



**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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ALBANIA: May 4th, according to the 2019 annual report from FRONTEX, Albania is a significant source of cannabis that is then trafficked to neighboring countries via land routes. These exports are also sent to Western and Central European countries via the Adriatic Sea using maritime vessels. *“Cannabis is the most widely consumed illicit drug in Europe with a large proportion of herbal cannabis grown closer to the place of consumption. Outdoor cultivation sites and numerous inland seizures reported in EUROSUR by the Member States during border surveillance activities confirm the Western Balkans and Albania in particular as a source of herbal cannabis trafficked to neighboring countries via land routes or exported to Western and Central Europe via the Adriatic Sea, using speed boats or ferries,”* the report reads. In addition to this, the report noted that in 2019 Albania’s maritime flag was demoted to the Paris MoU Black List. It is joined on the list by Mongolia, Sierra Leone, Moldova, Togo and Ukraine. Its inclusion means that vessels registered in Albania are considered high risk and can face restrictions when trying to enter certain ports. The report also tackled the issue of migration. Albanian citizens were found to be amongst those using fraudulent documents to travel, being refused entry to EU countries, and being returned home, voluntarily or otherwise. When looking at the ten most reported nationalities for return decisions, nationals of Albania, Pakistan, Syria, Algeria, Brazil and Turkey witnessed an increase in 2019. In line with previous years, Albanians, Ukrainians and Moroccans were the most reported nationalities for effective returns. All three did show a decrease on the previous year despite the upward

trend in detections for illegal stays. Overall in 2019, around 71,100 returns were reportedly carried out with the support of Member States and/or FRONTEX, and these mainly involved nationals of Albania, Morocco and Algeria. Voluntary departures reported in 2019 amounted to around 67,600, 36% of which were Ukrainians, followed by around 3,800 Georgians and just over 3,000 Albanians opting for this method of return. According to EUROPOL, most migrant smuggling cases in 2019 concerned the Western Balkan region. The most common modus operandi here was clandestine entry using often life-threatening means of concealment in various types of vehicles. The Western Balkan route continues to be mostly transited by irregular migrants trying to reach Western Europe from Turkey. This route was most often used by young, male migrants who accounted for 94% of all interceptions at EU borders in 2019. The overall demographics of migrants in 2019 show an increase in the share of vulnerable groups, including a slight growth in the share of women and children. EUROPOL has received particularly worrying reports about the kidnapping of vulnerable irregular migrants, including unaccompanied minors, once they arrive in the EU. (www.exit.al)

- May 7th, Albanian political parties have agreed to restart work on the electoral reform after it was suspended on March 9th, 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Political Committee comprising of majority and opposition representatives will meet on Monday, after opposition’s request. It came following majority representative Damina Gjikhuri’s warning that they were going to pass the electoral reform with or without the opposition’s consent if the latter

refused to restart work. Opposition leader Lulzim Basha said they are ready to approve the reform if their proposals are included in it. One of the main contested issues is the opposition's request for a "technical Government" before each general election that would ensure free and fair elections. The majority has refused the proposal which the opposition considers "essential." Civil society groups have proposed the Political Committee to change the electoral system but they have refused. In the actual electoral system, MP candidates are practically decided by the party leader. The Albanian political parties initially agreed to complete the electoral reform before March 15th, 2020 but they were slow and the pandemic suspended the work. The new deadline is set for May 31st, 2020. This week, EU Ambassador Luigi Soreca called on both sides to restart work on the reform as soon as possible. The reform is one of the conditions for Albania's advancement in the EU integration process. The General Affairs Council, comprising of Foreign Ministers of EU members states, is expected to adopt conclusions on enlargement in June; hence the May 31st, 2020 is the deadline for the electoral reform. (www.exit.al.com)

- May 9th, members of the Albanian civil society once again gathered in Skanderbeg Square to protest against what they call the authoritarianism and dictator-like behavior of Prime Minister Edi Rama, as well as the arrests of other protesters on Thursday [May 7th, 2020]. Protesters claimed that the right of peaceful protest was constitutionally guaranteed, and denounced its supposed violation by the Government under the ongoing state of emergency. Police officers attempted to forcibly remove protesters from the scene, and

one of them was taken away in an ambulance even as she insisted this was being done against her will. (www.exit.al)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Albania faces a series of protests against the Government. The Prime Minister, Edi Rama is accused of being authoritarian and has taken into advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen his powers. Electoral reform process may become a source of political tension since the ruling majority is not willing to make concessions and opposition is asking for significant reforms. However, there is time pressure since conclusion of the process is a pre-condition for the start of accession negotiations with the EU. In general, there is a political and institutional crisis in the country which came in the backstage during the COVID-19 pandemic and now is back on the forefront again. Besides, corruption, organized crime (and especially links of state's politics with organized crime), money laundering and smuggling remain as "open sores" for the country. The long judicial abnormality continues in the country affecting the Albanian justice system. It is not acceptable for a country which is in the "waiting room" of the EU to maintain malfunctions in the high judicial institutions (High Court, Justice Appointment Council etc).



BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:

May 4th: member of Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Zeljko Komsic in a press release highlighted several important facts regarding situation with the arrival of a Russian military unit that allegedly had already disinfected hospital facilities in Banja Luka, and an attempt to have the same unit perform similar work at a hospital

in Mostar. *“Any clinical centre, if unable to disinfect the premises of the clinical centre itself, can hire a firm engaged in such business. I am quite sure that the clinical centers in Banja Luka and Mostar have previously hired such firms that can effectively carry out this work,”* said Komsic. *“Also, I am sure that these facts are also known by those who called on the Russian Army unit as alleged assistance in the fight against coronaviruses. All this naturally raises the question of the real purpose of inviting and arriving the Russian military unit in BiH, namely in Banja Luka and Mostar, when there are companies and military units in BiH that can do the job faster and more efficiently,”* said Komsic. He added that the Bosnian Border Police can provide information on the manner of their first entry into BiH, as well as the procedure at the border of BiH when leaving that unit and returning to the Republic of Serbia. *“Given that the presence of this unit of the Russian Army in our country is completely unnecessary and given that this unit was called to BiH for quite different reasons than those publicly listed and that it is one type, as soldiers and intelligence officers like to say the activities of the so-called special, psychological activities, I believe the same, neither should have come to BiH nor should be returned again. As a member of Bosnian Presidency, I want to say publicly that I am absolutely against such activities on the territory of BiH,”* Komsic concluded. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

May 5th, in a video conference with the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, on Tuesday, Bosnia’s international administrator, Valentin Inzko welcomed the *“recommitment”* of the tripartite Presidency to the EU integration but

stressed that the country must adopt a State budget as soon as possible to respond to the consequences of the coronavirus crisis. Inzko, the foreign diplomat overseeing the civilian implementation of Bosnia’s 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, spoke to Guterres ahead of his semiannual address to the UN Security Council. He informed Guterres of current political developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the challenges the country is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *“The High Representative emphasized the need for swift adoption of the State budget to help mitigate the negative socioeconomic effects of the pandemic and to enable unhindered preparations for the October Municipal Elections,”* the Office of the High Representative (OHR) said in a statement. *“Welcoming the UN’s increased focus on reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives in BiH, High Representative Inzko also used the opportunity to underline the need for the international community to work closely together to advance positive, forward-looking reform agendas,”* it said. (www.ba.n1info.com)



The Bosnia – Herzegovina High Representative,
Valentin Inzko
(Photo source: www.ohr.int)

- May 7th, at its session on Thursday, the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Bosnia and Herzegovina unanimously passed the Decision on

calling and holding the Local Elections 2020, which should be held on Sunday, October 4th, 2020 this year, according to Vijesti.ba news portal. The decision to call and hold the Local Elections in 2020 calls for direct elections for 64 municipal councils in the Federation of BiH, 56 municipal assemblies in the Republika Srpska, 120 Mayors in BiH, 14 city councils in the Federation of BiH, seven city assemblies in the RS, 22 Mayors in BiH and the Brcko District Assembly. Elections for the election of a councilor in the City Council of Mostar will be called upon obtaining the necessary conditions for calling and holding elections. The total number of registered voters in the Central Voters Register is 3,374,364, including 100,474 voters from the City of Mostar. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Bosnia is trapped in the Dayton accords' provisions suffering from an ineffective and inadequate decision-making system which deprives the country from the basic state functions. For instance the state needs "desperately" its budget but it seems almost impossible for the three entities to reach an agreement. However, political system's inability has a direct impact on citizens' life. Russia tried to use the so-called "COVID-19 diplomacy" in order to send military units for supporting Bosnia to tackle the pandemic. State's authorities never allowed the Russians to enter the country speaking directly for "information operations" of Russian troops in Bosnian territory. Bosnia remains (together with Serbia) the vulnerable part of the Western influence in Southeastern Europe and Russia tries to penetrate through various ways. Political instability, poor economic

performances, entities' rivalries, and problematic framework of state's structure (due to Dayton Accord) have left Bosnia far behind other Western Balkan countries towards the EU. Furthermore, nationalistic rhetoric and actions from the three entities creates certain conditions of mutual mistrust and work as a factor of potential destabilization. Muslim countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Iran maintain a permanent presence through financial donations and investments.



BULGARIA: May 4th, Bulgaria's Cabinet will not ask Parliament to extend the State of Emergency past May 13th, 2020 but will largely keep the current anti-pandemic measures in effect, Finance Minister Vladislav Goranov said after a Cabinet sitting on May 4th. The Government approved a bill to amend the Health Act that will give the Health Minister Kiril Ananiev the power to impose stricter anti-epidemic measures or relax existing restrictions, as well as declare an epidemic emergency, if required. The bill is expected to be tabled to Parliament on May 5th, Goranov said. The bill will also amend the State of Emergency Measures Act to extend a number of measures listed in that law for a period of two months past the expiration of the State of Emergency. "We are moving towards actions related to the gradual restoration of the social and economic life, with a focus on measures that will remain in place," Goranov said. Some of the measures will stay in place for a period longer than two months, including amendments to the Foreigners Act as regards identification documents, Justice Minister Danail Kirilov said. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

- May 6th, Bulgaria's real Growth Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to contract by more than 7% in 2020, largely because of measures against COVID-19, while unemployment will reach 7% this year, the European Commission said in its Spring Economic Forecast. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic conditions in Bulgaria were favorable, the EC said. At 3.4%, GDP growth in Bulgaria in 2019 was robust for the fifth year in a row, mainly driven by growing household consumption. This positive trend has been interrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak. *"Bulgaria's real GDP is projected to contract by over 7% in 2020, largely due to the adverse impact of measures taken to contain the spread of the pandemic following the declaration of a state of emergency on March 13th, 2020. The sectors directly subject to these measures (e.g. retail, transport, hotels and restaurants, art and entertainment) are estimated to be operating at 30-40% of their capacity, while important negative spillover effects are also expected on the rest of the economy,"* the European Commission said. A rebound in economic activity is expected in the second half of 2020 with the gradual lifting of the confinement measures. Domestic demand is projected to strengthen already in the third quarter and should continue growing in the fourth. Government measures to protect income and employment should support household consumption, which is nevertheless expected to fall by almost 6% in 2020. Investment is set to shrink by 18% in 2020 on account of current and expected financial hardship at the firm level due to drastically reduced cash flows. *"Liquidity support schemes are expected to mitigate chain defaults but not to stimulate new investment,"* the EC said. The slowdown of international economic activity has had a negative effect on Bulgaria's

exports since end-2019. In 2020, a broad-based fall in Bulgaria's exports of more than 13% is expected, mainly due to the worldwide impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Imports are expected to contract by more than 12%, mainly due to the large fall in investment but also due to the decline in exports, which have significant import content. Growth is forecast to benefit from an assumed rebound in exports. *"Investment, however, is expected to follow a slower recovery path with an annual growth of only 1%, as high uncertainty and still weak business finances are set to suppress and postpone investment activity,"* the EC said. Risks to this macroeconomic outlook arise from the uncertainty on the degree of take up and success of the measures to support the economy, the European Commission said. *"The impact of the epidemic on consumption patterns will also be critical for the strength and duration of the recovery phase,"* the EC forecast said. The unemployment rate in Bulgaria has increased significantly since the COVID-19 containment measures were put in place, boosted in part by the return of workers from abroad. Job losses are set to be most pronounced in the services sector (which accounts for more than 60% of employment), where the disruption is likely to last longest. Bulgaria's unemployment rate is expected to jump to 7% in 2020, after having reached historic lows of 4.2% in 2019. In 2021, a partial recovery in employment is projected to take place and the unemployment rate to decrease to 5¾%. Nominal wage growth, after years of substantial gains, is expected to moderate to 3½% in 2020 and 2¼% in 2021. Consumer price inflation is expected to fall from 2.5% in 2019 to 1.1% in 2020 and stay at that level in 2021. This can be largely explained by the sizeable impact of the collapse in oil prices, the EC said. Core

inflation is set to fall to 2% in 2020 reflecting lower prices in non-energy industrial goods and a slowdown in services inflation. In 2021, core inflation is forecast to decelerate further to 1.3% due to a smaller price increase of processed food. Bulgaria is facing the COVID-19 pandemic from a strong fiscal position, the European Commission said. In 2019, the budget surplus reached 2.1% of GDP. As part of the package of measures to contain the pandemic and its impact the Government announced a higher spending on medical equipment, wage bonuses and increases for the medical and security staff, as well as subsidies, tax deferrals, state guarantees and a reallocation of investment funds to support the economy. In 2021, based on a no-policy-change assumption, the budget deficit is forecast at 1¾% of GDP, mainly due to the positive impact of higher economic growth on revenues and the fading impact of some expenditure measures. General Government debt is expected to increase and reach over 25% of GDP in both 2020 and 2021, as a result of the primary deficit, the contraction in GDP and certain measures to support liquidity in the economy (e.g. the capital strengthening of the Bulgarian Development Bank to provide state guaranteed loans) that do not affect the deficit but which do weigh on debt, the European Commission said. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

- May 8th, Bulgaria's Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva has asked the Committee on resolving historical issues between Bulgaria and North Macedonia to resume work, albeit remotely. Recently, there have been over 100 publications about Bulgaria in North Macedonia. The anti-Bulgarian theme is present in the pre-election situation in the country. Election come and go but

neighbors stay, Zaharieva said. *“Our goal is to recognize our common history, to celebrate together the heroes who have identified themselves as Bulgarians, but have fought for the ideals of Macedonia,”* Bulgaria's Foreign Minister explained. (www.novinite.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Economic forecasts are not encouraging for Bulgaria due to the COVID-19 measures. Economic situation may affect not only the Bulgarian effort to enter the ERM2 mechanism; the “waiting room” before the eurozone, but also the political stability of the country. Dispute with North Macedonia on “Macedonian” language and “Macedonian minority” may disrupt bilateral relations between the two countries. Bulgaria pushes North Macedonia to abandon its views if the latter wishes to start accession negotiations with the EU. Migration poses a national security threat but currently situation is under control since migrant and refugee flows coming from Turkey are not increased. Nevertheless, situation is closely monitored by Bulgarian authorities. Corruption and organized crime remain significant obstacles for the country’s development and should be addressed decisively. The country pays special attention to energy security developing several projects. Modernization of Armed Forces is a top priority for Bulgaria and huge armament projects are ongoing (fighter jets, armored vehicles, vessels etc). However, military operational capability of the state is questioned especially in the Air Force. Bulgarian Armed Forces are far from NATO standards.



CROATIA: May 7th, Croatia has managed to implement all of the necessary reforms to apply for entry into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism 2, the “waiting room” for the Eurozone, said Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic. Opening a meeting of the National Council for the Adoption of the Euro, Plenkovic noted that joining the Eurozone was Croatia’s political and legal commitment, one it accepted when it joined the EU and ratified the Accession Treaty, which was backed by a referendum held on January 22nd, 2012. *“Our Action Plan covered 6 areas - 19 policies, 9 institutions - and the goal was to fulfill them by the end of April. Today, I am pleased to inform you that we have completed everything on time. All the measures have been carried out by the relevant Ministries, the Croatian National Bank, and the Statistics Bureau,”* he said, adding that Croatia was now ready for the next phase on the road to adopting the euro. The Government has managed to tick all of the boxes on its Action Plan before the deadline, which was in the end of June, Finance Minister Zdravko Maric said. *“A lot of questions have been raised over these last two months about whether this crisis caused by the virus will stop or slow down our progress towards the exchange rate mechanism, but working closely with the ECB, it has not stopped or slowed us down,”* said the Governor of the Croatian National Bank, Boris Vujcic. (www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr)

- May 8th, Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic accepted resignation of Defense Minister Damir Krsticevic on Friday. Krsticevic made the surprise announcement on Thursday after an Air Force trainer plane crashed near the southern city of Zadar, killing two servicemen. The Prime

Minister said there was no reason for resignation and could not see how the Minister felt politically responsible for the tragic deaths while calling Krsticevic a friend and one of his closest political allies. *“I personally cannot see any link between his political responsibility and the fact that the plane crashed. I understand that this situation has impacted him very deeply. He was himself a soldier and the Commander of the [4th] Guards Brigade during the Homeland War. He is my closest associate in the HDZ and the Government, and he is my friend. I have decided to accept his resignation, but not because he is responsible. Unfortunately, accidents like this happen. Out of respect to him, I accepted his resignation,”* Plenkovic said. The Prime Minister added that this did not spell the end of his political career, especially with parliamentary elections just around the corner. This marks the second crash of a military aircraft in a little over three months. In late January, an American-made OH-58 Kiowa Warrior helicopter crashed into the Adriatic Sea near the island of Zlarin, killing two airmen on board. (www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr)

- May 9th, Croatia needs a new Government by September; only in that way will we have democratic legitimacy, Parliament Speaker Gordan Jandrokovic said in an interview with the Jutarnji List daily of Saturday. Jandrokovic said that a grand coalition between his Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica – HDZ), and the largest opposition Social Democratic Party of Croatia (Socijaldemokratska Partija Hrvatske - SDP) was out of the question. *“It is true that not even COVID-19 can join us together. We need to maintain social distance towards some of them.”* He said that it was essential to get a Government

and Parliament with a renewed democratic legitimacy. “Everyone who rightfully says that the country is facing difficult choices must be aware that the term of this Government and this parliamentary majority is at an end,” Jandrokovic said. Although he is the Secretary-General of the ruling party, he would not explicitly say when Parliament would be dissolved and elections called, insisting that the HDZ had not yet made that decision and that it would depend on the epidemiological situation. “Obviously elections will be held in July if situation with the epidemic does not deteriorate significantly over the next ten days,” Jandrokovic said, declining to discuss the HDZ's election slates. (www.hr.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Croatia moves rapidly towards parliamentary elections; most likely in coming July. Croatian economy is expected to suffer due to COVID-19 measures and the Government needs to make hard decisions. In this context, a new Government with fresh mandate is needed to make such decisions. Resignation of Defense Minister, Damir Krsticevic was accepted by the Prime Minister, Andrej Plenkovic but it did not have any impact on Government's stability. However, two air accidents in a little over three months is an alarming sign for the operational and maintenance capability of the Armed Forces. Croatia – Slovenia border dispute remains active, but COVID-19 pandemic and pre-electoral period in Croatia have downsized current situation. Croatia implements a policy of Armed Forces' modernization trying to form a reliable and well equipped force according to NATO standards. However, the current COVID-19 pandemic may affect the ambitious modernization plans due the

economic repercussions in the country. Croatian Air Force is far from NATO standards and actually the country lacks an operational air power.



CYPRUS: May 5th, refugees at Kokkinotrimithia reception center in Pournara began a hunger strike on Tuesday to denounce living conditions and overcrowding. The center was designed to host asylum seekers for a maximum of 72 hours until health checks are carried out. However, because of the travel restrictions in place due to the coronavirus pandemic, it currently hosts around 600 people. “We want to go out, we are simply too many in the center,” a refugee told Cyprus Mail. “Conditions are terrible, some of us have been here for four months; there is no electricity and not enough food for everyone. We are facing a very tough life inside the camp and that is why we took the decision to go on a hunger strike. We want our voices heard and the Government to know what is going on in here,” a refugee said. Different NGOs have recently criticized the living conditions at the site with the Interior Minister rubbishing their allegations. On April 23rd, 2020 however, Ombudswoman Maria Stylianou Lottides called on the Interior Ministry to improve conditions at the reception center, which she had inspected earlier in the month to assess living conditions amid the coronavirus pandemic. Among the shortcomings in Kokkinotrimithia were tents flooded by recent rains because they lacked proper flooring. “It is immediately required to expedite completion of the construction works for the expansion and configuration of the center so that it can become fully operational,” Lottides said in a report

following a recent visit to the facility. Lottides also asked for medical care on a daily basis and not having a doctor visit every other day as is the existing practice. Two nurses were on duty around the clock and special protocols were in place if there was a coronavirus case. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- May 7th, in two letters sent to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Cyprus' Permanent Representative to the UN Andreas Mavroyiannis condemned Turkey's unlawful claims over maritime areas where it could not have any rights under international law and has protested the new illegal drilling operations in the island's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Mavroyiannis stressed Cyprus "*rejects the newly attempted submission by Turkey of geographical coordinates concerning the outer limits of its alleged continental shelf in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, as well as the presentation of a chart which clearly encroaches upon the maritime zones of Cyprus, as well as of other coastal states in the region. Turkey's unlawful claims extend to maritime areas where it could not have any rights whatsoever under international law and purport to 'delimit' maritime boundaries with continental states with which it has no opposite or adjacent coasts and whose maritime areas do not, and could not, osculate.*" He referred to a MoU between Turkey and the Government of national accord state of Libya on the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean. The result, Mavroyiannis said, "*is an unlawful instrument that fabricates a non-existent maritime boundary between Turkey and Libya at the expense of the rights and interests of third states.*" He added that the Republic of Cyprus is "*the sole subject of international law on the island; has*

sovereignty over the whole island of Cyprus and all the rights stemming from there." He also raised the issue of Turkish drilling in the EEZ, which started at the end of April. "*The new drilling will be the sixth in less than a year,*" he said. "*The unlawful operations of Turkey in different parts of Cyprus' maritime zones have been uninterrupted since their launch on May 4th, 2019,*" Mavroyiannis added including a map showing all the drillings undertaken by Turkey in the past 12 months within the maritime zones of Cyprus, "*as well as Turkey's outlandish claims therein.*" Turkey's actions, he stressed, "*are a direct violation of Cyprus' sovereign rights and jurisdiction under international law.*" At the same time, he continued, "*Turkey continues to militarize the maritime space all around Cyprus and to illegally conduct unlawful seismic surveys within Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone.*" (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- May 7th, the Greek Cypriot side stands ready to resume efforts for the solution of the Cyprus problem as soon as conditions allow, Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides said on Thursday. Speaking to the Cyprus News Agency, the Minister said there is no other choice than seeking a solution. "*I wish and hope that very soon we will transition to the post-coronavirus era and we will be able to continue the negotiations for the reunification (of the island) but also all of our other plans for progress and prosperity in our country,*" Christodoulides said. On when he thinks efforts to resolve the Cyprus issue would resume, the Minister said that given that talks were supposed to pick up from where they left off in Crans Montana, immediately after the election process in the occupied areas that had been scheduled for April. "*No doubt the pandemic had*

a negative effect as it led to the postponement of the election procedure in the occupied areas,” he said. The elections in the north have been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic and are now due to take place on October 11th, 2020. Christodoulides also expressed concerns over the escalation of Turkey’s illegal actions in Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) amidst the global pandemic and its consequences including in the field of energy. “As far as we are concerned, our desire and readiness is to continue the effort as soon as conditions allow. There is no other option,” he said. The Minister also warned that the consequences of the pandemic will lead to changes at international level and in relations between states. He noted that the pandemic with its economic and many other effects follow the global economic crisis that began in 2008 and the recent immigration crisis. “These two crises have led some states to gradually challenge the structures, principles and values of the international system that emerged after the end of the Cold War,” he said, adding that after the end of this pandemic, such tendencies and approaches will be further strengthened. “I believe that priorities set through the foreign policy of states will be revised and redesigned,” he said. Christodoulides said his Ministry has prepared a plan for the current period and the post-coronavirus one in terms of promoting its policies “so that we are able to respond to the new state of affairs that is being shaped.” He added that the foreign ministry has also asked academics to submit their own approaches, assessments and suggestions. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Cyprus reacted diplomatically against the Turkish drills in the Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) denouncing Turkey’s aggressive behavior against international law. Cyprus cannot to stop the Turkish activity so far, failing to protect its sovereign rights. Turkey has simply refused to withdraw from a region that it is considered as its strategic extension where vital geostrategic and geoeconomic interests are at stake. Cyprus lacks adequate military means (especially aeronautical forces) to deter Turkey from continuing its activity. However, it is not expected escalation of situation in the near future since energy companies have postponed their scheduled drills within the Cypriot EEZ. It is certain that Turkey will not accept “fait accompli” in a region considered as part of its strategic interests. Besides, Turkey maintains a significant military force on the island (Army Corps size) which poses a permanent threat against the Cypriot republic. 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. Illegal migration is a challenge for Cyprus especially if migrant flows will be increased during summer.



GREECE: May 4th, Turkey rejected on Monday claims by Greece that two of its fighter jets harassed a helicopter carrying the Greek Defense Minister Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos on Sunday, saying the planes were conducting “routine flights” in the area. “Our fighter aircraft have performed an identification mission as part of their routine activities in the Aegean and harrassment of the helicopter with Minister of National Defense of

Greece onboard is out of question,” said Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hami Aksoy. He also accused Athens of “*dramatizing*” the incident “*in a way to create tension.*” The Greek Minister and Chief of the National Defense General Staff, General Konstantinos Floros were visiting the islands of Oinousses, Agathonissi and Farmakonissi. The incident took place after the helicopter took off from Oinousses. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- May 5th, an international agreement to build the EastMed gas pipeline, which will carry natural gas from the East Mediterranean to Europe through Greece, was submitted to Parliament on Tuesday for ratification. The agreement was signed by Greece, Cyprus and Israel on January 2nd, 2020, in the presence of the leaders of the three countries. The 1,900 kilometer (1,300 mile) EastMed pipeline is intended to provide an alternative gas source for energy-hungry Europe, which is largely dependent on supplies from Russia and the Caucasus region. The pipeline will carry 10 billion m³ of gas per year, with an extension capacity of 20 billion m³ per year. It will stretch from the Levant Base to the Florovouni area of Thesprotia prefecture, in northwestern Greece, where it will connect with the submerged Greek - Italian pipeline. The section up to Italy is estimated to cost six billion euro. Greece-based IGI Poseidon, which involves Greece's Public Gas Corporation (DEPA) and Italy's Edison as equal partners, are tasked with the construction of the pipeline. The effort to claim offshore energy deposits in the southern Mediterranean has created new tensions between Greece and Cyprus, and Turkey. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- May 6th, the Greek Foreign Ministry reportedly plans to reactivate Greece’s involvement in the wider Eastern Mediterranean region in tandem with the gradual lifting of the lockdown. Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias plans to resume contacts in coming days with his counterparts in the region, while on Tuesday he announced the appointment of Tasia Athanasiou as special envoy for Syria. Athanasiou served as Ambassador to Damascus between 2009 and 2012, and oversaw the closure of the Greek Embassy. Diplomatic sources say her appointment is part of Greece’s effort to play a more active role in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is also seen as a reflection of Greece’s interest in contributing to efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis, as echoed by Dendias in recent meetings with UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen. Meanwhile on Tuesday, Turkish jets conducted an overflight in the Aegean east of Chios island. (www.ekathimerini.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Greek Government seeks to attract tourists after the end of COVID-19 lockdown aiming to restart the state’s economy. Taking into consideration that one of the main pillars of the Greek economy is tourism there are concerns for the Greek economy route. As the Government enjoys citizen’s trust due to its tackling of COVID-19 and the migration flows and the country may enter in economic recession in coming autumn, one could not exclude early elections during summer or beginning of autumn. Greek administration is following closely Turkish provocations in Evros borderline and the Aegean Sea. Greek top-officials and military leadership are concerned due to upgrade of Turkish actions

which include firings of light weapons in Evros and support of migrants to enter Greek territory. Although, incidents are of low scale tension, situation could be turned into a “hot” incident or an armed conflict. Under current situation in Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Sea Greece, Greece is obliged to strengthen and modernize its Armed Forces operational capability.



KOSOVO: May 6th, the Kosovo Government said that dialogue with Serbia should be principled; there can be no agreement without dialogue; there can be no dialogue with maps. Government Spokesman Perparim Kryeziu said that all discussions related to borders were unacceptable and that the outgoing Government of Albin Kurti did not accept the term border changes as a euphemism for the division of Kosovo, Gazeta Express writes. The media reminds that the High Representative of the EU Josep Borrell, in an interview with several Balkan media on the issue of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, did not oppose the correction of the borders, stating that such an issue should be resolved between the two sides and that it is not up to the EU to tell Serbs and Albanians what to do. *“As for Josep Borrell’s statement, the Government emphasizes that dialogue should be principled; we reiterated our position that there can be no agreement without dialogue, there can be no dialogue with maps,”* Kryeziu said in response to Borrell. According to him, the Kosovo Government welcomes Borrell’s statement that the dialogue should be free and fair between Serbia and Kosovo and that the final agreement should take into account the effects it can have in the region. (www.balkans.aljazeera.net.com)

- May 7th, commenting on his participation at the online EU - Western Balkans Summit on Wednesday, President Hashim Thaci said the bloc should refer to Kosovo as an *“independent and sovereign state,”* the Beta news agency reported on Thursday. He added he asked for a free visa regime for Kosovo to be granted since *“it met all conditions.”* Thaci also asked the EU to start the accession process with Kosovo. Thaci told reporters he also spoke about the dialogue with Serbia and said he pledged for it to end with *“a comprehensive legally binding agreement which stipulates the mutual recognition.”* (www.rs.n1info.com)

- May 7th, European Commissioner for Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi said that in the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, it is necessary to reach an agreement that is *“mutually acceptable”* and which *“is not a risk for other countries in the region.”* *“The exchange of territories is in the background; it is primary that we have two sides at the table ready to talk and reach a solution,”* Varhelyi said, Tanjug reported. *“It is crucial that the two sides agree on a solution that is mutually acceptable and that is not a risk to other countries in the region. When we get to that point, then we can consider different elements of the solution,”* Varhelyi said. He added that he expects a great contribution from the EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajcak in initiating the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as in reaching an agreement. Regarding the statement of the Head of EU diplomacy that *“the EU cannot be more Catholic than the Pope”* when it comes to the agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, Josep Borrell’s office told Tanjug that the statement that the High Representative supported the idea of exchanging

borders was “*journalistic interpretation.*” Borrell answered. The President of the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës - LDK), Isa Mustafa, stated today that Kosovo should not be afraid of dialogue with Serbia and that foreign officials and mediators are not the ones who decide on Kosovo's borders. “*Neither Grenell nor Borrell nor Lajcak can change borders or exchange territories,*” Mustafa said in a social media post. The LDK President said Kosovo must trust its allies, believe in the US and the EU, as well as itself. He also believes that the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo and the opinion of the International Court of Justice are closed topics and that Kosovo has no reason to be afraid of dialogue. “*We must have a dialogue so that, within these borders and with the territory we have, Serbia recognizes us, to join the UN, five more EU countries recognize us and join NATO,*” he said. He added that this is in the interest of Kosovo; a mediator from the US and the EU, because it ensures stability and opens a new perspective for economic growth. (www.balkans.aljazeera.net.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Political instability and uncertainty remain in Kosovo, while LDK, AAK and NISMA held consultations for forming a Government. Under these circumstances it is almost impossible to talk for progress in the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue and negotiation for normalizing mutual relations. However, the EU and US special envoys push for dialogue restart. Fight against corruption, organized crime, money laundering and trafficking, establishment of rule of law, accountable and transparent state institutions,

and functional public administration are the main challenges for Kosovo towards its European path.



MOLDOVA: May 4th, Moldova’s Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat din Moldova - PDM) today held a meeting which lasted almost seven hours. The topics of discussion were focused on the internal party situation, relations with the governance partners, the party’s activity within the coalition, as well as the leaving of party members. In the end, PDM leader Pavel Filip said that an eventual political crisis would have been catastrophic for Moldova. According to Filip, the PDM MPs analyzed the recent developments on political stage and eventual scenarios. “*PDM will not tolerate interferences from outside with the party’s work. We also analyzed the coalition’s activity; we are quite different; yet, we reached conclusion that the step made by PDM at that time was correct, which did not throw the country into chaos, as added to the pandemic state, an eventual political crisis would have been catastrophic for Moldova. Snap elections can be triggered in two cases: when a cabinet is not established or the Parliament does not work during three months. Do you imagine what impact would this have on the state of things in the country?*” Filip said. The Head of PDM in Parliament, Dumitru Diacov, today said that the participants in the meeting had discussed the party’s organization, relations with members of the governance and opposition. “*There was an open and principled discussion, by taking contradictory positions; yet, we are all here and we have firm decision to go further,*” Diacov said. Lawmakers denied information on eventual attempts of changing the PDM President. (www.moldpres.md)

- May 7th, the Constitutional Court decided at a today's meeting that the Parliament is the body that determines at the will of a majority the system under which the parliamentary elections are conducted. Thus, for the conduct of legislative elections under new electoral system should pass at least one year from the publication of the parliamentary decision in the Official Journal of Moldova. The Constitutional Court today ruled on the notification No180b/2019 made by MPs Sergiu Litvinenco, Alexandru Slusari and Vasile Bolea, who asked "On which electoral system will snap polls take place if they take place?" According to the answer given by the Constitutional Judges, the elections until August 17th, 2020 can take place on the basis of the mixed system, and after that date they will be held under the proportional system. (www.moldpres.md)

- May 7th, Moldova's Constitutional Court (CCM) declared today as unconstitutional the agreement between the Governments of Moldova and Russia on the providing of a financial loan worth 200 million euro to the Moldovan state. The CCM session lasted almost ten hours and the deliberations – two hours. A judge of the Constitutional Court, Eduard Ababei, did not participate in the consideration of this file; the magistrate took exception, as he is relative with Finance Minister Sergiu Puscuta, who is involved in the negotiations with the Russian side. At the same time, the Parliament's representative in this file, Vasile Bolea, demanded the change of Judge Nicolae Rosca, reasoning that he had been a member of the Party of Action and Solidarity (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate – PAS). Bolea said that, for this reason, Rosca's judging might be biased. The demand on Nicolae Rosca's challenge was not admitted. Notifications

on checking the constitutionality were submitted by a lawmaker of the parliamentary group Pro Moldova, Sergiu Sirbu, a PAS MP, Sergiu Litvinenco and a lawmaker of the Dignity and Truth Platform Party (Partidul Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr - PPDA), Dinu Plingau. (www.moldpres.md)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

The Constitutional Court ended the dispute of the controversial agreement between Moldova and Russia regarding a 200 million euro loan by declaring it as unconstitutional. The loan has triggered questions in Moldova as it was considered as a harmful one due to burdensome terms. The case is considered as another chapter of the ongoing rivalry between the West (namely the EU and NATO) and Russia for influence in Moldova. The country is considered by the US and EU of great strategic importance being in the soft underbelly of Russia. On the other hand, Moldova is considered by Russia as an important region for its national security belonging by principle to its sphere of influence. Although the President Igor Dodon fully controls internal politics political scenery is not absolutely stable and questions for early elections have been raised. Russia maintains troops in Transnistria which are considered by pro-western forces as violating Moldovan sovereignty. The frozen conflict of Transnistria is always a "running sore" for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization. Corruption, lack of transparency and accountability reign in public administration and state's politics.



MONTENEGRO: May 6th, today, the Deputies of the Democratic Front

(Demokratski Front - DF) sent to the Assembly a Draft Resolution on a new sustainable economic policy in Montenegro in the conditions of continuous epidemic dangers and global trends, which, as they assessed, is the right way to move from detainee to sustainable, solidary and prosperous society. The resolution was signed by MPs Branko Radulovic, Andrija Mandic, Nebojsa Medojevic, Milan Knezevic and Milutin Djukanovic. As it is stated, measures have been proposed that should represent the basis of the work of the “*Government of National Salvation*,” which would conduct the first free elections. “*In that way, the necessary transition of society would be efficient, less painful and without possible conflicts*,” it is said. “*If the regime remains in the position of preserving personal interests and privileges at the cost of Montenegro's future, then these measures should be the basis of the work of the first democratic Government*,” reads the explanation of the Resolution that Vijesti had insight into. The document states the need for an efficient judiciary, reorganization of the health system and improvement of the position of health workers. Also to financially support their training, as well as to invite those who left the country to return. Resolution proposes three types of measures; urgent, primary and structural. Urgent measures include one-time financial support to all citizens in the amount of the minimum wage, ie half of the minimum wage for minors, support to households in necessary products, preventive protective equipment (masks, gloves and disinfectants), as well as support in food production. Among the proposed primary measures is updating the register of socially vulnerable citizens based on real needs, free protective health equipment and financial assistance, subsidizing electricity and

utility bills, financial assistance to pensioners, distribution of 50-euro vouchers for the purchase of medicines for chronic and acute patients, who are in a state of social need and pensioners with a pension of up to 250 euros. It is also proposed to abolish or reduce fees, awards, material expenditures, business trips, abolish subsidies for renewable electricity sources, and minimize the use of official vehicles. (www.vijesti.me)

- May 7th, report of the non-governmental organization “*Freedom House*,” which classified Montenegro in the category of hybrid regimes with a lack of democracy, accurately depicts an undemocratic state that has not had fair elections and change of Government for three decades. This was assessed by the representatives of the civil sector and political parties, stating that the document of the influential organization, which was published yesterday, is a serious warning to the Montenegrin authorities that negative trends about the state of democratic institutions and the rule of law must be stopped. Yesterday, the Government did not answer the questions of Vijesti about the report which states that the index of democracy for Montenegro is 3.86, which puts it in a hybrid, transitional regime. That is a state in which the rule of law and electoral irregularities are among the key problems. The democratic character of the Government was assessed with 3.25, the electoral process with 4.25, the civil sector with 5.25, and the independence of the media with 3.25. Montenegro received 4.5 for the democratic character of local Government, 3.5 for the independence of the judiciary and 3 for the fight against corruption. Grades are given on a scale of one to seven, where seven represents the highest level of democratic progress. The low grade for

democracy is an objective picture of reality and the result of undemocratic processes, which have been particularly intense in the last five years, said Stevo Muk, president of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Alternatives (IA). *“The fact that such an assessment comes from Washington should be taken into consideration by the leaders of the regime, who have always been critical against Moscow, Belgrade and ‘internal enemies’,”* Muk told Vijesti. (www.vijesti.me)

- May 8th, parliamentary elections in Montenegro could be held in the second half of July at the earliest, which would best suit the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (Demokratska Partija Socijalista Crne Gore - DPS), by taking into advantage of the Government's positive rating. During last two months, amid the health crisis, DPS achieved to politically neutralize the negative consequences of the adoption of the Law on Freedom of Religion. The fact that the ruling DPS has already launched a campaign amid the peak of the epidemic, as well as the economic crisis and the work of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACP) in the implementation of the Law on Financing Political Entities and Election Campaigns, indicates that DPS is working towards early elections. It should be underlined that in addition to the parliamentary elections, there are also local ones in several municipalities. According to the Law, parliamentary elections should be held no less than 60 or more than 100 days of the day they had been called. The President of the Management Board of the Center for Monitoring and Research (CEMI), Zlatko Vujovic, said that the biggest risk for DPS is the economic crisis and the increase of unemployment due to the coronavirus epidemic. *“It is likely DPS to call for elections in late*

summer or beginning of September as a middle ground. There is still some money liquidity, satisfaction with the results of measures against the coronavirus is fresh, citizens are more relaxed, and protests are still not allowed,” Vujovic said for Vijesti. The Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ACP) passed a set of regulations included in the new Law on Financing of Political Entities, which, according to analysts, prepared the legal ground for the autumn elections, while the public was preoccupied with measures to fight coronavirus and restrictions of movement. In the meantime, the law was changed once again, so the Government was given the opportunity to pay social benefits from the current budget, which was banned during the election year. Taking in advantage the change of legislation, the Government provided assistance to pensioners, a temporary increase in salaries in the public sector (this time to health care) achieving to secure votes for DPS in the coming elections. A practice that has been followed for years by DPS and has been pointed out by the opposition and civil society. *“Numerous benefits from the state treasury are underway for people who are socially endangered, and whose jobs have suffered, increasing the level of optimism among citizens, but also the chances of DPS success,”* Vujovic said. Legal Adviser at the NGO *“Action for Social Justice”* Ines Mrdovic said that the Government did not impose a state of emergency in the country because is preparing for parliamentary elections. Vujovic claimed that the summer scenario strengthens fears that a hard autumn will follow. *“DPS is aware of a terrible perspective for autumn and is trying to hold elections before autumn at all costs,”* he said. For the autumn scenario, as Vujovic estimates, the renewal of protests would be a risk, but it is

expected that the measures of citizens' banning, even during the pre-electoral campaign, would remain in force. (www.vijestu.me)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

The ruling DPS is seeking to call for parliamentary elections as soon as possible, while opposition asks for a delay until the autumn. There are concerns that coming autumn will be a hard one due to the COVID-19 consequences in the state's economy. So the Government seeks to call for elections in late summer or beginning of autumn. Opposition looks divided without a common stance but there are several parties which will boycott the elections protesting for lack of democratic values, media freedom and establishment of an authoritarian regime by the ruling DPS. Besides, the House of Freedom's latest report which enlists Montenegro (together with Serbia and Hungary) to the "hybrid regimes" moving towards authoritarianism was rather a shock for ruling DPS which was used to positive recommendations from the US organizations. Corruption, smuggling (especially cigarettes) and money laundering are dominated in the country setting significant obstacles and risks for every investor. Such situation has strongly affected progress of accession negotiations with the EU. Montenegro 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. The coming elections in the country should be seen as a democratic stress test. The country focuses on strengthening its Armed Forces by purchasing modern equipment.



NORTH MACEDONIA: May 6th, the latest "States in Transit" report by Freedom House for 2020 shows that North Macedonia has advanced in the criteria such as "electoral process" and "independent media." This year's score is 3/75 and this is the third consecutive year in a row where the democratic progress is improving. North Macedonia (and Kosovo* under the 1244/1999 UNSC Resolution) is the only country in the Balkans where advancements in democracy for 2020 were reported. North Macedonia received the worst score in Freedom House's report in 2017 with 3.57. Freedom House's report evidences the progress in the media sector, which independence was scored with 3.5. Despite the progress, North Macedonia remains in the group of countries with transitory hybrid regimes, which includes countries such as Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Moldova, Ukraine, and Kosovo* (under the 1244/1999 UNSC Resolution). The category of states with transitory hybrid regimes means that in North Macedonia the democratic institutions are fragile and there are significant challenges that refer to political rights and civil freedoms. One of the authors of this year's Freedom House Report, Michael Schmelcher, gave a statement for the Voice of America where he said that only in Kosovo and North Macedonia a progress was achieved in the media. (www.meta.mk)

* Kosovo is not a UN recognized state.

- May 7th, article 9 of the Declaration adopted after the online Zagreb summit of the EU reveals that, as Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov said, all EU member states will stand behind Bulgaria as it demands concessions from North

Macedonia. In his heated post-summit comments, Borisov warned North Macedonia that Bulgaria will block its EU accession unless the 2017 treaty he signed with the then Prime Minister, Zoran Zaev is implemented in full. *“We told them what our conditions are for them to be accepted to the EU. If you do not like it, you do not have to do it. We supported them for NATO. What are we supposed to do? To say that we are Macedonians?”* Borisov said mockingly before declaring a diplomatic win for Bulgaria contained in the EU Declaration. Bulgaria asks that North Macedonia’s historians agree that a number of historic figures honored in North Macedonia were in fact Bulgarians. It also wants to prevent North Macedonia from having the *“Macedonian language”* made into an official EU language in the course of the accession talks. *“The EU fully supports the Western Balkans partners’ pledge to inclusive regional cooperation and strengthening good neighborly relations, including with EU Member States. Implementing bilateral agreements in good faith and with tangible results, including the Prespa Agreement with Greece and the Treaty on Good Neighbourly Relations with Bulgaria, remains important in this regard. Further and decisive efforts need to be devoted to reconciliation and regional stability, as well as to finding and implementing definitive, inclusive and binding solutions to partners’ bilateral disputes and issues rooted in the legacy of the past, in line with international law and established principles, including the Agreement on Succession Issues. We welcome the recent appointment of the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade - Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues,”* article 9 of the Declaration states. The language used here is reminiscent of how

previous Greek demands for humiliating concessions from North Macedonia were imposed on the EU as requests that come with the collective weight of the entire Union. The North Macedonia’s Government attempted to conceal from the public that Bulgaria has appended conditions to the opening of accession talks, and once the text of the Bulgarian request was made public, Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov insisted that it is just a statement from one member state, and not the opinion of the EU. This claim was debunked by Borisov yesterday, and North Macedonia’s opening of accession talks is now again in doubt. (www.republika.mk)

- May 10th, Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (Socijaldemo-kratski Sojuz na Makedonija – SDSM) party leader Zoran Zaev came out with a request for elections in June. Zaev met with his coalition partners today and said that the vote should be as soon as possible and that this will be his position at the coming meeting of party leaders scheduled for next week by President Stevo Pendarovski. SDSM has pushed for quick elections despite concerns about the spread of the COVID-19 among voters, apparently thinking that later in the year the economic crisis will just get worse, and that will affect the popularity of his party. *“Our joint opinion is that the state took good steps to handle the coronavirus. We concluded that the country needs elections immediately after conditions are met. Once the peak has passed and the intensity is going down we should have elections, there will be no risk to public health. Especially considering that there could be another peak in autumn,”* Zaev said. This has been rejected by both the opposition Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian

National Unity (Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство - VMRO-DPMNE) party, Zaev’s coalition partner Democratic Union for Integration (Demokratska Unija za Integracija - DUI) and the State Electoral Commission, which insists that the electoral preparations need to begin from the start, and not just resuming from the stage the where they left off when the April 12th, 2020 elections were called off. The opposition has even dubbed this idea as the “corona elections.” (www.republika.mk)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

The SDSM pushes for parliamentary elections as soon as possible, even within June claiming that the country should restore parliamentary order. On the other hand opposition urges for elections when health conditions will be safe for the citizens. Although the country has a caretaker Government situation is not stable since the Parliament has been dissolved and there is no elected Government to handle major state’s issues. The Bulgaria – North Macedonia dispute is getting worse for the latter endangering the opening of accession negotiations with the EU and threatening the European perspective of the country. Moreover, it strengthens nationalistic rhetoric in North Macedonia giving spare place for populist voices amid pre-electoral atmosphere. However, it should be noted that North Macedonia is reluctant due to internal political reasons to fully implement the agreements with Greece and Bulgaria which have been set as preconditions by the EU for the country’s European future. The “Freedom House” report is alarming for North Macedonia

although it assessed improving in media independence and electoral process. The country is still in the list with “hybrid regimes in transition” and several reforms should be implemented. The country should focus on reforms regarding justice, rule of law, fight against corruption and money laundering, public administration, and respect of human rights in order to accelerate its European integration process.



ROMANIA: May 5th, Romania violated the rights of the Chief Prosecutor of the National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA), Laura-Codruta Kovesi, by revoking her from office before the end of her term, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) said on Tuesday, stressing that it decided unanimously that the right to a fair trial (Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights) and the right to free speech (Article 10 of the Convention) was violated. The case concerns the decision by which Kovesi was dismissed from the position of Chief Prosecutor of DNA before the end of her second term following some criticisms she voiced in connection with the legislative reforms in respect to corruption, states the Court, adding that the claimant maintained that she could not challenge the decision in Court. The Court also held that the applicant’s right to freedom of expression had been violated on the ground that she had been revoked because of the criticisms she brought while carrying out her duties in a matter of public interest. One of her tasks as Chief Anti-Corruption Prosecutor was to express her views on legislative reforms that could have consequences for the judiciary and its independence, as well as the fight against

corruption. According to the ECHR, the claimant's early dismissal was contrary to the very purpose of maintaining judicial independence and should have had a discouraging effect on her and on the other Prosecutors and Judges in their participation in public debates on legislative reforms concerning the judiciary and judicial independence. (www.nineoclock.ro)



The Prosecutor, Laura-Codruta Kovesi
(Photo source: www.consilium.europa.eu)

- May 6th, at a plenary session on Wednesday, the Chamber of Deputies defeated a bill on the administrative code, which provides also for the obligation to make the languages of national minorities official in the local public administration in certain instances, a bill initiated by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România - UDMR). The Legal, Budget, Administration and Labor Committees of the Chamber of Deputies had issued a joint report on Tuesday rejecting the bill. The bill is designed to provide a general framework for the organization and operation of public administration authorities and institutions, the statutes of their staff and administrative responsibility, public services, as well as the specific rules on public and private property of the state and administrative-territorial units, according to the report quoted by Agerpres.

The four Committees show that they have decided to issue a negative report “*the adoption of such a legislative initiative is not justified, especially because the explanatory memorandum does not contain a substantiation of the envisaged legislative solutions, with the initiators motivating their approach on their expectations that the Administrative Code in force might be found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court.*” The report passed 287 to 21 votes. The bill – initiated by 30 UDMR MPs was tacitly adopted by the Senate, but the Chamber of Deputies has the last say as it is the decision-making body in this case. (www.nineoclock.ro)

- May 7th, Prime Minister Ludovic Orban, when asked how he comments on the fact that the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, posted on social media an image of greater Hungary, which included Transylvania, stated that “*the sparrow dreams of cornmeal*” (e.n. – Part of a Romanian proverb, “*the sparrow dreams of cornmeal, and the madman of chaos*” in full). On the other hand, when asked what he believes of the point of view of People's Movement Party (Partidul Mișcarea Populară - PMP) Deputy Marius Pascan, who asked for “*placing UDMR [Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România - UDMR)] outside the law,*” Orban said that he does not support such measures. “*The National Liberal Party [(Partidul Național Liberal - PNL)] is a party that supports freedom of association. This does not mean that we will ever support anticonstitutional draft laws that affect the unity, indivisibility, the provisions of the Constitution. (...) Romania is one of the countries that ensure the broadest rights for national minorities, fact appreciated both at the European*

level, as well as the international level and I do not believe such drafts are necessary [e.n. – abolishing the UDMR],” Orban said during a press conference at the Military Technical Academy, according to Agerpres. The UDMR’s leader, Kelemen Hunor also wrote, on Wednesday, on social media “‘How can someone come in 2014, and state in front of the electorate, in the public space, that someone wants to break up Transylvania?! (...) These are not political statements, these are imbecilities!’ These are the words that Klaus Iohannis said in 2014 in a TV broadcast. (...) Last week, President Klaus Iohannis, through a two and a half minute statement, managed to destroy the idea of rational political dialogue, to mock the Hungarian language, and managed to stigmatize the Hungarian community in Romania. Two days ago, on Monday, the President launched a new accusation. The first man in the state claimed the UDMR promoted a law and is preparing a new blow by writing up a parallel administrative code, he claimed that we want to impose the Hungarian language in Transylvania as an official language and that our desiderata are against the Constitution. It is not true, it is false, it is a conspiracy theory, it is fake news, it is instigating hatred, it is nationalism and it is clean xenophobia,” Hunor said in a message posted on social media. (www.nineoclock.ro)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Law promoted by the Hungarian minority in Romania party UDMR rejected by the Chamber of Deputies ending speculations for wider autonomy in a region called Szekerland. However, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban keeps triggering tension in the region by promoting greater Hungary which includes parts

of Romania and Croatia. Without doubt such actions challenge region’s stability and good neighboring relations between EU member states. The possibility of snap elections in the near future is not very likely and it seems that the President Klaus Iohannis and ruling PNL postponed their plans due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Romania enjoys advanced upgrade in US and NATO strategic plans due to its geographical position located close to Russia. Consequently, Russia reacts in this close military cooperation between the two countries and the Alliance perceiving it as a threat against its national security. Romania keeps strengthening its Armed Forces seeking to achieve NATO standards.



SERBIA: May 4th, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Monday that parliamentary elections would be held on June 21st, 2020. Speaking after a meeting with officials of parties planning to field candidates, Vucic said that he accepted a proposal from some of those parties because they need to have 38 days to campaign before the elections. The President said that it is certain that there will be no large-scale gatherings in May, “especially not in closed spaces.” He added that the holding of gatherings in June will depend on the views of epidemiologists and on the state’s health conditions. According to Vucic, “a democratic atmosphere needs to be created after these hard times; a leadership, parliament and then a government should be elected for serving the interests of the citizens.” The leader of the Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka - SNS) said that he would “personally ask his associates to conduct the campaign in a spirit of tolerance and responsibility.” The meeting was

attended by Prime Minister Ana Brnabic, Parliament Speaker Maja Gojkovic, Serbian Socialist Party (Socijalistička Partija Srbije - SPS) leader Ivica Dacic, United Serbia (Jedinstvena Srbija) leader Dragan Markovic, New Party (Nova Stranka) leader Zoran Zivkovic, Serbian Patriotic Alliance (Srpski Patriotski Savez - SPAS) leader Aleksandar Sapic, Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska Stranka Srbije - DSS) leader Milos Jovanovic, Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (Savez Vojvođanskih Mađara - SVM) leader Istva Pastor, Justice and Reconciliation Party (Stranka Pravde i Pomirenja – SPP) leader Muamer Zukorlic, representatives of the Serbian Radical Party (Srpska Radikalna Stranka - SRS), Serbian Party of Defenders (Srpska Stranka Zavetnici), United Democratic Serbia coalition and 1 in 5 Million Movement. Nine lists of candidates have been submitted to the Republic Election Commission. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- May 7th, Bosko Obradovic, the leader of the nationalist opposition Serbian Movement (Srpski Pokret Dveri), said on Thursday the anti-regime protests had already started and that they would continue with *“a serious individual dissent which will spread to the street and will not stop until these authorities are gone,”* the Beta news agency reported. He referred to civic protest *“Noise Against Dictatorship”* which started over ten days ago with people banging pots, whistling and playing loud music from their windows and balconies during the curfew. *“I do not see any other possibility if we want Serbia back to normal political and every other form of life,”* Obradovic told the Belgrade NIN weekly. He added a decisive move should be made to change the regime in democratic elections in autumn. *“If they*

(the authorities) continue to insist on this fake election process after the abolishment of the state of emergency and do not want to allow free and fair elections by the end of the year, they have to be immediately stopped from spreading the dictatorship in a street protest,” Obradovic said. According to him, any democratic tool in overthrowing an undemocratic regime is allowed. *“So, I call for the defense of the constitutional order and laws, not for a coup,”* Obradovic said. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- May 7th, the opposition Alliance for Serbia (Savez za Srbiju - SzS) leader Janko Veselinovic told N1 on Thursday that the organization’s decision to boycott the coming elections is final. *“We decided at a SzS Presidency meeting three days ago to remain firm in the boycott because the conditions have not changed and are much worse than in April,”* SzS Chair Veselinovic said, adding that another important reason not to change the decision is because of the ongoing pandemic. *“Everyone from the authorities and opposition who calls voters to turn out for the June 21st elections is consciously risking their health,”* he said. Asked about the possibility of the Movement of Free Citizens (Pokret Slobodnih Građana - PSG) changing its decision to boycott the elections, Veselinovic said that the SzS would not accuse anyone of being on (Serbian President Aleksandar) Vucic’s payroll. *“If their decision to run in the elections is final, it benefits the Vucic regime and will certainly not help overcome the crisis which the world and the European Union have recognized,”* he said. Opposition leaders met in Belgrade on Thursday to discuss their decision to boycott the elections. The SzS invited the PSG

and other parties and civic movements to the meeting. (www.rs.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic announced that the postponed elections due to COVID-19 pandemic will be held on June 21st, 2020. Opposition SzS decided not to join the elections but there are rifts in the block. PSG has already announced that it changed its mind and it will run the elections; a decision which may affect other parties. Political situation is tense and protests are taking place almost every day. Alarming messages arrive from the opposition which is not very willing to accept a potential electoral victory of ruling SNS. Under these circumstances situation is rather stable and international stakeholders monitor closely current developments. Serbia is in the “microscope” of Western powers (namely the US and EU) due to increased activity of China and Russia which are seeking to put the country under their own sphere of influence. It is a fact that Serbia and Russia have developed very close relations, especially in the defense sector which concerns the EU and US. Serbia and Bosnia are the “vulnerable” and “fragile” links in the “security chain” of Southeast Europe since they do not belong to the Euro-Atlantic structures. Restart of dialogue with Kosovo is far since political uncertainty reigns in both Pristina and Belgrade. Although the EU and US push for dialogue restart it is assessed that it is very difficult to see tangible results within the 2020 due to Kosovo political uncertainty and Serbian electoral period. The EU has raised serious concerns over Serbia’s effectiveness on independence and accountability of the judiciary, freedom of expression, prevention of corruption

and the fight against organized crime. Serbia pays special attention in improving operational capabilities of its Armed Forces declaring towards all sides that they are the power of the state. It implements an ambitious armament program mainly supported by Russia.



SLOVENIA: May 4th, four center-left opposition parties filed a motion of no confidence in Economy Minister Zdravko Pocivalsek, accusing him of being responsible for profiteering of individuals and companies in the purchases of personal protective equipment. The move comes after a series of media reports questioning purchasing procedures. Denying accusations leveled against him, Pocivalsek said the motion was aimed at toppling the Government, while welcoming it as an opportunity to set the record straight. The motion has little chance of succeeding as coalition parties indicated their support for the Minister and even the opposition Slovenian National Party (Slovenska Nacionalna Stranka - SNS) said it would not vote for his dismissal. (www.sta.si)

- May 7th, the new Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF), Brigadier General Robert Glavas, believes that soldiers should enjoy better reputation in Slovenian society. He also talked to STA about the recent negative mark on the Army's preparedness for wartime action, noting it had much to do with staff shortages. He does not favor the idea to reintroduce conscription, dismissing the argument military service could put “spoiled youth” into line. (www.sta.si)

- May 10th, Slovenian Foreign Minister Ante Logar said on Saturday the Janez Jansa Cabinet

wanted good relations with all neighbors and that relations with Croatia had improved even though the border dispute remained unsolved. Speaking for Saturday's issue of the Ljubljana Delo daily, Logar said good relations with neighbors “*should be based on respect, the rule of law, but also on certain chemistry.*” He said “*there are contentious issues which still have not been solved*” but that Ljubljana -Zagreb relations had been “*reset*” and that there existed “*mutual respect and trust.*” Logar said the previous Slovenian Government sued Croatia before the end of its term over its non-application of a border arbitration ruling without having ensured a political consensus for that. He said previous Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar “*highlighted that border issue at practically every international forum and in all that time we made not one step forward about the arbitration issue.*” He said that caused tensions in the two countries' communication which the incumbent Government was defusing, wishing to solve outstanding issues via quiet diplomacy and better cooperation. “*At the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic, certain distrust was felt in the air which led to problems in international freight transport, but we resolved those issues in cooperation with Croatian [Foreign Minister] Gordan Grlic Radman relatively quickly,*” Logar was quoted as saying. “*We were cooperative and well-synchronized, which is a good start for next steps. The epidemic has put relations on a new starting point,*” the Minister said. Logar noted that Croatia could not put the focus on bilateral issues in the first half of the year because of its presidency of the Council of the EU and that some of those issues could not be solved. This has yet to be put on the agenda, he added. But Croatia is “*on the eve of an election*” so the border issue will wait for the next Government, Logar said. As

for the Jansa Cabinet's stance on the border arbitration ruling, he reiterated that “*the arbitration award is clear.*” “*We believe that legal acts should be honored and that is a negotiating position which is closed for us, while all the rest is a matter of agreement,*” Logar said. (www.hr.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Motion of no confidence against the Economy Minister cannot threaten the Government's stability. Migration is considered as a major threat against the country and additional measures will be taken for strengthening border control. Slovenia – Croatia dispute regarding the Piran Bay is still active but without tension or escalation due to COVID-19 pandemic. The Slovenian Foreign Minister made statements which show good will for improvement of bilateral relations between the two countries. 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.



TURKEY: May 7th, Turkey's lira briefly fell to a record low against the US dollar on Thursday as investors fretted about depleted currency reserves and the need for foreign financing as the coronavirus pandemic drains the economy. Thursday's fall to nearly 7.27 liras to the dollar pushed the lira beyond the record low hit during a 2018 currency crisis and extended five sessions of declines as the country sought to

mitigate the economic impact of the outbreak, which has killed 3,584 people in Turkey. It later recovered ground after the banking watchdog announced a ban on lira transactions by BNP Paribas, Citibank and UBS, saying the banks were unable to fulfill Turkish lira liabilities in due time. The state-owned Anadolu news agency had earlier reported that the watchdog was launching legal action against London-based institutions it said had mounted a “*manipulative attack*” on the Turkish lira. The lira stood at 7.1500 at 12:44 GMT, firming 0.7%, having weakened as much as 1% to 7.2690. It has lost some 18% this year under pressure from the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 130,000 confirmed cases in Turkey. Market concerns had been stoked by comments from a US Federal Reserve policymaker, which traders interpreted as ruling out a Fed swap line to cushion Ankara's depleted foreign exchange reserves. Swap lines - in which the Fed accepts other currencies in exchange for dollars - are meant to support big foreign dollar markets and not serve as a credit facility. The Fed did not include Turkey when it expanded them to some emerging markets in March. Turkey's Finance Minister Berat Albayrak voiced optimism in a conference call with investors on Wednesday about sealing a swap line deal for exchange funding, but he gave few details, several participants in the call told Reuters. Heading for its second recession in less than two years, Turkey has asked the US Federal Reserve and other central banks for access to funds as its own net foreign currency reserves have fallen to around 28 billion dollars from 40 billion dollars so far this year, reaching as low as 25 billion two weeks ago. Data on Thursday showed the gross foreign exchange reserves of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) stood at 51.46 billion

dollars as of May 1st, 2020 down from 52.66 billion dollars a week earlier. A Fed policymaker - asked on Wednesday about extending swap facilities to Turkey and others in need - said the Fed already has lines with countries that have a relationship of “*mutual trust*” with the US and the highest credit standards. A Turkish foreign exchange trader said those comments helped weaken the Turkish currency. “*We think pressure on the lira will continue in the short term,*” the trader said. In the call with investors, Albayrak defended Ankara's policies in the face of the currency selloff, saying Turkish reserves were more than adequate, according to participants on the call. But despite his optimism, investors fear Turkey could struggle to address the cash crunch. “*We already have one foot in the hole of a currency crisis,*” said Cristian Maggio, Head of emerging market strategy at TD Securities. Turkey's Central Bank was burning through foreign exchange reserves at a faster pace than any other emerging-market Central Bank. Analysts say the drop in the Central Bank's reserves is largely the result of its funding of state bank interventions to try to stabilize the lira. Compounding worries, Turkey faces a relatively high 170 billion dollars in external debt costs this year. As the lira weakened, Turkey published regulations on Thursday that would punish institutions spreading “*false or misleading information*” in financial markets. “*It smacks of the Turkish authorities trying to boss and bully the market and analysts, rather than get on the front foot in terms of the policy response,*” Timothy Ash of BlueBay Asset Management said. He said markets do not trust monetary policy in Turkey, given comments from Turkish officials including President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, showing an aversion to interest rates. “*When the*

economy needs rate hikes to defend the lira, as of now, we kind of know the CBRT will not be able to hike - or will be too slow to hike to make a difference for the lira,” he said. (www.aljazeera.com)

- May 8th, Fayez al-Sarraj, Head of Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), stated that it was Turkey that responded in times of need to fight the offensive of putschist General Khalifa Haftar, while he also criticized the EU's Operation IRINI for serving the warlord. *“In the previous nine months, we have been left alone to face the enemy aggression. For all that time we have sent repeated requests for help to our friendly countries with the hope of activating forms of mutual security. Turkey alone responded by sending experts and technicians to support our military programs, including training plans, the fight against terrorism and against illegal immigration,”* Sarraj told Italian Corriere della Sera on Thursday, adding that the two countries signed a memorandum that defines *“mutual prerogatives over territorial waters.”* *“It is our full right. Turkish companies have been working in Libya for decades and will continue,”* he added. Sarraj also criticized the EU's recently launched Operation IRINI. Reiterating that the primary objective of IRINI is to enforce the UN embargo against sending foreign military aid to Libya, Sarraj said *“Its area of operations is the Mediterranean Sea. But weapons and ammunition come to our enemies mainly by land and air. This is, in short, our objection: Our ports will be controlled, our troops penalized, while the Haftar airports will be free to receive any help and its militias to use any type of military reinforcement.”* Sarraj suggested that rather than just preventing illegal oil exports, the GNA agrees

there is a need to combat the network of human trafficking organizations in the central Mediterranean, and this can be accomplished through training and support for the Libyan Coast Guard. *“This, despite its weaknesses and few means, has contributed for years to the search and rescue of thousands of illegal migrants, in addition to having a prominent role in the decrease of migratory phenomena from Libya,”* he said. A sea mission began Monday with the French naval vessel JEAN BART and a maritime patrol aircraft contributed by Luxembourg, the EU said in a statement. World leaders agreed to uphold the UN embargo at a Berlin peace conference in January. Speaking on Egypt, Russia and the United Arab Emirates, which support Haftar, Sarraj said *“Their efforts only prolonged the war and contributed to new assassinations. Foreign interventions, if they continue, will have disastrous results destined to damage not only Libya but also the European and African balances.”* The Libyan Government has been under attack by Haftar's forces since April 2019, with more than 1,000 people killed in the violence. It launched Operation *“Peace Storm”* on March 26th, 2020 to counter attacks on the capital. The fighting over Tripoli has intensified in recent weeks despite UN calls for a cease-fire to allow authorities to focus on curbing the spread of the coronavirus. Following the ouster of late ruler Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, Libya's Government was founded in 2015 as part of a UN-brokered political deal. (www.dailysabah.com)

- May 10th, Iraq seeks to enhance bilateral relations in all fields with Turkey, the country's Prime Minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, said Saturday. The newly elected Prime Minister met with Fatih Yildiz, Turkey's Ambassador to

Baghdad, the Iraqi Prime Minister's office said in a statement. Al-Khadimi stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation with Turkey in the economy and in the fight against terrorism. Yıldız congratulated al-Khadimi on receiving the vote of confidence. On Thursday, Iraq's Parliament gave a vote of confidence to the new Prime Minister and his partial Cabinet to succeed the resigned Government headed by Adil Abdul-Mahdi. Al-Kadhimi managed to form a new Government after two former Prime Ministers-designate, Mohammad Allawi and Adnan Al-Zurfi, failed to garner support. Iraq has been roiled by mass protests since early October over poor living conditions and corruption, forcing Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi to resign. At least 496 Iraqis have been killed and 17,000 have been injured since the protests began on October 1st, 2019 according to Iraq's High Commission for Human Rights. (www.dailysabah.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Turkey is entering into a second recession in less than two years facing its record low against the US dollar last week. According to Turkish officials the Turkish lira is addressing a “manipulated attack” and it is assessed that pressure on Turkish currency will continue for the near future. Turkish Central Bank is trying to stabilize the state’s currency but it is in an extremely difficult situation since foreign exchange reserves have been reduced dramatically and it is in search for international funding. In the field of external policy, it seems that Turkey has stabilized the Syrian front, while Libyan forces of Fayeze al-Sarraj backed by Turkey are gaining ground against General Khalifa Haftar. Sarraj praised the Turkish support and condemned the EU’s decision to


launch operation IRINI. Turkey invests significant national interests in Libyan soil and its strategic alliance with Sarraj strengthens Turkish presence in Eastern Mediterranean Sea providing strategic depth in the country. Turkey works intensively on “soft power” by distributing medical aid in 60 countries around the world aiming to be consolidated as a regional power with significant capabilities. One should follow very carefully the harsh rivalry between Turkey and UAE which is behind several regional fronts (for instance, Libya) and it may affect Turkish policy in Middle East and North Africa. Turkey maintains its claims in the Aegean Sea and Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone violating constantly their sovereign rights. In the east Mediterranean front, Turkey will not accept “fait accompli” in the region and is expected to react violently if balance of power is jeopardized. The country continues to face several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs, Mayors, journalists and thousands of citizens 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. Turkey develops an ambitious armament project aiming at becoming self-sufficient in defense sector; if it succeeds it will set the base to become a regional military super power. Without any question, Turkey has the characteristics of a regional superpower and it tries to act like one.


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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. 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.*