



**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: October 15th, for Italy, the political crisis in Albania should be resolved by the internal actors. In a joint press release with Prime Minister Edi Rama, the Italian Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte, said that the majority should offer opposition a platform for constructive dialogue. But dialogue should be held without conditions. As for the opening of the EU accession negotiations, Conte said that Italy supports this process with Albania and that they will ask this Friday, at the European Council meeting, for a positive decision on Albania. The Italian Prime Minister said that reforms that were asked from Albania should be supported by everyone. (www.top-channel.tv)

- October 18th, France's insistence against the overwhelming majority of EU member states brought about on Friday the European Council not reaching a decision to open membership talks with Albania and Northern Macedonia. During a news conference following the end of the Council's meeting, French President Emmanuel Macron said he recognized the progress made by both countries, but that there were still some things to be resolved. He championed his idea of reforming the membership talks and enlargement process, which he described as a bureaucratic process. *"If we do not work properly with 27 members, how could be better with 28, 29 or 30,"* Macron said, referring to the EU's own internal problems, which he said had *"a new vision."* For her part, German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed regret that there was no unanimity in opening talks with Albania and Northern Macedonia, while stressing that *"Germany believes that the objectives set by the European Commission have been achieved."* She underlined

the fact that in the case of the two Balkan countries it is not about EU accession, but about launching a process of negotiations. The new President of the European Parliament David Sassoli, said the decision was greatly disappointing. *"Both countries and their citizens have made great efforts to meet the conditions set. When one is required to make further efforts, it is our duty to keep the given word. It will be difficult to explain to the people of these two countries why we are delaying the next step, at a time when progress has been made,"* he said. As for Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, not opening talks with Tirana and Skopje *"is a historic mistake."* He said that Italy would propose for the issue to be re-addressed to the General Affairs Council next month, stressing that *"if Europe creates such issues in the Western Balkans, not only it does not favor itself, but runs the risk of favoring other countries which aim to expand their sphere of influence."* The problem in the case of Albania and North Macedonia is not only related to the lack of support, but also to the uncertainty of the future of the process itself. Both French President Macron and Chancellor Merkel have said they will address the issue ahead of the Western Balkans summit in Zagreb next spring, but without specifying what will be done pending the French idea of revising the process. For his part, Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn said after the meeting that *"the leaders of European Union member states failed to uphold their commitment to open membership talks with Northern Macedonia and Albania at the European Council summit,"* Hahn wrote, referring to an *"extreme disappointment."* According to him, *"EU member states should clarify how serious their commitment to the Western Balkans' EU integration is."* Hahn reiterated his statements

a few days ago after the meeting of the member states' Foreign Ministers, noting that *“this is not a moment of glory for the EU. Refusing to acknowledge the progress made will have negative consequences, including the risk of destabilizing the Western Balkans with full impact on the EU.”* (www.tiranatimes.com)

- October 19th, in a press release, Secretary for Foreign Relations of Democratic Party (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë – PD), Arben Kashahu underlined this Saturday that Prime Minister Edi Rama must resign for the good of Albania. EU Commissioner for European Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn announced on Friday October 18th, 2019 that EU leaders failed to complete their commitment for opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. Consequently, Kashahu declared that Rama put his personal wealth and power before Albania's European future once again and marked him as the main obstacle of negotiations' opening failure. Furthermore, he accused Rama of setting in motion the propaganda mechanism so as to blame EU for this failure and not holding himself responsible about it. Besides, Kashahu stressed that Albania can join the EU without Rama. *“Edi Rama put again the interest of his personal wealth and power before the interest Albanians and the European destiny of Albania. He has set in motion the propaganda mechanism to blame EU, not to acknowledging any responsibility to him for why negotiations were not for Albania once again. It is not Europe's fault! The main obstacle for not opening accession negotiations is Edi Rama. He has six years that he blocks the Albanians' dream of becoming part of the European family with his malgovernment. Therefore, it should be clear to*

all, if Albania wants to join the EU, it will happen without Edi Rama. For the good of the country, Edi Rama must resign,” Kashahu stated. (www.albanindailynews.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Albania received once again a negative decision by the EU for opening accession negotiations. It was almost expected for Albanian Government (unlike with North Macedonia) and Prime Minister Edi Rama had almost admitted it by claiming on October 16th, 2019 that “if his country fails to get a start date for EU membership talks this week, it is purely down to internal divisions inside the EU; not because of any failings on the part of Albania.” France, the Netherlands, and Denmark have announced their intention to block Albania's opening of accession negotiations long time ago invoking Albania's political instability, corruption, rule of law, poor justice reform, and organized crime. Although, EU top officials and leaders of member states strongly criticized decision of these three countries, Albanian opposition announced that it was not EU's fault but Rama's incompetency. It is true that Rama from the very first moment has tried to put the blame on EU praising his Government's efforts. Albania's next day it will be difficult. Opposition is expected to intensify its protests in Albanian streets requesting resignation of the Government and early elections. For Rama who carries the burden of failure towards the country's European future it would be much more difficult to remain in power. The ongoing political crisis is expected to become deeper strengthening instability and uncertainty. Violent protests could not be excluded especially if Rama refuses to listen public demands and use Police violence against civilians. The Government

is accused of having links with organized crime and current situation raises questions over the power of "Albanian mafia" in the country and its influence in state's politics. Undoubtedly, corruption and organized crime remains the most significant state's problem undermining its strategic goal of opening accession negotiations with the EU. What really needs the country is political stability and constitutional order for moving ahead with reforms. Election of Albin Kurti as the new Kosovo Prime Minister is a new challenge for Albania. Besides, the state maintains its leading role in the Albanian world providing guarantees and support to Albanian population in the region namely Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.



BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:

October 14th, EU Foreign Ministers reiterated the commitment to Bosnia's EU perspective *"as a single, united and sovereign country,"* and called for Government formation at all levels so that authorities can proceed with work without any further delay, said the EU Council's conclusions passed on Monday. *"Taking into account that since last year's general elections, Government have not yet been formed in Bosnia and Herzegovina on State and Federation levels, the Council renews its call on Bosnia and Herzegovina to proceed with Government formation and start work without any further delay, in the interest of all citizens,"* said the Council recalling that effective implementation of reforms is necessary for Bosnia to advance on the EU path. The new call for the Government formation comes a year after the general elections in Bosnia, whose political leaders were unable to form the institutions due to deeply divided stances

on the country's NATO integration. Despite a deal on the Government formation that the leaders of election winner parties reached in August this year, relations with NATO i.e. a document called the Annual National Program, which is considered a step closer in the relations with the Alliance, is still a stumbling stone to proceed with the appointment of the Council of Ministers. The lack of the Government, consequently, blocks reforms and progress towards the EU membership, which all political parts in the country support. The EU Foreign Ministers also welcomed the continued presence of the EUFOR Althea Operation in Bosnia and confirmed the EU's readiness to continue the executive mandate of the Operation; to support Bosnia's authorities to maintain a safe and secure environment under a renewed UN mandate. The Council also recognized the importance of continued coordination of EUFOR Althea - EU's military deployment in charge of overseeing the military implementation of the Dayton Agreement, a peace treaty which ended the 1992-95 Bosnian war - with other international actors on the ground. (www.ba.n1info.com)

- October 15th, 90% of the migrant crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina is focused on the northern Bosnian town of Bihac where situation is escalating, Mayor Suhret Fazlic said on Tuesday in Sarajevo. *"I have come to Sarajevo to say that the migrant crisis is most prominent in Bihac. We are not satisfied because no one is talking about it anymore, and (Bosnia's Security) Minister Dragan Mektic even minimized the effects of the migrant crisis. His statement that there is a total of 4,000 migrants in the country is not true because I can say that there are 6,000 of them in Bihac. All our temporary, as well as illegal*

migrant centers are full,” the Bihac Mayor said. Over the past two years, Bosnia found itself on the new European migrant route. Migrants trying to get to western EU countries are entering the country mostly from Serbia and Montenegro and heading to Bosnia’s northern-most cities of Bihac and Velika Kladusa; the closest to the border with Croatia. There, they are faced with Croatia’s border Police that is much better equipped than their Bosnian colleagues and prevent migrants from entering their territory much better. This forces the migrants to flock to overcrowded centers. Bihac Mayor said the city authorities have been dealing with the migrant problem the entire summer and that they spent some 50,000 euro on the Vucjak migrant centre alone. *“No one gave us a single cent. We cannot work like this anymore. We do not think we should be the ones solving this crisis or the humanitarian issues of these people,”* Fazlic said adding *“next week, we will stop providing all services to the migrants. If that does not work either, we, the people of Krajina will come in front of the Parliament building until this is resolved.”* According to him, Bihac authorities are asking for a plan for their city and for someone to take the leadership role and solve the issue because the Mayor said they cannot keep them in the center of the town. *“Winter is coming and those poor people are going through Bihac covered in blankets,”* he said, noting that Croatia is still returning the migrants caught illegally crossing the border. Fazlic emphasized that Government's plans about the migrants are unacceptable to them because they do not reflect the situation on the ground. (www.ba.n1info.com)

- October 16th, in order to overcome the deadlock and for Bosnia to finally form a Government, the

ruling Serb party must accept that *“entity Government level cannot command the state level,”* the leader of the main Bosniak (Muslim Bosnian) party, Bakir Izetbegovic, said on Wednesday. Bosnia has not established its new Government since the October 2018 election because the winning parties disagree over whether to send a document, the Annual National Program (ANP), to NATO. The country took the obligation over years ago through a consensus between the representatives of all three major ethnic groups. However, the Serb ruling Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata - SNSD) which is also in power in the semi-autonomous Serb-dominated Republika Srpska (RS) entity, is against sending it. In line with neighboring Serbia, the RS National Assembly adopted a Resolution on Military Neutrality in 2017, meaning that it is opposed to entering any military organizations including NATO. Until Serbia changes its stance, the RS will not do so either, SNSD officials argued. Bosnia’s three Presidency members must all approve the new Council of Ministers. The Bosniak member, Sefik Dzaferovic, comes from Izetbegovic’s Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije - SDA). He and his Croat colleague, Zeljko Komsic, insist on sending the ANP. They refuse to approve the naming of the new Council of Ministers Chairman, who is supposed to come from the SNSD, until the document is sent. *“The issue will remain in the status quo until the SNSD decides to accept that the entity level cannot command the state level,”* Izetbegovic said. (www.ba.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Lack of state’s Government since October 7th, 2018 elections is an insurmountable obstacle

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which undermines stability and growth of the country. Not only that but it creates “fertile soil” for emerging ethnic tension and nationalistic rhetoric which is detrimental for Bosnia’s sustainability. Dayton Peace Agreement has been put into question by almost everybody including Bosnian Muslims (Bosniacs) threatening peace, stability, and coexistence of ethnic entities in the country. It is not a secret that political situation in Bosnia is alarming and at the moment it is considered as the most dangerous for a violent turbulence or a conflict in the region. Neighboring Croatia and Serbia keep on intervening in Bosnia’s internal affairs, while Muslim countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Iran maintain a permanent presence through financial donations and investments. Russia tries to “penetrate” in Bosnian affairs maintaining its influence in Southeastern Europe. Finally, NATO is rather difficult to allow a Western Balkan country to remain out of its collective security structures. Taking this into consideration, it will not be a surprise to see rapid political or even security developments in the country. As already “HERMES” has assessed Bosnia is a “captured” state with no Government, no state budget, and no growth sliming slowly but steadily towards interethnic tension conflict. Country faces several functional and institutional problems. Consequently political fragility maintains permanent uncertainty and institutional mistrust blocking any attempt for economic growth and major reforms. EU path is too long for Bosnia and only for geopolitical interests it could have chances entering the EU.



BULGARIA: October 15th, Bulgaria urges Turkey to suspend military operation in

northern Syria because the risk of a humanitarian crisis is very high. This was made clear after the Security Council held today at the Council of Ministers, which discussed the sharpening of the situation in Syria. After the end of the Security Council, Prime Minister Boyko Borissov and Deputy Prime Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva informed President Rumen Radev about the results of today's meeting. Borissov is adamant that Turkey's military operation in Syria should stop because the risk of a humanitarian crisis is very high. *“If a humanitarian crisis arises, it means an increase in the migrant wave, only diplomacy can resolve this conflict,”* he said. The measures already outlined at Bulgarian border are working perfectly and there is no change in situation since the start of the conflict between Turkey and Syria, he said. *“There is no change from what it was last week or the week before. Zero migrants on the border with Turkey, more pressure from Greece, but we have taken more measures and everything is under control,”* Borissov stressed. Regarding the imposition of sanctions on Turkey, Borissov said that Bulgaria would suffer billions of lev from such an action. Therefore, he hopes diplomacy will work out. Borissov was also asked for a statement by Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, who thanked Borissov from Azerbaijan for saying that *“Bulgaria supports Turkey's military operation.”* Borissov denied having made such statements. *“I have never supported the operation, but I have supported the agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey and that Turkey respects it; clearly and accurately,”* Borissov said. The Prime Minister also recalled *“Let's not forget that Turkey is a member of NATO and may request activation of Article 5, which relates to collective defense. Then it will become*

interesting. Over 700 attacks, say Turkish officials have launched by Kurds and Syrians. That is right, isn't it, I do not want to know or I am interested, but they are already officially talking about Article 5." The Prime Minister also urges Brussels to comply with the agreement with Turkey. The Foreign and Interior Ministers of Bulgaria and Turkey are in daily contact, the Prime Minister said. Within the Consultative and Coordinating Body of the Council of Ministers, situation in Northern Syria and related regional and international security processes were discussed. Deputy Prime Ministers Ekaterina Zaharieva and Krasimir Karakachanov, the Interior Minister, Heads of special services and advisers to the President have traditionally participated in the work of the Council. At its meetings, the Security Council analyzes and draws conclusions based on current information on national security risks, taking into account data from special services. The Council may, where necessary, plan specific measures to counteract threats to national security. Also Sunday, Karakachanov said there were no refugee pressures along Bulgarian borders at this stage, but the army was ready to respond as needed. Karakachanov supports the Prime Minister's view that diplomatic means should be handled against Turkey. During his conversation with the Prime Minister, President Rumen Radev demanded that the Government raise the issue of adopting a plan of action in case of migratory pressure at a meeting of the Council of the EU. (www.novinite.com)

- October 16th, Bulgaria does not support economic sanctions against Turkey over the military actions in Syria, Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ekaterina Zaharieva

told the Bulgarian National Television, reported by BNR. Over 140,000 people have already left Syria and over 400,000 do not have good access to clean water in this country, Zaharieva added. Currently, there is no migration pressure at the Bulgarian borders and there is no reason to panic, she added. The delay of opening accession negotiations between North Macedonia and EU will worsen and destabilize situation in the region, Bulgaria's Deputy Premier further said. Bulgaria supported the start of negotiations. It will be a big mistake to delay the start of the accession talks for March 2020, Zaharieva added. (www.novinite.com)

- October 16th, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised its economic growth forecast for Bulgaria to 3.7% for 2019, before slowing to 3.2% in 2020, according to its October 2019 World Economic Outlook. In its April forecast, the Fund projected economic growth of 3.3% this year and 3% in 2020. Unemployment is seen as dropping from 5.3% in 2018 to 4.9% in 2019 and 4.8% in 2020, the IMF said. It also made a small upward revision for the annual average consumer price inflation (CPI) from to 2.4% to 2.5%, compared to 2.6% in 2018. The current account balance is forecast to remain positive, but dropping from 4.6 per cent last year to 3.2 per cent in 2019 and 2.5 per cent in 2020. But although World Economic Outlook was positive on Bulgaria's immediate prospects, the global picture was much more downbeat, with the IMF cutting its 2019 world economic growth forecast to 3%, down from 3.3% in April and 3.6% in last year's October report. *"This subdued growth is a consequence of rising trade barriers, elevated uncertainty surrounding trade and geopolitics, idiosyncratic factors causing macroeconomic*

strain in several emerging market economies, and structural factors, such as low productivity growth and aging demographics in advanced economies,” the Fund said. “A notable feature of the sluggish growth in 2019 is the sharp and geographically broad-based slowdown in manufacturing and global trade. [...] Higher tariffs and prolonged uncertainty surrounding trade policy have dented investment and demand for capital goods, which are heavily traded,” according to the IMF. In contrast to weak manufacturing and trade, the services sector across much of the globe continued to hold up, which helped wage growth in advanced economies, but the divergence between manufacturing and services “has persisted for an atypically long duration, which raises concerns of whether and when weakness in manufacturing may spill over into the services sector.” The Fund said that its forecast faced significant downside risks, as trade barriers and heightened geopolitical tensions, including Brexit, could further disrupt supply chains and hamper confidence, investment, and growth. “Such tensions, as well as other domestic policy uncertainties, could negatively affect the projected growth pickup in emerging market economies and the euro area. A realization of these risks could lead to an abrupt shift in risk sentiment and expose financial vulnerabilities built up over years of low interest rates,” the IMF said. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Although the minor partner of the ruling coalition, the United Patriots, faces “structural” problems, the Government is stable. Political parties are focusing on the pre-electoral period of local elections scheduled for October 27th (first round) and November 3rd, 2019 (second round).

The country fully supported Albania and North Macedonia’s opening accession talks with the EU, while it maintains a rather “appeasement” policy regarding Turkish invasion in Syria fearing possible refugee waves. Corruption and organized crime remain significant obstacles for the country’s development and should be addressed decisively. 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: October 14th, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Affairs Davor Bozinovic on Monday commented on teachers' demands for a wage increase, saying that the Government and Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica - HDZ), as the senior coalition partner in Government, were prepared for all political challenges and even the possibility of a snap election. Bozinovic was replying to reporters at the Police Academy with reference to the Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats (Hrvatska Narodna Stranka – Liberalni Demokrati – HNS) insistence for teachers' wages to be increased and messages by Zagreb Mayor Milan Bandic and leader of the Bandic Milan 365 - Labour and Solidarity Party (Bandić Milan 365 - Stranka Rada i Solidarnosti - BM 365) that the Government needs to increase teachers' wages or the incumbent Government would no longer exist. Reporters asked about the Government's future considering that two junior partners in the ruling coalition were publicly opposed to the Government's decisions and have set their

demands to Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, Bozinovic responded that *“unlike the previous ones [Governments] we succeeded.” “Headway is visible in all segments and that headway is the consequence of a responsible approach, including a continuous increase in wages but to the extent that is realistically possible and which does not set aside any particular category to the detriment of another category of state or public servants. We would like it that there was more money and to be able to allocate more, however, the path the Government is taking is realistic. With this we are creating preconditions for a greater economic growth, a better credit rating, lower interest, paying off the debts of some previous Governments and that is the only way,”* he said. Asked whether the Government could survive *“with all this blackmail,”* Bozinovic reiterated that the Government follows its course and is *“going that way.” “If anything stands in the way on that course, we as the ruling party and the senior partner in the coalition, will certainly be prepared for any political challenge,”* Bozinovic said. Asked to comment on rumors within the HDZ even that considering all the blackmail, a snap election should be called yet Plenkovic does not have the courage to do so, Bozinovic said that that was not true at all. *“That is absolutely incorrect. We all talk and what I have just said is the opinion of everyone in the Government and naturally the Prime Minister too. And party, of course,”* he added. *The Government's policy is to increase wages horizontally for all services according to possibilities,”* he underscored. (www.hr.n1info.com)

- October 14th, Croatian Foreign and European Affairs Minister Gordan Grlic Radman on Monday denied a media report that Croatia had

blocked the adoption of an EU joint statement condemning Turkey's military intervention in northeastern Syria. *“We were surprised when we saw it. It is possible that someone confused Croatia with another country which may have wanted milder wording. We strongly supported a condemnation of the unilateral military intervention,”* Grlic Radman told reporters when asked to comment on a media report that Croatia, along Great Britain, had vetoed the adoption of the joint statement. *“We advocate multilateralism and are interested in stability in that region. We are against unilateral actions that cause instability, insecurity and a possible new wave of refugees,”* Grlic Radman said. AFP journalist Damon Wake wrote on social media, citing unnamed sources, that Great Britain and Croatia were currently blocking the EU joint statement condemning the Turkish offensive and that they objected to the use of the word *“condemn.”* EU Foreign Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg on Monday, condemned Turkey's unilateral military action in northeastern Syria and urged Ankara to withdraw its troops from the area. (www.hr.n1info.com)

- October 16th, lawmakers from parties that are junior partners in the ruling coalition commended Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic's annual report on the work of his cabinet presented to Parliament on Wednesday morning. MP Marija Puh [Banic Milan 365 - Labour and Solidarity Party (Banić Milan 365 - Stranka Rada i Solidarnosti - BM 365)] underscored that education, demography-related matters and employment were the priority of her party's parliamentary bench. MP Goran Dodik of the Croatian Christian Democratic Party (Hrvatska Demokršćanska Stranka - HDS), Croatian Social Liberal Party (Hrvatska

Socijalno-Liberalna Stranka - HSL) and Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja (Hrvatski Demokratski Savez Slavonije i Baranje - HDSSB) group said that the Prime Minister's understanding of politics deserved an excellent mark, his understanding of reality deserved a very good mark and that his role in the EU was very powerful. The Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats (Hrvatska Narodna Stranka – Liberalni Demokrati – HNS) welcomed the announcement of a wage increase for civil servants. MP Stjepan Curaj and HNS whip welcomed the announced wage increase for civil servants and underscored that the education reform needs to be followed up with a reward for employees. *“If our persistence on the wage increase has resulted in everyone getting it then we welcome that,”* he said. Leader of the Independent Democratic Serb Party (Samostalna Demokratska Srpska Stranka – SDSS) Milorad Pupovac considers the decision for the wage increase to be reasonable because, among things, the planned reduction of the VAT rate has been postponed. He agreed that it is necessary to re-examine the wage index in the public administration sector with the aim of improving the working climate. (www.hr.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

The country enjoys political stability and support from EU towards its Eurozone and Schengen Zone goals. The Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic resolved instantly the potential emerging crisis regarding teachers' wages announcing their increase. Croatia implements a hard-line foreign policy with its neighboring countries maintaining open disputes with Bosnia, Slovenia, and Serbia. The country has fulfilled all criteria for joining the Schengen area and it is expected to receive a

positive assessment by the European Commission in mid-October. However, the final political decision by the Schengen Zone member states requires a unanimous vote and it is expected to become a field of confrontation between Croatia and Slovenia. Croatia implements a policy of Armed Forces' modernization trying to form a reliable and well equipped force according to NATO standards. Failure to complete successfully the purchase of a modern fighter jet maintains a long period of an ineffective and weak Croatian Air Force.



CYPRUS: October 14th, EU member states will discuss how far they are ready to go on some measures that are on the table when it comes to the Turkish military activities in Syria, but also the drillings in Cyprus, High Representative and Commission Vice President Federica Mogherini told media on Monday morning in Luxembourg. The Turkish operation in Syria and the continued illegal drilling in the EEZ of Cyprus are the two main issues at the meeting chaired by Mogherini. *“This meeting is important not only for the decisions it could take, but also to prepare the European Council. Because as you know, the European Council later this week will have the same two topics on the agenda, among others. It will also be useful to prepare the meeting of Heads of state and government on these two issues,”* she said. The Council adopted conclusions on Turkish drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean on July 15th, 2019. In light of Turkey's continued and new illegal drilling activities, the Council decided to suspend negotiations on the Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement and not to hold the Association Council and further meetings of the EU-Turkey

high-level dialogues for the time being. The Council endorsed the Commission's proposal to reduce the pre-accession assistance to Turkey for 2020 and invited the European Investment Bank to review its lending activities in Turkey, notably with regard to sovereign-backed lending. In accordance with the European Council conclusions of June 20th, 2019 the Council invited the High Representative and Commission to continue work on options for targeted measures in light of Turkey's continued drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Council undertook to closely monitor developments and to revert to this issue as appropriate. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- October 17th, three Greek fighters took part in a National Guard exercise on Thursday, which took place at Kalo Chorio firing range in Larnaca. The three F-16 jets flew over the area but did not use their weapons. The National Guard's helicopters, artillery, and tanks also took part in the exercise, dubbed "*Steel Arrow*." Defense Minister Savvas Angelides said the F-16's participation was not only symbolic although the exercise was also a response to Turkish provocations in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone where Ankara sent a drillship two weeks ago. He said exercises were part of the National Guard's obligation to maintain its capability of deterrence at the highest possible level, Angelides said. "*It was a big exercise with Armed Forces from Greece taking part in the last phase, as part of the military cooperation we have. We have such military cooperation with many countries, let alone Greece, and at times we see joint exercises,*" the Minister added. Meanwhile, Turkish Cypriot "*Foreign Minister*" Kudret Ozersay said that his office has filed a protest with the UN regarding a

violation of what he called "*Turkish Republic of North Cyprus*" airspace by the Greek fighter jets which took part in the exercise, saying in a social media post that they flew low over the occupied village of Louroujina, before returning to their base in Crete. "*Everyone must know that such actions threaten stability in the region and that they must act responsibly,*" Ozersay said. (www.cyprus-mail.com)



Greek F-16s over the Cypriot airspace during military exercise "*Steel Arrow*"
(Photo source: www.army.gov.cy)

- October 18th, Foreign Minister Nicos Christodoulides said on Friday that a meeting of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres with President Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci may take place during the last week of November. Christodoulides noted that Guterres' exploratory contacts on this issue were at an advanced stage, adding that there is nothing more to say right now. The Greek Cypriot side's aim was for the meeting to take place and to achieve those results that will be conducive to the resumption of substantive negotiations as the UNSG has asked, he added. Asked if conditions were suitable for a meeting between the UNSG and the two leaders, he noted that the Secretary-General and the UN Security Council spoke clearly about the need to have the appropriate

conditions for the resumption of the talks. He went on to say that the aim is not just for the talks to resume but to have promising talks with prospects for a positive outcome. The Foreign Minister reiterated that negotiations must resume from the point they left off in Switzerland, with a view to reach a solution based on a bizonal, bi-communal federation as provided in the UN resolutions. At the same time, he added, any illegal Turkish activities must be terminated, as required by the international community, either as regards the Republic of Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone, or plans for the fenced-off city of Varosha or the buffer zone, he added. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Invasion of Turkish drillship Yavuz in Cypriot EEZ continues challenging the state's sovereignty. It is obvious that the lack of military power and more specifically aeronautical power is critical for Turkish uncontrolled actions. Cyprus continues to work by diplomatic means on resolving the crisis but the fact is that Turkey has consolidated its presence in the Cypriot waters. Current situation has not only political and diplomatic repercussions, but also economic ones. Turkey rejects any possibility of unilateral (by Cyprus) exploitation of hydrocarbons within Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) without equal participation of the Turkish Cypriot community. The presence of Turkish drillships accompanied by warships forced oil companies to reconsider their activity in Cypriot waters due to safety reasons. Despite Turkish provocations, Cyprus appears ready for talks under the UNSG auspices with Turkish Cypriot community for resolving the Cyprus question. Bi-communal and

bi-zonal federation is the basis for a negotiation, according to Cypriot officials. Joined aeronautical exercises with France (frigates) and Greece (fighter jets) aim to demonstrate that Cyprus enjoys military support which could assist in a potential threat against the state. As long as tension remains in Eastern Mediterranean, there is always a high risk of an armed "hot" incident or a conflict. It is certain that Turkey will not accept "fait accompli" in a region considered as part of its strategic interests. As long as part of Cyprus remains under Turkish occupation and Turkish troops (equipped with heavy weapons) are deployed in the island, Cyprus faces an existing direct threat against its national security and sovereignty.



GREECE: October 14th, Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias welcomed on Monday a decision by the EU Governments to restrict arms exports to Turkey over its invasion of Syria (although stopping short of an embargo) and to draw up economic sanctions on Ankara over its illegal drilling inside Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone. "The EU spoke in a consistent and clear voice, a voice that refers to our common European values and international law," Dendias said after the meeting in Luxembourg in reference to Turkey's military offensive in northeast Syria, adding that Ministers had agreed to limit arms sales to Ankara. Furthermore, Dendias said "the EU also spoke clearly on the issue of [Turkey's] violation of Cyprus' sovereignty and sovereign rights." He said the EU "went a step further than previous times, deciding [to impose] measures against individual and legal entities, which is what the Cypriot side clearly wanted." "We are very happy about that," he said.

The Greek Foreign Minister said international law must be the guiding principle of all states. “*When Turkey violates [international law], there have to be sanctions,*” Dendias concluded. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- October 15th, the notoriously overcrowded migrant and refugee processing center on the eastern Aegean island of Lesbos broke a new record on Tuesday, when its population reached more than 13,800 people. This is more than the camp, which was designed to accommodate just 3,000 people, has ever held. The Moria camp's population has risen steadily over the past few months as a result of an upsurge in arrivals from Turkey, despite efforts to decongest the camp by speeding up the transfer of asylum seekers to the Greek mainland. Between Sunday and Tuesday alone, Lesbos received 271 new arrivals. According to the state-run Athens-Macedonian News Agency (ANA-MPA), more than 1,000 of the camps current residents are minors traveling without a parent or chaperone. Of them, more than 50 are expected to be transferred to the mainland by the end of next week. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- October 18th, Greece called on the EU to prepare a back-up plan in case the number of migrant and refugee arrivals becomes unmanageable by the country, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said after the end of the summit meeting in Brussels on Friday. Mitsotakis said he does not want to exaggerate the problem but the request was made to prepare for any unforeseen developments. “*I cannot accept that the EU will be caught unprepared again. I do not believe Turkey will do what it has threatened, that is, open the borders. But we have to be prepared for the worst eventuality so that we do not just*

react to developments,” he said, adding that currently there is no back-up plan. “*I hope we will never get to this point of having to ask for anything extra,*” Mitsotakis said. He said EU leaders adopted Greece's proposal that the EU should support countries like Greece which are mostly affected by the rise in migrant and refugee arrivals in the past few months. Asked about the overcrowding in migrant camps on the islands of the eastern Aegean, he said transferring vulnerable people to the mainland is the only way to deal with the problem and pointed to the new Government legislation on asylum which he said aims to increase returns of failed asylum seekers. (www.ekathimerini.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Greece enjoys political stability. “Novarty’s” case may become source of political tension in the coming months, especially after Parliament’s decision to establish an investigative committee on former Deputy Justice Minister Demetrios Papaggelopoulos regarding his role in intervening and influencing Justice investigation. At the moment, migration is the main security problem of Greece. Arrivals of migrants from Turkey continue in increased rates. Control of migrant flows coming from Turkey is a critical point for Greek national security and consequently EU’s security. Greek – Turkish relations are in a critical point not only due to Turkey’s decision to violate Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) aiming at conducting oil and gas drills, but also because Turkey maintains a hard rhetoric against Greece regarding its territorial and maritime sovereign rights. Greece is concerned due to Turkish intention to search for hydrocarbons within its EEZ near to

Kastelorizo region. The critical question is “how Greece would react if a Turkish drillship would appear in its territorial waters.” It should be noted that situation may be escalated rapidly especially after the end of the touristic season. In this context, Turkish fighter jets keep on violating Greek airspace massively, while Turkish NAVTEX’s in Aegean Sea are issued on constant basis. Greece finally reacted regarding the ongoing violation of Cypriot sovereign rights by Turkey and sent last week three F-16 fighter jets over the Cypriot sky. The Greek F-16s participated in the Cypriot exercise “Steal Arrow” showing in action that Greece is determined to support Cyprus if it is necessary. Strengthening of military cooperation between Greece and the US upgrades Greece’s strategic role in Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. In this context, Greece and US have signed an advanced defense agreement which actually transforms Greece into a forward military base. Greece provides port of Souda (Crete island) and Alexandroupolis (North Greece) and airbase of Larissa and Volos for NATO troops. Greece seeks to modernize its Armed Forces by receiving US military aid. It is a fact that Greek military force has been affected by the long economic crisis threatening the balance of power with Turkey. Currently, Greece is in talks with France for purchasing two advanced frigates BELHARA. Taking into consideration the ongoing “NAVTEX war” in Southeastern Aegean and the complicated current situation in Cypriot EEZ, security situation is of high risk due to an accidental or preplanned incident by Turkey.



KOSOVO: October 14th, the winner of Kosovo general elections held on October 4th,

2019 Albin Kurti, the leader of Self-determination (Vetëvendosje) said the Serb List (Srpska Lista), Kosovo Serbs' political party, supported by Belgrade, did not represent the whole of Serb community, adding “*the Constitution does not say*” that the List had to be a part of the Government, the FoNet news agency reported on Monday. Kurti, who is widely believed to become Kosovo's Prime Minister, also says that the Belgrade – Pristina dialogue could resume after Serbia's elections next spring. Dialogue has been on hold for almost a year, following Pristina's decision to introduce the 100% import tariffs on goods from Serbia and Bosnia after, as Kosovo authorities said, Belgrade's campaign prevented it from joining Interpol. On Monday, Kurti told Al Jazeera TV that “*the first and the most important step in forming a new Government was a coalition agreement with the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).*” “*I am aware that if we have 12 Ministers, one has to be from the Serb community, but our Constitution does not say that person must be from the Serb List, because it does not represent the whole of the Serb community,*” he said. Kurti rejected the idea on demarcation with Serbia and added that before the resumption of dialogue, Kosovo should talk with Brussels about how to continue negotiations. Regarding tariffs, Kurti said he would deal with the issue after assuming the premiership. Speaking to Bosnian TV, Kurti said that Pristina would talk to Sarajevo directly and that cooperation between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina should exist. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- October 18th, Kosovo’s Self-determination (Vetëvendosje) leader Albin Kurti said on Friday that Serbia’s continued presence in the northern municipalities is a problem which his

Government will resolve with the local Serbs. Kurti's Vetevendosje party won the most votes at the recent parliamentary elections and is expected to become Kosovo's next Prime Minister. "We have to be institutionally present in the north of Kosovo, serving the entire population whether Serbs or Albanians," he is quoted as saying by Pristina media. "Kosovo institutions will also be present in majority-Serb municipalities south of the Ibar river. Their presence there is not a problem, Serbia's presence is," Kurti said. Kurti said that the two parts of the Trepca mining complex have to unite, adding that he hopes the divided city of Mitrovica would do the same. "Pristina and our government did not invest in Trepca, Serbia did and that can't be repeated," he said. The Serb List called the international community to condemn Kurti's statements "announcing the illegal and violent takeover of Trepca and the uniting of the (Serb) north and (Albanian) south of Mitrovica which directly invokes war with unforeseeable consequences to peace in Kosovo and the entire Western Balkans." (www.rs.n1info.com)

- October 18th, representatives of the Self-determination (Vetëvendosje) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës - LDK) the two parties which won the October 6th, 2019 early elections, met on Friday to discuss potential agreement on ruling coalition. The meeting took place a week after leaders Albin Kurti of Vetevendosje and Vjosa Osmani of LDK met for the first time after elections to set the principles of future Government. In a joint press release issued after today's meeting the two parties said that working groups of both Vetevendosje and LDK have met at the LDK's headquarters and they agreed related to content

and principles of the co-government agreement. During the meeting they have discussed main political topics and key sector reforms awaiting the new Government, according to the press statement. The parties agreed to intensify meetings and have decided the working groups meet again next Wednesday to further discuss in details today's decisions. (www.gazetaexpress.com)



Self-determination (Vetëvendosje) leader,
Albin Kurti

(Photo source: www.vetevendosje.org)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Winners of the October 6th, 2019 early parliamentary elections, Vetëvendosje and LDK are on talks to form the new Kosovo Government. It is a matter of time the new coalition to announce its agreement and Vetëvendosje leader Albin Kurti to become the new Prime Minister. A new era has come to Kosovo since traditional political forces of President's Hashim Thaci PDK and outgoing Prime Minister's AAK were defeated. In other words, former KLA militants who formed the political elite after war lost power and control of the entity. Kurti is a nationalist hardliner and it is assessed that dialogue with Belgrade will not be facilitated in the near future. Not only that, but it seems that Kurti's strategic

choice is to force Kosovo Serbs to cut lines of communication with Serbia and Kosovo authorities to fully control north. Such opinion is pretty dangerous since the balance of co-existence between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians is very sensitive. Deployment of security forces and the newly established Kosovo Army in the north may become a reason for turbulence and an armed conflict. Besides, Kurti advocates unification of Albania and Kosovo; a view which will threaten peace and stability not only in Kosovo – Serbia but in the whole Western Balkans. International community namely the US and EU will strengthen their efforts towards restarting dialogue between the two parties after elections. It seems that the US pays special attention in Kosovo problem by appointing Ambassador Richard Grenell as special envoy for Kosovo – Serbia dialogue; together with special envoy for western Balkans Matthew Palmer. Restart of bilateral negotiations could not be expected before December 2019 or beginning of 2020 provided that Kosovo will revoke tariffs imposed to Serbian goods. Increased tension is expected in North Kosovo by Kosovo Serbs if Serb List representatives will be excluded by the new Government. Only through normalization of relations with Serbia, Kosovo will be able to move forward namely to enter the UN, NATO, EU and to achieve a normal status of a state. Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration. Kosovo unresolved status, political instability, corruption, and organized crime are not encouraging factors for its future within European community. Path towards the EU and NATO will be long and hard.



MOLDOVA: October 17th, the Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat din Moldova - PDM) submitted today a motion of censure against the Government led by Maia Sandu. Democrats say that in the last period there are failures and lack of results in the social and economic policy. The motion of censure must be supported by at least 51 MPs to be adopted. The motion was presented in plenary by MP Adrian Candu. “During these four months, Sandu Government had no initiative to improve the conditions for the business environment. At the same time, a lot of social projects, initiated by Filip Government, were canceled and new ones were not launched,” Candu said. He listed the achievements of the former Government and asked the support of MPs to withdraw the confidence vote granted to the Cabinet of Ministers led by Sandu. According to Parliament's regulation, the motion of censure can be initiated by at least 1/4 of elected members and is debated on the first day of plenary meeting of the week following the date of submission. Immediately after filing the motion, the Democrats announced they were leaving the meeting room of the legislature, being dissatisfied with the activity of the Commission of Inquiry to elucidate circumstances of robbing the Moldovan banking system and bank fraud investigation, which was to present today the activity report. (www.moldpres.md)

- October 18th, the complex of issues, connected with providing of multi-dimensional Russian assistance to the unrecognized Transnistrian Moldovan republic for supporting socio-economic stability in the region were discussed by Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey

Rudenko and Head of Transnistria Vadim Krasnoselsky in Moscow on Thursday. According to the Russian Ministry, a separate attention was given to the condition and perspective of the negotiation process of the Transnistrian settlement, including the results of the recent 5+2 meeting in Bratislava. The high officials confirmed the relevance of this format for contributing to resolving practical issues of interaction between the two sides of the Dniester River. *“The need of complete implementation of agreements, achieved by Chisinau and Tiraspol in 2017-2018 was stressed. Also, it was pointed at the positive role of the continuation of contacts between the sides at all levels, including the highest one,”* the Russian Ministry reports. The press service of the Tiraspol leader, Krasnoselsky focused the attention on the problem of granting Russian citizenship to Transnistrian people, regarding as imperative the revising of legislative barriers, which hinder the receiving of Russian citizenship by Transnistrian compatriots, especially those born after December 26th, 1991. He also pointed at the initiatives on using maternal capital, provided by the Russian Federation, in the territory of Transnistria and on issuing of Russian medical insurance policies to Transnistrians for using them in the territory of Russia. The meeting was organized in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was also attended by Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Department for CIS Countries Alexey Polishchuk, President Putin’s Special Envoy at the Transnistria Negotiations, Russian Foreign Ministry Ambassador-at-Large Sergey Gubarev and Transnistrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vitaly Ignatiev. (www.infotag.md)

- October 20th, general local elections were held in Moldova today. The voting citizens will be able to elect their Mayors and Councilors in 1,969 polling stations open throughout Moldova. Also, four uninominal constituencies are holding new parliamentary elections today. The voting procedure started at 07:00 hours and ends at 21:00 hours. Following the local election, it will be elected 898 Mayors and 11,580 local Councilors. For these functions, there participate 3,761 candidates who wish to occupy the position of Mayor and 50,410 citizens who want to be advisers. According to the Central Election Commission's (CEC) data, the total number of voters registered in the State Register (RS) of voters is 3,285,894 people. Out of the total number, 2,818,228 citizens with voting rights are assigned to administrative – territorial units of level II. The difference includes people who have citizenship of Moldova, but do not have registration at home or residence and citizens with voting rights having their registered address in the administrative – territorial units on the left bank of the Dniester river. The poll will be monitored by 1,745 national and international observers accredited by CEC. It will be installed video cameras in the polling stations, but the central electoral authority claims that they will not compromise the secrecy of vote. The public order on election day will be provided by about 5,000 Police officers. (www.moldpres.md)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Coexistence of pro-western ACUM block and pro-Russian PSRM is becoming more difficult since disputes in high level are more often. However, cooperation will continue between the two parties (not for too long), because both sides are not

interested at the moment to lose power. The agreement signed by the Government's partners – ACUM block and PSRM – strengthens political stability despite their different views. Besides, EU, US, and Russia support this “unconventional” coalition for their own interests. It is already known that Moldova is a field of rivalry between the West and East, between the US, NATO, and EU on the one side and Russia on the other. Opposition PDM submitted a motion of censure against the Government but with little chances of success. Moldovan local elections will be a good chance for parties to measure their power. Transnistria is a case which concerns Moldova and withdrawal of Russian troops is a priority for the Government. It should be noted that Russia closely follows political developments in Moldova and it will not allow any overcome of its “red lines” such as Moldova's integration in NATO or EU. Moldova is considered as a pivotal country for Russian national security. It is assessed in the near future Moldovan Government will strengthen its calls for withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria. The “Transnistrian case” is always a “running sore” for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.



MONTENEGRO: October 14th, highway construction and Djurdjevica Tara bridge reconstruction are some sort of symbol of Montenegro - China friendship, said member of the Friendship Group with the National People's Congress, Nada Drobnjak who met with the delegation of the China Public Diplomacy Association (CPDA). Drobnjak thanked for the Chinese support which reflected in great number of donations and implementation of vital development projects. Vice President of CPDA,

Chen Juming, presented fundamental tasks of his organization. Juming said he believed CPDA would continue to support Montenegro and its development. (www.cdm.me)

- October 15th, the Montenegrin authorities will agree to negotiate a caretaker Government because they can hardly explain to international partners lack of will to discuss one of the key aspects of the electoral process, said Bojan Zekovic, Vice President of the Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (Socijaldemokratska Partija Crne Gore - SDP). In his opinion, refusal to have talks on caretaker Government is an immature behavior, which he hopes is only temporary. “Refusing to discuss one of the implementation models, and you have previously agreed it to be the subject to the work of the Electoral Law Reform Committee, is a violation of the decision itself, and that means further deepening of mistrust between the authorities and opposition,” Zekovic told the Mina agency. He believes that the refusal of the authorities is only temporary, “because you can hardly explain to anyone, both domestic and international partners that you will not discuss one of the key aspects of the election process related to election control.” “In this respect, I am optimistic, not because I believe in the good intentions of the authorities, but that they will make obvious self-goals by persistently refusing to engage in dialogue on any legitimate electoral topic, especially one concerning the technical Government,” Zekovic said. He noted that it was good that the Committee began working again and that the focus could finally be on specific topics that are the subject of the work of this Assembly body. (www.rtcg.me)

- October 17th, deadline for starting dialogue on technical Government, set by the part of

opposition, was October 15th, 2019. Nothing important happened, although opposition discussed their requests with the Head of EU delegation in Podgorica, Aivo Orav. In the meeting held on September 9th, 2019 part of the opposition members defined their common interests - formation of the technical Government and de-politicization of all institutions necessary for free election process. In a joint statement said that opposition parties and caucuses committed to the dialogue would base their political views on several key guidelines. Although the deadline has been established, no dialogue on technical Government has been held so far. That comes as no surprise, since Montenegro's President, Milo Djukanovic, immediately said that there would not be such talks. "Opposition's request for constituting technical Government is, in fact, request for the revision of the results of elections held in 2016," Djukanovic said. Only two days after the meeting between opposition members and Orav, Djukanovic said that, according to OSCE-ODIHR assessment, the last elections were fair and the reflection of citizens' free will. "Therefore, there is no need for forming some sort of transitional Government. There is no need for doing experiments," Djukanovic said. A day before Djukanovic's statement, opposition members met with Orav and Ambassadors of the EU member states. They stated that in order for the election legislation to be implemented properly and efficiently, "there has to be a technical Government." Independent MP, Aleksandar Damjanovic, says that the fact is that the deadline passed and opposition failed to react properly. (www.cdm.me)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Political tension and abnormality continues as ruling DPS insists that there is no need for a transitional Government rejecting opposition's request. Opposition appears divided strengthening ruling DPS's power. Although EC Progress Report is assessed as a positive one, it raises specific concerns over media freedom, corruption and organized crime. Report is elaborating on specific cases signaling detailed research. Montenegro enters into a crucial crossroad regarding its EU future and specific reforms and actions should be implemented if it remains committed in its goal to access the EU by 2025. The Government promotes state's political and economic stability which creates an almost ideal investment environment. However, the state needs more concrete reforms in the field of justice, rule of law, fight against corruption, money laundering, and organized crime, public administration transparency and accountability in order to become a stable and attractive investment environment. Russian influence continues to be considered as a "threat" against state's national security. Moreover, Serbian intervention in Montenegrin internal affairs is considered also as a notable problem which needs to be resolved. Serbia refuses to abandon the view that Montenegro is the "natural extension of the country." In this context, ruling DPS's proposal for renewal of Montenegrin Church will become a new field of rivalries with Serbia.



NORTH MACEDONIA: October 18th, senior EU officials, worried by growing Chinese and Russian influence in the Balkans, accused France on Friday of making a "historic error" by refusing to let North Macedonia and Albania start talks on joining the EU. North

Macedonia, Albania and four other Balkan countries - Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia - are trying to join the world's biggest trading bloc following the ethnic wars of the 1990s that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. But though the 28 EU Governments see Balkan membership as inevitable one day, French President Emmanuel Macron opposed the start of entry talks with Albania and North Macedonia in what one envoy said was an emotional six-hour debate at an EU summit. Macron later told reporters that the membership bids could not progress until the EU, with its complex decision-making structures, changed - though he did not say how it must do so. He said the EU in its current shape was not able to face today's challenges or handle another financial crisis, let alone allow in two more states from the Balkans, a region scarred by wars in the 1990s and struggling with crime and corruption. *"We need a reformed European Union and a reformed enlargement process, a real credibility and a strategic vision of who we are and our role,"* Macron told a news conference, referring to the long process of admitting new members, which involves candidate countries meeting targets in areas such as the economy and law and order. His position frustrated other leaders because Macron had long urged the EU to think strategically and go beyond internal squabbles, envoys said. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the executive European Commission, said France's decision was a *"historic error."* Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte had used the same phrase earlier on Friday and added *"We had to start membership talks, I am very disappointed."* European Council President Donald Tusk, who chaired the EU gathering, regretted a *"mistake"* had been made. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she

hoped EU leaders could review the matter at a summit next year when Croatia holds the EU's rotating Presidency. The move also received criticism from outside the EU, with the US State Department saying in a statement *"We are disappointed the European Council did not recognize each country's very strong reform efforts by agreeing to open accession negotiations at this time."* (www.reuters.com)

- October 18th, the non-approval of a starting date is bad and unpleasant news for North Macedonia. We have to be aware that the country is entering into a state of disappointment and all of this is a consequence of wrong policies that were conducted in the last few years. This was stated today by Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство - VMRO-DPMNE) party leader Hristijan Mickoski. *"I will agree that the decision for not being granted a starting date is a defeat, but it is not a defeat of the Macedonian nation and the citizens of Macedonia, but a defeat of Zoran Zaev's policies and his Government. It is a policy without a concept, vision, with plenty of crime, corruption, unemployment and deceit. The feeling among the citizens that this policy has pushed us in an endless circle of many retractions, appeasements, self-denials, hard swallowing only to end with failure,"* Mickoski said. He said that North Macedonia has friends in Europe and that the EU continues to our strategic goal. *"And we have to be self-critical and to admit that there will be no date for starting the accession negotiations because there are not any reforms. Because people have difficult lives and there is no other*

country where the crime rules the system. We have a faltering system and a Government that does not deliver justice because it protects injustice. I understand the disappointment among the majority of citizens in our country, and this is not a consequence of only one wrong decision by Zoran Zaev and this Government, but a string of wrong decisions stubbornly continued to drive towards the wall that is in front of us,” said Mickoski. He called the state leadership for a meeting where North Macedonia’s future will be discussed. (www.meta.mk)

- October 19th, North Macedonia’s Prime Minister Zoran Zaev during his address on Saturday called for early parliamentary elections after the country did not receive a date for opening EU accession talks. North Macedonia did not get a date for talks with the EU because the Union has its own issues to resolve, but “*we did it all, and we should keep motivated*” to continue forward to Europe, said Zaev addressing the nation. “*A great injustice was done to us in Brussels,*” Zaev said, calling the EU’s refusal to start talks a “*historic mistake.*” However, he added, we also have to take responsibility for our own decisions, which we have been making for our citizens and the future of our country. Considering the seriousness of the moment, a serious decision was in order, Zaev added. “*Convinced as I am that every politician has to be responsible, honest, and virtuous, I am holding myself accountable for disappointing my people. I stand before you and say it clear; the European dream of the Macedonian nation will not be shattered. The European dream of the Macedonians, Albanians, Serbs, Vlachs, Turks, Roma, Bosniaks, and all others living in our country will not be shattered. That is why, my*

dear citizens, I responsibly stand before you, asking you for your say. We have no time to lose,” Zaev said. “*I propose organizing a snap election. An election where you will have your say in the way our country should take. And this is what I will propose at tomorrow’s leaders’ meeting at President Pendarovski’s.*” Asked about people getting discouraged, Zaev reiterated that people should not give up, adding that the reforms are scheduled and ongoing and that the EU was the only right way to go. “*We will become a member and contribute towards it. We will shine our own sun,*” Zaev concluded. (www.nezavisen.mk)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

North Macedonia got a “cold shower” in Brussels when the EU decided not to open accession negotiations with the small former Yugoslav country. Although Albania had almost accepted the idea of a negative decision, it was not the same for North Macedonia. The Prime Minister Zoran Zaev had invested in his moderate political presence and the achievement of the “Prespa Agreement” with Greece. It was almost certain that a negative decision on North Macedonia would provoke rapid political developments. As already has been written by HERMES Southeastern Europe Directorate, Zaev had invested in the triptych “Resolve of name dispute with Greece, accession in NATO, and opening of accession negotiations with the EU.” Although the first two goals were successful the third one, the most painful, failed. Snap elections is one way road and nationalist VMRO-DPMNE is looking forward to come back in power. North Macedonia has entered in political uncertainty and instability, while we have not witnessed yet the reaction of North Macedonia’s Albanians in

this failure. It should be noted that the dilemma EU opening accession negotiations or Russian influence is not a realistic one since the country has already entered NATO which is a major step towards the western security system. North Macedonia should focus on reforms regarding judicial reforms, rule of law, fight against corruption and money laundering, administration, and respect of human rights in order to accelerate its European integration process. Besides, North Macedonia's politics are still shaken by a series of corruption and extortion scandals undermining not only the country's political stability, but also its European perspective. Fancy names such as "Extortion", "Empire", "Racket", "Titanic", "Monster" are nothing more than scandals involving politicians, businessmen, criminals, and judicial servants demonstrating that corruption, absence of rule of law and non transparency dominate in the state's function.



ROMANIA: October 14th, Romania's Foreign Affairs Ministry warned Hungary over the "massive" subsidies provided to ethnic Hungarian farmers in Transylvania. If it really wants, Hungary should provide the same subsidies to Romanian farmers as well without any discrimination, the Ministry implied. The Ministry shows that there is no bilateral agreement between Romania and Hungary on this issue and Romania has not conveyed the consent for the program through which the Government in Budapest has financed farmers in Transylvania with tens of millions of euro. The Ministry said that it notified Hungary, showing that *"the provision of economic assistance goes beyond the scope of the preferential treatment that a state can offer to its related minority in the territory of*

another state, according to internationally accepted standards." Accordingly, such measures can only be promoted with the consent of the Romanian state and without any discrimination on the basis of the ethnic criterion, according to a reply sent to G4Media.ro. (www.romania-insider.ro)

- October 15th, Romania's President Klaus Iohannis named the leader of the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal - PNL) Ludovic Orban to form the new Government. *"PNL was the only party that came to consultations and said directly that they were willing to form the Government, despite the difficulties, in this transition period,"* Iohannis said. The President added that he believes early elections to be a good solution, but not with an interim cabinet of Viorica Dancila. *"Every extra day with this failed Government is a wasted day for Romania,"* Iohannis stated. He also urged political actors in Romania to work together towards reaching a *"satisfying solution"* as soon as possible and install the new Government urgently. The President also restated the urgent matters the new cabinet has to resolve; organizing the presidential elections, elaborating the budget for next year and closing the budget for this year. *"The priorities of the Government I will present to the Parliament for investment are regaining the macroeconomic balances and correcting the economic measures that have hit the business environment and affected millions of employees in the private sector, ample restructuring of the Government apparatus, administrative simplification, bringing back competency and professionalism in the functioning of public institutions and digitizing the administration to increase the quality of services to citizens,"* said appointed Prime

Minister Ludovic Orban. (www.romania-insider.com)



PNL leader, Ludovic Orban
(Photo source: www.pnl.ro)

- October 18th, Romania's Prime Minister-designate Ludovic Orban said, that his party will probably opt to form the new Government alone, local G4media.ro reported. Orban made this statement after a meeting with Calin Popescu Tariceanu, the leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE), the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) former coalition partner. Orban was Transport Minister in Tariceanu's Government in 2007-2008. Back then, Tariceanu was also the President of PNL. Tariceanu told Orban that ALDE had 10 conditions to support his new cabinet in the Parliament, one of which was to have a single-party cabinet. Orban said this was his party's option as well. Moreover, no other party expressed interest in joining his cabinet, Orban said. The Prime Minister-designate seemed rather optimistic after talks with representatives of PRO Romania (PRO Romania - PRO), Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România - UDMR) and ALDE, an optimism not shared by his counterparts. PRO Romania President Victor

Ponta implied that his party would not vote for Orban's new Government and UDMR leader Kelemen Hunor said the new cabinet will not be validated by the Parliament. Even Save Romania Union (Uniunea Salvați România -USR), the second-biggest opposition party, came up with some important conditions to support the liberal Government. Meanwhile, Orban has been trying to convince the parties that supported the no-confidence motion that led to the fall of the PSD Government led by Viorica Dancila that they needed to support a new cabinet to remove Dancila from office as soon as possible. The Dancila cabinet, although revoked, will continue to govern, although with limited duties, until a new Government is sworn in. (www.romania-insider.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Opposition PNL leader, Ludovic Orban was named by the President Klaus Iohannis as the designate Prime Minister of an interim Government after topple of the Socialist Government of Viorica Dancila. It seems that Orban will achieve to form a single party interim Government until early elections to be held. However, it will be a weak minority Government and it is doubtful if it will achieve to handle serious state's issues such as the 2020 budget. Elections should not be expected before spring 2020, giving the necessary time to PSD to be reorganized and even to take in advantage a possible wear of ruling party. Under these circumstances, political uncertainty and instability are reign in Romanian politics. Presidential election scheduled for November 10th, 2019 and November 24th, 2019 (second round if necessary) is another political challenge for the country. The country 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 perceiving it as a threat against its national security. Romania keeps strengthening its Armed Forces seeking to achieve NATO standards.



SERBIA: October 14th, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Monday that any attempt to abolish the Serb List (Srpska Lista) could lead to catastrophic consequences in Serbian - Albanian relations, claiming that Kosovo Albanians and their Western partners were working together to achieve that goal. Vucic accused the Kosovo Albanians of inventing “*some story about poisonous envelopes with votes from Serbia.*” “*Now they are no longer sure that they are poisonous any longer. They do not know what to come up with but they say that the Serb List needs to be abolished. That will cause catastrophic consequences in relations between Serbs and Albanians because there will be no Serbs in the institutions and when there are no Serbs in institutions you know where they will be and how they will have to defend their freedom and homes,*” he said during a meeting with Russian Federation Council Chairwoman Valentina Matviyenko. Members of the Kosovo Central Election Commission reported allergic reactions and a foul smell from envelopes with votes brought in from Serbia. The envelopes were quarantined pending a Police forensic investigation. The Serbian President said that it is strange that none of the Serbs present in the Central Election Commission reported any symptoms of poisoning when the envelopes with votes cast in Serbia were opened. Vucic said that

official Belgrade had asked its Western partners to see reason and not help the Kosovo Albanians achieve what he called “*their sick goals ... or face a catastrophe.*” “*Everything they did, they did together with the goal of destroying the Serb List. That is of great concern to us,*” he said. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- October 15th, the economic results in Serbia are still very good, the unemployment is at the record low level, monetary policy correct, and the 3.5% growth is expected this year, and 4% in 2020, the Head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission Jan Kees Martijn said on Tuesday, the Beta news agency reported. The IMF mission spent two days in Belgrade for the third review of the Policy Coordination Instrument (PCI). “*The IMF team had construction talks with Serbia's authorities and agreed on politics needed for the completion of the PCI,*” Martijn told a news conference. He recalled that Serbia's Government adopted the budget rebalance, which included additional capital spending, one-time payment for pensioners and the increase of the public sector's salaries. “*Although these measures do not impede the fiscal sustainability, Serbia's Government should carefully follow the budget execution to secure that the deficit remains within the borders envisaged by the program,*” Martijn said. “*Structural reforms are still progressing, but stronger commitment in some areas is needed to induce Serbia's growth potential and limit fiscal risks,*” he added at the end of the IMF two-day mission in Belgrade. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- October 16th, Prime Minister Ana Brnabic told Belgrade daily Vecernje Novosti that the economic cooperation agreement that Serbia is set to sign with the EurAsian Economic Union is not political. Brnabic is scheduled to travel to Russia

in 10 days to sign the agreement. *“It does not run counter to the interests of the European Union, it is complementary because Serbia is a country determined to become an EU member which means that an economically stronger Serbia is also in the interest of the EU. We can have freed trade agreement with other countries and groups as long as we are not an EU member,”* she said. Brnabic said that Serbia’s place is in the EU because that is the country’s biggest export market. (www.rs.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Political tension continues in Serbia with opposition persistently refusing dialogue with ruling SNS. A potential boycott of the elections by the opposition will affect Serbia’s political stability, economic growth, and its European process. Serbia advocates equal friendly relations with the US, EU, Russia, and China. However, it is a common “secret” that it is considered by the west as a close “friend and ally” of Russia. Elections in Kosovo have created a totally new landscape by the election of nationalist Albin Kurti as its new Prime Minister. It remains to see if the newly elected Kurti (when he comes to power) will abolish the 100% taxes on Serbian goods giving the green light for restarting dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. However, his hardline to forbid any participation of the elected members of the Serb List is of great concern for peace and security in northern Kosovo. Additionally, a permanent presence of Kosovo security forces in Serb majority north Kosovo would bring tension and trubulence. Pressure from the US and EU is increasing towards both sides to restart dialogue. According to information the US mainly seek to forward talks between the two parties before the Serbian

elections on spring 2020. Tension remains between Kosovo and Serbia and none could predict Serbia’s reaction in a possible accidental or pre-planned (provocation including) incident in Northern Kosovo against local Serbs. One should have in mind that top state officials have said repeatedly in public that Serbia will protect Kosovo Serbs by any mean including security and military force. Serbia pays special attention in improving operational capabilities of its Armed Forces declaring towards all sides that they are the power of the state. Initiative between Serbia, Albania, and North Macedonia to sign an agreement regarding free move of people and goods demonstrates that regional cooperation is possible in a region which was tested in the past facing armed conflicts and bloodsheds.



SLOVENIA: October 16th, leader of the Left party (Levica), Luka Mesec reminded that the agreement with the Government has not been canceled, and today it will be tested on the revision of the income tax bill. *“The agreement between us and the Government has not been canceled. We will try to confirm that the Government respects the deal in tax reform, supplementary health insurance and cutting allowances for poor employees and the most vulnerable people. These are the three main things we are trying to achieve, and of course we work on converging with the Government in the coming weeks,”* Mesec said. Further cooperation of the Left with the Government will be announced in the coming days. He said the relationship with the ruling coalition was in a serious crisis since it did not respect the agreement with the Left. According to Mesec his party works on persuading the Government to

implement what has been agreed on the beginning of the year. (www.vecer.si)

- October 18th, the Chief of Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces, Major General Alenka Ermenc, has withdrawn her proposal for the prosecution of Brigadier General Miha Skerbinc whom she had dismissed as the Army's Force Commander in April 2019. Ermenc filed a lawsuit against Skerbinc to the Military Police on May 17th, 2019, claiming that Skerbinc discredited her good name by commenting on her medical condition. Skerbinc was dismissed by the Defense Minister, Karl Erjavec on April 2019 following a recommendation of Ermenc. His dismissal had caused much tension in Armed Forces. (www.vecer.si)

- October 19th, Slovenian members of the European Parliament have sent an open letter to current and new EU leaders opposing Croatia's accession to the Schengen area of passport-free travel, the Vecernji List daily reported on Saturday. The daily says the letter is the newest means of pressure ahead of the European Commission's decision on Croatia's compliance with all technical conditions for accession to the Schengen Area, which is expected on October 22nd, 2019. Slovenian MEPs express reservations about Croatia's technical and legal capacity to protect the Schengen Area which is why they seek a delay of the decision and ask that the issue be dealt with by the new European Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen. The letter was signed by six Slovenian MEPs, two each from the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats and the Renew Europe group. Two representatives of Janez Jansa's Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska Demokratska Stranka - SDS) party, also a member of the EPP,

refused to sign the letter. Croatia's accession to the Schengen area is a common interest because we are aware of all its benefits, both for Slovenia and the EU, and at the same time its accession should not be a security threat to the EU, the Slovenian MEPs say in their letter but then describe what they consider problematic about it. *“In our opinion, there are very serious reservations regarding Croatia's technical and legal capacity to protect the Schengen Area as well as its compliance with EU legal standards, notably regarding respect for and implementation of international agreements and judgments,”* the Slovenian MEPs say in an indirect reference to the two countries' border dispute and failed international arbitration on it which Croatia refuses to comply with, says Vecernji List. (www.hr.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ████ :

Although there are disputes between the five parties of the ruling coalition and opposition Left party which supports the minority Government announced that it would end cooperation with it, it is assessed that Government's collapse and early parliamentary elections are not very likely. The Left party obstacle is overcome by the support of the opposition SNS, while coalition parties are not in favor of snap election for their own reasons. Consequently, Marjan Sarec Government enjoys relative political stability, but with a lot of compromise in its agenda. Slovenia – Croatia relations may be tested in coming period due to the latter's effort to join the Schengen Zone. Slovenia appears determined to play the “Schengen Zone card” in order to push Croatia to implement the ruling arbitration regarding the Piran Bay dispute, but it is not sure if it will insist

until the end of the process. It might Slovenia be isolated by the other member states; it is not an easy way to veto in EU institutions. It should be underlined that relations between Croatia and Slovenia are in low level and an “underworld war” is ongoing (at political, diplomatic and intelligence context) due to the two countries border dispute. The issue of illegal migrants entering Slovenia mainly from Croatia is high in the agenda lately. The Government deployed military force to support Police tasks. Local communities and municipal authorities in the border with Croatia call for more effective measures against illegal migration. The Slovenian Armed Forces face problems mainly in the field of modern equipment and manning. The annual report on the Armed Forces operational readiness released by the Armed Forces Chief of Staff is disappointing since it assessed that the Armed Forces have limited operational capabilities in war time namely they cannot accomplish their mission. The med-term 2018 – 2023 defense program it could improve situation, but under current political situation it is doubtful if it will be implemented to the end. However, the 2020 and 2021 budget foresees increased funding for defense sector.



TURKEY: October 16th, Turkey’s alternatives for the US F-35 stealth fighter jets are ready and “offers are coming in,” President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was cited as saying by broadcaster NTV on Tuesday. Ankara and Washington have clashed over Turkey’s purchase of Russian S-400 missile defenses, which the US says are not compatible with NATO defenses and pose a threat to Lockheed Martin Corp’s F-35 stealth jets. Washington removed Turkey from the

joint F-35 program after it took delivery of the S-400 systems in July. Ankara, a buyer and producer of the jets, has said it could look elsewhere. (www.reuters.com)

- October 17th, Turkey has agreed to a five-day ceasefire in northeast Syria to allow for withdrawal of Kurdish forces, US Vice President Mike Pence said on Thursday after talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. “Today the United States and Turkey have agreed to a ceasefire in Syria,” Pence told a news conference after more than four hours of talks at the presidential palace in Ankara. Pence had flown to Turkey to call for a halt in Turkey’s cross-border military operation, called Operation “Peace Spring” under which Turkey has aimed to clear YPG Syrian Kurdish fighters from a 20 mile (32 km) deep “safe zone” along the border. “The Turkish side will pause operation ‘Peace Spring’ in order to allow for the withdrawal of YPG forces from the safe zone for 120 hours,” Pence said. “All military operations under Operation ‘Peace Spring’ will be paused, and Operation ‘Peace Spring’ will be halted entirely on completion of the withdrawal,” he said. (www.reuters.com)

- October 18th, Turkey’s ability to sustain its military campaign in Syria may depend in part on what happens far away from the battlefield; in the foreign exchange market. The lira has long been a pinball of geopolitics and lightning rod for relations between Ankara and its Western allies, specifically Washington. Renewed pressure on the currency and attempts to stabilize it could further endanger Turkey’s lean foreign currency reserves, leaving the country potentially with little room to defend the lira if sanctions tightened. That in turn could hurt the already fragile

economy and undermine President Tayyip Erdogan's ability to stand up to international pressure against his offensive in Syria. Last year, a standoff with the United States was an aggravating factor in a 30% fall in the lira, prompting an economic recession in the country which is heavily dependent on imports as well as foreign investor flows. By one measure, Turkey has about 36 billion dollars in foreign exchange reserves, a number that is barely enough to defend a sustained assault on its currency. "A shrinking pool of central bank reserves, large foreign currency rollover needs, and other economic vulnerabilities will limit Turkey's room for maneuver in Syria," said Karl Schamotta, Director of foreign exchange strategy and structured products at Cambridge Global Payments in Toronto. State-owned banks are reported to have helped prop up the pressured lira in recent weeks. According to one estimate, 2 billion dollars were funnelled into markets on a single day this week to defend the currency. Nonetheless, it tumbled 1.5% in the initial days of the invasion nine days ago before recovering some ground. "Net reserves are negligible in Turkey," said Tatha Ghose, forex and emerging market analyst at Commerzbank in London. "We assume that the Turkish Central Bank has no real reserve resources to fight lira weakness if and when it arises," Ghose said. Even countries such as Russia and China, with their much greater reserves, have found their forex firepower eroded quickly once pressure mounted, he added. Turkey's Central Bank declined to comment. The deal to pause military operations in Syria has come as a respite for Turkish assets. The government has also tried to make it harder for investors to short the lira. Traders reported some Turkish banks were curbing lira supplies to

overseas counterparts. Yet, the relief is likely to be temporary. And with a US congressional push for more sanctions going ahead full steam - including in a worst case scenario potential curbs on Turkey's sovereign debt - many investors fear the market euphoria may be short-lived. (www.reuters.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Turkey has launched the military operation "Peace Spring" against Syria aiming to establish a safe zone within Syrian territory and eliminating the Kurdish threat. It looks like Turkey has achieved its objective task by establishing a 32 kilometers "safe zone" within Syria before a ceasefire came in effect. Withdrawal of Kurdish fighters from Northern Syria will (which has started) will strengthen Turkish plan. It should be noted that Turkey combines military and diplomatic means very effectively achieving its goals. Besides, Turkey remains a pivotal country enjoying geopolitical importance and having one of the largest militaries (the 2nd within NATO). Due to its geopolitical and geostrategical aspects Turkey has the ability to achieve its national goals and protect its interests either by diplomatic means or by the threat of use or use of force. Turkey faces several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs and 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. The state demonstrates decisively its leading role in the wider region of the Middle East, Southeast Europe, and East Mediterranean implementing its doctrine for a diligent capability development effort to be able

to fight two multi-front, inter-state armed conflicts while being able to simultaneously carry on large-scale counterterrorism operations at home and beyond borders. Kurdish question is a major security threat for Turkey affecting stability, peace and even unity of the state. In Eastern Mediterranean Turkey continues to dispute Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) by sending its Yavuz drillship in a sea field (code number 7) which has already been licensed to Italian ENI and French TOTAL. Turkey is determined to protect its interests and would not hesitate to use force against Cyprus. With zero cost so far Turkey achieved to put the hydrocarbon issue on the table of negotiations, to force oil and gas companies to reconsider their engagement in a sea which is not stable and secure, and to directly question the Cypriot sovereignty. So far, so good for a country which is already in a military operation in another country. The state issued a NAVTEX starting from October 7th, 2019 until January 2020 showing that winter will be “hot” in Eastern Mediterranean Sea. 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.


www.hermesresearch.eu


email: info@hermesresearch.eu


Editor in Chief: Ioannis Karampelas


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.*