



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

# ***SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AT A GLANCE***



***SOUTHEAST EUROPE DIRECTORATE***

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

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

### **“HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE**

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**ALBANIA:** April 30<sup>th</sup>, the Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë – PD) leader, Lulzim Basha, said that Albania will not have the EU accession negotiations opened this year, because of the low standards set by the Government. *“There is no EU integration with Edi Rama. There can be no accession negotiations with these standards. These are African standards. The Berlin Summit was very clear for every Balkan autocrat, and for the most corrupted man, Edi Rama, who wants to take us 10 years back, by bringing back the visa regime. Unfortunately, Albania will not have the EU accession negotiations opened this year, because Albania has made steps back even with the judiciary,”* Basha said. (www.top-channel.tv)

- April 30<sup>th</sup>, the President of Albania, Ilir Meta, held a meeting today with the leaders of small opposition parties. Meta expressed his deep concern for the serious constitutional and institutional crisis that the country is facing. He underlined that he had warned that dialogue was urgently needed for avoiding an escalation of the conflict. Meta emphasized that he has done everything possible to encourage the judiciary reform within the constitutional deadlines and principles, which would create the balances for a functional rule of law. For the President, if this would have been carried out, the crisis would not be this deep. The President said that by not having all parties registered for the next elections, Albania’s elections and political pluralism may be at risk. However, the Head of State estimates that it is not too late to reflect and find a solution that would bring back the country’s constitutional and democratic normality. (www.top-channel.tv)

- May 2<sup>nd</sup>, upon announcing it will be escalating its action against the Socialist Government, the resigned opposition said on Wednesday it will expand the map of the roads it will block for Thursday’s protest, going from five national axes last week to 12 and from one hour block to two hours. Head of Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë – PD) Lulzim Basha shared the details with his smaller political allies on Wednesday afternoon at the PD headquarters, while earlier on in the day he visited the office of Monika Kryemadhi, Head of the Socialist Movement for Integration (Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim - LSI) and Basha’s most powerful opposition ally. *“At 18:00 hours, action will begin at the 12 districts of the country to block key axes intensifying and escalating civil disobedience. At 11:00 pm, we will unfold with our opposition coalition the tasks of the transitional Government in order to guarantee free and fair elections. Edi Rama’s resignation is a non-negotiable condition to pave the way for political dialogue that will lead to a transitional Government,”* Basha said. Although supporting the escalation of their stand, Basha’s allies have also sought solutions through dialogue, something which Basha has categorically rejected. Five of Basha’s allies have asked the President to call a parties’ roundtable. Recently, Rama said that it is not the majority’s duty to convince the opposition to enter the elections, while Basha has said time and time again he will not be negotiating with Rama, whom the opposition accuses of capturing the state through ballot buying and ties with organized crime. (www.tiranatimes.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Albania has entered in a period of political turmoil and fragile political stability not only*

because opposition organizes huge protests against the Government, but mainly because opposition MPs decided to abandon Parliament and resign aiming at blocking Parliament's works. Such decision was strongly criticized by the international community namely the EU and U.S putting at risk the opening of accession negotiations in June 2019. While opposition hardens its protests by blocking national roads, Albanian politics become more complicated since a new parliamentary opposition emerged by former PD and SMI members who replaced the resigned MPs. The Government highlights that the Parliament is fully functional, while PD leader Lulzim Basha calls it "fake opposition." Local elections scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 is the milestone of rapid political developments in the country. The ruling socialists push by any mean to conduct the elections, while opposition declares that there will be no elections. Escalation of tension including violent incidents is highly expected as we approach to the election date. PD and LSI leaders, Basha and Kryemadhi respectively pushing for the Government's topple and snap elections. International community strongly supports Rama urging opposition to follow parliamentary procedures avoiding its unconventional practices. It is not normal for a stable country seeking to enter the European club to face such situation of political abnormality. Opposition MPs' resignation aiming at forcing the Government in collapse is not a reasonable political strategy for a functional and stable democracy. It is assessed that Rama is stabilizing situation eliminating possibilities for snap elections. The new party, "Democratic Conviction" stemming from PD's body is a sign of the latter's weakness. 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 Netherlands decision to request from the EC the suspension of visa free for Albanians due to increased criminality is a hard "slap" against the state and the Government's image. The EU closely monitors progress of reforms especially in justice sector. The final decision for opening Albania's accession negotiations in June 2019 is up to the EU Heads of Governments. One should underline that unofficial concerns have already been raised regarding this date due to current political instability. Failure of opening accession talks with the EU it will further destabilize the country toppling the Government. 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. Possible border changes may engage Albania in dangerous situations taking into consideration that it has the role of "protector" of Albanians in the region.



## **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:**

April 29<sup>th</sup>, EU institutions in Bosnia are sending a wrong message to Brussels, as to why Bosnia has not formed its Government yet, Bosnia's Prime Minister Deniz Zvizdic said after the Berlin Summit. "We have not formed the Council of

*Ministers yet not because we cannot agree on Ministries allocation, but because some do not want to respect the rule of law and do not want to activate the NATO Membership Action Plan, justifying it with the so-called military neutrality, while arming more than 1,000 auxiliary Police officers within the Republika Srpska (RS) entity Police,” Zvizdic said. Bosnia wants to go along the EU path, which means accepting the rule of law and acting in line with that principle, the Council of Ministers Chairman said. He noted the summit participants talked about some other issues vital for Bosnia and the Western Balkans. “These are the European integration and the Berlin Process which have no alternative,” the Prime Minister told the press. He touched upon the region's stability for which he said is deteriorating. “Some new borders are being drawn again, and there are talks of territory exchange along ethnic lines, but we know from our past that such ideas once resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, huge crimes and genocide. That is why we are against the drawing of new borders in the Balkans,” Zvizdic noted. He concluded that all the Balkan countries have their internationally recognized borders and their inviolability is a fundamental principle of the EU. (www.ba.n1info.com)*

- April 30<sup>th</sup>, Bosnia's Foreign Minister Igor Crnadak said he is convinced the incumbent Council of Ministers will neither recognize Kosovo's independence nor decide on Bosnia's Membership Action Plan (MAP) for NATO. “We did not want to discuss Kosovo's independence in the past four years, while I was in office, and we will not recognize it because the other two Ministers coming from the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska entity are also against it,” Crnadak said. Their position regarding the MAP

will not change either, he noted. “Despite the Presidency's unanimous decision from 2009, the position of RS politicians is clear, and it will not change regardless of what was said during Monday's meeting in Berlin. The position is that once formed, the newly elected Council of Ministers will discuss whether the MAP will be activated or not,” the Foreign Minister said. He noted that that the Berlin meeting and the Franco-German engagement is an encouraging signal for the entire region. “I hope the approach to resolving the relations between Belgrade and Pristina will intensify in the coming period, and that it will give Bosnia an additional European incentive,” Crnadak said. (www.ba.n1info.com)

- May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Bosnia's Presidency Chairman Milorad Dodik and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed the revised Free Trade Agreement between the two countries and a Memorandum of understanding on the construction of Sarajevo-Belgrade highway, in Ankara on Friday. “We (the Presidency members) came here with high expectations regarding the Free Trade Agreement, and it was my great pleasure that I signed it with President Erdogan. So, our relations are stronger, and we also signed the first formal agreement on the construction of the Sarajevo-Belgrade highway,” Dodik said. He pointed out that Turkey showed clear support for the faster formation of the Government in Bosnia and that he familiarized Erdogan with the position of Bosnia's Serb-dominated entity of Republika Srpska (RS) regarding Bosnia's NATO accession and that institutional cooperation with this Alliance already exists. Dodik said the Presidency was happy about the talks on Bosnia's inclusion in the project “Turkish Stream” which would help alleviate Bosnia's air-pollution during winter months. He concluded saying he was grateful to

Erdogan for his support for peace and stability in Bosnia and the region. *“I want to congratulate our brothers and friends on the maturity they showed during the election, and I wish them a fast formation of the Government. I hope they will make up for the lost time and start implementing the reforms which would speed up their paths to EU and NATO integration,”* Turkish President Erdogan said. He noted that Bosnia is a mosaic in the Balkans and this is why *“peace and stability in Bosnia are of great importance for the region and Europe.”* He stressed that good relations with Bosnia are a priority for his country. According to him, the Sarajevo-Belgrade highway will contribute to the development of Bosnia and the entire region. Noting that Bosnia has a special place in their hearts, Erdogan concluded that they are making additional efforts to solve all the challenges Bosnia is facing as if they were their own. The meeting was attended by the Serb and Bosniak Presidency members, Milorad Dodik and Sefik Dzaferovic, while the Croat Presidency member was unable to attend due to health reasons. (www.ba.n1info.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT  :

*Political instability and uncertainty continues in Bosnia because it has not formed a Government since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 general elections. The three main parties representing the three constituent entities (Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats); HDZ (Bosnian Croatian party), SDA (Bosnian Muslim or Bosniak party), and SNSD (Bosnian Serbian party) have reached an agreement to cooperate in forming a Government and next days it will be officially announced. It seems that the three parties achieved to bypass their different views on main issues and especially Bosnia's accession process towards NATO. Bosnian Serbs*

*insist that the country should remain neutral staying out of NATO, Bosniaks remain committed to NATO accession as a precondition for supporting a Government, while Bosnian Croats appears neutral on the issue wishing to overcome the deadlock. Country faces several functional and institutional problems. Consequently political fragility maintains permanent uncertainty and institutional mistrust blocking any attempt for economic growth and major reforms. Croatia and Serbia keep on intervening in Bosnia's internal affairs destabilizing the state. Of course, both entities (Croats and Serbs) take in advantage “Dayton Peace Agreement” weaknesses and malfunctions. Russia pays special attention in Serbia and Bosnia in order to maintain its influence in the region. Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, Albania, and Montenegro have already entered NATO, while North Macedonia would join the Alliance within 2019. These two countries (Serbia and Bosnia) are the only “vehicles” for Russia to maintain a narrow influence in Southeastern Europe. Apart from external influence and intervention the country has to confront several internal “threats” which undermine its sovereignty, cohesion, and viability. Establishment of auxiliary Police Unit by RS raised tension between the FBiH and the Serbian entity emerging the mistrust between the state's communities. 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. Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey approach the country mainly through “investments” and/or funding*

*ethnic or religious groups according to their interests.*



**BULGARIA:** May 2<sup>nd</sup>, *“the political will of the Bulgarian Governments, the agreements with third countries and the assistance that the European Commission has provided with 150 million euro allocated to the European border guard are the three measures that give 100% the result for the security of the external borders,”* the Prime Minister Boyko Borissov said in a speech at the security round table organized by the Ministry of Interior and the Hanns Seidel Foundation. In his words, the agreement with Turkey works extremely well on the Bulgarian-Turkish border. Borissov was implicit that Bulgaria has successfully implemented these three measures guaranteeing the security of its borders. *“On the border with Greece, Bulgaria has substantial problems,”* Borissov pointed out. *“There are no frontiers at this border like the Schengen border. It is also about 800 km long and is hard to be guarded,”* the Prime Minister said. *“We are currently assisting our border services with the army,”* added Borissov. He also highlighted that justice system works very successfully in the country. (www.novinite.com)

- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, migrants' attempts to illegally enter Bulgaria across the border with Greece increased in 2018 and the trend continued, an official said here on Thursday, reported Xinhua. In 2018, 4,662 migrants have tried to illegally enter Bulgaria from Greece, which was approximately a six-fold increase compared to 2017, Svetlan Kichikov, Chief of Bulgaria's Border Police, said at a roundtable discussion on the protection of the European Union borders. Since the beginning of this year, there has been a steady increase in

attempts to illegally cross the Bulgarian-Greek border, Kichikov said, adding that in the first quarter of 2019 the number stood at 305, up 78% year-on-year. Meanwhile, attempts to illegally enter Bulgaria from Turkey last year declined by 23% compared with 2017 to 5,311, Kichikov said. From January to March 2019, the attempts numbered 370, down by 23% year-on-year, he said. *“Bulgaria is a transit country and a final destination for illegal migration. The country is located on the Eastern Mediterranean route and the threat of migratory pressure is conditioned by the situation in Greece and Turkey,”* Kichikov also said. (www.novinite.com)

- May 4<sup>th</sup>, 23% of the armored vehicles (48% of which are tanks), 80% of the aviation assets, and 10% of the navy ships that are in service at the Bulgarian Armed Forces are malfunctioning, learned BulgarianMilitary.com on the basis of the Report on the state of defense and armaments, which the Bulgarian Cabinet passed at its last regular meeting and submitted to Parliament for approval. The condition of the basic armaments and the technical equipment remains critical, despite the increased investment in maintenance and repair of major battle platforms. They are being operated with a number of constraints leading to a reduction of their combat effectiveness and to a risk to the health and life of the personnel, the report said. Some systems are so outdated that even providing sufficient financial resources is not able to solve the problems of their maintenance and field application. 23% of the road vehicles (48% tanks, 40% BMP-1s, 30% BTR-60PB-MD1s, 31% buses etc), 80% of the aviation means and 10% of the ships, vessels and facilities are technically malfunctioning that has a negative impact on the maintenance and development of the necessary



defense capabilities, the document stated. It is concluded that the state of defense capabilities of the Armed Forces allows fulfilling their constitutional obligations to guarantee the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, but with limitations. Regarding Armed Forces manning, lack of servicemen continues in high rates is affecting their operational capability. The analysis of the old calls for recruitments has shown an increasing tendency of decline in the number of civilians who are candidates for military service. The experts found a decrease from 5-6 candidates for one position in 2013 to 1 candidate for one position in 2016, and less than 1 candidate for one position in 2017 and 2018. According to them, this is still due to the unattractive salaries in the defense sector. (www.bulgarianmilitary.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Bulgaria has not entered yet in political instability but a potential major crisis is always a possibility. The junior partner of the ruling coalition, United Patriots remains the vulnerable and unpredictable piece of the inter-governmental stability; none could predict when a new incident or dispute will break out. Thus, Bulgaria has entered in a period of rather stable political situation. The President Radev grabs every opportunity to criticize the Government (and the Prime Minister Borissov) highlighting his different political affiliation (Radev is backed by the opposition Socialists). Opposition BSP tries to push further Borisov and his Government by strengthening its rhetoric and having tabled three motions of no confidence so far. 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. Fitch upgraded Bulgarian economy from stable to positive; a good sign of economic function. 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:** April 29<sup>th</sup>,

representatives of one of China's largest shipbuilding conglomerates are in Croatia to discuss possible investment in Croatia's financially troubled Uljanik and Treci Maj shipyards. Executives from the China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation met with Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic and other officials in Zagreb on Monday. They visited the shipyards in Pula and Rijeka on Tuesday. The visit is a last resort for the Uljanik Group, which owns the two shipyards and is trying to stave off bankruptcy. Monday's meeting was not expected to yield any concrete outcomes. Following the meeting, the Head of the China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation, Hu Wenming, said the matter would be given serious consideration.

During the “16 Plus One” summit in Dubrovnik earlier this month, China pledged to increase trade with Central Europe and provide more financial support for major cross-border infrastructure projects. At the summit, Premier Li Keqiang said a Chinese delegation would look at Uljanik. Hu did not say when a final decision would be made on Uljanik. Economy Minister Darko Horvat and Uljanik's chief executive Emil Bulic also could not say what would happen next. Union representatives were disappointed that they were not invited to the meeting. They believe they should have taken part. A court in Pazin last week postponed a bankruptcy ruling for the Uljanik Group until May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019. ([www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr](http://www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr))

- April 30<sup>th</sup>, according to the State Statistics Bureau, Croatia's Industrial production grew by 3% in March when compared to March of 2018. This is the third consecutive month of annual growth and the rate of growth has increased from the previous month. The strongest growth was recorded in the production of intermediate products, at 9.2%, followed by the production of capital goods at 4.7%, while the production of non-durable consumer goods grew by 0.6%. Economic analysts at Raiffeisen Bank noted that Croatia has seen stronger growth than the EU average, but warned that Croatia must be prepared for a possible slow-down in the economies of Croatia's most important foreign trade partners. Meanwhile, the bureau also reported today that retail sales in Croatia grew 5.7% on an annual basis, marking the 55<sup>th</sup> consecutive month of growth in consumer spending. However, retail sales dropped by 1.8% when compared to the previous month. RBA analysts say they expect to see continued positive annual growth in retail sales. ([www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr](http://www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr))

- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the World Bank Group has adopted its new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for cooperation with Croatia for the 2019-2024. The goals of the CPF are to support faster growth, increased productivity and investment into opportunities for Croatian citizens, especially those in less-developed areas. The new strategy is aligned with Government's national development plan, with a focus on accelerating growth and moving closer to income levels in developed EU countries. Also emphasized in the plan are reducing vulnerabilities and regional inequalities. The Head of the World Bank Office for Croatia Elisabetta Capannelli said the new strategy will help Croatia and its regions make progress, with more efficient public services. She added that it will also help to ensure that Croatia's natural resources are preserved and used in a sustainable manner. Croatian Finance Minister Zdravko Maric said that the new cooperation framework clearly identifies the country's key challenges and pressing needs. He said that the CPF adequately supports Government's existing policies, which are aimed at further strengthening institutions and the overall competitiveness of the Croatian economy. The new cooperation framework foresees support through three main areas. The first focused on improving the efficiency of the public sector, especially in terms of the efficiency of the bureaucracy. The second deals with the provision of assistance in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. While the third goal is to strengthen the role of the private sector in the economy by improving business conditions, promoting entrepreneurship, market competition and innovation and creating new and better jobs. ([www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr](http://www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr))

**COUNTRY ASSESSMENT  :**

*Croatia follows a tough regional policy with neighboring countries. It is openly intervene in Bosnia's internal affairs, while it maintains open disputes with Slovenia, Serbia, and Bosnia. It is estimated Croatia tries to establish a leading role in Western Balkans not only as an EU and NATO member state but also as a rising "local" (Western Balkans) power. One should take into consideration that Croatia shows its military strength and capabilities quite often not only in international, but also in national level sending strong messages to neighboring countries. Apart from that, Croatia pays special attention in energy strategy and security announcing ambitious projects. The state enjoys political stability, while its economy is growing. Border dispute on Piran Bay remains active and Slovenia's initiative to file a lawsuit against Croatia adds a new chapter between the two countries conflict. The state accelerates its efforts towards accession in Schengen zone, while the EC sends good news regarding Croatia's fiscal policy. Croatia implements a policy of Armed Forces' modernization trying to form a reliable and well equipped force according to NATO standards. Failure to complete successfully the purchase of a modern fighter jet maintains a long period of an ineffective and weak Croatian Air Force.*



**CYPRUS:** May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the UN Security Council on Thursday underlined the “urgent need for a settlement in Cyprus” after being briefed by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on his latest report in his Good Offices Mission. Speaking to the press after discussing the report, Dian Triansyah Djani, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN and President of the Security Council for the month of May, said the Security

Council welcomed the Secretary-General's latest report on Cyprus and emphasized “*the urgent need for a settlement which would be overwhelmingly in the security and economic interest of all Cypriots in the region.*” Djani read a statement in which the Council urged both sides to the conflict “*to agree terms of reference as a basis for meaningful result-oriented negotiation, mindful of the natural window of opportunity presented by the current electoral cycle.*” Council members, he said, encouraged the leaders of the two communities “*to prepare for a settlement through positive public messages on convergences and the way ahead*” and emphasized “*the need to avoid actions that damage the chances of success and urge the implementation and further development of confidence-building measures.*” (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- May 4<sup>th</sup>, the EU expressed concern over Turkey's intention to drill for gas in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and called on Ankara to respect the island's rights and refrain from illegal activity to which the bloc would respond appropriately. In a written statement issued on Saturday High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini expressed grave concern over Turkey's announced intention to carry out drilling activities within the island's EEZ. “*We urgently call on Turkey to show restraint, respect the sovereign rights of Cyprus in its Exclusive Economic Zone and refrain from any such illegal action to which the European Union will respond appropriately and in full solidarity with Cyprus,*” Mogherini said. Later on Saturday the Government said action against Turkey is already being undertaken at a legal, political, and diplomatic level

examining all possibilities, and in particular within the framework of the European Union. *“This provocative action by Turkey constitutes a flagrant violation of the sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus according to International and European Union Law,”* a press release issued by the Foreign Ministry said. It added that *“at the same time, it serves to reveal the real intentions of Ankara in relation to the Cyprus question and explains why Turkey has rejected the proposal for an informal meeting, in a ‘Crans Montana format’, to discuss the Cyprus problem. It was precisely in this context that the UN Security Council just recently underlined the need to avoid actions that damage the chances of success and urged the implementation and further development of confidence-building measures.”* Earlier Saturday, President Nicos Anastasiades said Turkey’s unlawful actions came immediately after the UN Security Council’s recommendation that any action should be avoided in a bid to facilitate the resumption of the talks. Turkey said it planned to carry out offshore drilling in an area around 60 kilometers west of Paphos while a survey vessel was also on the way. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed also concern releasing an announcement saying they are *“deeply concerned about information regarding the escalation of the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. We firmly [believe] that any economic activity should correspond to the norms of international law. We call upon Turkey not to undertake actions that could cause tension and create additional obstacles on the way to the settlement of the Cyprus problem,”* the announcement concluded. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- May 4<sup>th</sup>, Cyprus expects initial natural gas production from the Aphrodite field will begin

between 2024 and 2025, Cyprus’ Minister of Energy Yiorgos Lakkotrypīs said on Friday, after negotiations with operators. Cyprus’ Aphrodite was first discovered in 2011, but production has been delayed since as stakeholders Noble Energy, Israel’s Delek Drilling and Royal Dutch Shell renegotiate a production-sharing agreement with the Government. There has been a flurry of successful exploration efforts in recent years that identified natural gas plays in the eastern Mediterranean, where gas output has begun to soar. Eastern Mediterranean countries including Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, and Italy have formed a partnership to deliver more natural gas to Europe and transform the region into a major energy hub. Lakkotrypīs said he will meet with Aphrodite’s stakeholders next week to discuss the revenue sharing mechanisms between the Government and the companies, infrastructure plans and the price at which companies will sell the gas. He said he is confident those discussions will conclude in a few weeks. According to the Minister, they will likely transport the gas from the Aphrodite field via pipeline to Egypt, where it will be liquefied and exported. The field is estimated to produce about 800 million cubic feet per day in the first production phase, according to Delek. Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and the Palestinians recently formed the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum in an effort to create a regional gas market, cut infrastructure costs, and offer competitive prices. *“Cyprus is positioning itself to become a hub ... and the natural market is the European Union (EU),”* Lakkotrypīs said. In February, ExxonMobil Corp discovered a gas reservoir off the Cyprus coast with an estimated 5 trillion to 8 trillion cubic feet in gas resources (tcf), similar in size to the Aphrodite and Calypso gas finds also in Cypriot waters. Exxon’s discovery is unlikely to come online until the late

2030s due to inadequate liquefaction capacity, Rystad Energy said in March. ([www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*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. At the moment, Cyprus is engaged in three different trilateral formations which also include strong features of strategic cooperation and alliance; Cyprus – Egypt – Greece, Cyprus – Israel – Greece, and Cyprus – Jordan – Greece. The last two are highly improved due to the US engagement. At the moment Cyprus is promoting a fourth model of cooperation between Cyprus, Greece, and Lebanon. Apart from that, participating countries in these trilateral models seek to start interacting; it was announced that the meeting between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt will be widened including Jordan and Iraq. In other words, Cyprus is becoming the “leading link” between the Middle East and the Arab world on the one hand and the EU on the other. 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 it is a good question how it will react since it is certain that it will not accept “fait accompli” in a region considered as part of its strategic interests. HERMES last week’s assessment that Turkish provocative actions may be intensified either by Turkish gas and oil drills within the Cypriot EEZ, or by military actions*

*was fully confirmed. Turkish drill ship Fatih has entered the Cypriot EEZ raising diplomatic temperature dangerously. Cyprus examines various diplomatic and legal ways of reaction. An evolving tension (or crisis) is ongoing and somehow it should react protecting its sovereign rights. It is a test also for the various multilateral formations Cyprus participates in which way are able to strengthen its reaction against Turkey. Cyprus lacks of adequate naval and air power to secure and protect its territorial rights. It is also a question if the EU, US, and other powerful international stakeholders (France, Germany, UK etc) will maintain their support towards Cyprus simply in rhetoric level. 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 administration promotes abolishment of the arms embargo against Cyprus allowing it to improve its military capabilities. Conduct of aeronautical exercises in cooperation with other countries (Israel, Egypt etc) sends various messages of defense capability, readiness, and determination. Although the UN Secretary General appears optimistic for a new round of talks between the two communities, it is assessed that talks could not be resumed earlier than summer 2019. President Anastasiades promotes the scenario of a “bizonal, bicomunal decentralized federation”; an idea which is in principle accepted by the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community and enjoys support from the U.S. However, there are a lot of disputed issues in which both parts should compromise; the most important is considered the decision-making process. 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:** May 1<sup>st</sup>, Greece's ruling Coalition of Radical Left (Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς – SYRIZA) party has issued a statement condemning “*any anti-democratic intervention targeting the democratically elected Government in Venezuela,*” as the country continues to struggle with political turmoil and unrest. The leftist party also called for a fresh presidential election in the South American country. “*There has to be a democratic solution to the crisis through a dialogue between the Government and the opposition,*” the statement said. “*The international community has an obligation to mediate so as to [help] de-escalate the crisis and prevent violence and bloodshed,*” it said. Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido called on his supporters to take to the streets again on Wednesday following violent clashes Tuesday. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Turkish fighter jets launched a barrage of overflights and violations of Greek airspace during the Easter break, according to the Hellenic National Defense General Staff (GEETHA). Despite ongoing efforts between Athens and Ankara to revive confidence building measures, the Easter violations are seen to suggest that both sides still have a long way to go. Meanwhile, Ankara issued two Navigational Telexes (NAVTEXes) on Wednesday reserving areas in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean for exercises, while, according to an earlier report by Kathimerini, Turkey is also planning to conduct explorations within Greece's continental shelf in the summer. Analysts in Athens have attributed

the increased Turkish pressure to deepening ties between Washington, Athens, and Nicosia. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- May 2<sup>nd</sup>, main opposition party, New Democracy (Νέα Δημοκρατία – ND) will file a planned censure motion against Alternate Health Minister Pavlos Polakis on May 6th, 2019 when Parliament will resume its work after the Greek Easter recess. The motion relates to controversial comments the Minister made against a ND candidate in the upcoming European elections. Polakis last month accused ND MEP candidate Stelios Kymbouropoulos, who is wheelchair-bound, of using affirmative action laws to get a public sector job and then criticizing those laws. On the same day, the party will also table an amendment to revoke a planned reduction in the tax-free threshold. The proposal was announced by ND leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis during an interview with ANT1 television channel on Wednesday. Both moves aim to push further the Government and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras who sided with Polakis in the incident. (www.ekathimerini.gr)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Political situation in the country is rapidly evolving and opposition will file on Monday a motion of confidence against a Government's Minister. According to the Prime Minister, ND's move will be upgraded to a motion of confidence against all the Government. Call for early parliamentary elections could not be excluded since it is Tsipras' last chance to call them together with the European and local elections, scheduled for May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The country has entered in pre-electoral period due to EU elections. The Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras*



*focuses on approaching the center-left voters and weakening KINAL (former PASOK). Moreover, the ruling SYRIZA intensifies its efforts to gain the electoral body by announcing social care measures and benefits. Political uncertainty emerged in a period where Greece faces several diplomatic, security, and economic challenges. Internal terrorism is considered as a major unresolved problem of national security undermining stability of the state. Greek – Turkish relations enter in a new phase due to Turkey's decision to violate Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) aiming at conducting oil and gas drills. 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. Although Greek Defense Minister announced mutual efforts with his Turkish counterpart for confidence-building measures the latter insists on a provocative rhetoric undermining de-escalation efforts between the two countries. Lately, Akar requested demilitarization of eastern Aegean islands which rejected by the Greek Foreign Ministry. Turkish fighter jets intensified their activity regarding violation of Greek airspace and issue of NAVTEXs within Greek territorial waters for military exercises (including fires). Strengthening of military cooperation between Greece and the U.S upgrades Greece's strategic role in Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East as a western (US, EU, NATO) forward military base. On the other hand, Greece is concerned that this upgraded relation with the US may reinforce Turkish aggression in the Aegean Sea. Furthermore, Greece seeks to modernize its Armed Forces by receiving US military aid. It is a fact that Greek*

*military force has been affected by the long economic crisis threatening the balance of power with Turkey. Security situation is of high risk due to an accidental or preplanned incident by Turkey and the complicated current situation in Cypriot EEZ.*



**KOSOVO:** May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Kosovo Speaker of Parliament, Kadri Veseli, has started a round of meetings with Non-Governmental Organizations dealing with documentation of war crimes, and judicial institutions. Veseli said that an international court should be established to try Serbia's crimes committed in Kosovo during 1998-1999 war. "Creation of an international tribunal on Serbia's crimes committed in Kosovo is necessary. And Kosovo as a state is obliged to work for it. I have already started the initiative on this issue. Today I met Chief State Prosecutor, Government's Commission on missing people, as well as NGOs which have worked on transitional justice," Veseli said. Veseli has recently sent a letter to the Parliaments of friendly countries, asking them to react against Serbia's denial of war crimes committed in Kosovo. ([www.gazetaexpress.com](http://www.gazetaexpress.com))

- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Kosovo state leaders agreed to coordinate ahead of the Paris meeting with Serbia, hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron. At the initiative of the Speaker of Parliament, Kadri Veseli, state leaders including President Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, and co-head of state delegation in dialogue with Serbia, Fatmir Limaj, met on Friday to discuss on results of the Western Balkan leaders in Berlin held on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and coordinate ahead of the Paris meeting. State leaders agreed to jointly travel to Paris, Gazeta Express reported. The Paris meeting will be a continuation of the Berlin

Summit, when Kosovo and Serbia agreed to continue the dialogue on normalization of relations, without discussing the controversial topic of change of borders. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Kosovo leaders, President Hashim Thaci and Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj joined the Berlin summit on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, where German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and French President Emmanuel Macron sought to restart dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. Although the dialogue did not restart both sides - Serbia and Kosovo - sat on the same table after a long time. It was confirmed that a final agreement is far to be achieved. Kosovo top leaders appeared divided raising questions for Kosovo's negotiation strategy. Haradinaj (and Thaci, after the Berlin summit) insists on his decision to impose 100% tax on Serbian and Bosnian products which has led negotiation process into a deadlock. The international community namely the EU and U.S have put a lot of pressure on the Government to suspend taxes. Next meeting will be held on July 2019 in Paris and Kosovo top officials try to establish a united negotiation team. 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. The state's authorities show a tendency of escalating tension with Serbia undermining a peaceful resolution of the case. By imposing 100% tariff on Serbian (and Bosnian products), establishing Kosovo army, executing Special Forces operation in northern Kosovo, arresting Serbs, and requesting special court for Serbs it is created a climate which does not facilitate dialogue and the establishment of confidence*

*between the two parties. It seems that the question of border exchange or simply change has been put it aside. The Western Balkan protests "wave" may hit Kosovo door too as Vetevendosje prepares demonstrations against the Government. Mayoral elections in the North (of Serbian majority) scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 offer fertile soil for provocations or violent incidents. 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. Establishment of Kosovo Army is also a factor of destabilization since there is always a possibility of Police or military engagement with Serbian forces. Kosovo seeks KSF to be operating all over the country pushing NATO towards such direction. The presence of Kosovo Army in the north it is assessed of high security risk which may lead in armed violence. One should take into consideration that the Serb President has already ordered all defense and security stakeholders to take all necessary measures for protecting Serbian population in Kosovo.*



**MOLDOVA:** May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Moldova President Igor Dodon has called on the Right-wing pro-European parties from the voting bloc ACUM [Dignity and Truth Platform Party (Partidul Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr - PPDA) and Party of Action and Solidarity (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate - PAS)] to form a coalition Government with the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (Partidul Socialiștilor din Republica Moldova – PSRM). Dodon made that call at the May Day rally organized by the PSRM in the Chisinau central square. According to the organizers, it was attended by several thousand



people. Dodon took the floor at the rally as the Party's informal leader. He reminded that the Parliament's largest Socialist party had proposed the right-wing parties to form a parliamentary majority and a coalition Government, *"but, regretfully, our calls have not been heard by the right-wing politicians until now."* Dodon called on the Right parties to pluck up their entire courage and to *"make this necessary step like the Socialists did."* The President underlined if a coalition Government fails to be formed by the incumbent new Parliament, then the Socialists will go for an early parliamentary election, *"and we shall win it, I am sure!"* According to the law, if parliamentarians fail to form a parliamentary majority and to appoint a new Government within 3 months since the first plenary meeting of the new Parliament, the President has the right to dissolve the Parliament and announce the date of an early parliamentary election. This deadline expires on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019. (www.infotag.md)

- May 2<sup>nd</sup>, a campaign on electing Gagauzia Bashkan [Governor] has started in Gagauzia. The election day has been set for June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 the Gagauzia Election Commission registered an initiative group which will be raising signatures for registering incumbent autonomy Head Irina Vlah as candidate for the post of Governor. For registration, the applicants should raise 1.5 to 2 thousand signatures in their support from at least two-thirds of the autonomy localities. Gagauzia Election Commission Chairman Ivan Komur said that the initiative group is made of 34 people. All the documents they presented meet the law requirements, thus the group was immediately registered. At the end of the day on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 the Commission received documents on registering another initiative group, which will be nominating the

well known civil activist Mihail Vlah for the post of Governor. This group is headed by the nominee's comrade Leonid Dobrov. The group has not received confirmation about registration yet. The deadline for submitting documents is May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and the candidate registration will end on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019; 30 days before the voting day. The powers of the acting Bashkan Irina Vlah expired on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Four years ago she won in the first round of elections; 51% of Gagauz people voted for her. The second place was taken by Democrat MP, ex-mayor of Comrat Nicolai Dudoglo with 19.06% votes. Before the start of the election campaign, Irina Vlah took stock of her activity in the position of Governor, organizing a large event in Ceadir-Lunga. The ceremony was attended by President Igor Dodon, Ambassadors of Russia and Azerbaijan, and the First Secretary of the Embassy of Turkey to Moldova. As Infotag has already reported, initially the Bashkan elections were appointed for May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019. However, at the behest of the Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat din Moldova - PDM), on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the Gagauzia Popular Assembly (GPA) transferred the elections to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Also then, most of GPA Deputies, which represent PDM, tried to change the election legislation and the Gagauzia Election Commission's members. However, Irina Vlah did not promulgate the laws adopted by the GPA, while MPs of the Gagauzia Parliament failed to overcome the Governor's veto by two-thirds of votes. Thus, only the date of elections was changed, while the rest of GPA initiatives have not entered into force. (www.infotag.md)

- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Deputies of the ACUM [Dignity and Truth Platform Party (Partidul Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr - PPDA) and Party of Action and Solidarity (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate -

PAS)] bloc directed an address to the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, as well as to the National Energy Regulatory Agency (ANRE), demanding the copies of the 2005 -2018 audit in Moldovagaz, as well as explanations how the Government was resolving the problem of accumulating the debt for gas in Transnistria. MP Alexander Slusari wrote in social networks that in particular, opposition demands answers in a series of questions; On the basis of which laws the Economy Ministry is forming working groups for selecting energy resource suppliers? Why the number of requirements to importers is not anymore put for public access? Why the so-called importer contests are conducted in a closed manner and without participation of civil society representatives? *“These tenders in our opinion are conducted in lack of transparency and are contrary to the legislation. Due to this, many consumers, who live in the mainland Moldova, paying the bills for energy resources are for already many years in fact supporting the existence of the separatist regime and contributing to accumulation of Moldova’s external debt to the Gazprom, which already reached the record 6.2 billion euro. Thus, we demand from these two structures detailed information about organizing imports of natural gas and electricity, as well as the consumption of gas in Transnistria,”* Slusari wrote.

(www.infotag.md)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT  :

*Political deadlock continues in Moldova after parties failed to form a ruling majority so far. Although PSRM and ACUM block “try to communicate”, the hard line of the latter makes thinks complicated. However there are chances of a Government between the two parties.*

*Otherwise, snap elections are ahead. President Dodon benefits from political gap promoting a closer relation between his country and Russia. Moldova is between the Euro-Atlantic structures on the one hand and the Russian influence on the other. Political situation in the country is alarming and the EU has hardened its policy towards Moldova pushing for more reforms which will strengthen state’s transparency, accountability, and democratic values. The current Government has walked into dangerous paths which support corruption and organized crime and deep and determined justice reforms are needed. The U.S, EU and IMF express their major concerns. The ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine may affect Moldova; First of all Russia maintains military forces in Transnistrian ground and secondly it shares common borders with Ukraine which cannot go unnoticed by international stakeholders. The “Transnistria case” is always a “running sore” for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.*



**MONTENEGRO:** April 29<sup>th</sup>, the “Odupri Se – 97,000” movement, which is responsible for the largest civil protests in Montenegrin history, sent a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, due to the Western Balkans summit held on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, where Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic was characterized as a “factor of stability and peace.” *“We do not doubt that you have been informed in detail, but we remind you that the ‘stability factor’ from Montenegro has ‘bloody hands’ since the Balkan wars of the 1990s, arms smuggling, cigarette smuggling to EU countries (indictment by the Italian Prosecutor’s Office), links between the Government and crime (EU*

*reports), a wide range of narcotics trafficking in your territories, unsolved murders and attacks on journalists, plundered lands through predatory privatizations, and nepotism,” reads the letter. According to the movement’s statement, citizens’ protests are being organized since the beginning of February, precisely because of the dissatisfaction of citizens due to the 30 year long rule of Djukanovic and the party headed by him. “Thousands of citizens spent months on the streets of Podgorica for the outbreak of the ‘envelope’ affair; just one of the many cases which have shaken Montenegro,” the movement said. (www.vijesti.me)*

- May 4<sup>th</sup>, the “Odupri Se – 97,000” movement will organize its next protest on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 confirmed Nikola Grdinic, a member of the organizing committee. He said that the next protest will be held at the St. Peter Cetinjski Boulevard, where the buildings of the Parliament and President of Montenegro are located. Grdinic did not want to reveal the details of the next protest, stating that the public will be informed about the organizer's plan in time. Last protest was held on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019. (www.vijesti.me)

- May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Democratic Front (Demokratski Front - DF) said it will not announce any public assembly on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 when the final judgment in the case referring to failed coup attempt in October 2016 is supposed to be delivered. In case the party opts to organize any, competent authorities will not be informed, said the DF. According to DF, Montenegro is a private ownership and they already know that Djukanovic brothers will make the final decision in this case. “This time we will have very specific and targeted measures and actions in order to be able to protect dignity and freedom of the DF leaders and

*officials. We have a clear message for Mr Djukanovic and his team; we will not end by behind bars as we are innocent. Thieves and murderers who walk freely across the country are the ones who should be imprisoned, and by saying this, we mean on many people from the Government, Police, Prosecution and Courts,” DF said. (www.cdm.com)*

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Massive protests against the President and high officials disturbed a period of “euphoria”, emerging state’s problems such as corruption, link between state’s politics and organized crime, money laundering, media freedom, and nepotism. Protest movement and opposition parties reached an agreement to join forces for toppling the Government ensuring fair and free elections. Of course, under these circumstances polarization of political situation could not be excluded undermining the EU process of the country. One should keep in mind that on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Court verdict on DF members engaged in 2016 attempt coup will be released and DF implies strong protests and reactions. In general, Montenegro has entered in a fragile period (following the Southeastern Europe trend!) and a new protest is organized on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019; Next week one should be keep an eye on security challenge in the country. The EP assessment was positive praising the state’s efforts to implement major reforms, but on the other hand it underlined the problems of the rule of law, media freedom, corruption, money laundering, and organized crime. However, the EP stated that Montenegro under certain conditions may be able to access the EU by 2025. It is assessed that the EU and U.S strongly supports the President Djukanovic and the Montenegrin Government despite corruption*

*accusations as being the only loyal partner committed to the Western orientation of the state. In other words the west is closing its eyes in lack of democratic values and rule of law due to geopolitical interests namely Russian influence. The Government promotes state's political and economic stability which creates an almost ideal investment environment. Although the Government takes concrete measures against corruption, organized crime, and money laundering it is assessed that a lot should be done to reach such a level of economic activity; mainly in the field of public administration, public sector corruption, and money laundering. Imprisonment of opposition MPs is a worrying and alarming sign regarding rule of law and democratic values in the country. 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:** May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, said he expects the beginning of the accession talks with the European Union by June or July this year, the Beta news agency reported. He said Skopje implemented all necessary reforms adding his Government finished *“everything envisaged by the Reform Plan 18 which the European Commission approved.”* The only remaining issue is a law on prosecution which, as Zaev said, is nearly finished since the consultation with the opposition is in progress. North Macedonia has already got a green light to join NATO after the US President Donald Trump approved it and recommended to the Senate to ratify it. Skopje is

accelerating its Euro-Atlantic integration following a deal with Greece from June 2018 which ended a 27 year long name dispute. According to the agreement, the country changed its name from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia into North Macedonia. Athens was blocking North Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic path claiming the state name *“Macedonia”* suggested territorial claims to the Greek province of the same name. ([www.mia.mk](http://www.mia.mk))

- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, media reports suggesting that NATO considers modernizing Krivolak base in North Macedonia are false, a NATO official told MIA. Russian media reported today that NATO will get a military base on Krivolak with the country's membership in the Alliance and speculate that another base could be opened near Kumanovo. *“This is not true. North Macedonia is not yet a NATO member. Krivolak is and will remain a national base,”* a NATO official told MIA. He further explained that NATO has a Security Investment Program covering all major infrastructure projects in the Alliance's member states and that these projects are only considered in member states; consequently *“there is currently no plan for financing the modernization of the Krivolak base.”* ([www.mia.mk](http://www.mia.mk), [www.republica.mk](http://www.republica.mk))

- May 5<sup>th</sup>, Stevo Pendarovski will be the new President of North Macedonia show preliminary results of Sunday's election, the State Election Commission (SEC) President Oliver Derkovski said. SEC data from 98% of processed votes show that Pendarovski won 51.83% of cast votes, while his opponent Gordana Siljanovska – Davkova from the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Внатрешна македонска

револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство - VMRO-DPMNE) got 44.57%. Turnout stands at 46.44% clearing the 40% threshold. “SEC did not receive any complaints over irregularities at polling stations,” Derkovski said.

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*North Macedonia is looking its future more stable after the second round of presidential elections. Candidate of the ruling SDSM, Stevo Pendarovski will be the next state's President achieving a clean victory over the VMRO-DPMNE candidate. It seems that finally citizens welcomed Zaev's achievements; the resolution of the long name dispute with Greece and the acceleration of the Euro-atlantic integration of the country. Ruling SDSM fully controls North Macedonia's political life. The fact is the country is more stable and more coherent watching its future in a more optimistic way. Ratification of NATO accession protocol by the member states proceeds rapidly. However, there is concern for Turkey's ratification due to the fact that it tried to connect the North Macedonia accession process to NATO with its demands over FETO persecution. One could claim that North Macedonia is a country in “identity transition”; name deal with Greece oblige it to change institutional documents, while the law on the use of languages also obliges the state's institutions to implement changes that are brand new for public services. Too many changes in too little time. Next goal is the opening of accession negotiations with the EU in the coming June. Although there is skepticism among EU members states regarding the Western Balkans enlargement process, North Macedonia has most chance of any other Balkan country to get the green light in June. The country should focus on*

*its economy and major administrative reforms aiming at reaching the EU standards. Needless to say that in a period where border questions are raised again in the Balkans North Macedonia achieved to strengthen its political stability and growth prospects.*



**ROMANIA:** April 30<sup>th</sup>, the European Commission (EC) has organized a debate on the situation in Romania and said it will act swiftly concerning the issues of rule of law in Romania, an EC Spokesperson said. The statements follow warnings from several EC officials who have requested the triggering of article 7 for Romania, if the Government does not make immediate decisions to defend the rule of law, hotnews.ro reports. The EC members have discussed the rule of law in Romania, the spokesman said. Asked if the EC will act swiftly in regard to the rule of law in Romania, the spokesman said, according to APA “Yes, this will happen. The Commissioners’ College has been informed.” Several weeks ago, the EC First Vice-President Frans Timmermans had warned that “immediate measures” will be made regarding the problems in Romania. Last Friday, Timmermans said the EU Executive and the Party of European Socialists will not accept that Romania cuts down the intensity of anticorruption fight. Gunther Krichbaum, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee in the German Bundestag, sent a letter to EC President Jean Claude Juncker requesting the triggering of article 7 against Romania. He argued that since 2016 the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) Governments have systematically prevented the anticorruption fight and have worked against the rule of law. On the other hand, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the European Commissioner for Justice Vera



Jourova warned, in a speech addressed to the European Parliament, that the Bucharest authorities need to make urgent decisions, as there is risk of involvement in the judicial system, including in corruption cases, and this fact cannot be ignored. (www.romaniajournal.ro)

- May 2<sup>nd</sup>, President Klaus Iohannis has sent back to Parliament, for review, the law amending Law no. 50/1991 regarding the construction works. In a release posted on the Presidency website, the Head of state argues that Law 50 sent for promulgation had been under the verification of the Constitutional Court, which, by decision no. 142/March 13, 2019, rejected the unconstitutionality criticism. *“Beyond the issues of constitutionality, we believe that a review by Parliament is needed of the law amending Law 50 on the execution of construction works, from the view of opportunity to decriminalize the offenses,”* the release said. The Presidency further argues that Law 50 and other bills aim at observing the constructions regime, of quality and discipline, for the protection of general interest in urbanism and landscaping, for security and safety of constructions. (www.romaniajournal.ro)

- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Prime Minister Viorica Dancila said she has not been invited to the EU summit in Sibiu, adding that *“it is hard to understand and it is inappropriate that those who worked so much for Romania, who received so many appreciations, are not invited.”* Dancila said that during the presidency of the Council of the European Union, Romania has conducted titanic work to conclude 90 files, hotnews.ro informed. *“When I had the speech at the Athenaeum I said and I believe we need unity. I invited President Iohannis and he had the opportunity to deliver the first speech, I believe we need consensus during*

*the Romanian presidency of the Council of the European Union. I have not been invited to Sibiu. Consider that all the European leaders will be there. It is a message we deliver for the entire Europe. How can we speak of unity if the Romanian Premier will not attend it, to speak about the achievements and about the 2019-2024 agenda,”* the Premier wondered. Dancila said the decision *“is hard to understand”* but that *“with faith in our hearts and more consensuses”* things could work out. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Sibiu will take place the summit of EU leaders to discuss the future of the European Union. The summit will be hosted by President Klaus Iohannis, and European Council President Donald Tusk will chair the meeting. 27 Heads of state and Government from European countries, 36 official delegations, 400 high-level guests and about 800 journalists are just some of the participants in Sibiu. (www.romaniajournal.ro)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Political struggle between the President Klaus Iohannis and Government has been transformed into an “open battle” undermining political stability of the country. Iohannis announced the questions of referendum on justice scheduled for May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (together with the European elections). Iohannis strongly opposes in Government’s plans to intervene in judicial system while there are specific signs that the Government works towards controlling state’s justice. Under these circumstances, it is assessed that political climate will be fully polarized affecting Romania’s political stability. Moreover, the President refused once again to approve resignation of three Ministers blocking another Government’s reshuffle. Romania is running the Presidency of the Council of EU facing criticism*

*and non-confidence by the EU member states' high officials. The state looks divided in major institutional issues such as national defense, justice, and security. In this context, one should add the direct European Parliament's warning for activating article 7 of the EU Treaty (suspending certain rights of an EU member state when a country is considered at risk of breaching the EU's core values). It should be considered that European voices asking for such activation are multiplying. The state faces political abnormality in many levels which at the moment could be resolved only by early parliamentary elections. The Prime Minister's announcement of transferring Romanian Embassy in Israel from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem harmed the state's relations with Arab world increasing security risk in the country. 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.*



**SERBIA:** April 30<sup>th</sup>, the National Council of Albanians in Serbia warned about the rise of “Albanophobia,” adding the blockage of a bakery in Belgrade’s suburb owned by an Albanian was “*unacceptable and against local laws and international norms,*” the FoNet news agency reported. The Council reminded about similar events in several places in northern Serbia, adding they were “*just a show of a dominant social climate in Serbia against the minorities,*

*especially local Albanians.*” On Sunday, NGO’s and political parties strongly condemned the protest and the behavior of “*right-wingers*” who gathered the day before in front of the bakery to protest against an employee who had posted a picture of himself showing the two-headed eagle on social media. The protesters interpreted the Albanian symbol as a promotion of the idea of a “*Greater Albania*” especially since the owner of the bakery was Albanian. Serbia’s Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic said there was no incident outside the bakery during the protest. The Council said that “*systematic acts are presented as an individual outburst of hatred,*” adding “*they are products of the current system in Serbia and the consequence of rising xenophobia by politicians, media and public figures in Serbia.*” The Council called on Serbia’s authorities to urgently implement the law and react to such acts and the creators of hate speech while demanding from the Government to bring “*political decisions for preventing and fighting against the spreading of the fascist spirit in the society.*” Following the incident, an invitation to go to the bakery for a pie flooded social networks in Serbia. ([www.rs.n1info.com](http://www.rs.n1info.com))

- May 2<sup>nd</sup>, commenting on Serbia’s opposition announcement of daily talks with people, Marko Djuric, an official of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka - SNS) led by President Aleksandar Vucic, said Belgrade would not be “*either Maidan of Caracas,*” the Beta news agency reported. One of the leaders of the opposition Alliance for Serbia (Savez sa Srbiju - SzS) Bosko Obradovic said last week that the “*1 in 5 million*” protests that were going on throughout Serbia for months every Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays in different places would take another form in Belgrade from

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019. He said the capital would get “a free zone” within which the members of the Republic’s and local Parliaments, and opposition leaders would talk to people daily. Understanding that as a new way of protest, and alluding to the unrest in Ukraine in 2014 when the then President was removed in the demonstration, and in Venezuela this week where the opposition rallied daily in an attempt to dethrone the authorities, Djuric said that in Serbia the power would not be snatched in the street. Djuric, also the Head of Serbia’s Government Office for Kosovo, told reporters that the debate “is held in the Parliament where the elected people’s representatives sit.” “If they (the opposition) hope that Maidan or Caracas may repeat in Serbia, they shouldn’t dream about it because no one in the country will allow that to happen,” Djuric said. In what seems to be an announcement of possible actions by the SNS supporters, Djuric said the opposition should not be surprised if the citizens “peacefully and democratically” gathered outside the municipalities held by the opposition to show discontent with their work. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, President Aleksandar Vucic said he regretted that his idea of establishing a final compromise boundary between Serbs and Albanians has failed. As he said, the idea failed because “our people thought differently, and that will cost us dearly in two to three decades.” Vucic also announced that he will meet with Italy’s Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and then he will attend a military parade in Nis, southern Serbia, on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. After that he would meet with Serbs from Kosovo and he will inform them about the outcome of the Berlin meeting on Kosovo, held on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Vucic described Salvini as Italy’s “most

powerful politician” and one who stands for Italy revoking its recognition of Kosovo. He said their talks will be about Kosovo, as well as “the positioning in today’s changed Europe.” Asked about the announced decision on Belgrade’s countermeasures against Pristina’s introducing taxes on goods from central Serbia, and about early parliamentary elections in Serbia, the president said that he is “thinking about this every day.” According to him, there is a fierce campaign against the possibility of a compromise through delineation, both in abroad and at home “because they wanted an independent Kosovo throughout its territory.” He said that he “does not advocate an independent Kosovo within those borders, but for the establishment of a final compromise boundary between Serbs and Albanians.” “My ideas have failed. This will dearly cost our nation, our country in 20-30 years. I will have no use of my personal consolation that somebody will say I had been far-sighted. I was not convincing enough, I failed to explain the real situation, that reality is more important than emotions,” Vucic said. Vucic recalled that Pristina adopted its (unilateral) declaration of independence in 2008, and that those in power at that time (in Belgrade) “played stupid, helped them by seeking the opinion of the International Court of Justice, as well as by transferring (Kosovo) negotiations from the UN to the EU.” (www.b92.net)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Serbia has entered in a period of fragile political stability due to citizens’ reactions against governmental practices regarding human rights, media freedom, and elections transparency. However, it seems that opposition protest and reactions lose momentum. June 2019 is a possible*



time for early elections, but it would be determined by developments on Belgrade – Pristina dialogue progress. France – Germany initiative for restarting Serbia – Kosovo dialogue was neither successful, nor failing. It was confirmed that both countries are not ready to move further in a final agreement. The new meeting in Paris scheduled for July 2019 it could be more interesting. One should note that the draft declaration of the Berlin summit speaks about the need “of implementing the current agreement between Serbia and Kosovo” which is a firm Serbian position so far. On the other hand it does not say a word for the abolishment of 100% tax on Serbian goods. The Berlin summit confirmed that the Serbian President seeks to divide Kosovo in two parts; one Serbian and one Albanian in return of the Kosovo recognition as an independent state. Serbia strengthens its relations with Russia (and China) seeking stronger support regarding Kosovo case. Security situation is complex and uncertain since Serbia apart from political and diplomatic means has engaged its military and security forces. The Armed Forces are in high readiness alert but Vucic tried to de-escalate situation by stating that war is not a possible solution. However, none could predict Serbia’s reaction in a possible accidental or pre-planned (provocation included) incident in Northern Kosovo against local Serbs. One should have in mind that top state officials have said in public that Serbia will protect Kosovo Serbs by any mean including security and military force. Municipal elections in Kosovo Serb dominated north may provoke a violent outbreak engaging Kosovo Police force and KSF with unprecedented repercussions. 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 its Armed Forces are the power of the state.



**SLOVENIA:** April 29<sup>th</sup>, the Turkish Embassy in Ljubljana spied on critics of the Government of Turkey’s President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in Slovenia, secret documents obtained by the Stockholm news site Nordic Monitor have revealed. According to official correspondence sent by the Turkish Embassy in Ljubljana to headquarters in Ankara, Turkish diplomats collected information on the activities of Erdogan critics, profiled their organizations and listed their names as if they were part of a criminal enterprise. The campaign of intelligence collection and profiling of critics and their organizations by the Turkish Embassy in Ljubljana follows a similar pattern seen in other Turkish diplomatic missions in foreign countries. The move, which is unprecedented in scale and intensity, created uproar in many parts of the world, including Europe, where Turkish diplomats came under increased scrutiny. In one extreme case, Swiss Prosecutors launched a criminal probe and issued arrest warrants for two Turkish Embassy officials for attempting to kidnap a Swiss-Turkish businessman who has been criticized Erdogan’s governance. Among the organizations that were spied on by Turkish diplomats was the Ambra, Izobrazevanje, Kultura in Turizem d.o.o.; an educational and culture organization that was set up in 2005. An intercultural center called Drustvo Medkulturni Dialog was also among the organizations profiled by the Turkish Embassy according to the

document. The Ambra Jezikovni Center, which offers language courses in English and Turkish, was also listed in the document dispatched by Turkish diplomats in Slovenia. The social media profile of the organization shows it runs a mathematics competition in the country to encourage math skills among Slovenian students. The people and organizations that were spied on by the Embassy are believed to be affiliated with a civic group led by Fethullah Gulen, a US-based Muslim cleric who has become a vocal critic of Erdogan. (www.nordicmonitor.com)

- April 30<sup>th</sup>, Defense Minister Karl Erjavec, on the proposal of the Chief of Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces, Major General Alenka Ermenc, appointed Brigadier General Milan Zurman as the Commander of the Force Command. Zurman was until now the Deputy Commander of the Force Command and replaced Brigadier General Miho Skerbinec who was released from his duty by Erjavec on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Brigadier Franc Koracin was appointed as the new Deputy Commander of the Force Command and Colonel Ivan Mikuz as its Chief of Staff. (www.vec.si)



New Commander of Force Command, Brigadier  
General Milan Zurman

(Photo source: www.euforbih.org)

- May 1<sup>st</sup>, President Borut Pahor urged Slovenians to cast their votes in the upcoming

European Parliament elections in an interview with STA. The vote will show whether more people support the union or oppose it, Pahor said. *“All of us, who see the EU as bringing a future of peace, security, prosperity and the future for our children have the obligation to do something ... It is our responsibility to encourage people to vote,”* Pahor underlined. The vote, scheduled in Slovenia for May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 will be a historic one, the President believes. This election will decide *“whether we will hear of those who want more Europe or of those who want less Europe,”* he said. Pahor believes that the European Parliament will be *“more colorful”* after the vote. But he expects that pro-European forces will make up the majority. He is certain that Eurosceptics will not win the election. (www.sta.si)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Slovenia enjoys a relative political stability. Although the Government is a minority one seeking compromise for survival, Sarec has been proved of being flexible in Slovenia's politics so far achieving to balance adequately between different political trends. 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. At the moment none of the ruling coalition parties wish snap elections. 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 be excluded periodically. Tension has been reinforced lately by the revealed wiretapping scandal regarding the arbitration process between Croatia – Slovenia. Engagement of Croatian Intelligence Service operating in*

*another country (Slovenia) is a serious accusation undermining their diplomatic relations. Slovenia implies that such actions may affect its decision regarding Croatia's membership candidacy in Schengen Zone. Slovenia, as it is already known, has filed a lawsuit against Croatia over its refusal to implement the border arbitration. 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. Appointment of the new Force Commander brought calmness in the Armed Forces following a period of tension due to the former Commander's dismissal.*



**TURKEY:** April 30<sup>th</sup>, Foreign

Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu arrived in Irbil to meet top Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials, bringing an end to a two-year standoff following an illegal independence referendum in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region. The Foreign Minister and his delegation met KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani behind closed doors at the Prime Minister's residence in Irbil. Cavusoglu also had a meeting with the Head of the Kurdish Regional Security Council Masrour Barzani. The KRG held a controversial referendum in 2017 to gain independence from Iraq which strained its ties with countries in the region. The illegitimate referendum was heavily criticized by most regional and international actors, many warning that it would distract from

Iraq's ongoing fight against terrorism and further destabilize the already volatile region. Before arriving in Irbil, Cavusoglu visited on Sunday Baghdad and Basra and discussed water issues, reconstruction and political ties with Iraqi officials. He met Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi, Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali al-Hakim, and Council of Representatives Speaker Mohamed al-Halbousi and Turkmen Deputies. Cavusoglu also had a meeting with representatives of the Iraqi Turkmen Front in Irbil. *"Our Turkmen brothers, who are [the] third largest ethnic group in Iraq and the second largest in KRG, should be represented,"* Cavusoglu said. Iraqi Turkmen, also known as Iraqi Turks, are a Turkic-speaking minority whose total population is estimated at some 3 million. The Turkmen Front occupies two out of 328 seats in the Iraqi Parliament. ([www.dailysabah.com](http://www.dailysabah.com))

- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Turkey condemned the participation of a Greek Cypriot representative to NATO's change of command ceremony on Friday. The invitation to the Greek Cyprus administration, which is not a NATO member, to the change of command ceremony is inexplicable, said Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hami Aksoy. *"We condemn the unilateral behavior of SHAPE headquarters. We recall that these headquarters are under the political control of NATO members including Turkey,"* Aksoy said. Turkey boycotted NATO's change of command ceremony to protest against the participation of a Greek Cypriot representative. General Curtis M. Scaparrotti handed over the charge of the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe (SACEUR) to General Tod D. Wolters at a ceremony held in Mons, Belgium. On Thursday, Turkey informed NATO it will not attend the ceremony if the invitation to

Greek Cyprus administration is not withdrawn.  
(www.aa.com.tr)

- May 4<sup>th</sup>, Ankara said that it is not distancing itself from the NATO alliance by buying the Russian S-400 missile defense system, underlining that Turkey abides by all of its commitments and has fulfilled all of the obligations under the joint program for the F-35 fighter jet. *“In this program, there is no such clause saying that one will be removed from the program if it buys the S-400. Removing us from the program upon the request of any of the program members will be contrary to law and justice,”* Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told NTV yesterday, reiterating that the S-400 and F-35 systems will not affect each other. He said Turkey is trying to explain to the US and other partners in the F-35 project that the S-400s would not pose a threat to the jets, and added that Ankara had taken measures to prevent that. In his strongest challenge yet to warnings that Turkey may be removed from the F-35 project, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that the project would collapse if Turkey did not participate. While Washington has warned of potential US sanctions if Ankara pushed on with the S-400 agreement, Turkey has said it would not back down from the deal. Instead, Turkey has proposed to form a working group with the United States to assess the impact of the S-400s, but says it has not yet received a response from US officials. Speaking on the US support to People's Protection Units (YPG), Akar underlined that Turkey may be forced to take unilateral actions in the northern Syria if the US and Turkey failed to reach an agreement over the YPG presence along its border as it did in its two cross-border operations in the last two years. Noting that they have voiced their demands and recommendations as regards to the

safe zone very clearly, Akar stressed that Ankara will never accept the presence of a “terrorist organization” near its border and will take every measure they can. Turkey had long signaled a possible operation in areas held by the YPG east of the Euphrates. However, the Government decided to postpone the operation for a while after US President Donald Trump decided that Washington, the main backer of YPG, would withdraw its troops from Syria.  
(www.dailysabah.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Deterioration of Turkish – U.S relations is a major concern for Turkey threatening its political and economic stability. Purchase of Russian air-defense system S-400 is unacceptable for the U.S administration threatening directly Turkey with sanctions. Taking into consideration that Turkey is a pivotal country enjoying geopolitical importance and having one of the largest militaries (the 2<sup>nd</sup> within NATO) it is hard to believe that the U.S 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 U.S needs Turkey and the opposite. It looks like Erdogan and his rhetoric is the problem and an “orange revolution” or a “Turkish spring” could not be excluded in the future. However, invitation of Cyprus to attend the SACEUR’s handover ceremony was a strong diplomatic message of NATO’s annoyance which actually led in Turkey’s absence of the event. Economic recession does not help the Turkish President to strengthen his position internally undermining his political power. Turkey is heading in a major economic crisis. It seems that economy is the major Turkish problem which may be emerged as*

*the “Achilles’ heel” for Erdogan and his political long reign. It cannot be excluded dramatic developments regarding Turkish economy. Besides Turkish society looks like being fed up with autocratic practices of Erdogan and this was a key point during last local elections. 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. Although Turkey maintains its strategic goal of entering the EU, the EU sends strong messages of suspending the EU – Turkey accession talks. Turkish Armed Forces declares its readiness to intervene militarily in Syria, eastern of Euphrates river but the U.S does not give the “green light” aiming at protecting Syrian Kurds and YPG. Turkey is reinforcing its troops in the Turkish – Syrian borders waiting for the “green light” for establishing a safe zone in Syria but it is doubtful if it will ever get it. There are thoughts of unilateral action within Syria but such a decision may bring Turkish troops against the U.S forces; an unprecedented scenario. 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. Regarding Turkish interests in East Mediterranean Sea, Turkey looks like has been isolated from the energy activities in the region. Cyprus, Egypt Greece, Israel, Italy,*

*Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority have established an energy coalition promoting their interests and isolating Turkey. Turkey has proved so far its decisiveness in protecting its interests and it assessed that it will not give up its role in the “energy game” in Eastern Mediterranean Sea. Turkey has sent its drill ship Fatih within the Cypriot EEZ in a provocative escalation of tension in the region which could not exclude an accidental or pre-planned “hot incident.”*

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#### NOTE

-  Stable situation. No security risk
-  Rather stable situation. Security risk is monitored
-  Major concerns over stability and security. significant security risk in specific regions
-  Imminent major incidents regarding stability and security. High security risk
-  Evolving or ongoing crisis or violent/armed conflict