



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

**SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE**

**AT A GLANCE**



**SOUTHEAST EUROPE DIRECTORATE**

“SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AT A GLANCE” (ISSN: 2654-0304) is a weekly review of the most significant current political, economic, energy, defense, and security news of Southeastern Europe. It covers 14 countries; Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey. However Greece enjoys its own weekly review for a more detailed presentation of its current affairs (GREECE AT A GLANCE).

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

#### **“HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE**

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**ALBANIA:** November 26<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister Edi Rama introduced on Monday the highlights of a new legal package that aims to hit organized crime harder. The package appears to be similar to that of anti-mafia, in force for many years, but extends its scope further while giving Police, according to a project making rounds in the media, many powers that run the risk of conflicting with those of the prosecution. *“We must intervene with a special law against organized crime and terrorism and pass the entire norm of anti-mafia law at the expense of the subjects of this law, and their families. And every one of them has to prove before the Court that his home, his car, his business are the result of his work,”* said Rama. The measures envisaged by Rama will be of three categories, personal, from the prohibition of leaving the country to the restriction of movement in a particular territory, property measures, those related to preventive sequestration while there is proof against the suspect or accused, and those of an economic nature, excluding the right to license or benefit from public funds through contracts or concessions. Rama also demanded that intervention of Prosecutorial or Judicial Council for Prosecutors or Judges committing violations be clarified by law. It remains to be seen how these interventions have been translated into legal form. One project that is circulating in the media shows that the initiative is similar to the anti-mafia law, but surpassing it in scope. In this project, the Police also seem to have wide-ranging powers on delicate aspects related to the restriction of persons’ freedoms, which appear to run the risk of being in conflict with those of the Prosecution, or setting up parallel structures and institutions that are on the rise. On Monday, the

first eight members of the Special Prosecutor’s Office against Organized Crime and Corruption, SPAK, were named. They are expected to take office on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 when they will take an oath to the President of the Republic. Opposition has rejected the initiative claiming that actually it is the Prime Minister who would control investigation and fight organized crime. (www.tiranatimes.com)

- November 26<sup>th</sup>, a deadly, 6.4 magnitude earthquake hit Albania, and particularly Tirana and Durres, on Tuesday morning, bringing down buildings, trapping people under rubble and so-far causing at least forty victims. At least 9 bodies were recovered overnight on Wednesday from the ruins of collapsed palaces and residences. The quake hit 34 kilometers northwest of the capital, Tirana, but was felt across the region, in Italy and in the Serbian city of Novi Sad, almost 700 kilometers away. Firefighters and Army staff immediately were sent to help residents caught under the rubble in the coastal city of Durres and in Thumane, 40 kilometers to the northwest of Tirana and close to the earthquake’s epicenter, where the damages were greatest. Search operations were halted in Thumane on Thursday morning as it is believed there are no more people caught in the rubble. Operations are ongoing in Durres, while hope to find survivors seems to have faded. Media reported that all flights from Tirana airport were suspended due to damage at the airport building. Early on Tuesday morning the morning Prime Minister Edi Rama arrived in Durres. *“As the Constitution and legislation explain, and given the nature of the problem and situation, it will be a state of emergency in the perimeter of the two regions where the wounds are most open, in Durres and Tirana. A state of*

*emergency is not just a matter of finances, but a series of measures. I do not know whether those who preached it were willing to submit to such measures. This has been the reason we have been reflecting, because the state of emergency means creating a new level of governance for the situation for a period of 30 days,”* said Rama.



Search and rescue operations after the devastating earthquake in Albania

(Photo source: [www.mod.gov.al](http://www.mod.gov.al))

- November 27<sup>th</sup>, the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, announced the state of emergency for Tirana and Durres area. *“Priority is to save every possible life. We declare a state of the emergency for Tirana and Durres area,”* Rama announced. The Prime Minister made appeals for calm and patience, underlining that only by working together it will be possible to face the consequences of this natural disaster. ([www.top-channel.tv](http://www.top-channel.tv))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Albania faces a tragedy. Hit by an earthquake it counts 51 people dead so far, while 913 people got injured. International community expressed its solidarity, while search and rescue missions arrive in Albania from different countries to assist local forces. Tirana and Durres are in state of emergency. After such a drama there is no time for politics and other ordinary issues. However, in a short political comment, the ongoing political*

*crisis may be affected by the natural disaster and this would be visible in the near future.*



## **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:**

November 26<sup>th</sup>, the Parliamentary Commission for naming Bosnia’s Ministers has on Tuesday voted in favor of Zoran Tegeltija taking over the position of Chairman of the Council of Ministers after the tripartite Presidency approved his nomination last week. Tegeltija was confirmed with eight votes in favor and six against. He will take over the post from Denis Zvizdic, who served in a technical mandate since the October 2018 election. ([www.ba.n1info.com](http://www.ba.n1info.com))

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, Bosnia and Herzegovina's defense industry has recorded a steady rise in exports, exporting 82 million euro worth of ammunition and military equipment in the first ten months of 2019, an increase of 20% over the corresponding period in 2018, the Biznisinfo business news website says. The biggest buyers are Arab countries. For instance, Saudi Arabia bought 26.5 million euro worth of ammunition and military equipment from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first ten months of 2019. Egypt followed with purchases totaling 22 million euro. Morocco, Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates and Kenya are among the top ten buyers of ammunition and military equipment manufactured in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the Bosnian Chamber of Foreign Trade, total defense industry exports in 2018 came to 100 million euro. The lion's share, 94%, related to ammunition and the rest included parts of weapons. Bosnia's imports of military equipment last year totaled a mere 6 million euro. ([www.ba.n1info.com](http://www.ba.n1info.com))

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic bypassed Bosnian institution Wednesday when she visited Bosnia but not its state institutions, Bosnian Croat Presidency member Zeljko Komsic told N1, on Thursday. *“I will repeat what I said at the UN; we are witness to their activities on achieving their political interests within Bosnia, with which they only destabilize my country, which is not good, nor it contribute to the development of good neighborly relations,”* he said and added *“Grabar-Kitarovic only confirmed this yesterday. Why did they protest against what I said at the UN, then? Because they think they have an inalienable right to do so and that no one can dare say that that is not right,”* Komsic concluded. Croatian President stayed in Bosnia on Wednesday, visiting cities and towns with the Croat majority in southern Bosnia. Her visit and speeches of Croatia and her office helping the Bosnian Croats coincides with the Croatian general election where she hopes to win another term in office. (www.ba.n1info.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** :

*The country is on the path of political normality by achieving to establish the Council of Ministers after more than a year of the last parliamentary elections (October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018). State institutions will become functional again allowing the country to move forward with major reforms and economic growth. Nevertheless, political situation in Bosnia remains alarming and at the moment it is considered as the most dangerous for a violent turbulence or a conflict in the region. It is not a secret that all entities question the Dayton Peace Agreement aiming to set their own political agenda. Bosnia’s NATO process remains a major disputable issue since Bosnian Serbs claim*

*neutrality rejecting the idea of entering the Alliance, while Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and Bosnian Croats are in favor. Neighboring Croatia and Serbia keep on intervening in Bosnia’s internal affairs, while Muslim countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Iran maintain a permanent presence through financial donations and investments. Russia tries to “penetrate” in Bosnian affairs maintaining its influence in Southeastern Europe. Country faces several functional and institutional problems. Consequently political fragility maintains permanent uncertainty and institutional mistrust blocking any attempt for economic growth and major reforms. EU path is too long for Bosnia and only for geopolitical interests it could have chances entering the EU.*



**BULGARIA:** November 25<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister Boyko Borissov's words to journalists on his way to the US that he would not allow a NATO Black Sea military base on the territory of Bulgaria have drawn criticism from the Atlantic Council in Bulgaria, BNR reported. They said that such a statement did not fit what a Prime Minister of a NATO Member should say. Only a neutral country trying to balance between NATO and Russia could say such a thing, but not Bulgaria, which commitments to the allies require it to be a secure, worthy and reliable member of the Alliance. With that said, the Prime Minister's to the US actually began with a mistake, the Atlantic Council is convinced. (www.novinite.com)

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, with an order of Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, Milen Lyutskanov was appointed as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. This was announced by

the Government's press office. Lyutskanov is a diplomat with a long career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria. In 2009-2010 he used to serve at the same position in the Ministry. Between 2013 and 2018 he was Consul General of Bulgaria in New York, and then he was a high diplomatic employee at the Directorate of Foreign Economic Relations. (www.novinite.com)

- December 1<sup>st</sup>, S&P Global Ratings has raised its long- and short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings on Bulgaria to BBB/A-2, while maintaining a positive outlook. According to the S&P assessment, Bulgaria's economy was growing without building macroeconomic imbalances, its fiscal and external balance sheets were strong, and progress on entering the Exchange Rate Mechanism II (ERM2) was "steadfast." The decision to maintain the positive outlook reflected Bulgaria's "progressively strengthening fiscal and external position, which we project to continue as the country grows resiliently in a weaker external economy." S&P said it could raise the ratings further should the economy continue to grow without reversing fiscal gains or if the country's external performance "strengthened beyond our expectations. We could also raise the ratings if Bulgaria further entrenches structural and institutional improvements, for example on its path toward euro adoption." "We think that the country has completed its own deliverables under its action plan toward ERM2 and Banking Union membership, but the ultimate accession decision is not fully in its control," the credit ratings agency said. S&P said that, in its understanding, the key remaining issue is addressing the capital needs at two domestic banks, which the European Central Bank identified in this year's asset quality

review. "We think the ultimate ERM II accession decision and timeline crucially will hinge on political considerations not necessary within Bulgaria's control, because the eurozone and Denmark's Finance Ministers, and the ECB, will decide. While Bulgaria's performance under quantitative criteria is strong, support elsewhere in Europe could hinge on the perception of institutional convergence and the strength of the banking sector," the credit agency said. "However, political considerations aside, we think that the country's progress so far will enable it to join the ERM II in 2020, which would support our view of the credibility of its monetary policy framework," S&P said. In raising Bulgaria's rating, S&P Global joined the other two major international credit assessors, which rate Bulgaria on the second-lowest rung of investment grade. Fitch raised its rating to BBB in 2017 and Moody's rates Bulgaria at Baa2. All three ratings have a positive outlook, indicating the potential for further rating upgrades in the next 12 months, which are likely to be based on the outcome of Bulgaria's process to join ERM2, the euro zone's waiting room, and the ECB's Single Supervisory Mechanism. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Boyko Borissov Government is stable. Corruption and organized crime remain significant obstacles for the country's development and should be addressed decisively. The country pays special attention to energy security developing several projects. However, there are concerns regarding energy diversification since there is a risk the Bulgarian energy sector to become fully dependant by Russia. S&P upgraded Bulgarian economy (long and short term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings) expressing*

*trust in the country's stable growth. Modernization of Armed Forces is a top priority for Bulgaria and huge armament projects are ongoing (fighter jets, armored vehicles, vessels etc). However, military operational capability of the state is questioned especially in the Air Force. Bulgarian Armed Forces are far from NATO standards.*



**CROATIA:** November 25<sup>th</sup>, the international community knows that the arbitration proceedings in the Croatia -Slovenia border dispute was compromised and now that has been confirmed in Slovenia's Parliament, Foreign and European Affairs Minister Gordan Grlic Radman said in Brussels on Monday. *"The arbitration proceedings have been compromised and the international community is aware of that fact and that fact has now been confirmed in Slovenia's Parliament. Who else needs to confirm that the arbitration proceedings were compromised if even the country that claims it was not, no longer thinks so,"* Grlic Radman said commenting on a report by a Parliamentary Commission for the oversight of Slovenian secret services. The report actually admits that the Slovenian secret service SOVA had from the very start of the border arbitration process provided support to Slovenian diplomats in their attempts to lobby for the Slovenian side. Grlic Radman reiterated Croatia's stance regarding the Croatian - Slovenian border dispute, saying that this is a bilateral matter that needs to be resolved by the two countries. *"There is no point in trying to prove whether the decision by the compromised arbitration is valid or not. Slovenia's side is unnecessarily exhausting itself by trying to prove that the arbitration award is valid. It is*

*unnecessarily wasting time instead of sitting down at the table and start resolving outstanding issues,"* Grlic Radman said. ([www.hr.n1info.com](http://www.hr.n1info.com))

- November 27<sup>th</sup>, Croatia has always and will always be with Croats in Bosnia, and will never give up on them, President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, said in Mostar on Wednesday. Speaking at a ceremony marking the first anniversary of the Association of Bosnian Croats "Prsten" (Ring), she emphasized the importance of unity among the Croats who live in two separate homelands. *"Croatia has always been with you and will always be. I proved that during my term and will not give up on you, no matter what,"* said Grabar-Kitarovic, who will run in Croatia's presidential elections next month. *"I always say that I am proud of our people, who preserve and cherish the family values, who respect and cherish the origin of its predecessors, the people of open hearts and generous hands are the greatest treasure of every country and our people has always been showing solidarity, open hearts and generous hand to everyone, especially to those in trouble, both at home and away from it,"* the President said. The Republic of Croatia has always been helping the Croats in Bosnia and will never stop doing that. *"Without cherishing its historic and cultural identity, one cannot speak about the survival of the Croat people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they keep emigrating from according to official data,"* Grabar-Kitarovic said, stressing that this is why it is of utmost importance to involve the communities, associations as well as the Catholic Church. She thanked the "Ring" association for having a clear vision of the future of the Croat people in Bosnia and working on the preservation of their status. Advocating for the Croats in Bosnia has been and



will remain her policy, the President said. *“The Croats have two homelands, the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but we are one soul and one people. This is why I will not stop until the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina are given what belongs to the historically, politically and in accordance with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is the full equality and exercising all their rights as a constituent people,”* she said, adding that *“all those who believe that the Croats will disappear from Bosnia and Herzegovina are wrong. They will not. I will be your guarantee that the Croats will not be neglected again like they were during the long 15 years of my two predecessors,”* she added. (www.ba.n1info.com)

- November 29<sup>th</sup>, the Croatian Parliament on Friday voted in a set of nine tax laws making up the fourth tax reform which brings tax reliefs in the amount of 2.4 billion kuna (323 billion euro). Changes bring a lower, 13% VAT rate on food and dessert preparation and serving in and outside catering establishments and a lower VAT rate for holders of phonographic rights. As for income tax, the nontaxable income has been raised from HRK 3,800 to 4,000. Income tax for young people under 25 is reduced by 100% while income tax for young people aged 25-30 is cut by 50%. As for profit taxation, the limit for taxation with the higher, 18% rate is raised from 3 to 7.5 million kuna, which means that 93% of entrepreneurs will pay taxes at a rate of 12%, while the current share of entrepreneurs is 85%. The tax reform also keeps the standard VAT rate of 25%, the total financial effect of that measure being HRK 1.8 billion. The fourth round of the tax reform brings tax reliefs in the amount of HRK 2.4 billion, and together with the three previous rounds, the total

financial effect is HRK 9 billion in tax reliefs. (www.hr.n1info.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**   :

*The country enjoys political stability and adoption of 2020 state budget confirmed that the ruling coalition is stable. Croatia is moving ahead for the presidential elections, scheduled on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 (first round) and January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (second round if necessary). Workers and mainly teachers continues to push the Government for further increase in salaries and the prime Minister, Andrej Plenkovic try to reach a mutual solution. Croatia received a positive recommendation by the European Commission for implementing all necessary criteria for entering the Schengen Zone. However, the final political decision by the member states requires a unanimous vote and it is expected to become a field of confrontation between Croatia and Slovenia. Slovenia has already expressed its intention to block Croatia's accession to the Schengen Area due to their border dispute. However, Croatia expresses confidence that finally it will get full support (Slovenia including) for entering the Zone. However, Croatia insists on claiming that the arbitration rule is not valid and the dispute should be resolved through bilateral negotiations. Croatia implements a hard-line foreign policy with its neighboring countries maintaining open disputes with Bosnia, Slovenia, and Serbia. Top officials do not hesitate to openly interfere in Bosnian domestic affairs in the name of Bosnian Croats. 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:** November 26<sup>th</sup>, the Berlin trilateral meeting ended on Monday with a promise by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to continue efforts towards an agreement on the terms of reference so that proper negotiations can resume. The UN Chief reiterated, however, that this time attitudes must be different. He described his talks with the two leaders as “*focused and frank.*” The two leaders, Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akinci said they were both satisfied with the outcome. Following the working dinner lasting around two-and-a-half-hours with the two leaders in Berlin, Guterres announced that he has agreed to extend his efforts “*to achieve terms of reference to serve as a consensus starting point for phased, meaningful, and results-oriented negotiations at the earliest feasible opportunity.*” He also said he committed to explore with the two leaders and the guarantor powers the possibility of convening an informal five-plus-UN meeting at an appropriate stage. “*It is acknowledged that this time must be different,*” Guterres said. He said both leaders welcomed his engagement and reaffirmed their commitment and determination to achieve a settlement based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality as set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions. “*The Turkish Cypriot leader and the Greek Cypriot leader, motivated by a sense of urgency, agreed that achieving a comprehensive and durable settlement to the Cyprus problem within a foreseeable horizon is of utmost importance to the future well-being of both communities and that the status quo is unsustainable,*” he said. He added that the two

leaders affirmed their commitment to the Joint Declaration of February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the prior convergences and the six-point framework he presented on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Crans-Montana. The carefully worded but bland statement from the UN Chief confirmed the general feeling that little was to be expected from the meeting. Both sides had stated they were headed to Berlin aiming to achieve progress for the process to move forward but had expressed only reserved optimism. After the meeting, Anastasiades spoke of a “*creative consultation effort*” throughout the day on behalf of the negotiators and UN Special Envoy Jane Holl Lute that led, with the consent of Guterres and the two leaders, to the elements included in the joint announcement issued by the UN. “*Despite the known difficulties the result of today’s meeting is deemed as a first positive step in the effort to restart dialogue,*” Anastasiades said. The Turkish Cypriot leader said too he found the outcome of the meeting to be positive. Akinci said that Guterres’ involvement was important particularly after his reluctance following the end of the Crans-Montana talks, adding that he was certain the UN Chief had his reasons, probably tensions over hydrocarbons being one of them. He said that mention of a strategic agreement was important as was reference to the modalities especially the fact that the process could not be the same, that it could not be open-ended and needed to be results-oriented. Akinci also said that the reference made to political equality was also positive, adding that the statement had put an end to the debate on the date of the Guterres framework. Prior to the dinner, Guterres had short separate meetings with the leaders. Earlier in the day, his envoy, Jane Holl Lute met Greek Cypriot negotiator Andreas Mavroyiannis and Turkish

Cypriot negotiator Erhan Ercin. ([www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com))

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, an independent criminal investigator has been appointed to look into the spy-van case, Attorney General Costas Clerides announced on Thursday. Clerides appointed Elias Stefanou, a former Law Officer and a criminal law expert, as the independent criminal investigator into potential data privacy violations by the Larnaca-based company which owns van equipped with surveillance equipment. The spy-van is owned by ex-Israeli intelligence officer Tal Dillian and came to light in August through an article in Forbes magazine. It gained attention in Cyprus in mid-November leading Progressive Party of Working People (Ανορθωτικό Κόμμα Εργαζόμενου Λαού - AKEL) to demand an explanation from the Government over the presence of the surveillance vehicle, whether it has offered such services and who granted permission for the provision of such services in Cyprus. In response to the left-wing party, the Government said the matter was being investigated by the Police. According to Forbes, the van, a converted GMC ambulance, can intercept messages (sms), social media chats, calls, and all the contents of a smartphone. Cyprus law suggests that phone tapping is illegal while written communications can be intercepted under certain circumstances but only with a Court order. It was apparently imported to Cyprus as a van able to read weather conditions. The Government also said that importation and sale of such equipment was regulated by the law on the protection of private communications and violations are punished through penalties, imprisonment and seizure of the products. The subject of the spy van was brought up by AKEL

again during the House Finance Committee on Monday when the party criticized the Government over the public's sense of insecurity, following the Justice Minister's comments on the need of Police officers and Judges. ([www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com))

- December 1<sup>st</sup>, President Nicos Anastasiades announced a reshuffle of his cabinet on Sunday. This will see current Interior Minister Constantinou Petrides take on the role of Finance Minister. He will be replaced by current Democratic Rally (Δημοκρατικός Συναγερμός - DISY) MP Nicos Nouris. Government Spokesman Prodromos Prodromou will become Education Minister while Ayia Napa Mayor Yiannis Karousos will become Minister of Transport, Communications and Works, replacing Vassiliki Anastasiadou. Lawyer Kyriakos Kousios will become Government Spokesman and the position of Deputy Government Spokesman will be taken on by current President of the Youth Board Panayiotis Sentonas. Current Education Minister Costas Hambiaouris will be appointed as the Mountain Communities Development Commissioner and Klelia Vasiliou will become Environmental Commissioner. The new Ministers and others will be sworn in on Tuesday and will take over their new duties on Wednesday. The much advertised reshuffle has taken place, opposition Progressive Party of Working People (Ανορθωτικό Κόμμα Εργαζόμενου Λαού - AKEL) Spokesman Stefanos Stefanou said. Nouris is a sitting Disy MP and one of the parties three Vice Presidents, Karousos was voted as Mayor with DISY support while Sentonas is the Vice President of the DISY youth wing NEDISY. Wishing the new Ministers a productive start to their term, a DISY statement said the party was

sure they would come up with policies that would serve the good of the people. “At the same time, we cannot not comment on the negativity of AKEL in pre-judging the new Ministers before they have even taken up their posts,” the party said. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*The trilateral meeting of UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, the Cypriot President, Nicos Anastasiades and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mustafa Akinçi in Berlin was neither successful, nor failed. All sides confirmed their commitment to find a mutual accepted resolution. Guterres set the framework of negotiation on the base of bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality. It was rather an introductory meeting with minor contribution to the resolution process. Despite talks in Berlin, Turkey continues its invasion in Cypriot EEZ with Yavuz drillship challenging the state’s sovereignty. Lack of military power and more specifically aeronautical power is critical for Turkish uncontrolled action within Cypriot Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Cyprus continues to work by diplomatic means on resolving the crisis but the fact is that Turkey has consolidated its presence in the Cypriot waters (and this would be another “asset” during the negotiation process). As long as tension remains in eastern Mediterranean, there is always a high risk of an armed “hot” incident or a conflict. It is certain that Turkey will not accept “fait accompli” in a region considered as part of its strategic interests. Government reshuffle is assessed as an effort of President Nicos Anastasiades to balance in domestic politics. 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:** November 28<sup>th</sup>, Greece will submit at the meeting of EU Home Affairs Ministers next Monday a proposal for a “robust” European mechanism for the return of migrants, Greece’s Alternate Minister for Migration Policy George Koumoutsakos said Thursday. The Minister was speaking at a special joint session of parliamentary Committees on Migration, attended by visiting UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. The Minister said Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria have already formed the Eastern Mediterranean group, and is cooperating bilaterally with other Mediterranean frontline states, such as Malta and Italy. “Direction of our positions is clear. In the new European migration and asylum policy, a balance must be struck between responsibility of the countries of first entry and solidarity of other member-states that should implement burden-sharing policies and actions,” he said. “Greece is at its limits,” he continued, referring to the capacity and living conditions in the island migrant camps. “This requires a rigorous policy that by no means ignores human rights, but at the same time serves the greater good of Greeks’ safety, as well as that of the country.” The two-day meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council in Brussels will discuss the future of EU migration and asylum policy and the future of EU internal security. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- November 29<sup>th</sup>, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias asked on Friday Libya's Ambassador to Greece to present a copy of the agreement his

country signed with Turkey on maritime boundaries by December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 or risk being expelled from the country. The moves comes after Turkey announced Thursday it had signed a deal on maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea with Libya's internationally recognized Government, as well as a deal on expanded security and military cooperation. The memorandum of understanding on the "delimitation of maritime jurisdictions" was signed on Wednesday in Istanbul by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj. No details were made available on the accord. According to information from the Ministry, the back room talks between Ankara and Tripoli to establish maritime boundaries was already being discussed in Athens since July and the Greek side was not surprised. The same sources said there are indications that the memorandum of understanding vaguely stipulates that both sides will work on delimiting maritime zones. Furthermore, an MoU is not legally binding, and such agreements are usually not in the form of a memorandum. However, Greece is not considering rescinding the recognition of the current Libyan Government, as it is also recognized by both the EU and the UN. Next week, Dendias will raise the issue in a series of meetings he will hold with counterparts from countries with influence in the region on the sidelines of a NATO and OSCE meetings. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- November 30<sup>th</sup>, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's forceful defense of a highly contentious maritime boundaries agreement with Libya at a pipeline opening ceremony led to the withdrawal of an attending Greek delegation, led by Deputy

Environment and Energy Minister Dimitris Oikonomou. Speaking at the opening of the Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP) Saturday, Erdogan said that Turkey will not withdraw its ships from the Eastern Mediterranean, while defending a highly contentious maritime boundaries agreement signed with Libya's internationally recognized Government last week. "Ships will continue to perform their duties," Erdogan was quoted by local media as saying of Turkey's two drillboats and two seismic survey vessels. "Turkey will not let others crush its and Turkish Cypriots' interests," he said. Referring to the memorandum of understanding signed with the Tripoli-based Government, Erdogan dismissed reactions from Greece and Egypt. Current situation "will take a different dimension" once the deal is endorsed in Parliament, he said. TANAP is part of the pipeline system that will bring natural gas from Azerbaijan to Turkey, Greece, Albania and Italy, the latter three countries through the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). (www.ekathimerini.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ████ :

*Greece enjoys political stability. The Government implements a plan of restoring "law and order" in the country, mainly in Athens which has seriously damaged last 5 years during the left-wing party of SYRIZA governance. In this context, security forces have conducted several operations either in buildings in Exarchia region (considered as the "fortress" of anarchists in Athens) or in other places. It is assessed that the ultimatum issued by the Ministry of Citizen's Protection against anarchists to evacuate all buildings are illegally occupied within 15 days will bring clashes with Police forces and turbulence in the*

*Greek capital. There are security concerns of escalation of tension between security forces and radical leftist groups especially on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019. It should be noted that Greece is one of the last European countries faces domestic activity by left-ideology terrorists. At the moment, migration is the main security problem of Greece. Good weather contributes in maintenance of a stable flow from Turkish coasts towards Greek islands. Control of migrant flows coming from Turkey is a critical point for Greek national security and consequently EU's security. The Government announced strict measures aiming to control the problem. In this context, it announced that 5 closed migrant centers will be activated in 5 islands (Lesvos, Samos, Chios, Kos and Leros), asylum procedures and returns will be accelerated, and border controls will be strengthened. Moreover, the Government and mainly the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis strengthened his rhetoric calling the EU to support Greece which carries the migration burden alone. In this context, the Greek Alternate Minister for Migration Policy George Koumoutsakos will submit to EU a plan for addressing the problem seeking a balance in the burden share. Greece was surprised by the announcement of the Turkish – Libyan agreement on maritime boundaries which creates “fait accompli” in Eastern Mediterranean Sea. Greek authorities were obviously not prepared for such a scenario and current reactions could be described as spasmodic. The fact is that the new diplomatic developments in the region create a new complicated situation which may cause more tension between Greece and Turkey raising temperature. Latest developments could be the forerunner of escalating tension between the two countries in Eastern Aegean Sea, mainly in the*

*Kastelorizo island, south of Rhodes. Greece is concerned due to Turkish intention to search for hydrocarbons within its EEZ near to Kastelorizo region. The critical question is “how Greece would react if a Turkish drillship would appear in its territorial waters.” Turkey has targeted the wider area of Kastelorizo (and Northeast Aegean Sea) issuing several NAVTEXs for naval exercises with live fires. Moreover, Turkish fighter jets massively violate Greek airspace, while Turkish drones fly over Greek islands or islets. Turkey keeps upgrading provocations against Greece with a “hot” incident always to be in the foreground. Besides, Greek – Turkish relations are in a critical point due to Turkey's decision to violate Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) aiming at conducting oil and gas drills, but also because Turkey maintains a hard rhetoric against Greece regarding its territorial and maritime sovereign rights. Greece seeks to modernize its Armed Forces by receiving US military aid. It is a fact that Greek military force has been affected by the long economic crisis threatening the balance of power with Turkey. Currently, Greece is in talks with France for purchasing two advanced frigates BELHARA and with the US for purchasing two to four second hand ARLEIGH BURKE destroyers. Taking into consideration the ongoing provocations in the Aegean Sea and the complicated current situation in Cypriot EEZ, security situation is of high risk due to an accidental or preplanned incident by Turkey.*



**KOSOVO:** November 25<sup>th</sup>, the leader of the Self-determination (Vetëvendosje) party Albin Kurti said he had secured a majority to form a new Government following the October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 general elections, the FoNet news

agency reported. Kurti, the most likely new Prime Minister, said the three representatives of the minority parties of Gorani, Ashkali and Roma people agreed to unconditionally vote for him as Prime Minister, providing the necessary 61 out of 120 MPs support. Kurti said that this fact has created conditions to form a cabinet without including the third ethnic Albanian party. According to the agreement Kurti made, his Vetëvendosje, the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës - LDK) and three minority parties will make up the next Pristina Government. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, after Central Elections Commission (CEC) certified on Wednesday election results, leaders of parties which won elections – Self-determination (Vetëvendosje) party and the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës - LDK) are set to meet today to finalize the Government coalition, Gazeta Express reports. Candidate for Prime Minister, Albin Kurti and the LDK Chairman Isa Mustafa are expected to meet today and discuss all open issues, such as sharing of ministerial posts in new Government and election of President in two years, after mandate of current President expires. Deputy Head of LDK, Lutfi Haziri, told news agency KosovaPress that he is optimistic an agreement on forming new Government will be reached within days. He said that sharing of ministerial posts will be done based on political weight adding that other program issues have been already harmonized. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- November 29<sup>th</sup>, Self-determination (Vetëvendosje) leader and likely Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, is visiting the town of Durres in Albania which on Tuesday was hit by a

6.4 magnitude earthquake leaving 49 people dead and hundreds wounded. Addressing media from Durres, Kurti said that the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) and Albanian Army have excellent cooperation in their search-and-rescue operations. *“We came to see situation on the ground. I believe that in such crisis, the Army is the best tool offering the necessary organized structure. KSF and Albanian Army have excellent cooperation. With their professionalism, they are warming our hearts that we will overcome this situation. I believe that two of our Government should meet and discuss the aftermath of the quake,”* Kurti stated. Outgoing Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, is also expected to visit Albania today. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**   :

*Central Election Committee (CEC) officially announced results of the October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 early parliamentary elections, allowing Vetëvendosje and LDK to forward their cooperation by forming the next Government. Potential Prime Minister, Albin Kurti said that he has confirmed support of Kosovo minorities’ parties namely the Gorani, Ashkali and Roma people allowing him to secure 61 votes in the 120 seats Kosovo Parliament. It is interesting to see what will happen with Kosovo Serb minority and the elected MPs of Serbian List; the only Serbian party in the Kosovo Assembly. Constitution obliges Kosovo Government to include at least one Serb representative in a ministerial post, but Kurti seeks to exclude Serbian List from the Government claiming that it is influenced directly from Belgrade. Moreover, it seems that Kurti’s strategic choice is Kosovo authorities to fully control north. Such opinion is dangerous since the balance of co-existence*

*between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians is very sensitive. Possible deployment of security forces and the newly established Kosovo Army in the north may become a reason for turbulence and an armed conflict. Besides, Kurti advocates unification of Albania and Kosovo; a view which will threaten peace and stability not only in Kosovo – Serbia but in the whole Western Balkans. International community namely the US and EU strengthen their efforts towards restarting dialogue between the two parties after elections. Restart of bilateral negotiations could not be expected before December 2019 or beginning of 2020 provided that Kosovo will revoke tariffs imposed to Serbian goods. It is assessed that Kurti is willing to withdraw tariffs since he will take office. Increased tension is expected in North Kosovo by Kosovo Serbs if Serb List representatives will be excluded by the new Government. Only through normalization of relations with Serbia, Kosovo will be able to move forward namely to enter the UN, NATO, EU and to achieve a normal status of a state. Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration. Kosovo unresolved status, political instability, corruption, and organized crime are not encouraging factors for its future within European community. Path towards the EU and NATO will be long and hard.*



**MOLDOVA:** November 25<sup>th</sup>, Moldovan President Igor Dodon has called President of Romania Klaus Iohannis “*to jointly give up false geopolitical disputes.*” Dodon made such proposal in his congratulatory message sent to Bucharest today on the occasion of Iohannis’ victory in the yesterday’s presidential elections

and of his winning a second term of office. “*Romanians made an important choice for the Republic of Moldova as well, having handed in a mandate of trust to you. I am perfectly sure that you will continue rendering your active assistance to the close cooperation between our countries. The Republic of Moldova highly values your contribution and the Romanian people’s assistance to the europeanization of Moldova, and Romania’s constant assistance rendered in the form of numerous important projects aimed at the development of our country. I would like very much that during your second term, you and me together should spare Romania and the Republic of Moldova of false geopolitical disputes and, at the same time, to bring our citizens as close to each other as only possible, and to jointly work for their good,*” Dodon wrote in his message. He emphasized that Moldova is remaining committed to reforms, remaining a country that wishes to promote consolidation of security in region by joint effort with Romania and Ukraine. During a television program cast last week, Dodon expressed hope that during Iohannis’ second term they would necessarily exchange official visits. Dodon reminded that he had invited the President of Romania to pay an official visit to Moldova. Until now, meetings between the two Presidents have taken place only on the sidelines of various international meetings. Ex-premier Maia Sandu also sent a congratulatory message to Iohannis. “*I congratulate you, Mr. President! I congratulate you, dear Romanians!*” wrote Sandu, who took part in the voting yesterday, having called citizens of Romania in Moldova to take an active part in the voting. ([www.infotag.md](http://www.infotag.md))

- November 26<sup>th</sup>, President Igor Dodon met with Head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)



Mission in Moldova Ruben Atoyán. The Head of state wrote on social media that they discussed the perspectives of further cooperation. *“I told about the social initiatives recently started by the new Government for improving our citizens’ living conditions, as well as the intention to implement a number of large-scale infrastructure projects in Moldova. We hope for IMF support in the fulfillment of these goals,”* Dodon said. According to him, during the meeting they exchanged opinions on the political situation in the country. *“I assured Mr. Atoyán that the new Government will be strictly fulfilling all the commitments before external partners and will put all efforts for successful implementation of the current cooperation program with the IMF, which expires in March 2020. At the same time, I pointed that the basis for all the actions taken by the new Government will be the Moldova’s national interests, the protection of economic agents, the social defense for vulnerable segments of population,”* the President maintains. According to him, the IMF representative welcomed the fact that the Government wants to invest into infrastructure and expressed support to projects in population social protection. *“Ruben Atoyán said that the consistent implementation of the started reforms and the fulfillment of the IMF Memorandum will be the best signal for external partners,”* Dodon said. Before, the IMF, the EU and other development partners stated that the Moldova’s external financing will continue only in condition of strict fulfillment of reforms. (www.infotag.md)

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, Moldovan Special Representative for Transnistria negotiations, Deputy Prime Minister for Country Reintegration Alexandru Flenchea has stated Chisinau’s

readiness to sign a compromise variant of the Protocol of the Bratislava round of negotiations. Flenchea said at a press briefing in Chisinau on Thursday *“At the forthcoming meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council to be held in Bratislava on December 5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup>, we will state our readiness to sign a compromise variant of the Protocol on the results of the 5+2 format negotiations held in Bratislava last early October. The daily work on the Protocol, which we then failed to agree on and sign, continued after the Bratislava round of talks, and after the Bavaria conference of early November. So, presently Chisinau stands ready to sign the compromise variant of the Protocol, and now the word is after Tiraspol,”* Flenchea said. He voiced regret that after the Bratislava meeting there were followed some statements and estimates from Transnistria’s behalf, *“though the negotiation stakeholders had agreed to refrain from public statements.”* The Deputy Premier said that, on the whole, the Sides have agreed upon a final version of the Protocol with the exception of one point pertaining to priorities in the conflict settlement process for a forthcoming short-term period. *“We have outlined 4 priorities that are known to our international partners and to Tiraspol colleagues. Firstly: provision of free movement in the Security Zone because citizens must have the right and possibility to easily move from one side of the Dniester River to the other. Secondly: human rights and their observance. Thirdly: the provision of conditions for a normal work of the Latin-script Moldova-administered schools in Transnistria. By this, we mean primarily an adequate provision of all the 8 such schools with proper premises. And the 4th priority pertains to facilitation of running trade between the Dniester sides, prevention of smuggling, harmonization of*

tax standards and customs tariffs,” Flenchea said. In his words, both in Bratislava and Bavaria, Tiraspol was insisting on other priorities. “We stated readiness to discuss them, but that meant that the Chisinau-proposed priorities would not be included into the final variant of the Protocol. In subsequent days and weeks, the Slovakian OSCE Presidency and OSCE Special Representative on Transnistria Franco Frattini presented a compromise formula, which the Sides can yet discuss. Chisinau has already stated openly that it is ready to consider the entire spectrum of economic, social and humanitarian questions. And yesterday, we approved the compromise variant, and notified all the 5+2 negotiating format parties about it,” said the Moldovan Deputy Premier. The format brings together Moldova and Transnistria as the conflict sides, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE as international mediators (5); and the EU and the US as international observers (2). Flenchea stressed that there is time yet for signing the Protocol either before or right after the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Bratislava, “so Tiraspol has a chance yet for approving the document.” (www.infotag.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** :

*Moldovan politics are one man show; the state’s President Igor Dodon. After he achieved to topple the Government and to form a new Government enjoying PDM’s support, he re-distributes (together with PDM) posts and duties. Besides, the new Government includes mainly members of the Dodon’s absolute trust. The new Prime Minister, Ion Chicu’s first visit was in Russia, sending a message regarding priorities of his cabinet. Russia is closely following political*

*developments in Moldova as it is considered a pivotal country for Russian national security. The “Transnistrian case” is always a “running sore” for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.*



**MONTENEGRO:** November 28<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry of Defense plans to acquire four Bell 505 Jet Ranger X multipurpose helicopters for next year. The helicopter Bell 505, as a possible successor to the Montenegrin military Gazelles, was shown on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at the military airport “Prince Danilo” in Golubovci when the Bell Helicopter Textron Demonstration Day was organized by the Ministry of Defense of Montenegro, Bell Helicopter for Europe and Embassy of Canada. US-made helicopters will replace the Gazelle fleet owned by the Montenegrin Army for more than 30 years. Bell Company has a long tradition and many armies of the world, including the US Armed Forces. The Montenegrin Army has previously acquired three Bell helicopters. These are mid-range Bell 412 multi-purpose helicopters, in EP and EPI versions. Like the Gazelle, the Bell 505 is a light helicopter, but can carry twice as many passengers, namely four. For the next year the Ministry of Defense plans to buy 67 light armored vehicles, to build a new barracks in “Andrijevica,” to modernize and expand the capacity of the “Masline” barracks, and to build housing for employees. (www.rtcg.me)

- November 29<sup>th</sup>, through numerous joint projects Montenegro and Turkey will continue to improve their defense cooperation, it was said at the meeting between Director of the Directorate for Defense Policy and Planning,

Ivica Ivanovic, and Brigadier-General, Umut Jildiz. Ivanovic visited the Turkish Ministry of National Defense and the meeting he had with Jildiz was a great chance to analyze defense projects carried out so far. The Montenegrin official expressed gratitude for Turkish continuous support for Montenegro and expressed readiness to continue cooperation. He expressed his satisfaction with the dynamics of the implemented projects and pointed out those agreements and protocols on donation which had been signed were indicator of both parties' readiness to strengthen bilateral cooperation by implementation of projects. Ivanovic also stressed the importance of mutual support and cooperation between the Navy of the Armed Forces of Montenegro and the Armed Forces of Turkey. He said that Montenegro will continue to improve interoperability of its Army and invest in modernization and development. Brigadier General Jildiz said that he was very satisfied with the bilateral cooperation of the two countries. (www.cdm.me)

- November 30<sup>th</sup>, Delegates of the eighth Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (Demokratska Partija Socijalista Crne Gore - DPS) congress held in Podgorica re-elected Milo Djukanovic as the party leader, while Dusko Markovic was re-elected as the deputy leader of the party. There were 598 delegates who took part in the work of the congress, and after all the votes were counted, it was noted that two votes concerning Djukanovic were invalid, and as for Markovic, two were invalid and two against his election for the function of the party's Vice-President. "We have

*fulfilled all the promises made at the previous congress. We have managed to preserve Montenegro's stability, to join NATO and move towards the EU, which are important steps in the area of economic and democratic development,"* Djukanovic said after his re-election. According to him, DPS is steadily moving towards the Europeanization and emancipation of the Montenegrin society, and it creates conditions for a quality life of citizens. "Over the last four years, the DPS has more or less won all the elections. The party is in power in 17 municipalities. There is no room for being relaxed. We have a long-term mission. There are challenges regarding the further economic development because in that way it is possible to solve numerous social problems," he was adamant. Djukanovic and Markovic were the only candidates running for these posts. In addition, the congress elected the Main Committee comprising 146 members, the Statutory Commission, the Supervisory Board and adopted the party's Political Program. (www.cdm.me)



Montenegro's President and ruling DPS leader,  
Milos Djukanovic

(Photo source: www.predsjednik.me)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*Montenegro's President and ruling DPS leader, Milos Djukanovic re-elected as the party leader (while the Prime Minister, Dusko Markovic re-elected as the Vice-President of the party) confirming that he is the absolute dominant in*

*Montenegrin politics. However, political tension and abnormality continues as ruling DPS insists that there is no need for a transitional Government rejecting opposition's request. Opposition appears divided strengthening ruling DPS's power. A possible boycott by opposition of the next parliamentary elections will have negative impact in country's political stability, consolidation of democracy, and economic growth. EC hardens its stance towards Montenegro's EU accession process (as it was expected) and opening of new Chapters will not be a smooth and easy procedure. Although the Government tries to appear calm, the fact is that concerns have been raised in the country for its EU route. In this context, it is rather unlikely the EU to proceed with opening of Chapter 8 in accession negotiations with Montenegro. The Government promotes state's political and economic stability which creates an almost ideal investment environment. However, the state needs more concrete reforms in the field of justice, rule of law, fight against corruption, money laundering, and organized crime, public administration transparency and accountability in order to become a stable and attractive investment environment. Russian influence continues to be considered as a "threat" against state's national security. In this context, US personnel specialized in Cyber Warfare has been deployed in Montenegro (North Macedonia and Ukraine too) aiming to encounter hybrid threats and collect useful intelligence regarding Russian activity in the region. Moreover, Serbian intervention in Montenegrin internal affairs is considered also as a notable problem which needs to be resolved. Serbia refuses to abandon the view that Montenegro is the "natural extension of the country." Economic, trade, and defense relations*

*between Montenegro and Turkey are strengthening and the latter is considered as an important and reliable partner. The country focuses on strengthening its Armed Forces by purchasing modern equipment and reducing the average age of its military personnel (currently 37 years old).*



## **NORTH MACEDONIA:**

November 26<sup>th</sup>, Greece strongly supports North Macedonia's EU accession, full implementation of the Prespa Agreement, and strengthening of bilateral cooperation, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said Tuesday, at a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov. "I am happy to be paying my first visit to neighboring North Macedonia, which is soon to become Greece's NATO partner and EU hopeful. I am sure accession talks will open soon. You have Greece's full support," Dendias said. He underlined dramatic improvement in bilateral cooperation, set to focus in the future on economy, military collaboration, investments, and infrastructure. Regarding the Prespa Agreement, Dendias said there is progress in its implementation, but some areas still require adjustments. Dimitrov underlined that North Macedonia can count on Greek support on the road towards EU integration. "Greece is our strategic partner, neighbor and friend. The Prespa Agreement has opened a huge cooperation potential that needs to be utilized," Dimitrov said. He underlined that he expects the first session of the trademark committee and an expert meeting regarding new border-crossings between the two countries to take place soon. In answer to a reporter's question whether there is a possibility of either side disputing the Prespa

Agreement, Dendias said the position of the current Greek Government is that the issue is a done deal and requires full implementation. *“We have a joint future, if we act in good faith,”* Dendias added. Dimintrov also underlined that the agreement is part of state’s legal system and must be respected. (www.nezavisen.mk)

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Radmila Sekerinska said it would be irresponsible to do anything that would endanger the membership to NATO. We demanded member states to hurry and we should use the time wisely. The issue is important to us and it is not right to delay it. Postponing the elections is not an option, Sekerinska said, invited by a journalist to comment on Parliament Speaker Talat Xhaferi’s statement that she had no intention of calling the dissolved Parliament back for ratification of the NATO Protocol. *“You cannot ask lawmakers to vote on constitutional changes, and on the other hand to tell them you do not even need to confirm our membership in NATO. They voted for those constitutional changes and to make all that possible and therefore our goal is to ratify them by this assembly,”* Sekerinska said. She said at no time we can say *“we have no Parliament.”* The Minister presented today the 2020 Defence Budget. *“The defense budget for 2020 is a defense budget for a NATO member state and we were guided by that premise when we were planning it,”* Sekerinska said. According to the NATO membership, the country’s obligation is that the defense budget should be 2% of GDP. (www.nezavisen.mk)

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, several days ago there was a *“hybrid attack”* against North Macedonia Prime Minister’s office by perpetrators introduced

themselves as *“Greta Thunberg and her father.”* As was revealed by Prime Minister’s special adviser, Marjan Zabrchanec, at the E-Society Conference organized by the Metamorphosis Foundation, *“the attack”* i.e. the telephone conversation between Zaev and the people that introduced themselves as Greta and her father went through although, as Zabrchanec, the Prime Minister did not *“buy”* the alleged identity, but nevertheless decided to proceed with the conversation. According to Zabrchanec, this attack was *“even more sophisticated than the one conducted by the Russian pranksters.”* He said that the attackers have called from *“branded channels”* and they were using an US phone number, but the investigation which lasted for several days has shown that it is a *“hybrid attack.”* Zabrchanec used this term to refer to hybrid warfare. After the investigation the Thunberg family was notified. The conversation was scheduled through a North Macedonia’s diplomatic mission. In July this year, two Russian pranksters announced that during August 2018 and January and April 2019 managed to have lengthy phone conversations with Zaev, misrepresenting themselves as the then Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. (www.meta.mk)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Early parliamentary elections are scheduled for April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, while an interim Government is expected to be formed on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Undoubtedly, North Macedonia has entered in political uncertainty and instability. Russia is trying to fill in the “political gap” in Western Balkans, but western forces are on alert to prevent it. It should be noted that the dilemma EU opening accession negotiations or Russian*

*influence is not a realistic one since the country has already entered NATO (the process is ongoing but almost to be concluded since only Spain has remained to ratify the accession) which is a major step towards the full integration into the western security system. The country should focus on reforms regarding justice, rule of law, fight against corruption and money laundering, administration, and respect of human rights in order to accelerate its European integration process. North Macedonia's politics are still shaken by a series of corruption and extortion scandals undermining not only country's political stability, but also its European perspective. Fancy names such as "Extortion", "Empire", "Racket", "Titanic", "Monster" are nothing more than scandals involving politicians, businessmen, criminals, and judicial servants demonstrating that corruption, absence of rule of law and non transparency dominate in state's function. It should be noted that Justice moves slowly towards full investigation of these scandals.*



**ROMANIA:** November 27<sup>th</sup>, former Prime Minister Viorica Dancila has decided to resign from the position of leader of the Social Democratic Party's (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) on Tuesday evening, two days after her massive defeat in the second round of the presidential elections. She announced her resignation after a tense meeting of the party's leaders, which lasted about six hours. Marcel Ciolacu, Speaker of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, was appointed interim President of PSD, a position he will hold until the party organizes a congress to elect a new leadership, most likely in February 2020, local Digi24 reported. Dancila said that her

resignation "is not a gesture of weakness but a gesture of dignity," and that she understood her colleagues' opinion "that the party needs a reset, that someone must assume the result of the elections." "It is a gesture I made for the party. We did everything in our power to get a good result, but after discussions I understood that a reset of the party is needed. This reset requires another vision, another program and I want to guarantee my colleagues that Viorica Dancila will be part of the team that will work for winning next elections," Dancila said after the party leaders' meeting on Tuesday. In his turn, Marcel Ciolacu said "After my colleagues proposed me as interim President, according to the party's status, the first thing I did was to choose the Secretary General, and the first goal is to organize the congress, where we will have normal elections." He added that most PSD colleagues proposed February for the congress. Viorica Dancila lost the second round of the presidential elections on Sunday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 by Klaus Iohannis in a difference of over 30%. After the voting closed on Sunday, she said that she was not going to resign from PSD's helm. However, Ciolacu reportedly began discussions with party leaders since Monday, and even talked to Dancila about stepping down from the party's helm. Viorica Dancila was elected president of PSD in a congress held on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019. She will now take over as President of the party's women's organization, according to G4media.ro. (www.romania-insider.com)

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, Romania's new Government has endorsed a bill for the purchase of five more F16 fighter jets and will submit it to the Parliament for approval, President Klaus Iohannis announced after the Country's Superior Defense Council

(CSAT) meeting held on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 G4media.ro reported. The procurement deals in excess of 100 million euro must be endorsed by lawmakers, Iohannis explained. The President also informed about the Government's commitment to stick with the 2% of GDP budget earmarked for defense spending. The number of military troops approved for missions abroad was also increased by 200 to 2,100, under a CSAT decision. Romania will buy another five F16 jet fighters with the same configuration as the 12 already purchased, former defense minister Gabriel Les announced on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. Earlier in June, Profit.ro quoting Government documents announced that the state earmarked 250 million euro to buy another five F16 fighter jets from Portugal, which supplied the other 12 fighters Romania has already received. (www.romania-insider.com)

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, Lieutenant General Daniel Petrescu will be the new Chief of defense Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces, President Klaus Iohannis announced after the country's Superior Defense Council (CSAT) meeting held on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019. He is replacing General Nicolae Ciuca, who was appointed Defense Minister. (www.romania-insider.com)



The new Chief of Defense Staff of Romanian Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Daniel Petrescu

(Photo source: www.defense.ro)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

*Klaus Iohannis renewed his term as the state's President for another five year term. He was the triumphant in the presidential elections by defeating his opponent, Viorica Dancila, former Prime Minister and PSD leader by 30%. Dancila's defeat has caused chained reactions in the party forcing her to resign from PSD leadership. Elections should not be expected before spring 2020, giving the necessary time to PSD to be reorganized and even to take in advantage a possible wear of former ruling party. The country enjoys advanced upgrade in US and NATO strategic plans due to its geographical position located close to Russia. Consequently, Russia reacts in this close military cooperation between the two countries perceiving it as a threat against its national security. Romania keeps strengthening its Armed Forces seeking to achieve NATO standards.*



**SERBIA:** November 26<sup>th</sup>, Ivica Dacic, Serbia's Foreign Minister, said on Tuesday, there was nothing good which would produce a bit of optimism for the resumption of the Belgrade – Pristina dialogue on the normalization of relations, accusing Kosovo of sending the wrong messages, the Beta news agency reported. According to him, without the international community's pressure on Pristina, any success in the dialogue cannot be expected and that it will not continue before the 100% import tariffs on goods from Serbia, introduced a year ago, are lifted. *"I think that not many people did so much good for Serbia as did (outgoing Kosovo Prime Minister Ramus) Haradinaj and (his most likely successor Albin) Kurti by showing to everyone that the Albanian side is the*

*problem,*” Dacic told the state RTS TV. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- November 29<sup>th</sup>, Aleksandar Vucic, Serbia’s President, told Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushkov on Friday that Belgrade would remain militarily neutral, which it would cement by adopting the relevant strategic documents, the Beta news agency quoted Vucic’s office statement. Vucic and Grushkov discussed the bilateral relations, especially ahead of Vucic’s visit to Russia and meeting with President Vladimir Putin on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Before meeting Putin, Vucic will host Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. Serbia’s President said he expected *“with great hope the forthcoming meeting in Sochi, what will be their third encounter in 2019.”* The statement quoted Vucic as saying that for him *“it is extremely significant meeting as a chance to talk and exchange stands toward global and regional issues, and the most important topics of Serbia -Russia cooperation, primarily in the economy.”* Vucic and Grushkov discussed regional situation and said they hoped the Western Balkans would preserve peace and stability. Vucic thanked Russia for its support and frequent visits by its officials, while Grushkov passed on greetings from Putin, Prime Minister Dimitry Medvedev and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the statement said. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- November 30<sup>th</sup>, US policy on Serbia has not changed and has remained the same for years, the US Embassy told the Politika daily answering the question on alleged Russia's influence and possible change of Washington's stance towards Belgrade. The response comes after the Pentagon's report from May this year, which described Serbia as the most indulgent

environment for the Russian influence in the Western Balkans. Washington understands the *“interest of Serbia to develop positive relations with many partners and we would expect other Serbia's partners to show similar respect and support for Serbia's strategic goals,”* the Embassy was quoted as saying to the daily. America entirely supports Serbia's goal towards European integration and the EU membership as well as Serbia's military neutrality policy, the Embassy said. *“Our engagement with Serbia – and American technical support, which is greatly implemented through the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) – is aimed at helping Serbia to achieve the set goal, the European integration,”* the daily quoted the Embassy's answer. (www.rs.n1info.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**   :

*It seems that spy case between Russian and Serbian officials did not affect bilateral relations of the two countries. President Aleksandar Vucic is prepared for his visit to Moscow and President Vladimir Putin next week. Serbia and Russia maintain very close relations especially in the fields of defense, security, economy, and diplomacy. It is not a secret that Serbia is the “long hand” of Russia in Southeastern Europe and this situation worries the US administration. Political tension continues in Serbia with opposition persistently refusing dialogue with ruling SNS and hardening its stance against the Government. Potential boycott of the elections by opposition will affect Serbia’s political stability, economic growth, and its European process. The EU has raised serious concerns over Serbia’s effectiveness on independence and accountability of the judiciary, freedom of expression,*



*prevention of corruption and the fight against organized crime. Regarding Kosovo, Serbia is waiting to see initiatives and actions of the new Government which will be formed (most likely) with Vetevendosje leader, Albin Kurti as the Prime Minister. However, the Serbian Foreign Minister, Ivica Dacic appeared pessimist regarding progress of the dialogue process between Belgrade – Pristina. A possible deployment and permanent presence of Kosovo security forces in Serb majority north Kosovo would bring tension and turbulence. However, the US and EU are increasing pressure on both sides to restart dialogue. According to information the US mainly seek to forward talks between the two parties before the Serbian elections on spring 2020 but it is very unlikely to see this happens. Serbia insists that taxes should be revoked for joining dialogue. One should have in mind that top state officials have said repeatedly in public that Serbia will protect Kosovo Serbs by any mean including security and military force. Serbia pays special attention in improving operational capabilities of its Armed Forces declaring towards all sides that they are the power of the state.*



**SLOVENIA:** November 25<sup>th</sup>, the Slovenian Intelligence and Security Agency (SOVA) has reported Matej Tonin, Chair of the Parliamentary Commission overseeing intelligence services, to law enforcement for having disclosed intelligence, the public broadcaster TV Slovenija reported on Monday, citing an unofficial source. Tonin, leader of the opposition New Slovenia – Christian Democrats (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati - NSi), is accused of releasing

intelligence as part of a public section of a classified report his Commission had compiled about SOVA's activity in Slovenia's preparations for border arbitration with Croatia, TV Slovenija said. Tonin had said the report contained no intelligence, but SOVA maintained it contained the intelligence it had sent to the Commission for the Oversight of Intelligence and Security Services as part of the latter's inquiry into the circumstances leading to Croatia withdrawing from the border arbitration process. The Commission had examined the circumstances of the 2015 wiretaps of communication between Slovenia's agent in the border arbitration procedure and the Slovenian member of the panel of arbiters. The scandal led to Croatia declaring the procedure compromised and withdrawing from it. After a months-long inquiry, the Commission adopted the 150-page report on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and made 16 redacted pages public a few days later. According to TV Slovenija, SOVA has also notified the President of Slovenia, the Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Speaker of the Tonin case. Tonin said via social media that it was “bizarre” that SOVA had reported the Commission to the law enforcement after the report cleared it of having done anything wrong. *“The report shows the Slovenian Government and SOVA did not cheat in arbitration. It proves there is no Slovenian conspiracy against the Croats. The report strengthens Slovenia's position,”* Tonin said. He attributed SOVA's move to Damir Crncec, State Secretary at the Prime Minister's office and SOVA's former boss, implying it was another of his smear campaigns. (www.sta.si)

- November 26<sup>th</sup>, The Government adopted legislative amendments on Tuesday designed to

crack-down on the activity of self-styled village guards and militias patrolling the border with the intention to stop illegal migrants. The Government proposes for Parliament to pass amendments to the protection of public order act and to the state border control act as a matter of urgency. The Government says securing the border is in the sole jurisdiction of the Police, while the so-called guards are trying to interfere in Police powers and duties, obstruct Police work and are upsetting the public. The proposed amendments would ban any conduct by an individual or group conducted with the intention of controlling the border in the same or similar way as conducted by Police in controlling the border. Also banned are activities that impede the Police in conducting border surveillance. The Government also proposes banning the carrying, display or use of decorative weapons, imitation weapons, signaling weapons or other objects that look like weapons, in a way as to make it look as if police or army members perform their duties. The Government also proposes introducing a new offence for the use of camouflage clothing, uniforms or clothing that looks like Police or Army uniform, when the person wearing such a piece of clothing appears as if they are performing the duties of Police or Army personnel. The amendments come in the aftermath of increased activity by militias including the Stajerska Guard, whose leader Andrej Sisko was sentenced to eight months in prison earlier this year on the charge that he attempted to subvert the constitutional order. (www.sta.si)

- November 30<sup>th</sup>, in the first ten months of 2019, Slovenian Police recorded 14,066 illegal entries into the country, 72% more than in the same period of 2018, the Slovenian Ministry of the

Interior said on Saturday. The most numerous illegal migrants were from Algeria (1,752), followed by migrants from Afghanistan (1,519), Bangladesh, Syria and Iran. In the first ten months of this year, 553 migrants were returned to Slovenia, mostly from Italy and Austria, as were 25 from Croatia. Slovenian Police returned 9,653 illegal migrants to Croatia, which is a major increase compared to the 3,906 migrants returned to Croatia from Slovenia in the same period of 2018. The number of migrants who have sought asylum in Slovenia has increased from 2,875 in 2018 to 3,350 in 2019. In 2018 Slovenia granted international protection to 102 migrants, and this year it has granted international protection to 62 migrants. Currently, there are 335 people under international protection in Slovenian migrant centers. (www.sta.si)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**  :

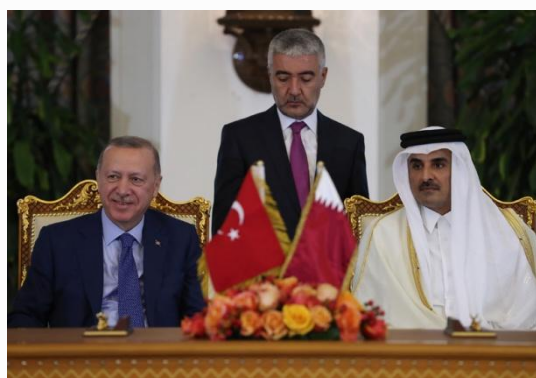
*Marjan Sarec's minority Government continues to enjoy support in the Parliament. It seems that the Left party's withdrawal did not affect the ruling coalition's sustainability. Although the Prime Minister is reassuring for the Government's stability and sustainability there are questions over its effectiveness. The possibility of snap elections is rather unlikely, however it is not certain what will happen when the Government bases its viability on opposition support. As the Prime Minister said a lot of compromise is needed. Opposition SNS (and NSi) offered their parliamentary support in the Government. Slovenia – Croatia relations may be tested in coming period due to the latter's effort to join the Schengen Zone. Slovenia appears determined to play the "Schengen Zone card" in order to push Croatia to implement the ruling arbitration*

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



**TURKEY:** November 25<sup>th</sup>, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says base in Qatar with 5,000 Turkish troops is now complete, calling it a “symbol of brotherhood.” Erdogan said Monday the construction of a new Turkish military base has been completed in Qatar and it will be named after the famous Muslim Commander Khalid bin Walid. Erdogan arrived in Doha earlier in the day to attend the fifth meeting of the Turkey-Qatar

High Strategic Committee. He spoke to troops at the Turkish base where about 5,000 soldiers have been stationed since a Saudi Arabia-led blockade started more than two years ago. The visit came as local media reported Qatar intends to buy 100 Turkish tanks. “It [Turkey-Qatar Combined Joint Force Command] serves stability and peace of not only Qatar but also the Gulf region,” Erdogan said after meeting troops at the newly finished base. “We have never left our friends alone in any period of history against threats and risks - and we never will,” Erdogan said. In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt launched a land, air, and sea blockade against Qatar, saying Doha was not adhering to their regional policies. Saudi Arabia closed the border with its neighbor - Qatar's only land border. Qatar has denied accusations of the blockading nations, saying it chooses to follow an independent foreign policy. “We have also been discussing regional issues where Turkey and Qatar have the same position,” he continued, adding the two countries share “excellent cooperation” in areas such as the war in Syria, the Gulf region, and “even beyond.” (www.aljazeera.com)



Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan with Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim

(Photo source: www.tccb.gov.tr)

- November 27<sup>th</sup>, former Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan has said he is planning to form a “*mainstream*” political party by the end of the year to challenge President's Recep Tayyip Erdogan ruling Justice and Development (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP). Babacan made the comments on Tuesday to broadcaster HaberTurk, in his first live interview since leaving AKP in July, citing “*deep differences.*” “*The calendar [for the launch] is the end of the year,*” he said, adding that the still-unnamed party would appeal to a wide cross-section of the population. “*It will be a mainstream political movement,*” he said. A founding member of the party that has ruled Turkey since 2002, Babacan first served as Economy and then Foreign Minister before becoming Deputy Prime Minister, a role he held from 2009 to 2015. Following a failed military coup in 2016, the Government carried out purges and detentions targeting members of the civil service, the judiciary, the military and academia that critics say undermine the rule of law and democratic freedoms. After an election victory last year, Erdogan also assumed new powers under a constitutional overhaul backed by a narrow majority at a 2017 referendum. “*We have seen that Turkey has entered a dark tunnel, with its problems on every issue growing by the day,*” Babacan told HaberTurk. “*Consequently, we have begun our efforts to create a new party,*” he said. Babacan largely refrained from directly criticizing Erdogan, but repeatedly said that a lack of democracy under “*one-man rule*” damaged the country. “*There were important principles and values during the foundation of the AK Party, but there has been a significant departure from these principles. This has become a national issue, and we felt a serious responsibility towards our country.*” Babacan, along with Turkey's former

President Abdullah Gul -another founding member of the AKP and a one-time Erdogan ally - has long been rumored to be planning a rival party. Babacan said Gul would not be actively involved in the party, but was working as an adviser or “*older brother.*” Former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu also fell out with Erdogan in 2016 and criticized the AKP's economic policy, but Babacan ruled out that he would join the new party. (www.aljazeera.com)



Ali Babacan, former Deputy Deputy Prime Minister

(Photo source: www.mfa.gov.tr)

- November 28<sup>th</sup>, Turkey and Libya on Wednesday signed two agreements on security and military cooperation and restriction of marine jurisdictions, Turkish authorities said. Memorandums of understanding were signed after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held a closed meeting with the internationally-recognized Government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj in Istanbul, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported quoting the Turkish Presidential Communications Directorate. The move comes as Tripoli, the seat of the Government of National Accord (GNA), has been battling forces backed by renegade military Commander Khalifa Haftar. More than 1,000 people have been killed since April when Haftar's eastern-based, self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) launched an offensive to seize Tripoli. The Ministers of Interior, Defense and Foreign Affairs of the two

countries were also present and held talks during the visit. Libyan Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha told local media that the memorandum of understanding on security signed between the two countries was aimed at maintaining security in Libya and protecting the country's sovereignty. He added that the deal also sought to strengthen the Government's capacity to combat “terrorism,” irregular migration and crime, as well as developing its security and training systems. The agreement called for an immediate cease of military operations near Libyan oil fields, in order to protect personnel and installations. (www.aljazeera.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** ■ ■ :

*Turkey implements an active and rather effective multilateral foreign policy integrating characteristics of a regional power. Last week, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Qatar where he announced a reinforced Turkish military presence with 5,000 soldiers in a new military base. Moreover, Turkey signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Libya on defense, security and denoting new maritime boundaries. The area spanning from southwest Turkey to northeast Libya cuts across a zone within Greek and Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone and where plans for a future gas pipeline are in the works to link Eastern Mediterranean gas fields with Europe. The agreement comes as Turkish drillships accompanied by navy vessels continue gas exploration and drilling activities within Cyprus' territorial waters. Taking into consideration that Turkey strengthened its defense cooperation with Pakistan and Pakistani warships appeared in Eastern Mediterranean, it is assessed that Turkey reacts by diplomatic and military means in the ongoing cooperation*

*between Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Egypt. In Eastern Mediterranean Turkey is determined to protect its interests and would not hesitate to use force against Cyprus or Greece. With zero cost so far Turkey achieved not only to consolidate a situation in which Turkish drillships could enter within Cypriot EEZ whenever they wish accompanied by Turkish navy vessels, but also to put the hydrocarbon issue on the table of negotiations, to force oil and gas companies to reconsider their engagement in a sea which is not stable and secure, and to directly question the Cypriot sovereignty. Turkey and Russia implement the agreement on Syrian “safe zone” ensuring a relative truce in the region. Turkish leadership appears satisfied with the final results of the operation “Peace Spring.” Undoubtedly, Turkey was one of the winners in Syrian conflict. It achieved to establish a 32 kilometers “safe zone” and to force Syrian Kurds to withdraw their forces from an area of 120 kilometers in Turkish – Syrian borders. In other words, Syrian Kurds are no longer a threat to Turkish security since they are not able anymore to conduct and support operations within the Turkish soil. Turkey continues to face several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs, Mayors, journalists and thousands of citizens are in custody or convicted by the state Courts. Local and international observers claim the country moves towards an authoritarian regime with thousands of citizens being persecuted. Ali Babacan’s announcement for the establishment of a new political platform (backed by prominent AKP former members such as Abdulah Gul and Ahmed Davutoglu) it is assessed as a “reply” of Erogan’s former comrades against his growing “one man” rule in Turkey. 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. Turkey develops an ambitious armament project aiming at becoming self-sufficient in defense sector; if it succeeds it will set the base to become a regional military super power.*


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#### **NOTE**

 *Stable situation. No security risk.*

 *Rather stable situation. Security risk is monitored.*

 *Major concerns over stability and security. significant security risk in specific regions. Low tension incidents.*

 *Imminent major incidents regarding stability and security. Violent incidents or armed violence in specific regions. Ongoing tension or crisis. High security risk.*

 *Evolving or ongoing crisis including major armed violence or violent/armed conflict. Civil, inter-state or non –state actors war.*