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**Hermes Institute of  
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# ***SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AT A GLANCE***



***SOUTHEAST EUROPE DIRECTORATE***

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

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

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

### **“HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE**

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**ALBANIA:** June 12<sup>th</sup>, the Deputy Minister of Interior, Rovena Doda, claimed that there has been no official request from any EU member country, or from the European Commission, for establishing a refugee camp in Albania. According to Doda *“There has been absolutely no request from any EU member country, or from the European Commission for building a camp in Albania to host refugees. In Tirana we have an asylum center, which is not a camp, but an institution based on the EU system.”* For several days there is a debate in Albania about the housing of the refugees, but in reality Albania does not yet have any official request from the European Union, although the Government leaks unofficially its readiness to correspond in such a request. Since January 2018 about 2,300 illegal immigrants have entered in Albania. (www.top-channel.tv)

- June 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>, On June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 the Prime Minister Edi Rama met with the President of the Republic of Albania Ilir Meta informing him for various topics. Among other Rama informed the President for the ongoing talks regarding a possible agreement over maritime borders with Greece. One day later Meta stated *“I want to underline the importance of this matter, because it is very important for both countries, not only because we need to leave behind an old problem, but also because we have to open the perspective for managing the maritime assets. This is why all of the President’s decisions will be according to the Constitution. Rama did not inform me about the progress of the negotiations, because he is not directly responsible or a negotiator of this matter. We made an evaluation of this situation, and discussed the perspective for progressing with a possible final solution.”* (www.top-channel.tv)

- June 15<sup>th</sup>, the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas appeared positive in the opening of conditioned EU accession negotiations with Albania and F.Y.R.O.M. According to him Albania has made visible progress, carrying out ambitious reforms in the judiciary. *“Naturally, the EU accession is conditioned by countries that fulfill the criteria. Our focus is on liberal democracy in a functional state, based on the rule of law. Some countries have made progress, such as F.Y.R.O.M. Albania has also made progress with the ambitious judiciary reforms. This is why I am optimistic about opening conditioned accession negotiations for these two countries. If we don’t see their perspective, all their other reforms will be nullified,”* Maas said. The German Foreign Minister claimed that if there will be no progress in the accession of Western Balkan countries, the consequences will be fatal. (www.top-channel.tv)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*The Albanian Government tries to accelerate its reforms towards the European integration receiving positive signals from the EU member states. However a lot must be done while the EU is closely monitoring situation. A potential agreement with Greece regarding bilateral disputes such as the maritime borders between the two countries would facilitate the EU opening accession talks. Corruption and organized crime remain the most significant problems of the state. Security situation stable without major incidents or challenges.*



**BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:** June 11<sup>th</sup>, Social Democratic Party’s (Socijaldemokratska Partija

Bosne i Hercegovine - SDP) candidate for the Bosniak member of Bosnia's tripartite Presidency and a representative in the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of B&H Denis Becirovic commended Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic statements that Serbia will have next year the strongest army in the region. According to Becirovic this is an alarming signal for all countries in the region. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic announces that Serbia will have the strongest army in the region next year. *"Such statements are a serious warning for all countries in the region including Bosnia & Herzegovina. Instead of Vucic and his associates devoting themselves to building lasting peace, economic development, construction of schools, hospitals, kindergartens...they are dreaming of large armies. The arms race is not the way towards a safer future for the region; on the contrary it is a recurrence of dangerous hegemonic policies from the 1990's,"* Becirovic said. The Bosnian politician paid special attention to the Agreement on sub-regional Arms Control, signed in Florence in 1996, which derives from of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The goal of adopting the agreement is, among other things, to achieve a balanced and stable level of the armed forces of the signatories maintaining an accepted military balance. Becirovic underlined the need for respecting this agreement which should be a priority for all States. However he did not hesitate to link Vucic's statements with the operational capabilities of B&H Armed Forces. *"Vucic's statements are an alarm to ask how strong and equipped the B&H Armed Forces are. The budget allocated to our army is inadequate, we have a problem with personnel, outdated equipment, corruption...Can the state of B&H allow itself to have this Unemployed Armed Forces? Isn't it humiliating that members of the Armed Forces of*

*B&H do not have collective insurance? Increasing the budget, bringing new equipment and modernization of the Armed Forces of B&H should be our priority, because the development of the economy and the attraction of investors can be achieved only in a stable and secure state. How can investors be convinced that their investments are safe if we do not have an army that can be a guarantor of peace and security?"*Becirovic said. (www.klix.ba)



SDP candidate for Presidential elections Denis  
Becirovic

(Photo source: www.sdp.ba)

- June 14<sup>th</sup>, Minister of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina Dragan Mectic stated that B&H will have nothing left to close its border if its Western neighbors do so, because as long as B&H remains a transit country, the situation can be under control. To date, 6,513 illegal migrants have entered B&H; 292 of them have been accepted by neighboring countries (mostly Croatia) through the readmission process, while 517 have been handed over to other countries with which there is a readmission agreement. Mektić claimed that there is no significant increase in migrants. He also said that B&H has so far approved about two million Euros for the rehabilitation of the migrant crisis while he announced reinforcement of border force with additional Police officers from the Republika Srpska (RS) and Brcko District who

will guard the eastern border of the state. (www.klix.ba)

- June 17<sup>th</sup>, five parties from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) entity taking part in the negotiations on Bosnia's Election Law reached an agreement on a Draft Law on Electoral Units and the Number of FB&H Parliamentary Mandates. The parties are: the Democratic Action Party (Stranka demokratske akcije - SDA), the Union for a Better Future (Savez za bolju budućnost BiH - SBB), the Social Democratic Party (Socijaldemokratska Partija Bosne i Hercegovine - SDP), the Democratic Front (Demokratska fronta - DF), and the Our Party (Naša stranka - NS) offered their support to the Draft. One of the main negotiators in the Election Law change, the Croat Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine - HDZ B&H), however, did not take part in these negotiations. *"Representatives of these five parties agreed on the text of the Law which is completely in line with the FB&H Constitution and which fulfils the principles of the Ljubic ruling. It is also harmonized with the recommendations of the Venice Commission,"* Head of SDP's Caucus in the FB&H Parliament Elvir Karajbic said. He said the Draft Law was not directed against anyone, but enables all FB&H citizens to elect and be elected in the FB&H Parliament and it equalizes the vote value adding that this Law removes electoral discrimination for the first time in 20 years. *"We call upon the HDZ BiH to support this Draft Law because the current Law which is in force provides no possibility for any other solution,"* Karabajic said. (www.ba.n1info.com, www.klix.ba)

*Country faces several functional and institutional problems. Consequently political fragility maintains permanent uncertainty and institutional mistrust. General elections have been scheduled for October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The state's road towards its Euro-atlantic integration is full of obstacles and opening of negotiation talks with the EU should not be expected earlier than 2022. RS rhetoric for greater autonomy remains active. Security situation stable; no major threats.*



**BULGARIA:** June 12<sup>th</sup>, Minister of Labor and Social Policy Biser Petkov submitted his resignation due to social disagreements and reactions regarding the draft of the new state's law on social care and assistance of disabled people. Although public dialogue on the subject is ongoing parents of disabled children asked for a separate law regarding their case. On the contrary Petkov insisted in his initiative for one law covering all disabled people issues. Prime Minister Boyko Borisov announced that he has not accepted Petkov's resignation encouraging him to continue with his duties and *"finish the job"*. (www.novinite.com)

- June 13<sup>th</sup>, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ekaterina Zaharieva commended on Bulgaria Socialist Party's (Българска социалистическа партия – BSP) announcement that it plans to table a motion of no confidence vote against the Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and his cabinet adducing security issues. Although BSP has not been more specific regarding these issues there have been much controversies recently over criminal activity. Apart from that BSP has strongly criticized the Government over the military helicopter accident in which two pilots died. According to Zaharieva Bulgaria's coalition Government is stable and an

**COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**  :

intended vote of no confidence by the opposition will fail. Moreover the Minister claimed that the real task of BSP action is to divert attention from Bulgaria's successes during its Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Bulgarian six-month EU Presidency comes to a close on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018. ([www.sofiaglobe.com](http://www.sofiaglobe.com))

- June 13<sup>th</sup>, the largest military exercise on Bulgarian territory, “SABER JUNCTION 18”, will be held in September 2018 with participation of eight NATO countries. The exercise will last for three weeks, and in the scenario, there will be real fighting to push away an unnamed aggressor. This is the culmination of a series of alliance maneuvers in Bulgaria that begin in less than a month - on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018. During the year, a total of three exercises will be held in Bulgaria and with participation of NATO allies. “SABER JUNCTION 18” will be held at Novo Selo, between September 4<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The leading country is the United States, with troops from Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Romania and the three Baltic republics Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia participating in it. It should involve between 3,000 and 5,000 people. ([www.novinite.com](http://www.novinite.com))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Bulgaria continues its active and constructive role in the context of the EU Presidency promoting various initiatives and policies in various topics (Cyber-security, air – marine transport, EU electoral law etc). A small scale political tension due to the imminent table of no confidence against the cabinet by the opposition BSP which it is estimated it will not affect the coalition Government's cohesion. The recent helicopter accident strengthened the need of*

*Modernization of the state's Armed Forces. Security situation stable; no major threats.*



**CROATIA:** June 13<sup>th</sup>, the “People Decide” citizens’ initiative has handed over to the Parliament 38 boxes with 405,342 signatures for a referendum question of amending the electoral law and 407,469 signatures for a question depriving ethnic minorities representatives of the right to decide on the formation of the Government and the state budget. The Parliament will check validity of signatures and then a decision is expected on whether or not the Constitutional Court will be asked for an evaluation of constitutionality of the referendum questions. “We expect a referendum to be called in September or October at the latest, so that our citizens may have the opportunity to vote on whether or not they want a democratization of the electoral system and change in governing of Croatia. We also expect politicians to not exert pressure on the Constitutional Court and compromise the issue with their inexperienced opinions,” said Sanja Bilac, member of the initiative. Asked if the second question violates the principle of equality, Domink Knezovic said “According to a Constitutional Court ruling in 2011 it is up to the legislature to determine whether national minority seats will be equated with those of other members of the Parliament. Therefore that is not a cemented rule and it is something that the Parliament – in this case citizens through the civil initiative – could decide upon.” ([www.total-croatia-news.com](http://www.total-croatia-news.com), [www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr](http://www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr))

- June 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup>, the President Kolinda Grabar – Kitarovic said on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 that she looks for a more active role in the upcoming chairing of



the EU instead of leaving the responsibility exclusively in the Government. She claimed that according to the Constitution the state is represented in the European Council by the President and the Government. Grabar – Kitarovic said *“I leave the whole job regarding the EU to the Prime Minister because this is something that he is involved on daily basis, but I wish to contribute to the creation of the chairmanship because this is a matter of joining our power notably when it comes to national security, immigration, and all other foreign policy issues. I am confident we will cooperate. The Government has the capacities and the know-how to lead this process, mainly in terms of technical details and policies. This is something I will not interfere in and I will respect it.”* However a day later the Government rejected Grabar – Kitarovic’s ambitions to join Croatia’s chairmanship in the European Council. A governmental source said *“As the President said by herself the Prime Minister represents the state in the European Council. According to the Constitution the Government runs for foreign policy and in this context the President and the Government work together in shaping and implementing the foreign policy. The Government prepares the program of Croatia’s chairmanship of the European Council in the first half of 2020 and the President is welcome in contributing to the program.”* (www.total-croatia-news.com)

- June 16<sup>th</sup>, Ministry of Defense announced that Croatian troops have successfully joined a military exercise “SABER STRIKE 18” held in Bernowo Piskie training area in Poland achieving inter-operability within NATO’s Battle Group and Polish forces. Exercise was organized by the 15<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade together with NATO’s Battle Group led by the USA. The Battle Group

“POLAND” is a unique multinational military coalition consisted of USA, UK, Croatian, and Romanian forces acting with the Polish 15<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade as a deterrence force implementing NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence. (www.total-croatia-news.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

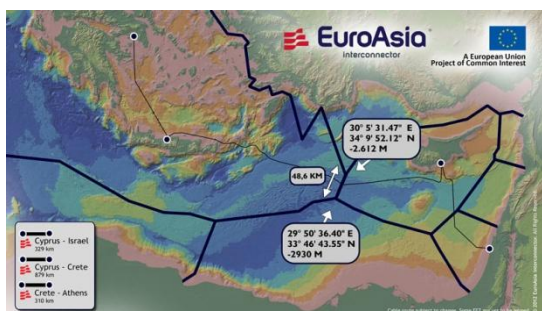
*It seems Croatian society has entered in somekind transition. Several citizens’ initiatives for referendums regarding social and human rights issues are ongoing expressing fears of a far conservative society. Apart from that it is estimated that the political distance between the President and Government may affect political stability of the state. Border dispute on Piran Bay remains active but no concrete actions and initiatives are expected due to political instability in Slovenia. Security situation stable.*



**CYPRUS:** June 13<sup>th</sup>, the Government has issued a notice for the expropriation of land for the EuroAsia Interconnector’s high-voltage direct current (HDVC) converter station. The station, set to be built in Kofinou, will be the hub for a 2,000MW 1,518km long subsea cable, planned to connect the electricity grids of Cyprus, Israel, Crete and mainland Greece. The first stage of the project will be completed in December 2020, and will be a 1,000MW 3.5 billion Euros project that will connect Crete and mainland Greece. The interconnection of Cyprus and Israel and Cyprus and Crete will be completed in December 2021. The project has been declared a European Union Project of Common Interest (PCI), and seeks to end the island’s energy isolation as a member



state. ([www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com), [www.euroasia-interconnector.com](http://www.euroasia-interconnector.com))



### Euroasia Interconnector Project

(Phot source: [www.euroasia-interconnector.com](http://www.euroasia-interconnector.com))

- June 14<sup>th</sup>, Cyprus and France signed a bilateral military cooperation program during a visit to Paris by the Defense Minister Savvas Angelides. According to a press release, Angelides completed his visit to the French capital where he held a series of meetings with his French counterpart Florence Palry, Chairman of the Defense Committee Jean-Jacques Bridey and the President of the Cyprus-France Friendship Group in the French National Assembly Sarh El Hairy. During the meetings, *“the continued enhancement of ties between Cyprus and France in the area of security and defense was reconfirmed, while Cyprus’ geostrategic role as a pillar of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean region was highlighted,”* the press release said. No details of the cooperation program were given. Cyprus decided to join the EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation (Pesco) two days after President Nicos Anastasiades saw French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris in November 2017. ([www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com))

- June 16<sup>th</sup>, President Nicos Anastasiades had not set preconditions for the resumption of talks as certain people had suggested, Government spokesman Prodromos Prodromou said, a day

after it emerged that the UN would be dispatching a senior official to test the waters for resuming reunification talks. Responding to the release of an advanced copy of UN Secretary General (SG) Antonio Guterres’ report, Prodromou noted the fact that he was interested in continuing the negotiation and intended to appoint an envoy to sound out the two sides. *“We hope the Turkish side will also display readiness since, as it is known, so far there was no positive response from Ankara to appoint an SG adviser,”* Prodromou said adding *“In any case, our side, the president, is ready.”* *“I believe there is still scope for the sides to act responsibly and decisively in order to chart a common way forward for the island,”* Guterres said in his report. He said that should the sides jointly decide to resume talks, the six-point framework that he had introduced in Crans-Montana on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 could form the basis for negotiations aimed at reaching a strategic agreement and paving the way for the comprehensive settlement. The framework contained elements related to territory, political equality, property, equivalent treatment, and security and guarantees and became the focus of a debate in the Greek Cypriot side after Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci announced in April this year that he accepted it the way it was submitted. Prodromou said the Secretary-General’s report proved there was interest and the Greek Cypriot side was satisfied because *“reference is made to the Guterres framework, which, beyond dates, discussions, it clearly includes six parameters, among which the two that are essential to us, abolition of guarantees and Turkey’s rights of intervention, and withdrawal of the occupying army.”* ([www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*There is much activity over energy issues. Cyprus promotes drills in its EEZ while Turkey is ready to react if it assesses that its EEZ (or the Turkish Cypriot EEZ) is violated by the Cypriots. Tension may rise significantly if Turkey begins its own drills in the region and especially if it takes action within the Cypriot EEZ. Talks may start soon after the Turkish elections and the UN prepares the ground for a new round of talks.*



**F.Y.R.O.M:** June 12<sup>th</sup>, the Minister of Information, Society, and Administration Damjan Mancevski has called the parliamentary Committee for Transport, Communications, and Environment headed by the opposition Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство – VMRO-DPMNE) not to block its tasks due to party's interests. Mancevski was referring to the ongoing debate regarding the proposed amendments on the draft law on audio and audiovisual media services. *“We are not against the amendments debate but it should end reasonably soon. VMRO-DPMNE representatives are preventing us from publically presenting candidates for Macedonian Radio Television's Programming Council and for the Council of the Agency of Audio and Audiovisual Services,”* Mancevski said. According to him endless talks within the Committee have delayed the adoption of the law on media. He underlined that his Government aims at preventing state's media from being controlled and under political influence. ([www.mia.mk](http://www.mia.mk))

- June 13<sup>th</sup>, President Gjorge Ivanov said the name agreement reached with Greece is

detrimental for the country, adding he would not sign it. In a TV address, the President said the agreement reached between Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras abandoned the country's positions that the Constitution would not be changed and refusal of the erga omnes aspect. According to him, the agreement is detrimental and unique in the history of mankind, violating the Constitution and the laws, undignified and reached in a non-transparent way. *“The Government did not have the strength and courage to initiate the building of a common stance and consensus. The entire process lacked transparency and the end result is a testimony of this. The text is detrimental for the Republic of Macedonia,”* said Ivanov and explained that the change of the constitutional name is accompanied by a change of the Constitution's preamble and all articles mentioning the “Republic of Macedonia”. The President said EU and NATO should not serve as an alibi for the agreement, which *“does not unite the society, but on the contrary polarizes it.”* Ivanov underlined *“Greece has managed to impose its requirements to the fullest, degrading the acquired rights within the UN, trampling on the legacy of our ancestors. The 73-year-long right of self-determination and the 27 years of independence are quashed. Everything that is sacred to the Republic of Macedonia is dishonored.”* ([www.nezavisen.mk](http://www.nezavisen.mk))

- June 17<sup>th</sup>, the heads of diplomacy of F.Y.R.O.M and Greece, Nikola Dimitrov and Nikos Kozias, today in the village of Psarades (Northwest Greece) signed an historic agreement on resolving the F.Y.R.O.M - Greece name dispute in the presence of the Prime Ministers Zoran Zaev and Alexis Tsipras. The agreement envisages an erga omnes name for the country, the Republic of

North Macedonia (Република Северна Македонија). At the ceremony on the Greek side of the Prespa Lake, high representatives of the international community were also present, as well as the United Nations mediator in resolving the dispute, Matthew Nimetz, whose career among other things marked the mediation between F.Y.R.O.M and Greece in trying to find a solution. The country is proud of choosing a “uniting” solution, F.Y.R.O.M’ s Prime Minister Zoran Zaev said. *“We are proud of this agreement. We are proud of having been able to be united over a solution to a dispute that has been dividing us and we have chosen a solution that unites us. By signing the final agreement for the settlement of the name issue and the establishment of a strategic partnership between our two countries - we have moved mountains. When many were in doubt, we have assured them that it is possible! Today we are putting an end to a dispute. We are putting an end to years-long differences that had erected a wall, which had hindered many friendly relations between the neighbors,”* Zaev said. (www.nezavisen.mk)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*It was an historic week for F.Y.R.O.M since it reached an agreement with Greece regarding the 27 year long “name” dispute. Gates of the EU and NATO are widely opened and the state is closer than ever towards its Euro-atlantic integration. However the negative stance of country’s President Ivanov who publically rejected the agreement put questions regarding the process of its adoption. Coming autumn will be “hot” for F.Y.R.O.M and political stability will be tested. The President is determined to block the agreement as he already did with the Law on Use of Languages. Zaev has the political time to*

*undertake initiatives overcoming the obstacles. Nevertheless this agreement may work as a factor of destabilization regarding political and security situation of F.Y.R.O.M.*



**GREECE:** June 11<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, anarchist groups continue their actions against public and private sector. On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 members of the anarchist group “Rouvikonas” (Roubicon) tried to invade in one of the best guarded places in Athens; the Ministry of Citizen’s Protection. Armed police guards prevented people from entering and arrested everyone on site. The latest attack aimed to press for another prison furlough to be issued to infamous “November 17” (N17) assassin Dimitris Koufodinas. The latter has begun a hunger strike after a request for a third furlough was denied by a corrections board. In a second attack in the same day members of an unknown self-styled anti-establishment group burst into the building housing the Hellenic American Union (HAU) in Thessaloniki to express support for Koufodinas. Four individuals entered the building, sprayed slogans in favour of Koufodinas and threw flyers. In the third such incident on Monday, 20 members of an anarchist group stormed into the offices of the ruling Coalition of Radical Left (Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς – SYRIZA) prefectural committee in the city of Volos and remained there, demanding that jailed N17 terrorist Dimitris Koufodinas is granted a furlough. One day later twenty suspected members of the “Rouvikonas” anarchist group will be read charges of disrupting the peace, disrupting public transportation and inciting violence. In the same day ten unknown individuals targeted the offices of the Hellenic American Union (HAU) in Athens smashing a

window. The US embassy in Athens strongly condemned the two attacks on the Hellenic American Union offices in Thessaloniki and Athens by anarchist groups who support hunger-striker and jailed terrorist Dimitris Koufodinas. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 anarchist group “Rouvikonas” raised a banner in front of the Parthenon, on the Acropolis Hill, to express support for Koufodinas. Leader of the main opposition party New Democracy (Νέα Δημοκρατία - ND) Kyriakos Mitsotakis reacted to protest on the Acropolis, taking a swipe at the Government’s failure to curb a spike in lawless activity in the country. “*The embassies, Parliament, Council of State, Pentagon (Ministry of Defense) and other Ministries, and now the Acropolis. The march to ‘normality’ continues,*” Mitsotakis tweeted. Finally, N17 terrorist Dimitris Koufodinas, who has been on hunger strike for almost two weeks, will be granted a 48-hour furlough after his health recovers, authorities announced. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- June 16<sup>th</sup>, coalition Government survived a no confidence motion tabled by the main opposition New Democracy (Νέα Δημοκρατία - ND) party in Parliament on Friday, due to the recently concluded agreement between Athens and Skopje to resolve the contentious F.Y.R.O.M “name issue.” The motion garnered 127 votes with 153 against. The junior coalition partner Independent Greeks (Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες - ANEL) backed the Government despite its opposition to the name deal F.Y.R.O.M that Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announced last week. One ANEL MP, Dimitris Kammenos backed the motion. He was subsequently expelled from the party, reducing the Government’s majority to 153 MPs out of 300. There was tension inside Parliament notably when Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias submitted

declassified Ministry documents in a bid to compare the Government’s negotiating tactics on the name issue to that of previous administrations. Addressing Parliament, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras slammed the opposition for bringing the motion of no confidence, remarking that “*future historians will struggle to comprehend why, at such a positive moment for the country, ND chose to try and topple the Government.*” ND leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared that “*a vote against the motion of no confidence is a vote in favor of the Tsipras-Zaev agreement tomorrow,*” referring to FYROM’s premier, Zoran Zaev. “*I want all Greeks to understand the theater of hypocrisy that has been staged,*” Mitsotakis added. Tsipras’s coalition partner Panos Kammenos reiterated his party’s opposition to the F.Y.R.O.M name deal, saying that ANEL will oppose it, when it comes to Parliament, “*not just with our vote*” but by any means possible. He stressed, however, that he remains allied to Tsipras for his declared fight against corruption and to get the country out of the bailout era. The leader of centrist “To Potami”, Stavros Theodorakis, pointed to the positive aspects of the deal. “*Helping our country doesn’t mean supporting the SYRIZA-ANEL Government,*” he added. The leader of Movement for Change (Κίνημα Αλλαγής – KINAL), Fofi Gennimata, in which Theodorakis is a partner, opposed the deal, saying she trusts the government with “*nothing.*” (www.ekathimerini.com)

- June 17<sup>th</sup>, A landmark agreement ostensibly resolving the nearly three-decades-long F.Y.R.O.M “name issue” was signed by the Foreign Ministers of Greece and F.Y.R.O.M at Psarades lakeside village in a picturesque border region between the two Balkan neighbors. If it is ratified by both sides, given that political

opposition is rife against the deal in both states, then the provisional “F.Y.R.O.M” and constitutional “Republic of Macedonia” will be succeeded by “Republic of North Macedonia” (Република Северна Македонија) applicable in all uses. In a brief statement before the signing ceremony, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras referred to a “*New era in the Balkans ... we are here to do our patriotic duty.*” International community welcomed the historic agreement and the U.S.A, UK, Germany, Austria, Albania, Cyprus, Slovenia and other hailed the deal. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg spoke about an “*historic*” deal while the UN mediator Matthew Nimetz said that the agreement will bring mutual benefits and will establish a strategic partnership. European Union Foreign Affairs chief Federica Mogherini and Commissioner in charge of regional policy Johannes Hahn issued a joint statement congratulating the Prime Ministers of Greece and F.Y.R.O.M “*In reaching this historic agreement between their countries, which contributes to the transformation of the entire region of South-East Europe.*” However the agreement caused strong reactions not only in the opposition but in Greek citizens too. ND leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis slammed the deal calling it a “*bad deal*” that recognizes a Macedonian ethnicity and language. The leader of the centre-left coalition party KINAL, said she will not back the deal. Gennimata argued the deal does not offer a “*comprehensive solution*” to the decades-old dispute despite its positive elements. However, according to information, prominent members of the party like former Prime Minister George Papandreou, Potami leader Stavros Theodorakis, Athens mayor Giorgos Kaminis, Democratic Left (Δημοκρατική Αριστερά) leader Thanassis Theocharopoulos and MEP Nikos Androulakis said they support the agreement. Citizens’ protests

broke out all around the country and mainly in cities of Northern Greece. (www.ekathimerini.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Greece resolved a long dispute with F.Y.R.O.M enjoying positive messages from the international community. However a difficult period for the governmental coalition’s sustainability has just started. Alexis Tsipras Government maintains a fragile parliamentary majority while reactions in the country against coalition’s executives becomes harder and harder. It seems that ANEL; the small partner of SYRIZA receives the bulk of reactions. Turkey keeps on “low level” tension in the Aegean Sea (violation of F.I.R and/or territorial sea by fighter jets and navy or coast guard vessels respectively).*



**KOSOVO:** June 11<sup>th</sup>, Kosovo Assembly Speaker, Kadri Veseli, announced initiation of drafting a special law on protection of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) war and its values. Veseli said that the new law will represent institutional protection of the Kosovo war, as well as establishment of a war museum. “When Kosovo is preparing to mark 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the war in Kosovo, today I initiated drafting of the Law on Protection of the KLA war values. This law aims at institutional protection of our war, to decide on a central monument of the war, as well as to start the work on establishment of the liberation war museum,” Veseli wrote in his Facebook profile. Veseli, who was senior member of the KLA during 1998-99 war with Serbia, also said that with the new law Kosovo will get a special date on commemorating the



sacrifice of people for freedom. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- June 12<sup>th</sup>, after revealing the memorial for the KFOR soldiers who died in Kosovo, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said that the country seeks to join NATO contributing in international peace. The NATO Assistant Secretary General John Manza, on behalf of the Secretary General, thanked people of Kosovo for building this memorial in Pristina. KFOR Commander Major General Salvatori Cuoci, who uncovered the monument for the 157 KFOR soldiers that died during the war, said that the monument will keep alive memory of those who gave their lives for freedom. The Kosovo Minister for the Security Forces Rustem Berisha, said that June 12th, 2018 will remain as the day of hope, the day when the country came to know that they are not alone. (www.top-channel.tv, www.kryeministri-ks.net)



Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and NATO Assistant Secretary General John Manza revealing KFOR memorial

(Photo source: www.kryeministri-ks.net)

- June 12<sup>th</sup>, Minister of Trade, Bajram Hasani, told BIRN in an interview that Kosovo seeks to scrap taxes between Kosovo and Albania for local producers establishing a “joint national” market” but Albania is not very keen on the idea. “We agreed with Albanian officials for a national strategy on a joint market,” Hasani said.

However, according to the Minister, Albania's Government has yet to take any concrete steps to make such a plan happen. “*Albanian institutions do not have the same sensitivity towards Kosovo that we have for them,*” he said, adding that, “*Except for the will to work in this direction, nothing is being implemented.*” After a meeting with manufacturers from both countries, Hasani said it was agreed that the initiative should start with those producers who export most between the two countries. According to Hasani, the most important is that both the Kosovo Manufacturing Club and the Union of Albanian Producers remain interested in pushing this initiative forward. Astrit Panxha, head of the Kosovo Manufacturing Club, told BIRN that according to data from 2017, Albania exported about 150 million Euros worth of goods to Kosovo while Kosovo exported far less to Albania – amounting to about 35 million Euros. “*It is evident that Albanian products penetrate the Kosovo market much more easily than Kosovo's products do in the Albanian market,*” Panxha said. Kosovo's Parliament approved last week a resolution supporting unification of customs with Albania. (www.balkaninsight.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration moving in the opposite direction towards the EU and NATO integration. It seems that the state is not ready to develop an effective dialogue with Serbia due to internal political rivals but this dialogue is crucial for Euro-Atlantic future of Kosovo. Interethnic incidents raise concerns over peaceful co-existence of Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities. Institutional establishment of*

*KLA memory does not work towards reconciliation of Kosovo people from all sides who suffered during war. Apart from that the state is under a security alert due to potential terrorist threats. Kosovo which is not a UN member is quite far from the Euro-Atlantic path due to structural and institutional problems.*



**MOLDOVA:** June 14<sup>th</sup>,

Movement of a large number of Russian armored vehicles of the Russian Operational Group on route Tiraspol – Ribnita a few kilometres from border with Ukraine, was monitored by local people. According to the declaration of Moldovan side within Joint Control Commission (JCC) “On June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 starting at 08:30, on route Tiraspol – Ribnita, direction Grigoriopol – Dubasari, three columns with military machinery and armored vehicles of various types, possibly of the Russian Operational Group, were travelling accompanied by special vehicles of unconstitutional militia structures. As requested by the other parties in response of JCC to displacement of military columns, the Transnistrian side specified that all military equipment of Tiraspol is in places of permanent deployment and does not circulate throughout Security Zone while representatives of Russia informed that they would document the case and inform JCC at upcoming meeting to take place on June 21st, 2018.” (www.moldpres.md)

- June 15<sup>th</sup>, Moldova will repeatedly ask the United Nations General Assembly to withdraw the Russian troops from the left bank of the Dniester River. The announcement was made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Tudor Ulianoschi, who said that resolution proposed by Moldova, might have been

examined on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. The head of the Moldovan diplomacy said that authorities in Chisinau had re-registered with the UN Secretariat request for project examination and it was accepted for June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. “The Government has not dissociated from its initiative. Recently, the UN Secretariat has registered the draft resolution submitted by Moldova entitled ‘The complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces on territory of Moldova.’ There are being made some efforts now as to provide widest possible support for the UN member states. We already have 10 states that have signed the draft resolution,” said Ulianoschi. In 2017, Moldovan diplomacy made more requests to international authorities urging for complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from territory of Moldova. The Prime Minister Pavel Filip delivered a speech at recent UN General Assembly session where he referred specifically to the need to resolve territorial conflict in the eastern part of Moldova and demanded withdrawal of foreign military forces from territory of Moldova. (www.moldova.org)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

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





## **MONTENEGRO:** June 11<sup>th</sup>,

Chief Negotiator for Montenegro's Accession to the EU, Aleksandar Drljevic said that he expected higher degree of efficiency and more visible results in the area of rule of law. He insisted on the results without compromise and claimed that the coordination of the negotiation process has been brought to a higher level by the establishment of European Integration Office in the Cabinet of the Prime Minister. In fact it is a clear message that the EU integration process is a priority of the country. *"In the coming period our focus remains on the chapters 23 and 24, but also on the implementation of activities in other areas in order to open other chapters and start closing negotiation chapters during the Austrian presidency,"* Drljevic said. According to him in the coming period, Montenegro will focus on rounding up the reforms in all chapters, with a special focus on the rule of law enjoying full support of the EU. Drljevic statements was made after his first meeting as Chief Negotiator of Montenegro with the Head of the EU Delegation in Podgorica, Aivo Orav. (www.cdm.me, www.rtcg.me)

- June 12<sup>th</sup>, during 2017 banking sector in Montenegro was characterized by high liquidity and a declining credit risk. The insurance market is stable, while the capital market is still recording a moderate recovery. Fiscal risks continue to be pronounced, but due to the implementation of fiscal consolidation measures, their intensity and direction of influence on financial stability have been reduced, from a rising to a moderate level, announced the Financial Stability Council of the Central Bank of Montenegro. *"On the basis of these estimates, the systemic risk of financial stability has been assessed to be moderately*

*stable, with the presence of certain sector risks that continue to exercise increased pressure in the fiscal sphere, as well as the risk of insufficient income of the economy and population that slow down the recovery perspectives,"* the Council announced after a recent session. (www.cdm.me)

- June 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>, the strongest opposition alliance in Montenegro, the United Reform Action (Građanski Pokret Ujedinjena Reformska Akcija - GP URA) movement and the Democratic Montenegro (Demokratska Crna Gora - DCG) are heading to Brussels next week to present what they call a plan to overcome the long-lasting political crisis in the country. The leader of URA, Dritan Abazovic, and the DCG chief, Aleksa Becic, will meet the EU Enlargement Commissioner, Johannes Hahn, early next week. The meeting comes after two Parties requested the establishment of a special parliamentary commission composed of both ruling and opposition representatives aiming at revising the election and judiciary laws in line with the recommendations of the international community, but also deal with organized crime, corruption, and political pressure on the public broadcaster RTCG. Their plan is seen as marking the end of the opposition's Parliament boycott that started after the October 2016 general elections when the entire opposition left Parliament, alleging abuse of the elections and demanding fresh snap elections. Although URA and the DCG did not confirm having ended the boycott, Commissioner Hahn on social media said he welcomed that Becic and Abazovic had announced *"Their gradual return to the Parliament"* and welcomed also a *"Decision saying that all political actors in democratic institutions need to engage constructively in debate and reforms."* Hahn said he was looking forward to meeting the

Montenegro opposition leaders in Brussels. On June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 leaders of these two Parties, Becic and Abazovic submitted their Plan for Electoral Reforms to all opposition MPs as well as to the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). ([www.cdm.me](http://www.cdm.me), [www.balkaninsight.com](http://www.balkaninsight.com))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Major reforms should be implemented in order the country to come closer to the EU. Establishment of the European Integration Office within the Government shows strong commitment towards such direction. Opposition initiative to present an action plan and to end its Parliament boycott is an encouraging sign towards Montenegro's political normality. However Government has not reacted yet in the proposed action plan and is still under question if the opposition will finally return to the Parliament.*



**ROMANIA:** June 13<sup>th</sup>, Ukrainian security service invaded in a Romanian cultural centre in the country's Northern Bukovina region. The Chernivtsi branch of the Ukrainian security service announced in a press release that it had launched an inquiry against founders of the Romanian cultural centre after they allegedly disseminated “calls to violate the national integrity of the [Ukrainian] state.” It is said that maps and literature printed to promote the centenary of the formation of the modern Romanian state were found during the raid. Investigators said they found literature calling for the re-establishment of the “historical truth” by reuniting several regions with Romania - Northern Bukovina, Northern Bessarabia (today's Moldova) and Southern Bessarabia, which is also now in Ukraine. The Romanian Foreign Ministry

expressed concerns about the rights of the Romanian community in Ukraine and underlined that the incident was raised at a meeting between a Romanian state secretary and Ukraine's Ambassador to Bucharest, Oleksandr Bankov. “On this incident, the Romanian side stressed the necessity that the Ukrainian authorities respect the rights of the Romanian minority and avoid any actions meant to violate these rights or that can be interpreted as intimidation,” the Ministry said in a press statement. In February 2018, two schools that taught in the Romanian language in Chernivtsi were set ablaze by unknown assailants. In September 2017, Ukraine introduced new education legislation that set Ukrainian as the only language of study in primary and secondary schools. The move, which the Government in Kiev said was meant to prevent teaching in the Russian language, raised concerns from Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece and Poland, which complained to the Venice Commission. Hungary also blocked an Ukraine-NATO Commission meeting at the ministerial level in April 2018 in connection with the legislation. The Kiev Government decided in February 2018 to extend the transition period to the new Ukrainian-only system until 2023 and submitted a new bill to parliament. ([www.balkaninsight.com](http://www.balkaninsight.com))

- June 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup>, Romania's ruling Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) plans to suspend the President Klaus Iohannis if he does not sign the order to dismiss the Chief Prosecutor of the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) Laura Codruta Kovesi. A decision issued by Romania's Constitutional Court (CCR) at the end of May 2018 obliges the President to dismiss the DNA head as requested by Justice Minister Tudorel

Toader. Iohannis said he would analyze the Court's motivation thoroughly before announcing his decision and called for an ample debate on the state's architecture followed by a referendum. Several PSD leaders, including Deputy Prime Minister Paul Stanescu and Labor Minister Lia Olguta Vasilescu, reacted to the President's statement saying he will be suspended if he does not comply with the CCR's decision, which is mandatory. PSD may start the procedure to suspend the President on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018 when the Parliament's two chambers will have a joint sitting at the Prime Minister's request. The ruling coalition made of PSD and the Alliance of Liberal and Democrats for Europe (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE) has the majority in the Parliament required to suspend the President and could have the president suspended as early as June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018. If the President be suspended, Senate President Calin Popescu Tariceanu, the leader of ALDE, will take over as interim President. The President's suspension would also lead to a referendum on his dismissal. Thus, Iohannis can resume his duties if the people reject his dismissal. However, the PSD is also considering another scenario that would allow them to avoid a referendum. They could try to accuse the President of high treason, which would lead to the President's suspension until the High Court of Cassation and Justice clears him of these charges, according to Constitutional Law experts. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 PSD spokesman Adrian Dobre said that the Party has not discussed "timing" on an alleged suspension of the President Klaus Iohannis. (www.romania-insider.com, www.romaniajournal.ro)

- June 15<sup>th</sup>, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis nominated MP Petru-Gabriel Vlase of Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat -

PSD) for Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE). Former SIE Director, Mihai Razvan Ungureanu, resigned in September 2016 and the position has been vacant since then. The President sent his nomination to the Parliament on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 taking everyone by surprise, as he is currently in conflict with PSD. Vlase, 47, is currently at his fourth mandate as Deputy in the Romanian Parliament, where he is also a Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies. He graduated from the National Defense College, National Defense University, The National Security Superior College and the National Intelligence Academy, where he also got a doctor degree in defense and intelligence. (www.romania-insider.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Dismissal of the Chief Prosecutor of the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) Laura Codruta Kovesi has been developed into a major institutional and constitutional crisis. Ruling coalition faces the dilemma of suspending or not the President Klaus Iohannis. Such an action may cause chain political reactions and developments in the country. However Romania as member of the EU and NATO enjoys security and stability.*



**SERBIA:** June 11<sup>th</sup>, Defense Minister Aleksandar Vulin rejected the possibility of the establishment of Kosovo army this year as the Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj announced. "They will not form it, and of course they won't have the Serbs' support. They tried, but that (Kosovo) is not a state, they don't even have a military academy," Vulin said. He also underlined that Kosovo army cannot be established without Kosovo Serbs support; "Even according to what

*they refer to as laws, they can't form an army without the Serb List votes, and the Serb List will not vote,” the Defense Minister continued. Speaking about the Serbian Army, Vulin said it had been undermined for decades in a planned and systematic manner - but it was finally rebuilt, while the policy of the state and President Aleksandar Vucic is to strengthen the military. “Of course we will be the strongest in the region. Serbia is the most important country in the region and its army must be likewise. The stronger our army, the more peace we enjoy being safe from anyone attacking us, either Serbia or Serbs no matter where they live. It is our duty to protect Serbia and Serbs wherever they live,”* Vulin said. (www.b92.net)

- June 12<sup>th</sup>, in an op-ed for the Belgrade newspaper Politika and penned on the occasion of Russia's Statehood Day the Russian Ambassador in Serbia Aleksandr Chepurin has announced the possibility of his country getting “*even more deeply involved*” in resolving the Kosovo problem adding that Belgrade is, when it comes to Kosovo, about to face “*Ultimatum pressure from traditional Serb-haters,*” and that Russia has been and will always be on the side of Serbia. “*Our position remains unchanged; we will support that decision which Serbia and the Serbian people will consider acceptable to themselves. We are proceeding from the Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council forming the legal basis for an agreement,*” Chepurin stated. He pointed out that there should be no parallelism between the Crimean and Kosovo cases, because these are “*Two completely different stories since Crimea separated (from Ukraine) in accordance with the UN Declaration of 1970.*” “*The Crimea issue is definitely closed, Crimea is Russia, and Kosovo is Serbia. It's not just a slogan, it's the legal reality*

*that must be respected,”* Chepurin said. (www.b92.net)

- June 12<sup>th</sup>, President Aleksandar Vucic was welcomed by his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the ceremonial opening of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP). TANAP was inaugurated in Eskisehir, Turkey and Vucic was there at the special invitation of Erdogan standing beside him on a ceremonial stage, alongside the Presidents of Ukraine and Azerbaijan, Petro Poroshenko and Ilham Aliyev. “*My presence here today represents a new, very visible confirmation of the successful bilateral relations between Serbia and Turkey, which contribute both to the progress of our two countries and the Western Balkan region,*” Vucic said in his address. Vucic stressed the construction of TANAP is very important for two reasons; firstly because it gives hope that the region of Southeast Europe will not remain isolated when it comes to major energy projects, and secondly because this project will improve energy security of this part of Europe, and therefore will have an impact on improving the investment atmosphere bringing new investors to the countries of the region. However Vucic underlined “*For us, this is primarily of great bilateral significance, it is an honor for us to be invited, although I don't think that there will be plenty of gas for Serbia from TANAP - but there will be for Italy, Albania, and other countries.*”

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*Relative political stability. Security situation is stable. The EU and U.S strengthen their pressure towards Serbia and Kosovo for a mutual accepted solution. However it seems that Serbia – Kosovo dialogue has reached a stalemate. The Kosovo*

*issue creates a fragile balance on permanent basis. Russian influence towards Serbia is also a question which affects state's relations with the West.*



**SLOVENIA:** June 11<sup>th</sup>, Slovenian Police expressed its disagreement regarding a major anti-immigration military and police exercise planned by Austria in the Austria – Slovenia borders (Spilje region) on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018; Slovenian statehood day. *“We expressed our disagreement not only with this specific date, but also because of the exercise’s area, and its general concept. The number of migrants entering Austria from Slovenia is not such big as to require such exercises,”* Police announced. The Minister of Internal Affairs, Vesna Gyorkos Znidar emphasized that *“Slovenian Police controls situation regarding illegal migration and closely monitors migration routes. External Schengen border is well-protected and so will continue in the future,”* adding *“It is an internal political issue of Austria which should not spill over to Slovenia.”* Austria has established a new border security unit, called “PUMA”, which consists of 600 members and it is of high operational readiness. Unit will be fully operational by September 2018, while in Spilje it will demonstrate its readiness to act. According to the Slovenian daily “Delo” only 13 returned migrants were received from Austria this year. (www.dnevnik.si, www.delo.si)

- June 15<sup>th</sup>, according to the Secretary General of the Party of Alenka Bratusek (Stranka Alenke Bratušek - SAB), Bratusek Jernej Pavlic, talks for a possible coalition with the left-handed parties are very intense and calls and meetings are held on daily basis. Whether the formation of a left-

wing coalition will be possible, it also depends on the reality of the demands of The Left (Levica) Party and Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (Demokratska Stranka Upokojencev Slovenije - DeSUS). In a press conference Pavlic said her Party discusses with the List of Marjan Sarec (Lista Marjana Šarca - LMS) and Modern Centre Party (Stranka Modernega Centra – SMC) in order to explore the possibility of cooperation. Pavlic expressed her wish that talks will include more Parties as soon as possible. In her opinion future of Karl Erjavec as leader of DeSUS is critical for a successful coalition because otherwise *“A left-wing coalition will not be possible.”* Pavlic underlined that Erjavec’s potential successors have a different agenda aiming at entering a right-wing Government. She also claimed that support of The Left Party and Christian Democrats (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati - NSi) is important for a possible coalition. Finally Pavlic said that her Party is going to support as the Parliament Speaker LMS’ candidate *“Since we work on forming a coalition together.”* (www.dnevnik.si)

– June 16<sup>th</sup>, a three-month deadline expires on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 when the European Commission has to reply to a Slovenian letter about the Croatia – Slovenia border arbitration. Slovenia has submitted a letter to the EU Commission proposing a lawsuit against Croatia over its failure to implement a border arbitration ruling contenting that Croatia was in breach of the EU law. Croatia has rejected Slovenia’s claims in a letter to the EU Commission on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The EU Commission has avoided to give a clear answer regarding its intentions about the case; *“We are still studying the matter, so we will not speculate on the following procedural steps,”* said Mina Andreeva, a spokeswoman for the EU



Commission. Before a member state act against another EU country should put a proposal of action to the EU Commission which has a deadline of three months to reply. According to Slovenian diplomats it is assessed that the EU Commission will decide against the Slovenian requests although Government's members remain optimistic expecting a positive answer by the Commission. However a negative decision of the EU Commission towards Slovenia's request is not an obstacle for the country to further proceedings which may file the suit against Croatia to the EU International Court of Justice. It cannot be assessed if the Cerar's Government which is about to resign should file the lawsuit or a new Government which will occur after the elections of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 should undertake responsibility of the issue. The Prime Minister Miro Cerar is expected to announce further actions after Monday's morning briefing of journalists by the European Commission. ([www.dnevnik.si](http://www.dnevnik.si))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Political developments are ongoing due to parliamentary elections results which do not allow one Party Government. SDS got the first place in the electoral body but it is doubtful whether it will succeed to form a coalition Government. The country may enter into political instability while new elections may not be excluded. Although tension with Croatia regarding the Piran dispute reduced due to internal political situation rhetoric remains active and Slovenia looks ready to step forward its reaction by filing a lawsuit against Croatia.*



**TURKEY:** June 11<sup>th</sup>, Turkey launched an operation in the Qandil mountain in

northern Iraq against Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê – PKK) aiming at eliminating its leadership and cutting lines of communications. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the operation during his rally in the central Anatolian province of Nigde, saying “We've launched our operation in Qandil... with 20 of our airplanes, we've destroyed 14 targets so far.” The Qandil mountain, located roughly 40 kilometers southeast of the Turkish border in Iraq's Erbil province, is being used as the headquarters of PKK and its Iranian affiliate, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), although the area is under de jure control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag stated that it is not possible for Turkey to conduct an operation without consulting the Iraqi Government. Bozdag also said that the dialogue between the two countries continues and although there may be disagreements on some issues, the operation will continue. According to sources, the Army initially aims at cutting Qandil's communication with Sinjar and other parts of Iraq to hinder logistics. The operation is also expected to cut relations of PKK from Syrian Kurds. The Army had already pushed nearly 30 kilometers into northern Iraq towards Mount Qandil as it took control of the Bradost region and entered the Barazgir valley, which is considered a gateway to Qandil. ([www.dailysabah.com](http://www.dailysabah.com))

- June 14<sup>th</sup>, Turkish, and U.S. military officials reached an agreement on the plan for northern Syria's Manbij at the meeting held at Germany's Stuttgart Turkish Armed Forces announced. The meeting between Turkish military officials and the U.S. Central Command overseeing activities in the Middle East was held at the U.S. Europe Command headquarters. One day earlier, Turkey's

Chief of General Staff General Hulusi Akar and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Curtis Scaparrotti discussed the Turkish-U.S. Manbij roadmap over the phone. In a statement the Turkish General Staff said Akar and Scaparrotti also addressed the security situation in the north of Syria and the security issues in the Manbij-focused roadmap. The Manbij roadmap was announced after a meeting in Washington last week between Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The deal focuses on the withdrawal of PKK's Syrian offshoot People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG) from the northern Syrian city located west of the Euphrates River and on stability in the region. If the model work successfully Turkey will push for a similar arrangement in other territories under control of YPG. In such a case eastern Syria could eventually become a joint U.S.-Turkey zone of influence. (www.dailysabah.com)

- June 14<sup>th</sup>, Turkey has entered the final stretch of an historic election campaign and public opinion polls are giving President Recep Tayyip Erdogan a clear lead in his re-election bid. Electoral rules forbid polling in the final 10 days of a campaign to prevent research from swaying voters, and pollsters have rushed to release data, with a handful putting Erdogan's share of the vote above 50% — the percentage needed to win in a first-round of voting on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018. If he falls short of half of the vote, a runoff between the top two candidates will be held on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The election is Turkey's most significant in at least a generation, ushering in constitutional changes Erdogan won in a contentious referendum last year that will greatly expand the powers of his office. The elections are also occurring during the emergency rule that Erdogan imposed in the wake

of a 2016 coup that failed to topple him. Tens of thousands of people have been jailed — including Selahattin Demirtas, one of Erdogan's presidential competitors, whose support hovers around 10%. Dozens of media outlets have been outlawed, raising questions from observers including the Council of Europe about how free and fair the vote can be. Muharrem Ince candidate for the main opposition Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP), has staged round-the-clock campaign events in nearly all of Turkey's provinces, pledging to hold a total of 106 rallies in the 50 days he has to campaign. (www.al-monitor.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Turkey faces several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs and journalists are in custody or convicted by the state Courts. The new extension of the country's state of emergency maintains or even strengthens the abnormality of current political life. The country moves towards an authoritarian regime with thousands of persecution of citizens. It is a big question if Erdogan will succeed to receive more of 50% of the votes from the first round; According to the polls a feasible goal. Another interesting question regarding elections is if the pro-Kurdish HDP and his jailed leader Demirtas will achieve to enter the Parliament. Turkish Armed Forces have been engaged in a new military operation against Kurds and PKK in Northern Iraq. It seems that Turkey achieved to reach an agreement with the U.S regarding Syrian Manbij in favor of Turkish interests. Kurdish question is a major security threat for Turkey affecting stability, peace and even unity of the state.*





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#### NOTE

 Stable situation. No security risk

 Rather stable situation. Security risk is monitored

 Major concerns over stability and security. significant security risk in specific regions

 Imminent major incidents regarding stability and security. High security risk

 Evolving or ongoing crisis or violent/armed conflict