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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: July 30th, four days after asking the OSCE to help resolve the crisis in Albania, President Ilir Meta insinuated through another declaration that his request has not received any response. *“It is true that I have asked the OSCE for help. You know who keeps refractory stances by misusing the international partners. Do not expect any foreign Ambassador or other representative to tell you the truth. Nobody knows that truth better than me. Without local elections on October 13th, there will be no integration on October 18th,”* Meta said. (www.top-channel.tv)

- August 2nd, Festim Lato, a controversial Albanian politician recently found murdered in the Amsterdam-Rijn canal, had his own private army in the Gelderland village of Afferden, where he lived. Various Dutch authorities were aware of this, but did not intervene, the Telegraaf reports based on sources and its own research. Lato, 43, was the self-proclaimed president of Chameria, a geographic region in the border of Albania and Greece. He lived on a residential farm on Kerkdam in Afferden. According to the newspaper, in past years the farm looked like a barrack with the forces of the future Chameria army staying in bunk beds at Lato's home. One source told the Telegraaf that the Chameria forcers were trained by soldiers from Kosovo. During a recent celebration of Albania's Independence Day, a military parade took place in Lato's back garden. A video on social media shows Lato inspecting the soldiers in combat uniforms, with their faces painted in camouflage colors. *“This is the army that I am building,”* Lato said to a former employee,

according to the newspaper. In the internet there is a video of Lato holding up various automatic weapons. The municipality of Druten, which covers Afferden, was aware of the military presence in the municipality, an anonymous official confirmed to the newspaper. The only action taken was a municipal inspection of Lato's farm, to check whether he was complying with the housing zoning plan. The building was closed for a few days at the behest of the municipality, after which it was simply used as a barrack again, the Telegraaf writes. In February 2018, the social media video of the military parade was sent to a specialized detective at the Police in The Hague. He exchanged some emails with people around Lato, including with one person who said they *“know everything”* about Lato and were willing to talk. But no concrete action was taken, according to the newspaper. The Hague Police did launch an investigation into fraud late last year, after two of Lato's business partners reported him. They were summoned to the Police station for an appointment, and *“never heard anything again,”* they said to the newspaper. A Police Spokesperson confirmed the fraud investigation to the newspaper, and said the Police are aware of the video of the military parade, but could not say why nothing was done about it. The Public Prosecutor and the Municipality of Druten would not answer the newspaper's questions. A Dutch entrepreneur who was at the military parade told the Telegraaf that he was amazed by the private army in a Gelderland backyard. *“That Dutch politicians allowed that, I do not understand at all. How did Lato manage all that? I watched in astonishment,”* he said. *“But yes, the president promised me that he would build 210 kilometers*

of new roads in his new country, Chameria. For that I could deliver 50 tractors and 100 crawler cranes, of a quarter of a million euro each. So I was thinking mainly of getting that contract,” the Dutch witness said. (www.nltimes.nl)

- August 3rd, the President, Ilir Meta’s National Security Adviser Bahri Shaqiri clarified in a statement that “Major General Ylber Selman Dogjani has been dismissed from the post of Commander of the Navy only because his mandate has expired. His release has nothing to do with any other allegation, even in some media, that the dismissal is allegedly related to a legal violation. If the President of the Republic had been convinced of a minor violation by Major General Dogjani, he would have dismissed him immediately; not when he had fulfilled his term as head of the Navy,” Shaqiri stated.



Major General Ylber Selman Dogjani

(Photo source: www.aaf.mil.al)

“President Meta hopes that successor of Major General Dogjani who will be nominated for this post will not only have the proper integrity, but should have a long career in the Navy. One of the main tasks of the President is to protect the integrity of military against political pressure and games,” Shaqiri concluded. It was written in the media that Dogjani’s dismissal was related to the

January 11th, 2019 weapons theft of a Navy base in Pashaliman (www.tiranapost.al)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Political crisis remain active in Albania since the Government and opposition cannot start a dialogue for deescalating tension. Moreover, the President Ilir Meta and the Government are in an open confrontation seeking to undermine one another. Local elections held on June 30th, 2019 are rejected by the opposition maintaining a tense situation. President Ilir Meta proposed presidential and local elections on October 13th, 2019 in an effort to resolve current political crisis, but Prime Minister Edi Rama has rejected the date. The country has entered in an endless crisis undermining its democratic function according to the European values and standards. In other words, Albania is under a political and constitutional chaos. Such situation strongly affected Albania’s EU perspective. Combination of political instability, ties between politics and organized crime, and corruption made the EU to postpone the opening of accession negotiations for Albania for the near future. According to the Enlargement Commissioner, situation will be re-examined by October 2019. Rama’s Government collapse and snap elections is a possible scenario. The Government is accused of having links with organized crime and current situation raises questions over the power of “Albanian mafia” in the country and its influence in state’s politics. Undoubtedly, corruption and organized crime remains the most significant state’s problem undermining its strategic goal of opening accession negotiations with the EU. The EU closely monitors progress of reforms especially in

justice sector. Albania monitors Kosovo – Serbia negotiations and definitely has a role as a “mother nation.” The state maintains its leading role in the Albanian world providing guarantees and support to Albanian population in the region namely Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. In this context, the Albanian Prime Minister and his Government work on promoting Kosovo interests in international community using any forum they have access.



BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:

July 31st, President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic said during a meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a very unstable country and has been taken over by people affiliated with Iran and terrorist organizations in some respect, Croatian Index.hr portal reported. *“The country is now under the control of militant Islam, which is dominant in determining attitudes,”* Grabar-Kitarovic said. She estimated that Croatia is suffering from a migrant problem, which is not quite similar to the one in Europe. Although almost everyone claims to be Syrian refugees, they are mostly African or Pakistani migrants trying to break through the border from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Grabar-Kitarovic said. Bosnian officials and members of the country’s Jewish Community slammed Croatia’s President for her statements, calling her *“unstable”* and her words *“fascistic.”* *“She is unstable, not Bosnia and Herzegovina,”* said the Croat member of Bosnia’s tripartite Presidency, Zeljko Komsic. *“Everyone in Europe and in the world is aware that these are lies fabricated by the aggressive and fascist policy of official Zagreb toward Bosnia and Bosniaks*

[Muslim Bosnians], which contains all elements of fascism,” Sefik Dzaferovic said in his statement. The Head of Bosnia’s Jewish Community, Jakob Finci, strongly criticized the statement as well. After Bosnia’s reactions Grabar-Kitarovic denied that she had described neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina as being *“controlled by militant Islam”* during her meeting behind closed doors with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin the day before, during her three-day official visit to Israel. (www.ba.n1info.com, www.sarajecotimes.com)

- August 2nd, Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Security Minister Dragan Mektic has again accused Croatian Police of forcibly returning illegal migrants to Bosnia and Herzegovina and violating the country’s territorial integrity. *“We have the information to prove this, that they enter our territory armed, and footage showing what they do to migrants who cross into Croatia from Bosnia and Herzegovina, they beat them, take away their money and mobile phones, and return them to us,”* Mektic told the Bosnian Faktor news website on Thursday. Mektic said that his Ministry does not have the authority to respond because this is a foreign policy matter, adding that all information available has been referred to the country’s Presidency from which they expect a reaction. *“Something has to be done, there has to be a response. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also been notified that Croatian Police enters Bosnia and Herzegovina armed, and they, too, must respond and protect the integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina,”* Mektic said. The Croat chairman of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Presidency, Zeljko Komzic, raised this issue at a meeting with Croatia’s Ambassador

Ivan Sabolic on Wednesday. Suhret Fazlic, the Mayor of Bihac, the town with the largest concentration of illegal migrants seeking to reach western Europe, made similar accusations in a statement carried by the Zagreb-based Jutarnji List daily earlier this week, Hina reports. Fazlic said that all migrants caught in Croatia are pushed back across the border near Bihac regardless of whether they came from Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina. *“Croatian Police, armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles, cross the border one kilometer deep into our territory. When I tell them that it is against the law, they just shrug and say they are acting under orders. You cannot justify such actions with deterrence,”* the Mayor said. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

- August 2nd, Russia intends to set up a military base in the Bosnian Serb-dominated part of Bosnia to counter NATO in the Western Balkan region, according to an article by Germany's Die Welt. Russia has donated six MiG-29 fighters to the Serbian military, while donation of 30 BRDM-2MS armored scout vehicles and 30 T-72MS main battle tanks with logistics support is underway, a press release by Serbia's Defense Ministry on Wednesday said. *“The news brings aspirations of Serbia to modernize its army and with that to bring its own arms industry back into focus,”* said the article, carried by Deutsche Welle. *“That is potentially explosive - as Serbia relies on Russia, a country which showed in Ukraine its decisiveness to expand its sphere of influence with armed force,”* said the article by Boris Kalnoki, Die Welt's correspondent in Budapest. He wrote that Serbia had *“under the dictator Slobodan Milosevic waged wars against Croatia and Kosovo, and in the Bosnian war*

helped the Serbs there. Having this in mind, announcements of Serbia's Government that it will attack Kosovo if necessary, if that country forms its own army, sound especially threatening,” he wrote. The article says that the Parliament in Pristina decided in December to form an army, partly because *“Serbia is arming itself. That is part of the overall arming in eastern and central Europe,”* he wrote, adding that Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria are accelerating modernization of their arsenals stemming from Soviet times. But he also wrote that Croatia aims to buy F-16 fighter jets to replace its old MiG 21's. *“Considering that this represents the strengthening of NATO in the region, it is not surprising that Russia is counteracting. While NATO mostly relies on Albania, Kosovo, and Croatia in former Yugoslavia, Russia is concentrating on Serbia and Republika Srpska, the Serb entity in Bosnia”* he wrote. The US has one of its biggest military bases in Kosovo, Bondsteel, and Russia wants *“to build its military base in Republika Srpska,”* he assessed. The article reasons that, since Serbs are economically weaker than the EU members in the region, *“Moscow is giving them arms as gifts: Serbia gets, apart from the tanks, six MiG 29 fighter jets, Belarus gives them another eight.”* This will result in Serbia having the strongest air force in the region, it said. (www.ban1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Political instability and uncertainty continues in Bosnia because it has not formed a Government since October 7th, 2018 general elections. The three main parties representing the three constituent entities (Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats);

HDZ (Bosnian Croatian party), SDA (Bosnian Muslim or Bosniak party), and SNSD (Bosnian Serbian party) although they have reached an agreement to cooperate in forming a Government, it seems that they still cannot overcome Bosnia's accession process towards NATO. Country faces several functional and institutional problems. Consequently political fragility maintains permanent uncertainty and institutional mistrust blocking any attempt for economic growth and major reforms. Croatia and Serbia keep on intervening in Bosnia's internal affairs destabilizing the state. In this context, the Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic made some defamatory statements for Bosnia during her visit in Israel. Russia pays special attention in Serbia and Bosnia in order to maintain an influence in the region. Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, Albania, and Montenegro have already entered NATO, while North Macedonia would join the Alliance within 2019. These two countries (Serbia and Bosnia) are the only "vehicles" for Russia to maintain a narrow influence in Southeastern Europe. Apart from external influence and intervention the country has to confront several internal "threats" which undermine its sovereignty, cohesion, and viability. EU path is too far for Bosnia and only for geopolitical interests it could have chances entering the EU. Election of ultra nationalist pro-Russian Serb Milorad Dodik in the tripartite Presidency is a strong sign of more nationalistic rhetoric and more obstacles towards Bosnia's EU and NATO (mostly) integration. Dodik is a person who does not actually believe in B&H viability and is expected to promote (actually, he has already started) his own political agenda. Bosnia faces a significant problem of illegal migration

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



BULGARIA: July 30th, Bulgaria is the shortest route that connects China with Europe, making the country the most advantageous entry door to China for the EU. This was stated by Head of State Rumen Radev at a meeting of Dondukov 2 with representatives of Chinese companies involved in the implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative. The conversation is a continuation of the Bulgarian President's state visit to China in early July this year, on which a number of leading Chinese companies were invited to invest in the development of Bulgarian transport, energy, tourism and innovation. Rumen Radev noted that Bulgaria actively supports the "One Belt, One Road" and "17 +1" initiatives for cooperation between China and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It is no coincidence that a Global Partnership Center for the initiative is foreseen in Bulgaria. According to the President, the volume of the Chinese goods for Europe is growing every year, which requires large and modern logistics centres in Europe, and Bulgaria offers some of the best conditions for this. The Bulgarian Head of state recalled the three priority projects he presented during his visit to China at the invitation of his colleague Xi Jinping; the opening of a direct Sofia-Beijing air line and a branch of a Chinese bank in Bulgaria, as well as the establishment of a Bulgarian-Chinese centre for

research and innovation in Bulgaria.
(www.sofiaglobe.com)

- July 31st, the US congratulated the Bulgarian Government on the decision to buy eight F-16 multifunctional fighter jets, ammunition and related equipment. *"We look forward to work with Bulgaria on this project and to strengthen our long-term strategic partnership,"* State Department reported. *"We congratulate Prime Minister Boyko Borissov and the Bulgarian Government on their commitment to modernize the country's Armed Forces by acquiring these highly efficient, NATO-compatible aircraft,"* the State Department press release said.
(www.novinite.com)

- August 1st, the meeting between Bulgaria and North Macedonia's Prime Ministers Boyko Borissov and Zoran Zaev was held. Meeting marking the 2 years anniversary of the signing of the Neighborhood and Cooperation Treaty between the two countries. Prime Minister Boyko Borissov was greeted with the highest honors in front of the Government building in Skopje by Prime Minister Zoran Zaev. The two held a four-eye meeting, after which they made a statement to the media. A little later, the two Prime Ministers, accompanied by Bulgaria's Foreign Minister, Ekaterina Zaharieva, and Northern Macedonia, Nikola Dimitrov, laid wreaths and flowers at Gotse Delchev's grave in the yard of St. Spas Church in Skopje. Two years after the signing of the treaty, both sides have achievements. A common understanding of Medieval history was reached, common celebrations for people such as St. St. Cyril and Methodius, St. Clement, Naum and King Samuel, accelerated work along the Sofia - Skopje railway corridor, as well as more

intense economic relations. Borisov said *"Two years since we signed the Neighborhood Treaty. I think in those two years, things have been done that couldn't have happened decades earlier. It came with the joint efforts of both the Government of Greece, Bulgaria, and the Republic of Northern Macedonia. It has created a huge perspective for your country on the road to the European Union and NATO."* (www.novinite.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Junior partner of the ruling coalition, United Patriots proved once again that it is the vulnerable and unpredictable piece of the inter-governmental stability. Announcement that the ultra-nationalist coalition has split expelling Ataka party and its leader Volen Siderov raises questions for Government's majority and ruling coalition viability. It is assessed that the Government will remain "alive" enjoying support of Ataka MPs, however there is concern for the Government's future. Thus, Bulgaria has entered in a period of fragile political situation. After European elections, opposition BSP appears weakened facing internal problems. The country strengthened its efforts towards entering the Eurozone achieving a positive decision of the Eurogroup. However, the EC made clear that Bulgaria could not enter the Eurozone before 2022. Apart from that the European Parliament adopted a resolution for the accession of Bulgaria (and Romania) in Schengen Zone. However, it is questioned if the European Council will receive a unanimous final decision for Bulgaria under the current migration pressure. Corruption and organized crime remain significant obstacles and should be addressed decisively. Although

modernization of Armed Forces is a top priority for Bulgaria and huge armament projects are ongoing (fighter jets, armored vehicles, vessels etc) military operational capability of the state is questioned especially in the Air Force. Bulgarian Armed Forces are far from NATO standards. The latest report on defense situation confirmed the major problems the Bulgarian Armed Forces are facing. Security situation stable; no major threats.



CROATIA: July 29th, Environment and Energy Minister Tomislav Coric said that it had not been decided yet on whether a nuclear waste storage facility would be built on Mount Trgovska Gora near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and if such a decision were made, the neighboring country would be able to raise its concerns. Coric made the statement after being asked by the press in Zagreb whether a decision had been made to store medium and low radioactive waste from the Krsko nuclear power plant at Trgovska Gora and whether in that case Croatia should consult with the Bosnian authorities. The Krsko plant is located in Slovenia and is co-owned by Slovenia and Croatia. *“As for Trgovska Gora, Croatia is considering that site, and as for opinions and signals from Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is fully justified for any country to think about what is happening in its neighborhood and I do not see any problem with that,”* the Minister said. He pointed out that disposal sites like that that existed across Europe were made according to the highest standards and posed no threat. Coric said that if Croatia decides to dispose of its radioactive waste in the Trgovska Gora area it would contact Bosnia and Herzegovina and the neighboring country would be able to raise its

concerns. He said that concerns could not be raised based on hearsay evidence but should be clearly founded, adding that he expected all parties involved behaving responsibly. Coric said that the site of the nuclear waste storage facility would be decided after careful consideration. He added that the Croatia - Slovenia Commission on this matter is meeting in September or October. Asked what would happen if the Bosnian authorities continued to oppose the idea, Coric said that sometimes it was impossible to reconcile all views and that there are always those that are discontented. *“I am not prejudging the decision and I cannot answer what if questions,”* Coric said. A protest rally was held outside the Croatian Embassy in Sarajevo on Monday against Croatia's plan to build a radioactive waste storage facility near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. (www.hr.n1info.com)

- July 30th, Croatia is an exceptionally successful European story, newly elected European Commissioner Ursula von der Leyen said in a brief address to the press upon arriving in Zagreb on Tuesday ahead of talks with Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic. Croatia is the youngest member of the EU yet at the start of 2020 it will chair the Council of the EU. Croatia is an exceptionally successful story and it is model for many, many countries, said Von der Leyen. She expressed her admiration for Croatia's achievements and thanked Croatia and Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic for supporting her election as the EC's President. Croatia is catching up not only with older member states but with new ones who entered in 2004 and in 2007, so that it can arrive at the level that is appropriate to those who are developed in this European family,

he said. He mentioned fulfilling all criteria for Croatia to access the Schengen Area, and a strategy to introduce the euro currency. (www.hr.n1info.com)

- July 30th, information stating that Croatia has fulfilled all technical conditions for joining the Schengen border regime, and that the European Commission (EC) will confirm the last of the eight chapters of Schengen legislature in September, has evoked great interest in Slovenia. However, Slovenian Prime Minister Marjan Sarec refrained from comment. The Slovenian Government said they supported Croatia's entry into Schengen but, at the same time, they expect every candidate for entry to fulfill all the necessary criteria. Furthermore, according to the Delo newspaper, the third report by the group that evaluates the readiness of member states to join Schengen, has not yet been prepared. Also, approval by all members is necessary before the final decision is made on accepting a country into the EU's border-free area. Prime Minister Sarec did not exclude the possibility of his Government connecting the issue of membership with unresolved issues regarding the border arbitration between the two countries, which resulted in Slovenia filing a case at the European Court of Justice last year against Croatia. Croatia does not recognize the arbitration ruling after having withdrawn from the arbitration process in 2015, after Slovenia was caught in a material breach of the Court's fundamental principles, namely engaging in backroom deals so as to secure a favorable verdict. (www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

The country enjoys political stability and support from EU towards its Eurozone goal. Croatia follows a tough regional policy with neighboring countries, but its new Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic Radman claimed that Croatia seeks resolution of all problems with its neighbors. Nevertheless, Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic did not hesitate to discredit Bosnia during her visit in Israel. Unofficial sources claim that the country has fulfilled all Schengen zone criteria and it is a matter of time (during September 2019) to officially announced. However, the matter may become a new field of confrontation with Slovenia. It implements a policy of Armed Forces' modernization trying to form a reliable and well equipped force according to NATO standards. Failure to complete successfully the purchase of a modern fighter jet maintains a long period of an ineffective and weak Croatian Air Force.



CYPRUS: July 29th, the cabinet licensed energy companies ENI and TOTAL to explore block seven of Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and approved a partnership between the two in five other blocks. The cabinet also approved nine other drills inside the EEZ within the next couple of years. Block seven neighbors the Calypso field in block six where ENI carried out an exploratory drill early in 2018 and is believed to hold between six and eight trillion cubic feet of natural gas. TOTAL and ENI had applied for an exploration license in block seven back in November 2018. The joint projects include block three where in February 2018 Turkish warships prevented an ENI drillship from carrying out a drill. Ankara has repeatedly

warned Cyprus against taking “*unilateral steps*” in exploring and developing hydrocarbons without factoring in the Turkish Cypriots. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- August 3rd, natural gas issue has essentially become a part of the reunification negotiations and can ruin a solution if not resolved despite the Greek Cypriot side’s insistence that it is unrelated, Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci said. In an interview with the Cyprus News Agency (CNA), Akinci said in his upcoming meeting with President Nicos Anastasiades they should come up with a way to resolve the matter to avoid further tensions. *“It has become a chapter of our lives, it is among the important topics in the news and it has become an issue which, if properly regulated, could help in reaching a solution,”* Akinci told CNA. *“But if it is handled wrongly, like today, then it could wreck the solution.”* Under the current circumstances, the two sides are obliged to discuss the matter and find a way out for the benefit of both communities, Akinci said. Akinci said that natural gas issues are considered a matter to be handled by the future federal government and the Turkish Cypriot side has no objection with that. During their August 9th meeting with Anastasiades, Akinci said he would try to explain the need to find a way out. *“If one side says I am not forming a Committee, wait until after the solution, which no one knows when it will happen, but in the meantime starts to send gas from the Aphrodite gas field to Egypt and starts to collect revenue after some years, this will not be accepted by Turkish Cypriot side or Turkey,”* he added. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- August 4th, President Nicos Anastasiades, when he meets Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, on August 9th, 2019 will move on the basis of UN resolutions and decisions, plus the EU’s call on Turkey to act in accordance with international law and principles Government Spokesman Prodromos Prodromou said. Prodromou said Anastasiades would seek to reach out to the Turkish Cypriot leader provided he would be met with “*a compatriot*” and not “*the plans of Ankara*,” This is a crucial moment for Cyprus, he said, adding that everyone needed to support the President’s effort to restart negotiations from the point they stopped in 2017 and utilizing the six parameters proposed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. According to Prodromou, this is what Turkey is trying to avoid. *“Turkey, by refusing to negotiate and to abolish anachronistic guarantees and withdraw its army from Cyprus, is making the solution of the Cyprus problem even more difficult, unfortunately,”* Prodromou said, adding that it appears this is happening with the help of the Turkish Cypriot side. Instead of negotiating with the Greek Cypriot side on the basis of UN principles, Prodromou said, the Turkish Cypriot side is attempting to make Turkey a partner in Cyprus’ energy resources and thus prevent substantial negotiations. Prodromou said that Turkey’s current stance towards the natural wealth of Cyprus shows, “*intolerance, brazen authoritarianism and expansionism.*” *“It is not the resources of Cyprus that we have to defend but, above all, the unbreakable principle of sovereignty of the Cypriot state and its people. And so together we defend the very idea of a solution to the Cyprus problem without Turkish occupation,”* he added. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Cyprus has reached a deadlock in the ongoing crisis with Turkish invasion of drillship *Fatih* (while the second one *Yavuz* is also ready to start drills) within its EEZ. *Fatih* is there for five months, while Turkish administration declares that offshore drilling will continue until an agreement between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities will be reached regarding exploration and exploitation of natural gas. In other words, Turkey's objective goal is to force (by the presence and activity of drill ships) Cyprus to compromise reaching an agreement with the occupied north part. Cypriot party leaders unanimously rejected leader of the Turkish Cypriot community Mustafa Akinci's proposal for co-management of hydrocarbons to the Cypriot administration and the UN. On the contrary, President Nikos Anastasiades offered more assurances to the Turkish Cypriots on safeguarding their share of the proceeds from hydrocarbons when Cyprus talks are in their final stage. However, Akinci underlines at every chance that Cypriot hydrocarbons have become integral part of the negotiation between the two communities. Despite international calls to Turkey for abandoning its plans of violating the Cypriot EEZ and its sovereign rights, Turkish actions remain "unanswered." Cyprus is trapped failing to act decisively and effectively for protecting its sovereignty. Actually, Cyprus is trapped because it does not have a mechanism of power (military, diplomatic, economic etc) to force Turkey to withdraw its ships. Cyprus lacks of naval and air forces which could deter Turkey of violating Cypriot sovereign rights, while Greece appears reluctant in sending naval units

in the region showing presence and exercising deterrence. The EU prepared a draft with sanctions against Turkey but the latter rejected them claiming that it will continue its activity. Turkish message is very clear; we are present in Cyprus, we are present in the energy "game" and nothing works leaving Turkey aside. In other words, energy security includes Turkey; otherwise eastern Mediterranean is not a stable and secure sea. A "hot" incident cannot be excluded. Despite current situation, Cyprus works systematically in order to become a major part of the East Mediterranean energy hub. It is favored not only by its natural gas deposits, but also by its strategic position in the "heart" of East Mediterranean Sea and of course of being an EU member state. The strategy of multilateral cooperation seems to be fruitful. Cyprus seeks to negotiate and reach agreements with its neighboring countries regarding their EEZ expanding maritime cooperation and energy security. Turkey looks like being isolated from the energy game and its current aggressive reaction is attributed to this situation. It is certain that Turkey will not accept "fait accompli" in a region considered as part of its strategic interests. Cyprus improved its bilateral relations with the US, strengthened its defense cooperation with France, UK, and lately develops its defense and security relations with Germany. One could say that Cyprus strengthens defense cooperation with NATO leading countries. The US senate voted on the abolishment of the arms embargo in Cyprus but the term of forbidding Russians vessels from using Cypriot ports may create more problems than it would solve. As long as part of Cyprus remains under Turkish occupation and Turkish troops (equipped with heavy weapons) are

deployed in the island, Cyprus faces an existing direct threat against its national security and sovereignty.



GREECE: July 29th, Greece will propose legislation this week to scrap academic sanctuary, a law that was designed to protect protesting students and freedom of ideas but which the new Government says is used as a cover for lawlessness. The law is a legacy of the crackdown by the then military junta on students on November 17th, 1973, when a tank burst through the gates of the Athens Polytechnic School, killing dozens, and leaving a deep rooted suspicion towards authority among Greeks. The newly elected Conservative Government says the notion of academic sanctuary has outlived its purpose and is now being hijacked by criminal elements. *“From an asylum for the protection of ideas it has unfortunately become an asylum for lawlessness,”* Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said. Mitsotakis, who unseated leftist Alexis Tsipras in the July 7th, 2019 election, campaigned hard on the issue of public safety; opinion polls showed the theme topped public concerns along with the economy. *“It is not asylum that protects academic freedoms and the freedom of ideas ... but an institution which prohibits the free movement of ideas and the free movement of students in certain universities, and allows for illegal acts to take place,”* Deputy Education Minister Vassilis Digalakis told Reuters. Greek universities have long complained of drug dealing on campus, with addicts shooting up in plain view, and self-styled anarchists who make petrol bombs at some faculties for their regular encounters with riot Police, or use

faculties as squats. Coalition of Radical Left (Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς – SYRIZA) party Lawmaker and former Education Minister Nikos Filis said the asylum law is synonymous with Greek democracy. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- July 31st, Greece accused Turkey of undermining security in the eastern Mediterranean by drilling for oil and gas around Cyprus, making some of the strongest comments on the issue from Athens’ newly elected Government. Cyprus has discovered natural gas in areas off the south of the island, but attempts to explore for more are challenged by Turkey, which claims part of the seas around the island as its own. *“The illegal actions of Turkey, which defy international law are placing the security of the region at risk. As such, they are absolutely condemnable,”* Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias told reporters after meeting his Egyptian counterpart, Sameh Shoukry. *“We discussed this flagrant violation of the sovereignty and the sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus perpetrated by Turkey,”* Dendias said, hours after returning from a trip to Cyprus. Egyptian Minister Shoukry, who did not mention Turkey by name, said through an interpreter *“We discussed provocations in the area and how there should be respect to international law, for the provocations to stop.”* Egypt, Greece and Cyprus cooperate in a range of areas, including energy. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- August 1st, in line with the pre-election pledge to modernize Greece’s national security apparatus, which Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis had reiterated at the recent meeting of the Council for Foreign Affairs and Defense (KYSEA), the Government appointed Retired

Vice Admiral Alexandros Diakopoulos to the new post of national security adviser to the Prime Minister's Office. Diakopoulos will also be the KYSEA secretary, tasked with coordinating issues of national security. Meanwhile, Panagiotis Kontoleon was named the new head of the National Intelligence Service (NIS). Kontoleon, a former executive at security services company G4S, will replace Yiannis Roubatis after his term expired. According to a statement issued by Prime Minister's office, "*the Government has set the modernization of the country's security policy as a basic priority.*" For this reason, it is said, the post of national security adviser will serve as a link between the Prime Minister and the Defense Ministry. "*It was deemed an urgent need... This is why [the Government] selected an official with great experience and undisputed capabilities like Vice Admiral Alexandros Diakopoulos,*" the statement read. "*On the same grounds, the Government is undertaking the modernization of NIS with the aim of tackling traditional threats, as well as new dangers such as cyberwar and the interconnection between terrorist and criminal activity on a global scale and with geopolitical repercussions/dimensions,*" the statement said. The statement said that by choosing Kontoleon to be NIS Director it is emulating the practice of intelligence services in other countries that are headed by people who did not have prior careers there. The effort to restructure NIS was also boosted with the appointment of three Deputy Directors – Vasilios Grizis, Dionysis Melitsiotis and Anastasios Mitsialis. Seeking to send a message of continuity within the Greek state, especially in the field of intelligence, Mitsotakis thanked the outgoing Roubatis for his service and

for the briefings he was given while he was in the opposition. (www.ekathimerini.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

The new conservative Government looks well prepared for taking over power in the country. Ministers have presented immediate responses to sensitive fields such as security, healthcare, foreign affairs, and education. The new majority Government ensures political stability in a "strange" time period that security, diplomatic, and economic issues challenge Greek administration. The Greek Government inaugurated a new institution, the national security adviser, aiming at strengthening crisis management and establishing a reliable and functional mechanism of decision making regarding defense and security issues. Greek – Turkish relations are in a critical point due to Turkey's decision to violate Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) aiming at conducting oil and gas drills. Moreover, Turkey maintains a hard rhetoric against Greece regarding its territorial and maritime sovereign rights. 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 touristic season (end of September – mid October). Moreover, a crisis to Cyprus means a crisis to Greece forcing Armed Forces to deploy military, naval, and air units. Taking into consideration that Cyprus lacks of naval and air power it is Greece which will support the small and vulnerable island located in

the East Mediterranean heart. Turkish fighter jets keep on violating Greek airspace. Strengthening of military cooperation between Greece and the US upgrades Greece's strategic role in Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East as a western (US, EU, NATO) forward military base. Furthermore, Greece seeks to modernize its Armed Forces by receiving US military aid. It is a fact that Greek military force has been affected by the long economic crisis threatening the balance of power with Turkey. Security situation is of high risk due to an accidental or preplanned incident by Turkey and the complicated current situation in Cypriot EEZ (not likely within the summer touristic period).



KOSOVO: August 2nd, the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës - LDK) after a meeting on Friday has decided their current Chairman Isa Mustafa lead the party for another four-year mandate, a source told Gazeta Express. The LDK's Steering Committee convened on Friday morning only a day ahead the election convention when members of this opposition party are expected to elect their new leader. LDK's Chairmanship met also on Thursday as part of efforts to decide on a consensual candidate who would be leading the LDK for another four-year mandate. Mustafa after meeting with the Steering Committee will meet also heads of LDK branches. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- August 2nd, Kosovo President Hashim Thaci addressed ruling coalition parties asking them to propose a new candidate for Prime Minister to replace Ramush Haradinaj who offered his irrevocable resignation on July 19th, 2019 after

being summoned by the Hague Prosecutors to be interviewed for his role as wartime commander of the KLA. Chairman of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Kosovës - PDK) Kadri Veseli, leading party in Haradinaj's Government, was quick to answer Thaci's request saying that they have no proposal for new Prime Minister, and early elections are the only way to overcome political deadlock. "As leader of ruling coalition, I have answered to Kosovo President informing him that there will be no new candidate for Prime Minister. As I stated earlier and I will reiterate; elections are inevitable," Veseli said in a statement posted in social media. Veseli who is also Speaker of Parliament, said that he has decided to call the Parliament's presidency meeting on August 5th, 2019 and jointly with Chiefs of parliamentary groups coordinate on calling an extraordinary session to dissolve current legislation of the Parliament of Kosovo. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- August 2nd, Kosovo President Hashim Thaci in a letter sent to Kadri Veseli, Chairman of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Kosovës - PDK) leading party in ruling coalition, said that as the winning coalition in 2017 election, they have the right to propose a candidate on forming the Government of Kosovo. Thaci in his letter said that he took the initiative, based on his Constitutional obligations, after Ramush Haradinaj resigned as country's prime minister on July 19th, 2019. According to the Constitution of Kosovo and applicable laws after political entity winning the election or coalition granting majority in Parliament, proposes their candidate to form the Government, the new candidate for Prime Minister has 15 days to

present his cabinet before the Parliament of Kosovo and ask the approval of MPs. If such a proposal does not get majority in Parliament the President should announce early elections held within 40 days. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Consultations between state institutions (President, Parliament Speaker etc) and parliamentary parties are ongoing following Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj's resignation. It seems that President Hashim Thaci is not in favor of snap elections, while all other parties appear positive and ready for early parliamentary elections. It is widely spread that elections will be announced for September 8th, 2019. Under these circumstances dialogue with Serbia comes in second priority. Tension between Serbia and Kosovo remains in high levels due to a series of provocative actions of the latter; ban of Serbian officials to enter north Kosovo populated mostly by Serbs, Police operation in the north arresting Serbs, 100% tax on Serbian and Bosnian products, Kosovo Assembly resolution that Serbs committed genocide during 1998-1999 war, establishment of Kosovo Army, request for a special Court for Serbs undermining any possibility of negotiations with Serbia. Only through normalization of relations with Serbia, Kosovo will be able to move forward namely to enter the UN, NATO, EU and to achieve a normal status of a state. Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration. Path towards the EU and NATO will be long and hard. The possibility of Kosovo

Army presence in the north it is assessed of high security risk which may lead in armed violence.



MOLDOVA: July 30th, the Parliament accepted resignation of MP Vlad Plahotniuc, elected on the ticket of Moldova's Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat din Moldova - PDM) in the Nisporeni uninominal district. The Lawmakers present at the parliament meeting approved the decision by unanimous vote. At the same time, the Parliament declared vacant one MP mandate for the Nisporeni uninominal district. Vlad Plahotniuc said that he was giving up his MP mandate today morning. Another five Lawmakers have earlier given up their mandates. It is about Andrei Nastase, Maia Sandu, Liliana Nicolaescu-Onofrei, Otilia Dragutanu and Viorel Melnic. (www.moldpres.md)

- July 30th, Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Vasili Sova unveiled the priorities as regards the Transnistrian conflict settlement. According to the official, among the priorities, is the ensuring of the observance of human rights, ensuring freedom of movement and democratization processes in the region. Another priority regards the economic development. Sova also said that certain amendments had been recently made to the composition of the working groups set up within the confidence building measures and that the groups were to soon start their work. At the same time, the Deputy Prime Minister informed that a new group for strengthening the trust measures in the military sector would be created. Sova specified that the mechanism of domestic consultations between representatives of the Presidency, Government

and Parliament would be re-established in the near time, in order to set internal priorities on the Transnistria-related issues. Head of the OSCE Mission in Moldova Claus Neukirch has recently informed about the resumption of the 5+2 negotiations in next autumn. These talks include representatives of the sides, Moldova and the Transnistrian region, the mediators on behalf of OSCE, Russia and Ukraine, as well as the observers on behalf of the EU and the US. (www.moldpres.md)

- July 31st, Dumitru Robu is the new acting General Prosecutor (PG) of Moldova. The decree regarding its appointment has been signed by President, Igor Dodon. Afterwards, the new PG has been introduced to the staff of General Prosecutor's Office. The candidacy of Robu for the position of PG was designated by the Parliament by a decision approved at the hearing, on July 30th, 2019. It has been positively endorsed by the Superior Council of Prosecutors (CSP), which is holding a meeting today. At the presentation of the new acting PG, Dodon said that the expectations of society and leadership of Moldova towards him are very high. Robu said he is aware that the expectations of society are high and that he will make efforts to regain and increase trust of citizens in institution of the Prosecutor's office. In the meanwhile, Ruslan Flocea has been appointed Director of the National Anticorruption Centre (CNA). Parliament adopted a decision to this effect with the votes of 72 MPs. The candidacy of Flocea was selected following a contest organized by the Parliament's Juridical Commission for rules and immunities, to which nine people submitted their files. (www.moldpress.md)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

Political stability has re-established in the country, while state's institutions have become functional again by the appointment of new Directors. The new ruling coalition enjoys full control of Moldova establishing its power and removing everything reminds the previous power of PDM. Besides, the former "strong man" of PDM resigned from MP. Cooperation between PSRM and ACUM block continues without problems. 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. Sandu has characterized her country as "a state in transition" implying that it has a democratic deficit which will be restored by the new Government. EU seeks to improve cooperation with the new Government by restarting micro-economic assistance. The ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine may affect Moldova, especially after Prime Minister Maia Sandu's clear intention to strengthen cooperation with Ukraine. It should be underlined that Russia maintains military forces in Transnistrian ground and secondly Moldova shares common borders with Ukraine which cannot be unnoticed by international stakeholders. The "Transnistria case" is always a "running sore" for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.



MONTENEGRO: July 31st, Minister of Interior, Mevludin Nuhodzic, and Head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro, Aivo Orav, visited today the border crossing in the port

of Bar and the Command and Operation Center of the Regional Center of Border Police “Jug”, which owns contemporary techniques for electronic surveillance worth 3.4 million euro. *“The motive for our visit was the desire to see the new equipment and techniques used by the Border Police. We saw that the technology is state-of-the-art and enables complete surveillance and detection of all data at the land border. Installation of TV and thermal imaging cameras provides full surveillance and detection of the border,”* Nuhodzic said. Orav expressed satisfaction with the visit to Bar and with the functioning of the system acquired by the EU donation. He emphasized that the equipment is the result of the implementation of the EU recommendations. He thanked the Ministry for adopting all recommendations offered by the EC. (www.cdm.me)



Minister of Interior, Mevludin Nuhodzic, and Head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro, Aivo Orav during their visit in the Command and Operation Center of the Regional Center of Border Police “Jug”

(Photo source: www.gov.me)

- August 1st, Deputies approved amendments to the Decision on the formation of Committees for the further reform of electoral and other legislation. 42 Deputies voted to amend the

Decision while two abstained. After the 10 Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (Demokratska Partija Socijalista Crne Gore - DPS) amendments were adopted, the amendment tabled by Democratic Front (Demokratski Front - DF) lawmakers on forming a technical Government did not pass because it was not endorsed by the majority of MPs. 41 MPs voted against, 20 MPs in favor, while one abstained. Representatives of Democratic Montenegro Demokratska Crna Gora - DCG) and the Civic Movement United Reform Action (Građanski Pokret Ujedinjena Reformska Akcija GP URA), which boycotted Parliament's work, are expected to be included in the Committee. The proponent of the amendment to the Decision on the formation of the Committee for Further Reform of Election and other legislation, Speaker of the Assembly Ivan Brajovic, called on the Deputies at the beginning of the session to contribute together to the improvement of the electoral and other legislation. He stated that the willingness to upgrade the decision had already been shown. An amendment which provides the deadline for amending the electoral legislation to be extended to November 15th, 2019 is acceptable to him. *“This is serious matter, the Committee does not function if there is no opposition in it,”* Brajovic said. (www.rtcg.me)

- August 2nd, parliamentary decisions have opened the way for all parties to participate in the work of the Committee on Comprehensive Reform of the Election and Other Legislation in order to prepare the 2020 elections in the best possible way. It is especially important for the EU that no one disputes the results of those elections, said the

Head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro, Aivo Orav. He believes that Committee should reach its decision through consensus, because it would be harder to challenge such decisions and a much better atmosphere for elections could be created. From the EU perspective, the decision made in Parliament, he said, was very important and greatly appreciated “as it paves the way for all parties to participate in the work of the Committee on Comprehensive Reform of Elections and Other Legislative so that the 2020 elections are as perfect as possible.” Asked what would happen to the reform and ultimately the elections if the rest of the opposition did not join the Committee, Orav said “I think it is very important for the state to have more dialogue between politicians. In my country, politicians from different parties make very strong statements about each other in front of the cameras, but then they go out and drink beer and coffee together, as usual.” Dialogue, he said, is needed, not only between the authorities and the opposition, but also within the opposition itself. (www.rtcg.me)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Political stability is re-establishing again since opposition has weakened its stance and Committee on reforming electoral legislation has been established creating hopes for successful elections in 2020. The idea of a technical Government is removing. Although EC Progress Report is assessed as a positive one, it raises specific concerns over media freedom, corruption and organized crime. Report is elaborating on specific cases signaling detailed research. Montenegro enters in a crucial crossroad regarding its EU future and specific reforms and

actions should be implemented if it remains committed in its goal to access the EU by 2025. The Government promotes state's political and economic stability which creates an almost ideal investment environment; However, the state needs more concrete reforms in the field of justice, rule of law, fight against corruption, money laundering, and organized crime, public administration transparency and accountability in order to become a stable and attractive investment environment. Montenegro shows activity within NATO trying to prove that it is an equal partner of the alliance with military capacity according to NATO standards. Moreover, it tries to modernize and strengthen its operational capabilities and in this context it raised its defense budget aiming at purchasing new assets such as armored vehicles.



NORTH MACEDONIA: July 30th, the largest opposition party in North Macedonia, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство - VMRO-DPMNE), has declared that it is ready to vote the new bill on the Special Prosecutor's Office if the ruling party agrees to declare early elections. The Vice Chairman of the party, Aleksandar Nikolovski told “Kanal5” that snap elections is their only condition. “No bill can pass in Parliament if a snap election is not declared,” Nikolovski said. Prime Minister and leader of Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija – SDSM), Zoran Zaev said that the

voting of the bill on Public Prosecutor's Office cannot be conditioned with snap elections. *"There is no reason to hold snap elections. We need to find a solution, but not through early elections. Why should we damage the economy,"* Zaev said. Analysts claim that early elections will be unavoidable at the start of next year. *"If we are not given a date for the launch of EU membership talks by October, then elections are an option. But even if a date is given, then the Government will declare this as a success and will announce early elections,"* university professor, Berat Aqifi said. The fate of the Special Prosecutor's Office is considered to be the last pending issue before EU member countries decide on the opening of membership talks with North Macedonia in coming October. (www.nezavisen.mk)

- July 31st, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство - VMRO-DPMNE) and Besa Movement (Lëvizja Besa) winked at each other and established the first step towards cooperation, but whether this cooperation will be transformed into a coalition before, or after the parliamentary elections, is too early to discuss. These are the comments in the two parties that have come after the reign they took over in the parliamentary the Committee on Elections and Appointment Issues at the expense of the ruling duo; SDSM and DUI. The recent meeting between Hristijan Mickoski and Bilall Kasami resulted in a nearly synchronized performance for the two first issues that came up on the agenda; the debate at the Committee on Elections and Appointment Issues, but more

importantly, the law on Public Prosecution and Besa's promise not to accept the Government's proposal unless it has undergone serious changes. Although the part of the party that stayed with Kasami has been reduced to two MPs, the latest presidential election showed that Besa in coalition with the Alliance for Albanians (Алијанса за Албанците - AA) would be at least equal to the Democratic Union for Integration (Demokratska Unija za Integracija - DUI), which was also confirmed by recent polls. VMRO-DPMNE officials emphasized that they are in regular contact not only with Besa, but also with other political parties in the Albanian bloc; Ali Ahmeti's DUI and Zijadin Sela's AA. (www.nezavisen.mk)

- July 31st, the vetting process of Ministry of Interior employees, starting from janitors to Ministers, according to Minister Oliver Spasovski, was given the green light from the Government on Tuesday. By August 20th, 2019 the Ministry of Interior is to form a working group that will come up with a proposal of activities and time frames for the process, which it should then submit to the Government by October 1st. Vetting of staff is an integral part of Police force ethics and professional standards in developed countries, the Government said in a press release. The working group will include Interior Ministry staff, independent experts, members of civil society, and representatives of OSCE. Vetting procedures are also planned in other public agencies in the future, the release added. (www.nezavisen.mk)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Pressure by opposition for snap elections is getting harder. VMRO-DPMNE feels confident that it will win possible early elections and has started to approach the Albanian political forces to secure cooperation. Prime Minister Zoran Zaev has put his hopes in the coming October when he expects the EU to greenlight North Macedonia's accession talks. If not, Zaev is obliged to call early elections with little possibilities to win. If he gets a positive signal by the EU he will also call for early elections capitalizing his success. To conclude, the country will face early elections until October the latest. Following the European "cold shower" citizens have started to focus on Government's failures in fight against corruption and organized crime, social care measures, and foreign policy. Zaev based his political survival and dominance in the triptych "resolution of name issue with Greece – NATO accession – opening of EU accession talks." Although the first one was successfully accomplished and the second is proceeding rapidly the third one has stuck. Consequently, VMRO-DPMNE is increasing its pressure for a caretaker Government and snap elections. The threats of nationalism and political instability are covering North Macedonia's sky. The country should focus on its economy and major administrative and judicial reforms, fight against corruption and impunity aiming at reaching the EU standards.



ROMANIA: July 29th, President Klaus Iohannis has had a new press statement at Cotroceni Palace on Sunday evening on the Caracal case after the investigators said suspect Gheorghe Dinca had confessed to murdering the two missing teen girls. The

President said that all responsible for the tragedy in Caracal will have to be severely punished from the Police, Interior Ministry, to Special Telecommunication Service (STS) and all involved institutions. Iohannis underlined he rejects the Government's "petty political approach," and urged the Government to think if maybe it is one which is the moral author of this tragedy. "The institutions of the Romanian state have failed to do their job this time as well, the job to protect the fundamental right to life. It is a gloomy reality which, unfortunately, cannot be changed anymore. Those responsible in this case must be severely sanctioned. From the Interior Ministry, to STS, to all institutions that will be found guilty of these tragedies. But punishments, no matter how severe and well deserved they might be, cannot bring back the lost lives. What is mandatory for us is to identify all means to prevent such tragedies from repeating," the Head of state argued. Referring to the Prime Minister Viorica Dancila's proposal to organize a referendum in the view of tightening sentences for rape, manslaughter and child molestation, Iohannis asked the Government to forget "about absurd referendums and assume responsibility." Iohannis argued he would ask the Justice Minister in the Supreme Council of National Defense (CSAT) sitting on Tuesday to urgently analyze the amending criminal laws, saying there are other solutions to prevent such tragedies. "Criminal legislation must be amended in the interest of defending the fundamental rights and not to protect criminals," the Head of state argued, urging the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) - Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE) Government to cancel

amendments operated to the justice laws in the past two years. *“If PSD-ALDE do not operate these amendments, I promise you I will secure a new majority after elections,”* to make sure the rule of law is operational. The Head of state has slammed PSD-ALDE ruling, accusing it of lacking all credibility. (www.romaniajournal.ro)

- July 29th, Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dancila, who also serves as President of the senior ruling Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD), said on Friday that she may announce a successor for the Prime Minister seat, to be appointed in case she wins the presidential elections in November, local Agerpres reported. Previously, the party's officials stated that the target for Dancila is qualifying to the second ballot. Asked whether the Minister of Finance, Eugen Teodorovici, could replace her, Dancila replied *“Definitely yes.”* Chances for Teodorovici to take the Prime Minister office in November are rather slim, though, judging from the electoral polls that indicate incumbent President Klaus Iohannis as the frontrunner candidate. Asked who would be the Prime Minister with whom she would work best if elected President, Dancila said that she is considering several people. *“I think that I have to discuss this first in the National Executive Committee [before making public statements]. We have to run in the presidential elections in a tandem, [...] I think I have to go out with a proposal for Prime Minister,”* she said. (www.romania-insider.com)

- July 30th, the controversial amendments to the Criminal Codes drafted by Romania's ruling coalition formed by the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) - Alliance

of Liberals and Democrats (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE) breach constitutional provisions, the Constitutional Court (CCR) unanimously decided local Hotnews.ro reported. Consequently, CCR returned the bills to Parliament. Decision was taken after seven delays and is the second time the CCR rules as unconstitutional the amendments to Criminal Codes. CCR accepted the unconstitutionality complaints submitted by President Klaus Iohannis and the opposition parties over the amendments made by the Parliament to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code. The main opposition party, the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal - PNL) said, after CCR's ruling, that the Parliament should reject and not further amend the bill. (www.romania-insider.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

The tragedy in Caracal, where a young girl was kidnapped and murdered last week has provoked several political reactions. First of all, it has cost the seat of two Ministers (Interior and Education) and secondly it has got an intense political aspect. President Klaus Iohannis slammed the Government for the case emphasizing that “maybe it is the one which is the moral author of this tragedy.” Political parties have started to announce their candidates for the coming presidential elections scheduled for November 2019 (November 10th, 2019 the first round and November 24th, 2019 the second one). Romania according to NATO strategic and operational planning has become an advanced base close to Russia. Its strategic importance and role has been upgraded and high level NATO exercises take

place in its territory. Consequently, Russia reacts mainly against the NATO military base in Deveselu where anti-missile defense systems have been deployed. Temporarily deployment of THAAD system, a modern high-capability system, may raise tension in the region. Romania keeps strengthening its Armed Forces seeking to achieve NATO standards.



SERBIA: July 29th, Serbian Air Force and Air Defense Commander Major General Dusko Zarkovic told Belgrade daily Politika that he expects Russian Mi-35 helicopter gunships by the end of the year in order to form a squadron of state of the art combat helicopters. *“Those helicopters will be part of a helicopter combat squadron deployed at the Morava airport outside Kraljevo. Four helicopters might not sound like much but their fire power will make a significant contribution to the capabilities of airborne fire support units,”* the General said. Speaking about MiG-29 fighters, the General said they will come in three phases; the final one being their upgrade. *“The first stage is completed, the second stage is underway and their modernization starts in the last quarters of this year. Once that is finished, the MiG-29s will be at the same level as the latest aircraft in the world and they will provide complete control and protection of the sovereignty and air space of Serbia protecting the Armed Forces of Serbia (VS) in operations,”* Zarkovic said. He said Air Defense forces were last upgraded with new equipment in the mid-1980s with the Soviet Kub and Neva missile systems. *“Although we have modernized the existing systems in the meantime, we need to buy*

new ones with far better combat capabilities,” the General said. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- July 29th, Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic arrived at Nis military quarters to see the new BRDM-2 (Combat Reconnaissance/Patrol Vehicle) within the presentation of weapons and military equipment of the Serbian Armed Forces. Vucic thanked the Russian Federation and Russian President Vladimir Putin. *“It is modern to speak badly about Putin nowadays, but I will be old-fashioned and I will say thank you to President Putin. We did not pay for this, we got it as a gift, it is important that our citizens know that,”* Vucic pointed out.



President Aleksandar Vucic during the presentation of weapons and military equipment of the Serbian Armed Forces
(Photo source: www.mod.gov.rs)

President was accompanied by the Defense Minister Aleksandar Vulin, the Head of the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces, General Milan Mojsilovic, and the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Serbia, Alexander Botsan - Kharchenko. Mojsilovic thanked the President for the support he provided to the Serbian Armed Forces and introduced the technical details of the vehicles. In addition to 10 BRDM-2 vehicles from Russia, an old BRDM

vehicle of the Serbian Army was added to the parade. During the presentation, tanks were presented, as well as the possession of the “Norama” self-propelled howitzers. Vucic announced that by the end of the year, Serbia will receive additional weapons either bought by Serbia or donated by Russia. He added that four combat Mi-35 helicopters, three Mi-17 helicopters, and additional BRDM-2MS and T-72 tanks will arrive to Serbia by the end of the year. Russian Ambassador to Serbia Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko said that his country is determined to continue military cooperation with Serbia, in order to enable Serbia to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity. (www.b92.net)

- July 31st, according to daily Blic source, at some point, dispute was caused by Miroslav Aleksic, Vice President of People's Party (Narodna Stranka - NS) who spoke about media torture and the lack of media freedom. Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka - SNS) representatives asked Aleksic to present evidence for this claim. Vladimir Djukanovic wondered how TV Trstenik looked like when he was on its head, the Blic source that attended the meeting said. At that point, Party of Freedom and Justice (Stranka Slobode i Pravde - SSP) leader Dragan Djilas reacted by defending Aleksic, raising his voice, which caused a fierce reaction by Djukanovic in return, along with the Head of SNS info service, Vladanka Malovic. Serbian Telegraph found out that Djilas did not talk about election conditions at all and focused on media which editorial policy does not suit him as the biggest problem. “Vladimir Djukanovic got up at some point and told Djilas to stop yelling, thus showing respect for the institution they were in,

and Vladanka Malovic, head of the SNS Information Service, told him that he is a tycoon, having no right to talk about freedom of the media when he was the first to silence all the media he found inappropriate, and those which he disliked, while he was in power,” the source said. As it was stated, Aleksic, accused the ruling party of dictatorship, followed by SNS representatives challenging him to prove this claim. Daily Kurir also claims that things ‘got out of hand’ when Aleksic first started to complain of the media dictatorship, and then Djilas continued talking about the unequal treatment of the opposition in the media. (www.b92.net)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

The country has entered in a period of fragile political stability due to opposition reactions against governmental practices regarding human rights, media freedom, and elections transparency. President Alexandar Vucic announced that elections (parliamentary and local) will be held on March or April 2020. Opposition said that if its requests will not be fulfilled, elections will be boycotted. However, efforts for dialogue between the ruling SNS and opposition have started in order the crisis to be resolved. The first meeting was a hopeful step, but there is a “long distance” between the two parts. Regarding Belgrade – Pristina dialogue there is nothing to be expected in the near future; the whole process has reached a deadlock. It is announced that next Belgrade – Pristina meeting will be held on September, but it is more than doubtful since early parliamentary elections are expected in Kosovo on September 8th, 2019. Armed Forces remain in operational readiness

without any deployment of units across Serbia – Kosovo border. Serbia strengthens its relations with Russia (and China) seeking stronger support regarding Kosovo case. Security situation is complex and uncertain. 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. At the moment, Serbia looks like acting in accordance with the international law aiming at reducing tension in the region. In other words state's leadership is acting in a "reasonable" and "wise" way avoiding mistakes of the past which have isolated Serbia from the international community. Serbia pays special attention in improving operational capabilities of its Armed Forces declaring towards all sides that they are the power of the state. In this context, it keeps acquiring weapons mainly from Russia. Last week, it received 10 battle vehicles BDRM-2, as military donation from Russia.



SLOVENIA: July 30th, commenting on reports about Croatia being ready to enter the Schengen area in the autumn, the newspaper Delo said in Tuesday's front-page commentary that the Government will thus be faced with a challenge of whether to support Croatia or use this step as leverage to ensure the implementation of the arbitration ruling. *"Prime Minister [Marjan] Sarec faces the first serious foreign affairs dilemma, which is strongly linked to interior policy, in particular to the opposition Democrats' criticism that this Government is not able to protect the border properly. He will also*

face the public opinion, which will probably not welcome any yielding to Croatia," it was written. The paper says that in terms of security and border control Slovenia would benefit from Croatia becoming a Schengen country; however, it would also lose its advantage in the two countries' border arbitration dispute. Given Slovenia's status in Brussels, it is not likely that the country's efforts to let the new EU Commission decide on the issue would be successful, concludes the commentary headlined Sarec's Dilemma of Security and Politics. (www.sta.si)

- July 31st, Slovenian President Borut Pahor reiterated his opinion on the border dispute with Croatia, accusing the EU of behaving Croatia as a "spoiled child" instead of promoting bilateral implementation of the arbitral award. *"Limits have been set by the arbitral tribunal and that judgment will sooner or later be implemented,"* he wrote on social media. He recalled that today, in 2009, in Sweden, being the then Prime Minister of Slovenia with the then Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor, they had signed an arbitration agreement and that the arbitration award was based in this bilateral agreement. Pahor accused some European leaders of choosing the Croatian side which does not respect the arbitral award but offers repeated bilateral talks, arguing that Slovenia irreversibly compromised the arbitration process with an attempt to influence the judges through a deal between the then Slovenian Foreign Ministry agent Simone Drenik and Slovenian arbitrator Jernej Sekolec. *"Some European leaders tell us that we are right and that the Court's decision on the border should be respected, but at the same time they suggest that*

we should reach a compromise with Croatia,” Slovenia's President wrote on social media. *“I tell them that the only proper and fair thing is to treat Croatia like any other responsible state in a contractual relationship and that it is obliged to fulfill its obligations, not as a spoiled child who does only what is right for him,”* Pahor concluded. (www.balkans.aljazeera.net)

- August 1st, the Government indicated it is planning to extend the deployment of auxiliary Police to help the regular force address the illegal migration on the Schengen border with Croatia and with other duties. Under the proposed decree, released on the Government website, auxiliary Police will be deployed until the end of the year to help patrol the border and stand in for absent regular police officers. The proposal notes that illegal migration rose by more than 45% year-on-year in the first half of the year. It is also noted a deterioration in road safety and the engagement of larger numbers of Police Officers in providing security at a number of high-risk events. The staffing rate of the Slovenian Police is on average 70% and at some Police Stations only 60% or less. As a result, most of the auxiliary Police Officers have already been hired to assist in protecting the state border or preventing illegal migration, as well as replacing regular Police Officers who have insured complex events. As many as 460 auxiliary Police Officers have been called up this year, completing an average of about a third of the legal limit of 30 days. (www.sta.si, www.reporter.si)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Although Slovenia enjoys a relative political stability, the minority Government of Marjan Sarec has entered in a period of fragile balance due to the Left party announcement that it will re-assessed its support towards the ruling coalition. Left party is the key factor for Government's stability and viability by supporting it in the Parliament. Without the Left's support the Government would be toppled and early elections should be called. Under these circumstances Prime Minister Marjan Sarec does not exclude a confidence vote together with the 2020 – 2021 budget adoption by the Parliament. Sarec seeks to bear his partners responsibilities towards the Government's support and either to stabilize his ruling coalition or to call early elections. At the moment it is assessed that none of the ruling coalition parties wish snap elections, however political developments in coming autumn could not be excluded. Sarec has been proved of being flexible in Slovenia's politics so far achieving to balance adequately between different political trends. Looking in the future and next parliamentary elections he seeks to unify political forces belong to the ALDE family against SDS which keeps on being the most powerful political force in the country. The Government has to address several internal social issues (increase of minimum wage, health care, pensions etc). Border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia remains active with low scale skirmishes not excluded periodically. Unofficial announcement by the EC that Croatia has fulfilled the Schengen Zone criteria and it would be accepted during the coming autumn has put a dilemma in Slovenian foreign policy towards its relations with Croatia. Is Slovenia going to block Croatia's entrance in the Schengen area or it will vote for it? It is

assessed that September will be a month of intense contacts between Slovenia and Croatia, while the EU is expected to push Slovenia to facilitate Croatia's accession to the Schengen zone. 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). 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. The Slovenian Armed Forces face problems mainly in the field of modern equipment and manning. The annual report on the Armed Forces operational readiness released by the Armed Forces Chief of Staff is disappointing since it assessed that the Armed Forces have limited operational capabilities in war time namely they cannot accomplish their mission. The med-term 2018 – 2023 defense program it could improve situation, but under current political situation it is doubtful if it will be implemented to the end.



TURKEY: August 2nd, Turkey's Supreme Military Council held its annual summer meeting yesterday at the Presidential Complex under the Chairmanship of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In the meeting, 14 Generals and Admirals have been promoted to higher ranks. The meeting, which set the agenda for Turkey's military and typically deals with promotions, dismissals and other staffing decisions, lasted for approximately 90 minutes. In a press briefing after the meeting, Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalin announced the decisions made. Accordingly, 14 Generals and Admirals have

been promoted and 40 Colonels have been promoted to the ranks of General and Admiral. Also, Major General İrfan Özsert has been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General within the Turkish Land Forces Command. Both First "Aegean" Army Commander General Abdullah Recep and Third Army Commander General İsmail Serdar Savas are retiring. The terms of duty of Lieutenant General Metin Gurak, the Deputy Chief of General Staff, and Lieutenant General Seref Ongay, Commander of the Land Forces Training and Doctrine Command (EDOK), have been extended for another year. Five Land Forces Brigadier Generals and seven Air Force Brigadier Generals have been promoted to Major General, and one Naval Forces Rear Admiral has been promoted to Rear Admiral upper half. Duty terms of 12 Generals and Admirals have been extended for a year and those of 313 Colonels for two years. One General has been retired due to the age limit, and 47 Generals and Admirals have been retired due to being unlisted. The number of active Generals and Admirals will drop from 241 to 233 after the implementation of these decisions. The decisions will be effective as of August 30th, 2019. Before the meeting, the Council members visited Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Turkish republic founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in the capital Ankara. Signing the memorial at Anıtkabir, Erdogan wrote that this year's meeting was being held at a period when Turkey faces increasing external threats against the country's survival and unity, primarily stemming from the conflicts in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean. *"Thanks to the measures taken after the July 15 betrayal, with its increasing discipline, motivation, deterrence and movement ability, the Turkish Armed Forces are*

our biggest guarantee against these asymmetric threats,” Erdogan added. Among the top officials attending the closed-door council meeting were Vice President Fuat Oktay, National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul, Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu, Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoglu, Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, Education Minister Ziya Selcuk, Chief of General Staff General Yasar Guler, Land Forces Commander Ümit Dundar, Naval Forces Commander Adnan Ozbal and Air Forces Commander Hasan Kucukakyuz. (www.dailysabah.com, www.aa.com.tr)

- August 3rd, National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar reiterated on Thursday that Turkey will continue to be a guarantor and protector of the rights and interests of the so-called “*Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*” (TRNC). “*Efforts to alleviate Turkey's guarantor position with a variety of statements are futile. Turkey is a guarantor on the island of Cyprus and will use this right as effectively as possible,*” Akar said. He expressed that both Turkey and the “TRNC” have demonstrated their support for peace and stability on every occasion until today and that Turkey continues to do so. Akar, said that the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) turned down an offer to establish a joint committee for the hydrocarbon activities in the eastern Mediterranean and continued his words by saying “*We have done and continue to do our part. Everyone needs to bear in mind that we take our power from international law.*” He also said that it is possible to create a fair sharing of the natural resources within the framework of positive neighborhood relations. Since this spring,

Ankara has sent two drilling vessels, the Fatih and most recently the Yavuz, to the Eastern Mediterranean, asserting the right of Turkey and the “TRNC” to the resources of the region. (www.dailysabah.com)

- August 3rd, if efforts to find common ground with the US prove unsuccessful, Turkey will have to create a safe zone in Syria on its own, said the Foreign Ministry on Friday. Talks on the issue will continue with a US military delegation due in Turkey next Monday, Ministry Spokesman Hami Aksoy told a press conference. On the issue, Turkey expects the creation of a 32 kilometer safe zone in northern Syria, giving Turkey control of this region, which must be cleared of the People's Protection Units (YPG), he said. All aspects of the safe zone and the Syrian conflict have been discussed during recent visits to Turkey by James Jeffrey, the US envoy for the anti-DAESH coalition, Aksoy added. But Aksoy warned that Turkey's patience is limited, adding “*We will not let this process be dragged out. If our expectations are not met, we are fully capable of taking whatever measures [are needed] to ensure our national security.*” He stressed that Turkey wants to clear the area of all terror elements and establish a “*peace corridor.*” It was also stated that a new military delegation from the US would come to Turkey on August 5th, 2019 to continue talks to establish a safe zone in Syria. The US has primarily partnered with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an umbrella organization in northeastern Syria in the anti-DAESH fight. The SDF is led by the Kurdish Syrian YPG. Turkey is also prepared to launch an operation east of the Euphrates to eliminate the YPG. However, following the US decision to withdraw from

Syria, Ankara decided to put the operation on hold. While establishing a safe zone would eliminate some of Turkey's concerns, the presence of the YPG in Syria and its plan to form a quasi-state will continue to present a threat to the country. Until now, Turkey and the US did not discuss in detail where the safe zone would be and what would happen to the YPG militants. Turkish officials had been waiting for Washington to clarify what they meant by the safe zone. As Turkey was waiting for the US to take more concrete steps, Turkey carried out two cross-border operations west of the Euphrates River, Operation “Euphrates Shield” launched in August 2016 and Operation “Olive Branch” in January 2018, to drive militant groups, including the YPG and DAESH, from its borders. On the other hand, disagreements over the scope of a safe zone in northeastern Syria and other issues are preventing its implementation, US President Donald Trump's envoy for the anti-DAESH coalition said late Thursday. “The Turks want a deeper zone than the one that we think makes sense,” James Jeffrey told reporters at the State Department, noting Washington proposed an area of some 5 - 14 kilometers along the Syrian border with heavy weapons pulled further back. He further cited unspecified “differences of opinion” over how the US and Turkey “would operate in that zone.” Jeffrey added that the US is mindful of Turkish security concerns with regards to the “PKK and offshoots of the PKK but are equally committed to protecting the main US partner in northeast Syria from coming under attack. We are committed to those who have fought with us not being attacked and not being harmed by anyone,” Jeffrey said. (www.dailysabah.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Tension between the US and Turkey is maintained due to S-400 advanced air defense system purchase by the latter. Although direct sanctions against Turkey by the US are removed as an option, the American administration exercise pressure to its ally through a couple of sensitive issues such as expulsion of the F-35 fighter jet project, support of Kurdish Syrian YPG (and avoidance of establishing a safe zone within Syrian territory), and support of Cypriot activities in East Mediterranean. Nevertheless, Turkey is a pivotal country enjoying geopolitical importance and having one of the largest militaries (the 2nd within NATO). It is hard to assess that the US seek a full rift with its NATO ally. On the contrary, there are still open official and unofficial channels of communication working on a mutual accepted compromise. The US needs Turkey and the opposite, especially in a period where Middle East is in turbulence. In this context, a US delegation will visit Turkey on August 5th, 2019 for consultations regarding the establishment of a safe zone within Syria. Turkey is heading in a major economic crisis, although the new Central Bank Governor takes initiatives to restart Turkish economy after a long period of recession. Turkey faces several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs and journalists are in custody or convicted by the state Courts. Local and international observers claim the country moves towards an authoritarian regime with thousands of citizens being persecuted. EC Progress Report on Turkey was disappointing “freezing” any further development regarding its accession process. Moreover, the EU has presented a draft of






imposing sanctions to Turkey due to illegal drilling for gas and oil off Cyprus. Turkish Armed Forces declares its readiness to intervene militarily in Syria, eastern of Euphrates river reinforcing their troops. According to information the invasion and attack against Syrian Kurd YPG is imminent. Such an operation without the US “green light” may further deteriorate relations of the two countries. The state demonstrates decisively its leading role in the wider region of the Middle East, Southeast Europe, and East Mediterranean implementing its doctrine for a diligent capability development effort to be able to fight two multi-front, inter-state armed conflicts while being able to simultaneously carry on large-scale counterterrorism operations at home and beyond borders. Kurdish question is a major security threat for Turkey affecting stability, peace and even unity of the state. In Eastern Mediterranean Turkey continues its drilling operations with two ships (Fatih and Yavuz) maintaining a tense situation. However, it achieved to establish an almost permanent presence within Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) without any real cost. The cost so far, for Turkey, is zero achieving simultaneously to question Cypriot sovereign rights. EU declaration for imposing sanctions against Turkey seems not enough to force Turkey to back down. It is assessed that Turkey is fully determined to escalate tension in the region including armed violence (if it is necessary) aiming at securing its interests. Taking into consideration that Cyprus and Greece act in coordination and the latter guarantees defense and security of Cyprus it cannot be excluded an accidental or pre-planned “hot incident” in Cyprus or the Aegean Sea (not likely scenario during summer).

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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.