as a means for Russia to probe US capabilities. The White House, however, sought to downplay the effects of the decision on the US relationship with Turkey, saying that Washington still *"greatly values"* its strategic relationship with Ankara. A spokesman for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed *"unease"* on Thursday over Washington's decision to remove Turkey from the joint strike fighter program, broadcaster CNN Turk said. Erdogan spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said relations between the NATO allies could not remain healthy with unilateral decisions, it said. Erdogan has previously said he did not believe Washington would impose sanctions over the issue since the two countries are *"strategic allies."* (www.aljazeera.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Turkish – US relations has entered in a new phase after the start of S-400 advanced air defense system deliveries by Russia. The US closely follows situation expelling Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet program.. The threat of sanctions is still on the table, although the Turkish administration worked systematically last two weeks in order to convince public opinion that the US President backs down from his firm stance. However, taking into consideration that Turkey is a pivotal country enjoying geopolitical importance and having one of the largest militaries (the 2<sup>nd</sup> within NATO) it is hard to assess that the US seek a full rift with its NATO ally. On the contrary, there are still open official and unofficial channels of communication working on a mutual accepted compromise. The US needs Turkey and the opposite, especially in a period where Middle East is in turbulence. Economic recession does not help the Turkish President to strengthen his position internally undermining his political power. Turkey is heading in a major economic crisis. Turkey faces several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs and journalists are in custody or convicted by the state Courts. Local and international observers claim the country moves towards an authoritarian regime with thousands of citizens being persecuted. EC Progress Report on Turkey was disappointing “freezing” any further development regarding its accession process. Moreover, the EU has presented a draft of imposing sanctions to Turkey due to illegal drilling for gas and oil off Cyprus. Turkish Armed Forces declares its readiness to intervene militarily in Syria, eastern of Euphrates river reinforcing their troops. According to information the invasion and attack against*

*Syrian Kurd YPG is imminent. Such an operation without the US “green light” may further deteriorate relations of the two countries. Operation “Claw” against PKK in north Iraq has entered in a new phase inaugurating operation “Claw 2”. The state demonstrates decisively its leading role in the wider region of the Middle East, Southeast Europe, and East Mediterranean implementing its doctrine for a diligent capability development effort to be able to fight two multi-front, inter-state armed conflicts while being able to simultaneously carry on large-scale counterterrorism operations at home and beyond borders. Kurdish question is a major security threat for Turkey affecting stability, peace and even unity of the state. In Eastern Mediterranean Turkey continues its drilling operations with two ships (Fatih and Yavuz) maintaining a tense situation. Turkey is determined to react even with violence if its interests are harmed. The cost so far, for Turkey, is zero achieving simultaneously to question Cypriot sovereign rights. EU declaration for imposing sanctions against Turkey seems not enough to force Turkey to back down. It is assessed that Turkey is fully determined to escalate tension in the region including armed violence (if it is necessary) aiming at securing its interests. Taking into consideration that Cyprus and Greece act in coordination and the latter guarantees defense and security of Cyprus it cannot be excluded an accidental or pre-planned “hot incident” in Cyprus or the Aegean Sea (not likely scenario during summer).*






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**ISSN: 2654-0304**

**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. Low tension incidents.
-  Imminent major incidents regarding stability and security. Violent incidents or armed violence in specific regions. Ongoing tension or crisis. High security risk.
-  Evolving or ongoing crisis including major armed violence or violent/armed conflict. Civil, inter-state or non –state actors war.