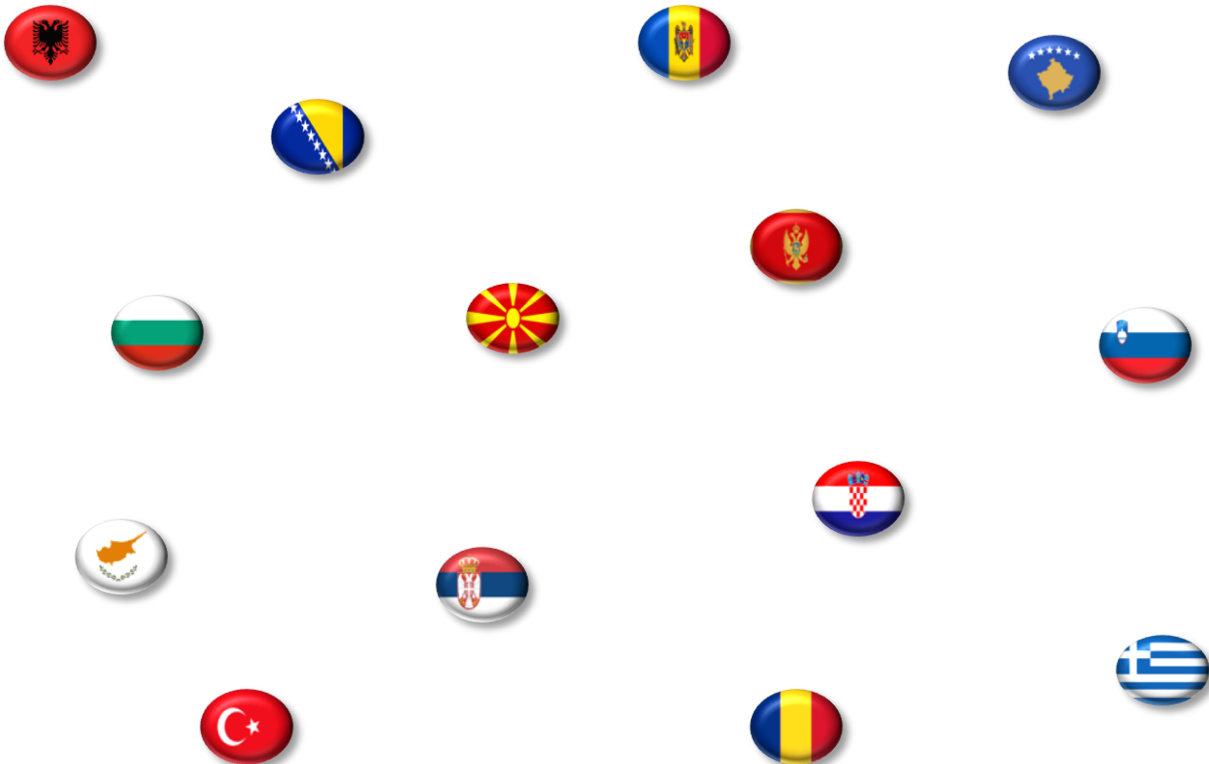




**Hermes Institute of
International Affairs,
Security & Geoeconomy**

SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

AT A GLANCE



SOUTHEAST EUROPE DIRECTORATE

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

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

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ALBANIA: June 19th, opposition supporters physically clashed with state Police in Kavaja on Wednesday evening, when they tried to forcefully enter the Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones (KZAZ), where the election materials were located. Police threw tear gas and water with high pressure to keep protesters away, even leaving the facility's area to capture some of the most active protesters in its proximity. Similar moments of strong tension took place on Wednesday in many cities in Albania, especially where the opposition has control over the municipalities. Its supporters gathered around the premises where the KZAZ have been set up, demanding the electoral process be terminated. Situation also escalated towards confrontation between the Police and opposition supporters in Kamez and Burrel, where similar attempts were made to enter the KZAZs. Police used tear gas to keep away opposition supporters who later entered the Palace of Sports, taking, destroying and ultimately burning the electoral materials. Right-wing municipalities have been insisting for the premises that have been made available to the Central Election Commission (CEC) to be evacuated for the June 30th, 2019 local elections process. According to them, the decree of President Ilir Meta for the cancellation of the elections should be respected, and consequently there can be no election process. Meanwhile, the CEC considered the decision of the Head of state to be void and continued with the preparations for the elections. Strong tensions were also recorded in Tropoja this week, where opposition supporters entered the city centre's KZAZ. In Shkodra, opposition supporters, together with employees of the Shkodra Municipality and former Democratic

Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë – PD) Deputies, gathered on Tuesday evening in the yard of the “*Shejnaze Juka*” Middle School and, after several minutes of confrontation with the Police forces, set fire to the school's first floor. All materials brought by the CEC for the preparation of the voting day were burned. Former PD MP Bardh Spahija, who was among the protesters, said that “*this was only the beginning of popular revolt against those who are imposing on Albanians one-sided elections. It was a quick reaction of the Shkodra citizens. This is not violence. Violence was an attempt by the state Police to usurp the institutions and impose itself on Shkodra citizens.*” The CEC said it is continuing its work on preparing the June 30th, 2019 local elections and warned that any violation of this process constitutes a punishable criminal offense. On Wednesday, Rama warned a new law that will prohibit anyone who commits “*electoral violations,*” meaning that will interrupt local elections, to leave the country for ten years will pass in Parliament. (www.tiranatimes.com)

- June 18th, the Romanian Presidency of the EU held a joint press release with the European Council. The Enlargement Commissioner, Johannes Hahn, said that some countries are not ready to confirm negotiations for Albania and Northern Macedonia. “*Enlargement is a strategic matter of the EU. There has been progress, but we are not where we wanted yet. France, Germany and Denmark are skeptical about Albania. Three countries want to postpone the day of the decision. Germany wants more time. No decision has been taken yet, at least not for this summer. More time is needed by the member countries. I hope that we will have the results this year.*”

Maybe in October. It is very important to be fair. I hope we will have a final decision until then,” he said. The Albanian Prime Minister, Edi Rama, reacted immediately after the declaration and said that regardless of the constant mud throwing from the opposition, which is doing everything possible to damage the country’s image in the eyes of Europe, with stones, fireworks and Molotov bombs, Albania is resisting. (www.top-channel.tv)

- June 19th, parliamentary majority is determined to continue with the procedures for removing President Ilir Meta from his duty. The Commission of laws has discussed the request made by 55 MPs of the Socialist Party of Albania (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë – PS), who want President Meta to be removed from his duty after he canceled June 30th, 2019 local elections.



Albanian President, Ilir Meta
(Photo source: www.president.al)

At the Parliamentary Commission of Laws, MPs, including the ones from the new opposition, discussed for more than an hour the validity of this request and the steps that is needed to be taken further. Ulsi Manja, Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission of Laws, said that the Chairman will invite the President to appear at the Commission and explain his position. MP Ralf

Gjoni, on the other hand, said that it is hasty to take such a decision. He proposed to continue with the procedures after June 30th, but his request was rejected by the votes of majority. (www.top-channel.tv)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Political situation in Albania is “explosive” after President’s decision to postpone local elections scheduled for June 30th, 2019. Prime Minister seeks dismissal of the President, Ilir Meta. In other words, Albania is under a political and constitutional chaos. Ruling Socialists and Prime Minister continues the pre-electoral campaign while Electoral Commissions are preparing for the election. On the other hand opposition appears determined to cancel elections. Taking current situation into consideration June 30th, 2019 is a date that tension and clashes are expected with unpredictable results. Questions for a potential civil conflict has been raised showing that situation is totally disappointing. Such situation strongly affected Albania’s EU perspective. Combination of political instability, ties between politics and organized crime, and corruption made the EU to postpone the opening of accession negotiations for Albania for the near future. According to the Enlargement Commissioner, situation will be re-examined by October 2019. Rama’s Government collapse and snap elections is a possible scenario. The Government is accused of having links with organized crime and current situation raises questions over the power of “Albanian mafia” in the country and its influence in state’s politics. Undoubtedly, corruption and organized crime remains the most significant state’s problem

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



BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:

June 20th, BiH’s archive possesses rich and valuable archival material, documents about 14 kilometers long dated from the Austro-Hungarian period until the last 1992-1995 war in BiH. Because of the unsuitable rooms where humid air and microorganisms are present, archival material is endangered and susceptible to decay. Embassy of Qatar has received a request for a donation on March 26th, 2019, specifically for renovating rooms in which the archival material of historical importance for BiH, in the amount of 128.512,51 BAM (65,000 euro). The state of Qatar has approved these funds. This donation will initiate the project “*Reconstruction of BiH Archive*,” which aims to ultimately provide the ideal conditions for the storage and protection of archive material of invaluable value. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

- June 21st, the US State Department has put BiH on the List of Countries to pay attention due to terrorism and land mines. Terrorist groups continue plotting possible attacks in Bosnia-

Herzegovina. Terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets/shopping malls, local Government facilities, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, parks, major sporting and cultural events, educational institutions, airports, and other public areas. Minefields and land mines are present throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. While suspected hazardous areas are normally clearly marked, several people are killed or injured each year. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

- June 23rd, President of the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije - SDA), Bakir Izetbegovic, commented on the formation of a new Government saying that a compromise must be reached regarding NATO membership of BiH. “*Nobody has given up on anything, they all have to find a solution which would be to send annual plans in the manner defined by law and strategies*,” said Izetbegovic to reporters. Asked if it was certain that the Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers would be appointed over the next seven - eight days, he replied that “*if the Chairman of the Council of Ministers offers a solution based on such a compromise, why not*.” “Our goal is to eliminate the stalemate in the work of the Council of Ministers of BiH and the FBiH Government, until the new Government and the Council of Ministers are appointed. I think that we have succeeded and that some misunderstandings can be solved here, for example, appointing the Director of the Police Directorate,” said Izetbegovic, Federal News Agency reports. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Political instability and uncertainty continues in Bosnia because it has not formed a Government since October 7th, 2018 general elections. The three main parties representing the three constituent entities (Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats); HDZ (Bosnian Croatian party), SDA (Bosnian Muslim or Bosniak party), and SNSD (Bosnian Serbian party) although they have reached an agreement to cooperate in forming a Government, it seems that they still cannot overcome Bosnia's accession process towards NATO. 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 (although they are in favor of joining NATO). Country faces several functional and institutional problems. Consequently political fragility maintains permanent uncertainty and institutional mistrust blocking any attempt for economic growth and major reforms. Croatia and Serbia keep on intervening in Bosnia's internal affairs destabilizing the state. 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.

EU path is too far for Bosnia and only for geopolitical interests it could have chances entering the EU. Election of ultra nationalist pro-Russian Serb Milorad Dodik in the tripartite Presidency is a strong sign of more nationalistic rhetoric and more obstacles towards Bosnia's EU and NATO (mostly) integration. Dodik is a person who does not actually believe in B&H viability and is expected to promote (actually, he has already started) his own political agenda. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turke, and other Muslim countries approach the country mainly through "investments" and/or funding ethnic or religious groups according to their interests.



BULGARIA: June 17th, at a solemn ceremony with raising its national flag, Bulgaria joined NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence. The Center is located in Tallinn, Estonia, and currently has 25 members. The first secretary of the Embassy of Bulgaria in Finland, accredited to Estonia, Milen Dimitrov presented Bulgaria to the event. Together with Bulgaria, Denmark, Norway and Romania joined the center in the same ceremony. The Center's mission is to improve the capacity, cooperation and information sharing among NATO, its member nations and partners in cyber defense through education, research and development, analyses and consultations. Joining the Center, Bulgaria will be able to build and develop national operational capabilities in cyber security. The Center's kernel includes a diverse group of experts; researchers, analysts and lecturers. Combination of military, governmental and industrial environments allows the Center to provide a comprehensive approach to cyber-

security. It is the largest center among 25 other similar centers within NATO. At present, Japan, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia and Switzerland are leading talks for the process of joining, and Luxembourg and Australia have expressed a desire to start them. At the moment, the countries which are participating in the Center's work are Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Austria, Finland and Sweden. (www.novinite.com)

- June 18th, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (Bulgarska Sotsialisticheska Partiya - BSP) started consultations on party subsidies. The party's subsidy is again on the agenda for the Deputies. BSP started political consultations with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Dvizhenie za Prava i Svobodi - DPS) and the United Patriots (Обединени Патриоти) in Parliament. Expectations are at a later stage the left to come up with its proposal on how much the party's subsidy will be reduced. The Deputies accepted last week the proposal of Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (Граждани за европейско развитие на България – GERB), the party subsidy to be reduced from 11 to 1 Bulgarian Leva for a won vote. At the same time, the DPS went out with a counter-proposal; zero leva of state money, using the American model, with the possibility of financing parties outside; from legal and natural people. (www.novinite.com)

- June 21st, at the end of next week, a US delegation will come to Bulgaria for the

final negotiations for the purchase of eight F-16 fighter jets for the needs of the Bulgarian Armed Forces. This was announced by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Krasimir Karakachanov during the parliamentary scrutiny on Friday. According to Karakachanov, talks on new aircraft continue on schedule. There may only be a delay due to staff changes in the US administration. Karakachanov expects a meeting with the US Secretary of Defense next week, if there is no change. Bulgaria has chosen American fighter jets F-16. According to the initial offer, the price for eight jets was 2.2 billion Leva (1.1 billion euro). The sum is not budgeted by the state this year and the Ministry of Finance plans to increase the level of Government's debt to finance it. According to the stipulated texts in the state budget, the maximum debt that the state can take is up to 1 billion Leva. (www.novinite.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

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. After European elections, opposition BSP appears weakened facing internal problems. The country strengthened its efforts towards entering the Eurozone achieving a positive decision of the Eurogroup. However, the EC made clear that Bulgaria could not enter the Eurozone before 2022. Apart from that the European Parliament adopted a resolution for the accession of Bulgaria (and Romania) in Schengen

Zone. However, it is questioned if the European Council will receive a unanimous final decision for Bulgaria under the current migration pressure. Corruption and organized crime remain significant obstacles and should be addressed decisively. Although modernization of Armed Forces is a top priority for Bulgaria and huge armament projects are ongoing (fighter jets, armored vehicles, vessels etc) military operational capability of the state is questioned especially in the Air Force. Bulgarian Armed Forces are far from NATO standards. The latest report on defense situation confirmed the major problems the Bulgarian Armed Forces are facing. Security situation stable; no major threats.



CROATIA: June 18th, speaking to reporters Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica – HDZ) Party Chairman Andrej Plenkovic reiterated that he expects President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic to run for a second mandate, adding that she will have the HDZ's full support. Plenkovic also commented on yesterday's announcement that former Social Democratic Party of Croatia (Socijaldemokratska Partija Hrvatske - SDP) leader Zoran Milanovic will run as the SDP candidate. Two years ago Plenkovic led the HDZ to a decisive win over Milanovic and his SDP-led coalition. Senior SDP official Arsen Bauk said today that to ensure a win at the elections for President, Milanovic will need to win over voters from other center left parties. However, at this early stage, few from the center left were ready to commit to backing Milanovic. It is expected that the elections for Croatian President will be held in January 2020. (www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr)

- June 19th, Croatian Defense Minister Damir Krsticevic met with his Italian counterpart Elisabetta Trenta in Rome during the first official visit of a Croatian Defense Minister to Italy after 15 years, the Defense Ministry said in a press release. Krsticevic and Trenta expressed their satisfaction with increasing defense cooperation, which is mostly evident in traditional cooperation between the two countries' Navies. Croatian and Italian naval forces are currently participating in the international military exercise “Adrion – 19” Livex. In order to further strengthen the bilateral defense cooperation, the two Ministers announced that a new defense cooperation agreement would be signed soon. As European Union members, Italy and Croatia are participating in four PESCO projects and in European firefighting forces. The two Ministers agreed that there is a lot of potential for advancing defense cooperation, especially in the defense industry. “*Croatia has a high-quality defense industry and Italian soldiers have had a chance to see the exceptional quality and functionality of the Croatian helmet for themselves,*” Krsticevic said. The meeting also focused on the current security and political situation in Southeastern Europe, with Krsticevic reaffirming Croatia's commitment to the EU and NATO's enlargement policy and readiness to provide further support to membership aspirants. (www.hr.n1info.com)

- June 20th, Croatia could join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM II), seen as a waiting room for eurozone entry, in about a year, Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic said in Brussels on Wednesday after meeting with Commission Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue Valdis Dombrovskis. “*I think we have done well*

all the prerequisites and believe that we will receive support at Eurogroup level and at other levels when final decisions are made. As usual, this process will take about a year,” Plenkovic told the press. The ERM II accession procedure requires Croatia's Central Bank Governor and Finance Minister to send a letter to Brussels, after which the process of evaluation of each policy area begins. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said during a visit to Zagreb earlier this month that Croatia was fully prepared to join ERM II soon. A country's admission to ERM II is decided by all eurozone countries and the European Central Bank. According to the Commission's latest convergence report of May 2018, Croatia meets all the criteria for eurozone entry except one, and that is participation in ERM II for at least two years. Croatia is expected to join the eurozone around 2023 at the earliest. (www.hr.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

The country enjoys support from EU towards its Eurozone goal. The state enjoys political stability and latest pressure from small coalition partner BM 365 is considered of minor importance. 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. 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

accelerates its efforts towards accession in Schengen zone. It implements a policy of Armed Forces' modernization trying to form a reliable and well equipped force according to NATO standards. Failure to complete successfully the purchase of a modern fighter jet maintains a long period of an ineffective and weak Croatian Air Force.



CYPRUS: June 20th, Turkey launched a second drilling ship on Thursday that will conduct natural gas operations off the northeast coast of Cyprus for three months, a move which risks aggravating a conflict with Cyprus over jurisdiction rights for oil and gas exploration. Turkey and the internationally recognized Cypriot Government have overlapping claims in that part of the Mediterranean, an area thought to be rich in natural gas. Turkey's Energy Minister Fatih Donmez said at the launch of the vessel, the Yavuz, it would operate in a borehole near Cyprus' Karpas peninsula, and reach a depth of 3,300 meters. Ankara, which does not have diplomatic relations with Cyprus, claims that certain areas in Cyprus's offshore maritime zone, known as an EEZ, fall under the jurisdiction of Turkey or of Turkish Cypriots. Cyprus says that defining its EEZ is its sovereign right. Donmez said unilateral agreements made between Cyprus and the regional countries that attempted to “steal” the rights of Turkey and Turkish Cypriots had “no legal validity.” “Turkey will continue its operations in its own continental shelf and in areas where the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has licensed *Turkiye Petrolleri* [Turkish Petroleum Corporation] without stopping,” Donmez said. “We are warning actors

from outside the region that are forming partnerships with Cyprus: Do not chase illusions that will yield no results,” he noted. Greece, which backs the Cypriot Government, has called on the European Council to condemn Ankara’s actions in the region. Cyprus has also threatened to jeopardize EU enlargement talks if the bloc does not take action against Ankara. Ahead of the EU summit on Thursday evening, President Nicos Anastasiades met with Donald Tusk, president of the European Council. Anastasiades briefed Tusk on Turkey’s ongoing violations of the island’s EEZ as well as the recent Turkish move in the fenced-off town of Varosha. *“I expect the European Council to confirm its full solidarity with Cyprus and its readiness to respond appropriately,”* Tusk stated after the meeting. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- June 21st, targeted measures are to be taken on an EU-level against Turkey over its drilling activities in Cyprus’ EEZ, the Cyprus Presidency said. President Nicos Anastasiades said measures are not an end in themselves but would work towards sending a message to Turkey that *“if it maintains European inclinations, it will have to adjust to EU principles and values.”* The goal, Anastasiades said, was to terminate illegal activities in Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone and to resume negotiations to find a viable solution to the Cyprus problem. He acknowledged that Nicosia has not been happy with the first draft of the conclusions on Thursday night. *“And so we prepared the new text that was adopted as submitted,”* he said. Cyprus’ EU partners were convinced, he said, when they realized that Turkey’s words and deeds did not match, particularly after the dispatch of the second

drilling ship in Cyprus’ EEZ, he added, referring to the Yavuz. The first drillship Fatih has been positioned off the west coast of the island since May. Ankara said drilling has begun. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said on Friday Turkey could face consequences if it persisted on a course of action challenging Cyprus’ right to explore for gas. *“There is an upsurge in Turkish aggression, something we do not only observe in the relations of Turkey with Greece and Cyprus, but also important countries like the United States, and with Europe,”* Tsipras told reporters at the end of the EU summit. The conclusions of the European Council summit stated that the EU had adopted the recommendation by Anastasiades for concrete support in restraining illegal Turkish drilling activities. The General Affairs Council invited the EC and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to submit *“options for appropriate measures” against Turkey “without delay”* due to the country’s refusal to conform with international law and EU calls for restraint with regard to its drilling activities. Opposition Progressive Party of Working People (Ανορθωτικό Κόμμα Εργαζόμενου Λαού – AKEL) on Friday said that while the strong language used in the EC conclusions was positive, specific measures and sanctions to tackle the issue were not set out. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- June 21st, Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci called on President Nicos Anastasiades on Friday to take part in a five-party meeting to clarify the solution that the Greek Cypriot side is seeking to the Cyprus problem. *“We are in the middle of a process that is unfinished,”* Akinci said, highlighting that it was not the UN

parameters but the Greek Cypriot side and its “*maximalist positions*” that were responsible for the dead-end in the negotiations. Speaking at a lengthy press conference on Friday morning, Akinci said the chances of holding a meeting attended by five parties – the two sides and guarantor powers Greece, Turkey and Britain – formal or informal, would be clear after the Greek and Turkish presidential elections. Akinci said that he would do whatever is possible to ensure that the Cyprus problem moved towards the direction of a peaceful coexistence, with security and political equality between the two communities. He reiterated his proposal for the creation of a bicomunal committee for natural gas, noting that there is still time to avoid additional tension and to use the issue as a field for cooperation rather than conflict. “*The reasonable thing to do on this issue is to start with discussing it. Let us advance step by step from an environment of tension to an environment of common benefit, cooperation. There is a ship sent by Turkey. The second one is also coming. Within this framework, the continuation of increasing tension seems unavoidable. It is possible to turn around this course,*” he said. Referring to the “*cabinet*” decision announced earlier in the week by Turkish Cypriot “*Foreign Minister*” Kudret Ozersay regarding plans to conduct a scientific inventory of Varosha, Akinci denounced the move which he said excluded the “*Presidency*” and was announced before a study could be carried out. “*The ‘President’ is not a scarecrow. He represents the will of the people. I do not think that Turkey does not want to consult with me, but it is evident that there is a deficiency on this issue,*” he said. Akinci added that any move in Varosha must be in line with

international law, as well as promote peace and cooperation between the two communities, and respect the rights of previous owners of property. “*It is possible to bring onto the agenda the opening [of Varosha] for the Greek Cypriots under UN supervision and for common businesses and in return of beginning direct flights to Tymbou... I want to emphasize the importance of international law. Stating that decisions on Varosha were taken by excluding the president is far from being serious. [...],*” he said. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Cyprus has reached a deadlock in the ongoing crisis with Turkish invasion of drillship Fatih (while the second one Yavuz is also ready to start drills) within its EEZ. Fatih is there more than two months, while Turkish administration declares that offshore drilling will start soon. Despite international calls to Turkey for abandoning its plans of violating the Cypriot EEZ and its sovereign rights, Turkish actions remain “unanswered.” Announcement of Cypriot administration that arrest warrants have been issued against workers in the drillship are interpreted as spasmodic actions of a trapped state which cannot act decisively and effectively for protecting its sovereignty. Actually, Cyprus is trapped because it does not have a mechanism of power (military, diplomatic, economic etc) to force Turkey to withdraw its ships. Cyprus lacks of naval and air forces which could deter Turkey of violating Cypriot sovereign rights, while Greece appears reluctant in sending naval units in the region showing presence and exercising deterrence. Cyprus working closely with Greece

achieved to convince EU leaders to introduce a joint declaration condemning Turkish actions and warning Turkey with undefined sanctions. Turkish message is very clear; we are present in Cyprus, we are present in the energy “game” and nothing works leaving Turkey aside. In other words, energy security includes Turkey; otherwise eastern Mediterranean is not a stable and secure sea. A “hot” incident cannot be excluded. Despite current situation, Cyprus works systematically in order to become a major part of the East Mediterranean energy hub. It is favored not only by its natural gas deposits, but also by its strategic position in the “heart” of East Mediterranean Sea and of course of being an EU member state. The strategy of multilateral cooperation seems to be fruitful. Cyprus seeks to negotiate and reach agreements with its neighboring countries regarding their EEZ expanding maritime cooperation and energy security. Turkey looks like being isolated from the energy game and its current aggressive reaction is attributed to this situation. It is certain that Turkey will not accept “fait accompli” in a region considered as part of its strategic interests. Cyprus improved its bilateral relations with the US, strengthened its defense cooperation with France, UK, and lately develops its defense and security relations with Germany. One could say that Cyprus strengthens defense cooperation with NATO leading countries. The US administration promotes abolishment of the arms embargo against Cyprus allowing it to improve its military capabilities. 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 with vessels violating Cypriot sovereignty. 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: June 21st in the wake of what Athens has hailed as a successful EU summit for Greece and Cyprus, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras warned Friday that Turkey could face consequences from the bloc if it did not desist from its provocations in the Eastern Mediterranean island’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In a statement Thursday, the European Council called Turkey’s drilling in Cyprus’s EEZ “illegal,” stressing that Europe “stands ready to respond appropriately” with measures. Tsipras, who appeared particularly satisfied by the statement of support, told reporters Friday that it was “the first time after decades of international violations of international law by Turkey that the EU, after coordinated actions by Greece and Cyprus, has condemned Turkish actions in such a clear and decisive manner.” He also said that the “stern” message to Turkey is accompanied by targeted measures by the EU for the first time. Tsipras did not disclose what these measures could entail and deferred reporters to the next General Affairs Council meeting of EU Foreign Ministers. He did however hint that the measures could lead to serious economic consequences for Turkey. This “turnaround in favor of our national positions,” he said, was due to his Government’s foreign policy that gave Greece influence in the region, the EU and the wider international arena. He cited the Prespes agreement signed with North Macedonia and the subsequent military

agreements signed between Athens and Skopje. The deal, he added, ensured that Greek jets are flying over North Macedonia and not Turkish ones. However, Tsipras did send a conciliatory message, saying that he intends to keep channels of communication with Ankara open, and also expressed hope that if Turkey stops its disruptive behavior, talks could begin again for the reunification of war-divided Cyprus. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- June 22nd, Greek police were seeking a 27 year old associate of Panagiota Roupa, a leading member of the Revolutionary Struggle terrorist group, after she violated the terms of her conditional release, failing to report to her local Police station. Constantina Athanasopoulou had been arrested in January 2017 as an associate of Roupa, herself then a fugitive. She was released in June 2018 after the maximum 18 month period of pre-trial detention expired, on the condition that she report to the Police every week. She failed to do so this week and also failed to turn up Friday at a Greek Court which convicted her to 34 years for participating in a plot to free Revolutionary Struggle leader Nikos Maziotis from Korydallos Prison. In the meanwhile, two anarchists arrested last Wednesday (June 12th, 2019) following a thwarted heist on a money delivery van outside Thessaloniki's AHEPA Hospital were remanded in custody on Tuesday after defending themselves before an investigating magistrate. Yiannis Dimitrakis, 41, and Costas Sakkas, 35, who posed as a doctor and patient for their attempted heist last week, face charges of armed robbery, forgery and civil disobedience. Dimitrakis was to be taken to a prison in Komotini and Sakkas to the Nigrita penitentiary

in Serres pending trial. According to sources, the men admitted to the attempted robbery, citing financial problems. They denied that they had aimed to fund domestic terrorism with the loot. Police are seeking evidence of their suspected links to terrorist groups Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire and Group of Popular Fighters. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- June 23rd, as Turkey continues with its provocative behavior in the Eastern Mediterranean, despite EU calls for it to desist from drilling for oil in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Greece's Armed Forces are on standby to deal with a possible escalation of tensions in the East Med or the Aegean, Kathimerini understands. According to sources, the key question being pondered in Athens is how to react in the event that Turkey decides to conduct seismic research or drilling within Greece's continental shelf or its EEZ. The biggest concern is about a potential Turkish intervention east of Rhodes and south of Kastellorizo. On political level, Athens underlines the potential repercussions of Turkey's provocative behavior on stability in the broader region. The statement by the EU last week, though vague, was welcomed by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras as "*the first clear and decisive*" condemnation of Turkey by the bloc "after decades of violations of international law." On the operational level, however, it is less clear what Greece's response should be. The country's Armed Forces will be on high alert over the summer as defense officials prepare a series of plans to deal with a possible Turkish intervention. The plans are primarily based on Hellenic Navy maneuvers, as Turkey is currently using research ships and drilling vessels

to entrench its presence in the region. However, the Hellenic Air Force would likely play a supportive role in any response. Asked last week whether Greece can count on military support from the EU or the US in the event of an incident, Defense Minister Evangelos Apostolakis told reporters that Greece will have to plan to deal with such a scenario independently. “*There is neither such promise, nor any such issue at the moment, but as I have said before, when we need to do something it is expected to act alone.*” Athens also holds little faith in promises by French President Emmanuel Macron to send French Navy ships to the Aegean if necessary as such pledges have been made in the past. (www.ekathimerini.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Snap parliamentary elections announced for July 7th, 2019 after ruling SYRIZA was strongly defeated in the European and local elections by opposition conservatives ND. The country has entered into a long pre-electoral period due to European and local election and the coming parliamentary one. ND will focus to achieve a full majority in the coming elections in order to form a stable Government. On the other hand it is a period that Greece faces diplomatic and security challenges mainly by Turkey. Internal terrorism is considered as a major unresolved problem of national security undermining stability of the state. Greek – Turkish relations are in critical point due to Turkey’s decision to violate Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) aiming at conducting oil and gas drills. Moreover, Turkey maintains a hard rhetoric against Greece regarding its territorial and maritime sovereign

rights. Greece acting in coordination and cooperation with Cyprus achieved to convince EU member states to adopt a rather strict joint declaration speaking for potential sanctions against Turkey if continues to violate Cypriot EEZ. However, sanctions are still far from decided and imposed. A crisis to Cyprus means a crisis to Greece forcing Armed Forces to deploy military, naval, and air units. Taking into consideration that Cyprus lacks of naval and air power it is Greece which will support the small and vulnerable island located in the East Mediterranean heart. Turkish fighter jets keep on violating Greek airspace, while Turkey has issued a NAVTEX within Greek territorial waters for military exercise (including fires) in the Kastelorizo island region. It is a fact that Greek political and military leadership is concerned over a potential incident with Turkey, especially if its drillships appear within Greek waters. As Defense Minister Apostolakis said in such a case Greece has no other option than forbid it implying use of force. Strengthening of military cooperation between Greece and the US upgrades Greece’s strategic role in Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East as a western (US, EU, NATO) forward military base. 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. In this context, addition of 70 second-hand offensive reconnaissance helicopters OH-58 “KIOWA WARRIOR” upgrade operational capabilities of the Army especially in the sensitive area of the

Aegean Sea. Security situation is of high risk due to an accidental or preplanned incident by Turkey and the complicated current situation in Cypriot EEZ.



KOSOVO: June 20th, Kosovo Minister of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Besim Beqaj, has resigned a day after his party – the Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Kosovës - PDK), ordered all its members indicted of various criminal charges, leave all public posts. Beqaj, is senior member of the ruling PDK and is one of 11 party's senior officials indicted in 2018 of allegedly handing out state jobs to people based on their political affiliation. After his resignation, Beqaj said that the indictment against him is ungrounded. Amongst other things, Beqaj said that he will continue to be part of the biggest ruling party. Beqaj is one of 11 PDK officials indicted in the so called "*Pronto*" affair. The case is based on wiretaps made in 2011 during an anticorruption operation. According to the indictment, the defendants could be heard in wiretapped conversations offering party supporters jobs at state-financed agencies. Leaks from the wiretaps led to a public scandal in 2016 involving high-ranking PDK officials, including current President Hashim Thaci, who in 2011 was Prime Minister of Kosovo. The scandal was dubbed the "*Pronto Affair*" by media because Thaci could be heard on a leaked recording answering his phone using the Italian word "*pronto*" when he received a call from a senior PDK official, Adem Grabovci, who frequently demanded from Government officials direct jobs to PDK members. On Wednesday, Head of PDK, Kadri Veseli, has decided to

dismiss from exercising public posts all members of the party who are indicted of various criminal charges. Veseli's initiative has been welcomed Thursday by Nataliya Apostolova, Head of the EU Office in Kosovo saying that she hopes seeing this standard is applied by all political parties. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- June 21st, the German Government announced that the meeting scheduled for July 1st, 2019 between Kosovo and Serbia in Paris, has been postponed. "*It is correct that the meeting announced for July 1st is postponed,*" a German Government Spokesperson told Deutsche Welle. It added Germany and France would remain in close contact with Pristina and Belgrade. The Government's Spokesperson has refused to make further comments after Gazeta Express has reported that a meeting of delegations from Kosovo and Serbia met in Berlin on Wednesday. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- June 23rd, tariffs Kosovo introduced to Serbian goods could stay in force forever unless Belgrade recognizes Kosovo's independence, Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said. "*We are ready whenever Serbia is,*" Haradinaj said in Lipljan, in Central Kosovo, just south of the capital Pristina. He noted that Pristina was the one who accepted the "*position which is less than that of an independent state*" in talks on the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and by doing so, made it impossible to be recognized as an independent state. The Prime Minister added Pristina was the one that sat behind that table as a weak and non-equal party. "*We made it difficult for international factors to defend us,*" Haradinaj said and added that the name of the dialogue is "*Mutual recognition*

within the existing borders.” In November 2018, Pristina authorities introduced protective measures on all products coming from Serbia and Bosnia. Tariffs were raised from 10 to 100% in less than a month after their introduction, and despite calls from the international community and warnings from the US, Kosovo remained adamant to hold the tariffs in place until both Serbia and Bosnia recognize its independence. (www.rs.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Kosovo keeps escalating tension with Serbia blocking any chance of dialogue restart. Latest Police operation in the north arresting Serbs (and Albanians), 100% tax on Serbian and Bosnian products, Kosovo Assembly resolution that Serbs committed genocide during 1998-1999 war, establishment of Kosovo Army, request for a special Court for Serbs are just a few actions which undermine any possibility of negotiations with Serbia. By keep repeating in every forum that there is nothing else to talk than “Serbia recognizing Kosovo” you simply do not promote dialogue. Pristina does not hesitate to escalate tension even with an armed conflict. Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci stated that his state could be unified with Albania including parts of south Serbia (Presevo, Bujanovac and Medveja). Such statements are not only immature, but also put under risk peace and stability in the region. Thaci openly speaks for border change and more specific violent change. It is strongly recommended that international community, namely the UN, EU and US should terminate decisively such irresponsible ideas. Under these circumstances it is not a surprise that meeting

between Belgrade – Pristina scheduled for July 1st, 2019 in Paris was postponed. Only through normalization of relations with Serbia, Kosovo will be able to move forward namely to enter the UN, NATO, EU and to achieve a normal status of a state. Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration. Path towards the EU and NATO will be long and hard. Kosovo seeks its Army 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: June 17th, ex Prime Minister and President of the Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat din Moldova - PDM), Pavel Filip stated that the Democrats are coming back to Parliament, though in opposition. At the same time, he claimed that the PDM will vote for the draft laws that will be for Moldovan citizens, even if they will come from Deputies from the new parliamentary majority, ZdG wrote. “We will be an active and constructive opposition,” Filip said in a press briefing. At the same time, the former Minister of Education, Culture, and Research, PDM member Monica Babuc, was proposed by the party as Deputy Parliament Speaker [and she was elected on June 18th, 2019]. In the meantime, Vladimir Plahotniuc, in his first message to Moldovan

citizens through social media said that he is not in the country and that he no longer feels safe in Moldova. (www.moldova.org)

- June 20th, the Moldovan Parliament is going to investigate the coup attempt made by the Democratic Party of Moldova (Partidul Democrat din Moldova - PDM) on June 8th – 14th, 2019. Parliamentary majority, by the votes of 57 MPs, supported the establishment of a parliamentary ad hoc Commission that shall “*investigate circumstances of a coup attempted to undermine fundamentals of the constitutional system in the Republic of Moldova.*” The bill author MP Sergiu Litvinenco of the Party of Action and Solidarity (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate - PAS) stated that such parliamentary investigation is necessary to thoroughly search the judgments made by the Constitutional Court (CC) on June 7th - 9th, 2019. Though the Head of state, President Igor Dodon had already annulled them, there are strong suspicions that the CC decisions were issued by order of PDM and its Chairman Vlad Plahotniuc. In his words, the ad hoc Commission must also verify information that several Prosecutors sought to arrest 60 Deputies from the parliamentary majority, while relevant Courts were preparing arrest warrants. PDM MPs reacted in this initiative; MP Sergiu Sirbu perceived the initiative as a public execution. Another Democrat, ex-Minister of Justice Vladimir Cebotari stated that a coup attempt presupposes the use of military force, but there was nothing of this kind in this particular case. However, PAS MP Lilian Carp stated that being a professional historian, he believes that PDM’s activities during the first week of the Parliament’s plenary work (June 8-14) can be characterized as a coup

attempt. Socialist MP Gaik Vartanyan stated that with its anti-constitutional decisions, the CC placed Moldova on the brink of a civil war. The ad hoc Commission will be headed by the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (Partidul Socialiștilor din Republica Moldova – PSRM) MP, ex-Minister of the Interior Vladimir Turcan, and will include PSRM Grigore Novac and Victor Gaiciuc; Deputy Speaker Mihai Popsoi of the PAS; Dignity and Truth Platform Party (Partidul Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr - PPDA) MP Dinu Plingau. The Democrats refused to delegate their representatives to the Commission and the Sor Party (Partidul Șor) was absent from the Parliament plenary session. (www.infotag.md)

- June 20th, President of the Constitutional Court (CCM) Mihai Poalelungi has tendered resignation from office. According to a press release, Mihai Poalelungi submitted his application on resignation. Poalelungi was elected to the position of President of Moldova’s Constitutional Court in March 2018.



Resigned President of Moldovan Constitutional Court, Mihai Poalelungi
(www.constcourt.md)

Earlier, Poalelungi had held the office of judge at the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of Moldova and the post of judge and President of the Supreme Court of Justice. Prime Minister Maia Sandu demanded last week resignation of all judges of the Constitutional Court. (www.moldpres.md)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Newly elected Government enjoying support of PSRM and ACUM block Deputies is moving rapidly in changes of executives in critical state institutions in order to consolidate its power. Besides, Prime Minister Maia Sandu openly declared that her block has cooperated with Socialists aiming at “liberating the country from PDM oligarchy.” PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc left the country expressing fears for his security. The fact is that the new Government is determined to investigate all “dark” activities of Democrats during their ruling period. Moreover, parliamentary majority has established a Committee to investigate a potential coup attempt by PDM during June 8th – 14th, 2019. It seems that the country has avoided turbulence and political chaos especially after former Prime Minister Pavel Filip announced that PDM will join Parliament as opposition. Needless to say that the country has come in the edge of civil turbulence. It is interesting to watch the new international orientation of the country since a pro-Russian and pro-western party formed the Government. Moldova might be a unique example of compromise between the US and Russia. Moldova is between the Euro-Atlantic structures on the one hand and the Russian influence on the other. Political instability and uncertainty affect

vitality in state’s function blocking reforms, harming economy and keeping the country far from European standards. The EU tough policy against Moldova may soften now as a signal of support to the new Government which includes a pro-western party. Such support could be expressed by restarting micro-economic assistance. 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 be unnoticed by international stakeholders. The “Transnistria case” is always a “running sore” for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.



MONTENEGRO: June 20th, Montenegro’s Foreign Ministry summoned Serbia’s Ambassador Zoran Bingulac because of “Belgrade officials’ constant negative statements about Montenegro’s internal affairs which culminated with a Minister saying President Milo Djukanovic was the biggest criminal in Europe,” the Beta news agency reported on Thursday. The State Secretary Zoran Jankovic said statements like one made by Nenad Popovic, Serbia’s Minister of Innovation and Technological Development are “worrying” and “inappropriate” and that Podgorica expected Belgrade “to distant itself” from such words. “Serious qualifications about the President of Montenegro are unacceptable, not in the line of good neighborly relations and do not contribute to the cooperation of the two countries,” Jankovic told Bingulac. According to Jankovic “Serbia’s intensive campaign was inappropriate and unjust leading

the country [Serbia] against the draft law on religious freedom.” (www.cdm.me)

- June 21st, the first class of Montenegrin volunteers in the Armed Forces concluded their training. Graduation ceremony was held in Danilovgrad and it was attended by the Minister of Defense, Predrag Boskovic who praised the volunteers. As representatives of the Ministry of Defense said, Boskovic is very satisfied with the level of training. He thanked volunteers for forging the way to a very important project. However, he expressed hopes that none of them would ever come in situation to put on the uniform in order to defend this country from a foreign enemy. Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Montenegro, Colonel Svetozar Brajkovic said that no individual could perform a heroic deed the way a group of people could. *“Our objective was the establishment of collective spirit and we did it,”* Brajkovic said. On the behalf of the entire class, Milorad Bojovic thanked the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces of Montenegro for giving them the chance to serve their military term. He said it was an honor for them to be part of the Armed Forces and perform tasks just like professional soldiers. *“There is no as honorable vocation as the military vocation. Anybody who gets the chance to put on the military uniform and defend their own country has already done a lot for a lifetime. I promise that the Armed Forces of Montenegro can count on us whenever necessary,”* Bojovic said. (www.cdm.me)

- June 22nd, Montenegrin Prime Minister Dusko Markovic, commented on the positive opinion of the Venice Commission concerning the Draft Law on Freedom of Religion, and emphasized that

Montenegro has got confirmation of its freedom, independence, and democratic potential. *“The Venice Commission confirmed our freedom, independence and democratic potential. The Constitution guarantees the State’s right to determine all social issues – without intention to cause damage to anyone, but in the interest of every citizen and his/her rights and freedoms. The same will happen with this Law! We will not determine who will go to churches and monasteries and when to do that, but those churches and monasteries belong to the people of Montenegro, that is the state and no one can deny it,”* Markovic said. (www.cdm.me)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Although EC Progress Report is assessed as a positive one, it raises specific concerns over media freedom, corruption and organized crime. Report is elaborating on specific cases signaling detailed research. Montenegro enters in a crucial crossroad regarding its EU future and specific reforms and actions should be implemented if it remains committed in its goal to access the EU by 2025. Political stability is re-establishing again after DF decision to return in parliamentary Committees. 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. However, protesters movement has lost dynamics and ruling DPS is more stable. The EU and US 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; However, the state needs more concrete reforms in the field of justice, rule of law, fight against corruption, money laundering, and organized crime, public administration transparency and accountability in order to become a stable and attractive investment environment. Montenegro shows activity within NATO trying to prove that it is an equal partner of the alliance with military capacity according to NATO standards. Moreover, it tries to modernize and strengthen its operational capabilities and in this context it raised its defense budget aiming at purchasing new assets such as armored vehicles.



NORTH MACEDONIA: June 17th, North Macedonia's Prime Minister Zoran Zaev after Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija - SDSM) Central Board meeting in Ohrid yesterday said that he will reassemble the Government and will replace eight Ministers and 20 Heads of public institutions instead of announcing snap parliamentary elections. The Government reshuffle will be completed by end of June whereat there will be no early elections because the date for the start of EU accession negotiations is certain, he said. Zaev said on Sunday that the Government should continue its mandate and focus on the country's integration processes – NATO membership, for which accession protocol has already been ratified by 17

member states and to join NATO by the end of this or the beginning of the next year and to get a date to start EU accession talks. He explained that the initial concept of Government reshuffle, which did not exclude the possibility of early elections or return of the mandate, was directed to the EU member states that they are obliged to deliver a date for negotiations. He said that he will not allow the return of radicalism, populism, nationalism in the country, repeated divisions in the society, quarrels with neighbors. *“For the stability of the country, it is essential this Government to stay and no new elections to be planned,”* German Ambassador Thomas Norbert Gerberich said on Sunday at “Prespa Meet” event. Zaev also made changes within his party as well. The SDSM's Executive Board has 16 new members. (www.nezavisen.mk)

- June 17th, Minister of Justice, Renata Deskoska said that the extradition order for former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski over the events that took place in Parliament, on April 27th, 2017 will be sent to Budapest this week. *“The entire file from the Court and the Prosecution arrived at the Ministry late last week. Today, I signed all attached documents and in the upcoming days, they will be sent to Budapest with an extradition order for the crimes committed on April 27th,”* Deskoska said. (www.meta.mk)

- June 18th, EU member states did not accept the recommendation from the European Commission (EC) to set a date for opening membership negotiations for North Macedonia and Albania. According to EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn, a small number of countries opposed it. The conclusions agreed at the gathering said that *“in light of the limited time available and the*

importance of the matter, the council will revert to the issue with a view to reaching a clear and substantive decision as soon as possible and no later than October 2019.” After the meeting, EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn told a news conference that a small number of member states were opposed and warned that the collective credibility of the Union is at stake. Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó in an interview with MIA said that the decision was embarrassing. (www.meta.mk, www.rferl.org)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

EU decision to postpone opening of accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania was totally disappointing for Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and his ruling coalition. Although NATO accession process is implementing rapidly, EU rejection was a “slap” in the face of North Macedonia’s stability. Although Zaev insisted previous days on warning European states that postponement of opening accession talks would mean snap election in the country, after the EU member states leaders’ decision he changed his mind claiming that there will be no early parliamentary elections but a wide governmental reshuffle. Zaev defended his decision claiming that he will protect the country from populism and nationalism but it is assessed that he seeks to avoid early elections because he would face a clean defeat by opposition VMRO-DPMNE. Zaev based his political survival and dominance in the triptych “resolution of name issue with Greece – NATO accession – opening of EU accession talks.” Although the first one was successfully accomplished and the second is proceeding rapidly the third one has stuck. It is expected that

VMRO-DPMNE will increase its pressure for a caretaker Government and snap elections. Definitely, North Macedonia and Albania are two different cases regarding their EU future and should not be handled as a single package. The threats of nationalism and political instability are covering North Macedonia’s sky. The country should focus on its economy and major administrative and judicial reforms, fight against corruption and impunity aiming at reaching the EU standards.



ROMANIA: June 19th, the no-confidence motion filed by the Romanian opposition against the Government of Prime Minister Viorica Dancila was rejected, since only 200 MPs supported it, compared to the 233 votes needed for it to pass. MPs of the ruling coalition, Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) - Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților – ALDE), refused to express their vote. MPs of the opposition parties National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal - PNL), Save Romania Union (Uniunea Salvați România - USR), People's Movement Party (Partidul Mișcarea Populară - PMP), PRO Romania (PRO România - PRO), and Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România - UDMR) and some Deputies representing the national minorities supported the motion. In their no-confidence motion, the opposition parties accused the ruling coalition of concentrating on amending the justice laws with the final purpose of preventing the prosecution of corrupted politicians. According to the opposition, this was confirmed by the vote on May 26th, 2019

when the ruling coalition's parties lost the elections for the European Parliament and Romanians supported in large numbers the public referendum initiated by President Klaus Iohannis on tightening the rule of law. Separately, the motion also addressed the Government's poor management of the conflict between ethnic Romanians and Hungarians related to the military cemetery at Valea Uzului. This is the third no-confidence motion against the Government of Dancila, all of which were rejected. The first motion fell in June 2018, voted by 166 MPs, and the second in December 2018 was rejected as well, with only 161 votes. (www.romania-insider.com)

- June 20th, Romania is not facing activation of the Article 7 of the EU Treaty, said Justice Commissioner Vera Jourova while attending the EU - US ministerial meeting on justice and home affairs in Bucharest. *"I have been here at a time when the reform was going in the wrong direction. At the same time, I am glad about the useful meeting between Prime Minister Viorica Dancila and [EC President Jean-Claude] Juncker. Commitments were voiced by the Romanian party to return to the path of reforms that we have recommended [...] Article 7 exists for moments when we find that situation in a country is serious and that there may be a systemic breach of the rule of law. This is not the case for Romania at this moment,"* she said in a statement to the press, local Agerpres reported. Asked whether the Magistrates' Investigation Section should be dismantled, Jourova replied that this is a decision of the authorities in Bucharest. *"We only recommend principles,"* she said. (www.romania-insider.com)

- June 21st, the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) convened for an informal meeting between Prime Minister Viorica Dancila and local party leaders in Neptun seaside resort this weekend might be decided on reshuffling certain Ministers. Among them there might be Transport Minister Razvan Cuc, Tourism Minister Bogdan Trif, but also Vice Prime Minister and Development Minister Daniel Suciuc, Interior Minister Carmen Dan, and Agriculture Minister Petre Daea, PSD sources told local media. Reshuffle is to be conducted after the extraordinary congress of June 29th, 2019. The same sources revealed that while some PSD members want to take the Government restructuring path, with fewer Ministries, Dancila who is interim PSD leader, would endorse a reshuffle. Dancila Cabinet has 25 Ministries at present and a position of Vice Prime Minister with no portfolio, currently taken by Viorel Stefan. However, as Stefan is going to the European Court of Accounts as of July, his position becomes vacant, and PSD must also think of a successor. As for the presidential election this autumn, the ruling party has three rumored potential candidates so far; Finance Minister Eugen Teodorovici, Education Minister Ecaterina Andronescu and Senator Serban Nicolae. (www.romaniajournal.ro)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

It seems that political normality and stability are appearing again in the Romanian horizon after Dragnea's imprisonment. Ruling PSD provides strong signs of abandoning its previous agenda on controversial justice amendments and control of state's justice system. The EU has already sent

its satisfaction via the Justice Commissioner who said that triggering of article 7 of the EU Treaty against Romania it is not an option at the moment. Finally, Prime Minister Viorica Dancila and her Government survived in the third no-confidence motion feeling more stable after the vote. Romania is concluding its term on the Presidency of the Council of EU and despite previous criticism and non-confidence by the EU member states' high officials, the final result could be assessed as positive. The "open battle" between the President Klaus Iohannis and the ruling PSD has divided the state in major institutional issues such as national defense, justice, and security. PSD congress aiming at electing its new leader may bring new political developments with snap elections not excluded. 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: - June 17th, the Alliance of Serbia (Savez za Srbiju - SzS) called all opposition members to boycott municipal Parliaments' work and speak to people instead of "sparring" with the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka - SNS) led by President Aleksandar Vucic, the FoNet news agency reported. The SzS Deputies have been boycotting the work of Serbia's Parliaments for

months, rejecting calls from SNS to go back to benches before the way of the assembly functioning was changed to respect opposition members and allow them time for discussion. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- June 17th, the 6th multi-national military exercise "Platinum Wolf – 19" ended at the South base in southern in the presence of the Chief of the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces, General Milan Mojsilovic, the Commander of the Land Forces, Lieutenant General Milosav Simovic and the US Ambassador to Serbia Kyle Scott. At the sixth "Platinum Wolf - 19" exercise in addition to the host – the Serbian Armed Forces, members of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Northern Macedonia, the US, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom also took part. So far, more than 2.000 members from 15 partner countries participated in these exercises, organized by the 4th Battalion of the Land Forces. The aim of the exercise, which took place from 3rd to 17th June, 2019 was to train partner countries to participate in multinational peacekeeping operations. According to Exercise Commander, Colonel Sladjan Stamenkovic said that over the last 15 days soldiers and senior officers from 10 partner countries were trained at the "Borovac" training grounds in the tactics, techniques, and procedures applied in multinational operations. At the exercise, 502 people participated, of which 257 were members of foreign Armed Forces. For first time, a unit from the Italian Armed Forces participated in the exercise. US ambassador Kyle Scott said at the closing ceremony that the exercise is improved every year with a training scenario based on

realistic situations. He also said the South Base has become a model base for training peacekeeping forces. (www.mod.gov.rs)



“Platinum Wolf – 19”

(Photo source: www.mod.gov.rs)

- June 22nd, Serbian President, Aleksandar Vucic said he is not happy that the Belgrade-Pristina summit in Paris was called off, adding that the US want to play the lead role in dialogue mediation. Speaking to Minsk journalists, he said that Kosovo Prime Minister Ramus Haradinaj obviously wanted to let the US know at any cost that they decide on everything, and not the French or Germans. Vucic said that Serbia finds it unacceptable that all those who recognized Kosovo want to play the lead role in the Pristina-Belgrade normalization dialogue. He added that delay of the Paris summit was not a defeat of France and Germany, but a difficult situation for everyone. “They can bring as many Americans as they want, but it still will not be enough. I hope we will avoid any tensions in the meantime,” the President said, adding that “Serbia has the right of an adjournment.” (www.rs.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

The country has entered in a period of fragile political stability due to citizens’ reactions

against governmental practices regarding human rights, media freedom, and elections transparency. Although protesters insist on organizing protests, it seems that opposition reactions lose momentum. President Alexandar Vucic announced that elections (parliamentary and local) will be held on March or April 2020. Opposition said that if its requests will not be fulfilled, elections will be boycotted. It is assessed that Vucic feels more confident that fully controls political situation in Serbia and there is no need for early elections at the moment. Regarding Belgrade – Pristina dialogue there is nothing to be expected in the near future; the whole process has reached a deadlock. Taking into consideration that both sides harden their rhetoric, cancellation of the Paris summit scheduled for July 2019 was not a surprise. Armed Forces are in full alert but without any deployment of units across Serbia – Kosovo border. Serbia strengthens its relations with Russia (and China) seeking stronger support regarding Kosovo case. Security situation is complex and uncertain especially after Police operations in Northern Kosovo (with Serbian majority population) which endangers the possibility of armed violence. None could predict Serbia’s reaction in a possible accidental or pre-planned (provocation including) incident in Northern Kosovo against local Serbs. One should have in mind that top state officials have said repeatedly in public that Serbia will protect Kosovo Serbs by any mean including security and military force. At the moment, Serbia looks like acting in accordance with the international law aiming at reducing tension in the region. In other words state’s leadership is acting in a “reasonable” and “wise” way avoiding mistakes

of the past which have isolated Serbia from the international community. Serbia pays special attention in improving operational capabilities of its armed forces declaring towards all sides that its Armed Forces are the power of the state.



SLOVENIA: June 20th, dissatisfied by cooperation with Marjan Sarec's minority Government, the Left (Levica) party has started questioning its support to the ruling coalition. Coordinator Luka Mesec said that things have stuck and party's council would decide in July whether to carry on with cooperation. *"When it comes to cooperation with the Government we are dissatisfied,"* Mesec said noting that his party has sought to complete before summer four projects agreed with the Government. *"These projects are related to changes in health services preventing healthcare privatization, indexation of the minimum hourly rate for students with the minimum wage, regulation of real estate agencies, and transfer of apartments from Bank Assets Management Company (DUTB) to the National Housing Fund,"* Mesec said. According to him, party's representatives were met with Sarec two weeks ago urging for completion of at least three projects before summer *"but nothing happened in these fields."* Mesec said that under these circumstances the party will put forward its bodies in order to debate the question of whether to continue cooperating with Sarec's Government. The debate will be concluded in the party's council which will take the final decision on the matter. The last straw for the Left was obviously privatization of state-owned bank ABANKA. *"The two remaining systemic banks in state ownership, ABANKA and NLB have been sold recently. The biggest problem is that in both cases*

the Government did nothing to stop the forced processes," Mesec said. According to him, the Government leans to the right lately which could be concluded from the draft of income tax reform prepared by the Finance Minister Andrej Bertoncelj. (www.sta.si)

- June 20th, Slovenia completed privatization of its banks this week, wrapping up a process that started in 2013 with a huge bailout of the banking system that required billions of euro in state aid; money that has not been fully recouped. The state's 100% stake in ABANKA, the country's no. 3 bank, was sold to NKBM, Slovenia's second largest bank, for 444 million euro. Transaction is supposed to be completed by the end of the year pending regulatory approval, according to Slovenian Sovereign Holding (SSH), which said the deal satisfied *"all of the commitments given by the Republic of Slovenia to the European Commission with regard to state aid."* The price, within the 400-500 million euro range forecast by most analysts, means Slovenia has not entirely recouped the 781 million euro cost of recapitalizing ABANKA and BANKA CELJE, which was later merged with ABANKA, in 2013. NKBM is owned by the US private equity fund APOLLO (80%) and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Just a day before completing the ABANKA privatization procedure, SSH sold the remaining 10% of New Bank of Ljubljana (Nova Ljubljanska Banka – NLB) that it was obligated to offload in line with state aid commitments, leaving the state with a controlling stake of 25% plus one share. Completion of both privatization procedures means that restrictions on both banks imposed by the European Central Bank (ECB)

because of the state aid will be lifted, giving them both more room to grow. (www.sta.si)

- June 21st, the National Assembly rejected an interpellation motion filed by the opposition Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska Demokratska Stranka - SDS) against Defense Minister Karl Erjavec. After a full-day debate, 35 Deputies supported the motion, while 39 were against it. In order the interpellation to succeed, 46 MPs should have voted for it. According to SDS, Erjavec misused the Military Intelligence Service and has lied in the case of Army's night shooting at Pocek training field, which led to the dismissal of Brigadier General Mihe Skerbinca, Commander of the Army Force Command. "If I really make any mistake, I will resign by myself," Erjavec said after the session. In his view, SDS seeks only to topple the Government. (www.vecer.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■:

Although Slovenia enjoys a relative political stability, the minority Government of Marjan Sarec has entered in a period of fragile balance due to the Left party announcement that it will re-assessed its support towards the ruling coalition. Left party is the key factor for Government's stability and viability by supporting it in the Parliament. Without the Left's support the Government would be toppled and early elections should be called. At the moment none of the ruling coalition parties wish snap elections, however political developments in mid-July could not be excluded. Sarec has been proved of being flexible in Slovenia's politics so far achieving to balance adequately between different political

trends. Looking in the future and next parliamentary elections he seeks to unify political forces belong to the ALDE family against SDS which keeps on being the most powerful political force in the country. The Government has to address several internal social issues (increase of minimum wage, health care, pensions etc). Announcement that 2020 and 2021 state budget will be focused on healthcare and pensions shows that current Government seeks to strengthen social care structures of Slovenia. Completion of privatization of state-owned banks ABANKA and NLB is a positive sign of the Government's work showing determination in strengthening state's economic growth. Border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia remains active with low scale skirmishes not excluded periodically. Slovenia implies that the ongoing border dispute may affect its decision regarding Croatia's membership candidacy in Schengen Zone. Announcement of the EU Court that Slovenia's complaint against Croatia will be heard on July 8th, 2019 will add another chapter on the two countries 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. The Slovenian Armed Forces face problems mainly in the field of modern equipment and manning. The annual report on the Armed Forces operational readiness released by the Armed Forces Chief of Staff is disappointing since it assessed that the Armed Forces have limited operational capabilities in war time namely they cannot accomplish their mission. The med-term 2018 – 2023 defense program it could improve situation, but under current political situation it is doubtful if it will be implemented to the end.



TURKEY: June 17th, Washington is looking at imposing financial sanctions on Turkish firms beyond those that build parts for the Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jet, over Ankara's planned purchase of the Russian air defense system S-400, a top Pentagon official said. Ellen Lord, US Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment said US officials viewed Turkey as an important ally in NATO and urged it to drop its plans to buy the S-400 so that its companies could continue to build critical parts for a wide range of other US weapons systems besides the F-35 fighter jet. Discussion so far has focused mainly on the high-profile F-35 program. But Lord's comments at the International Paris Air Show reflected growing concern in Washington about Turkey's refusal to reverse the purchase of the S-400 system. Lord said the issues were being kept separate for now, but an interagency US Government group is looking at potential sanctions against a wider range of Turkish firms under the US Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). She said no decisions had been made, but a decision to proceed with sanctions would hit Turkish industry hard. *"That is not really what we want to do. We want to find a way to continue to work with Turkey,"* she said. Turkish firms build 937 parts for the F-35 stealth fighter, and Ankara had planned to buy 100 F-35 fighters, which would have a total value of 9 billion dollars at current prices. Pentagon now plans to move that production to US sites and elsewhere, ending Turkey's manufacturing role by early next year. Turkish officials argue that Ankara is fulfilling its responsibilities in the F-35 project and expected the program to continue as planned. They say

buying the S-400s is only meant to meet Turkey's defense needs and posed no threats to the F-35. Ralph Acaba, President of Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems, said Turkish firms build components for the company's Patriot missile defense system, although Turkey does not own or operate that system. He said Turkish firms were important, reliable suppliers, but Raytheon was constantly looking at alternatives, based on risk assessments. He declined to provide details on the total amount of Turkish content in Raytheon weapons systems. Rick Edwards, Executive Vice President of Lockheed Martin Corp's international division, said the most significant program involving Turkish content is the F-35. But he said the impact on Turkish industry if all US defense orders are cancelled would be significant. *"If all American work disappeared ... that would have a pretty severe economic impact on those companies,"* he said. (www.aljazeera.com)

- June 18th, Syria does not want to see fighting with Turkey, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem said, after Ankara said one of its posts in Syria's Idlib region was attacked from an area controlled by Syrian Government forces. Russia, which supports Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in his country's civil war, and Turkey, long a backer of the rebels fighting Assad, co-sponsored a de-escalation pact for the area that has been in place since last year. But the deal has faltered in recent months, forcing hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee. About 300 people have been killed by Syrian and Russian air raids and shelling in the area since late April, according to the United Nations. Idlib, in Syria's northwest along the border with Turkey, is the last remaining bastion of anti-government rebels after

eight years of civil war. *“We hope that our military and the Turkish military do not fight. This is our principled stance,”* al-Moualem told reporters in Beijing, standing alongside the Chinese Government's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi. *“What we are fighting is terrorists especially in Idlib, which is Syrian territory - part of our country,”* al-Moualem said. The dominant force in the Idlib region is Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a former wing of al-Qaeda until 2016 when it renounced its affiliation. Others, including some with Turkish backing, also have a presence. *“The question now is what does Turkey want to do in Syria? Turkey is occupying part of Syrian soil, and has a military presence in certain parts of Syria,”* al-Moualem added. *“This question needs to be asked of Turkey what are their actual aims? We are fighting those terrorist groups and organizations. The whole world believes those people we are fighting are terrorists.”* Damascus and Moscow want HTS out of Idlib and disarmed, and keep pressuring Ankara to make that happen. Since April, Syrian Government forces have stepped up their shelling and bombing of the area, killing scores of people. The rebels say the Government's actions are part of a campaign for an assault that would breach the de-escalation pact. The Syrian Government and its Russian allies say the heightened military operations are in response to rebel violations, including the presence of fighters in the demilitarized zone. Turkey's Defense Ministry said on Thursday Syrian forces deliberately attacked an observation post with 35 mortar rounds. Three Turkish soldiers were slightly wounded. (www.aljazeera.com)

- June 22nd, residents of Istanbul will be back at the polling stations on Sunday in a rerun of the mayoral election, which was last held about three months ago. The rerun comes weeks after Ekrem Imamoglu, the candidate of main opposition Republican People's Party's (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP), won the election in Turkey's commercial hub by a slim margin over Binali Yildirim of the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP). The result of the March 31st, 2019 polls was a big blow to AKP, which in the same local polls also lost control of the country's capital, Ankara, and Izmir, the third largest city. AKP, led by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, successfully lobbied for a rerun of the Istanbul mayoral vote, after Imamoglu secured the seat with a difference of just 13,729 votes. Imamoglu spent only 18 days in office when Turkey's election board ordered a rerun in the country's largest city, citing *“situations which affected the result and honesty”* of the polls. The decision came after the AKP, which ran Istanbul for the past two decades, lodged an *“extraordinary objection”* against the result. With Turkey facing its first recession in a decade, the Istanbul mayoral candidates have mostly focused on unemployment, poverty and the cost of living. According to the most recent data released by the Turkish Statistical Institute in 2017, at 970 billion Turkish liras (166.6 billion dollars), Istanbul accounts for just over 31% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), meaning the city has an economy greater than countries such as Finland, Egypt, Portugal and Greece. Even so, the distribution of GDP per capita has been decreasing for the past six years, squeezing many Istanbul residents. Campaign signs erected around the city over the

past few weeks openly rival each other as to which side will give the best deal, or even free offers, on everyday necessities such as gas, water and transportation. CHP promises a 40% reduction in water prices and that it will provide monthly support to families in need, including distribution of free milk to “poor and needy Istanbul residents.” AKP has promised a better deal; a discount of 46% on water bills and 10% on gas, as well as monthly assistance for low-income families of 50 liras (8.6 dollars) for gas and 80 liras (13.73 dollars) for electricity bills. (www.aljazeera.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Turkish – US relations keep on deteriorating. The US administration has threatened Turkey with hard economic sanctions including suspension of Turkish participation in all defense projects; such a move would be devastating for Turkish defense companies. Deliveries of Russian air defense system S-400 is expected to begin in mid-July. However, taking into consideration that Turkey is a pivotal country enjoying geopolitical importance and having one of the largest militaries (the 2nd within NATO) it is hard to assess that the US seek a full rift with its NATO ally. On the contrary, there are still open official and unofficial channels of communication working on a mutual accepted compromise. The US needs Turkey and the opposite, especially in a period where Middle East is in turbulence. 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. Municipal elections in Istanbul on June 23rd, 2019 will be closely monitored by international stakeholders as a “stress test” of Turkish democratic principles and values. However, it is proved that loss of Istanbul municipality – the biggest Turkish city and trade hub which was under AKP control last 15 years – was a “bitter defeat” for Erdogan. That is why he has mobilized all available assets to re-win the election. Turkey faces several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs and journalists are in custody or convicted by the state Courts. Local and international observers claim the country moves towards an authoritarian regime with thousands of citizens being persecuted. EC Progress Report on Turkey was disappointing “freezing” any further development regarding its accession process. Turkish Armed Forces declares its readiness to intervene militarily in Syria, eastern of Euphrates river but the US 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. Syrian mortar strikes against forward Turkish outpost within Syria made Turkey to warn that if they continue it will hit back. Syrian authorities although made clear that they do not seek an open confrontation with Ankara, they have reminded that Turkish Army has entered into Syrian territory deploying its forces. Operation “Claw” against PKK in north Iraq continues. The state demonstrates decisively






its leading role in the wider region of the Middle East, Southeast Europe, and East Mediterranean implementing its doctrine for a diligent capability development effort to be able to fight two multi-front, inter-state armed conflicts while being able to simultaneously carry on large-scale counterterrorism operations at home and beyond borders. Kurdish question is a major security threat for Turkey affecting stability, peace and even unity of the state. In Eastern Mediterranean Turkey escalates tension by sending a 2nd drillship (Yavuz) accompanied by Turkish Navy frigates. Production-sharing deal for the Aphrodite gas reservoir worth over 9 billion dollars over 18 years between Cypriot administration and Noble Energy excluding Turkish Cypriots from any profit it is assessed that it will lead in rapid escalation. Turkey is determined to react even with violence if its interests are harmed. The cost so far, for Turkey, is zero achieving simultaneously to question Cypriot sovereign rights. Although the EU presented a joint declaration condemning Turkish actions and underlying that it will consider appropriate action against Turkey if does not stop an illegal gas drilling bid in Cypriot EEZ, international reactions still are limited in words. In this context, Turkey strengthened its diplomatic efforts to convince international community for its fair rights in the maritime region. It is assessed that Turkey is fully determined to escalate tension in the region including armed violence (if it is necessary) aiming at securing its interests. Taking into consideration that Cyprus and Greece act in coordination and the latter guarantees defense and security of Cyprus it cannot be excluded an accidental or pre-planned “hot incident” in Cyprus or the Aegean Sea.

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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.