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

## ***SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE***

### ***AT A GLANCE***



***SOUTHEAST EUROPE DIRECTORATE***

***PROVIDING KNOWLEDGE TO THOSE WHO SHAPE THE FUTURE***

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

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

### **“HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE**

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**ALBANIA:** January 8<sup>th</sup>, leader of the Socialist Movement for Integration (Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim - LSI) Monika Kryemadhi said that her party will build a joint political platform with the Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë – PD) with the task to remove Edi Rama. She underlined that Rama will soon be a defendant in front of the judiciary, because he has violated the Constitution before the elections of June 2017. *“2017 was the year of criminal elections, of canabization, of drug traffic, which brought the blocking of the judiciary reform. 2018 will be the year that will confirm the opposition and that will politically isolate Edi Rama. Rama will be brought to justice for the way how he has acted. He is known for manipulating the public opinion,”* the LSI leader said. (www.top-channel.tv)

- January 9<sup>th</sup>, after a meeting organized with the leaders of local branches, opposition leader of the Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë – PD) Lulzim Basha declared that January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 will be the day of the protest warned by the opposition. The DP leader declared that the current Government is illegal, and the only task of the opposition will be removing it. *“The judiciary is captured by politicians. We want justice for the unemployed, for students, for those who want to build their life in Albania. Everything starts by bringing legality back to the country. We have a narco-state today built on illegality. Illegality is the foundation of corrupted elections, of bought votes that created an illegal Parliament and an illegal Prime Minister”* Basha stated. Spokesperson of the ruling Socialist Party of Albania (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë – PS) Eliza Spiropali commended the protest warned by the opposition: *“Despite the constant efforts of the*

*opposition to create turmoil inside our country, or even when they speak English to the EU and other officials, we will put Albania’s agenda before political daily agendas. Unfortunately, this is not the rhetoric or the politics of the opposition. They have decided to put their political interest above the national one.”* (www.top-channel.tv)

- January 10<sup>th</sup>, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati speaking about pending issues with Greece claimed: *“The war package is clear for each party and includes the properties, Cham issue, issue of cemeteries of fallen Greek soldiers in Albania and so on. Secondly the current matters related to the rights of national minorities; in the concrete case the Greek minority, the rights of Albanians living in Greece, consular issues, driving licenses. Finally are issues related to the solution regarding the border regime.”* (www.albaniannews.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Political tension may rise due to strong opposition reactions against the Government’s decisions and actions. Opposition strengthens its rhetoric against the Government. Security situation stable without major incidents or challenges.*



## BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA: January 9<sup>th</sup>,

Republika Srpska (RS) celebrated its statehood day in Banja Luka with a series of events attended by officials from RS, Serbia, officials from the region and some foreigners. Around 1,800 people marched through to celebrate the Day. President of the National Assembly Nedeljko Cubrilovic, RS Prime Minister Zeljka Cvijanovic, Serbian Minister of Defense Aleksandar Vulin, Serbian

Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic, Serbian Ambassador to BiH Stanimir Vukicevic and the Prince Alexander and Princess Katarina Karadjordjevic also attended the ceremonial assembly, in addition to the President Milorad Dodik. The President said *“The Serb people have two states: Serbia and Republika Srpska, and we want to be one.”* One of the guests at the parade was Darko Mladic, the son of wartime Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic, who stood on a stage in Banja Luka’s main square along with politicians from Serbia and Republika Srpska. Also in attendance were Anatoly Bibilov,



Celebration of statehood day in RS  
(Photo source: [www.predsjedn timers.net](http://www.predsjedn timers.net))

President of Georgia’s Russian-backed breakaway region of South Ossetia, and members of the Austria’s far-right Freedom Party. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic did not attend celebration, but sent a message that *“Serbia will always be with the RS.”* The U.S reacted with RS celebrations through a statement of the U.S embassy in Sarajevo in which highlighted that celebration of January 9<sup>th</sup> has declared as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of B&H representing a clear violation of the rule of law, and those who are doing that should be held responsible. ([www.balkaninsight.com](http://www.balkaninsight.com), [www.sarajevotimes.com](http://www.sarajevotimes.com), [www.rtrs.tv](http://www.rtrs.tv))

January 13<sup>th</sup>, according to media reports a militia called “Serbian Honour”, which it said had been trained in the Russian-funded centre in Nis, Serbia, was in the process of setting up a paramilitary group that would used if need be against Republika Srpska (RS) President Milorad Dodik’s opponents. The report included a picture of the group reportedly taken on Bosnian Serb entity’s statehood day on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Banja Luka, claiming one of the group’s leaders, Bojan Stojkovic, is a former Serbian paratrooper who trained in Moscow and had been awarded a medal there by a Russian general. The Presidency of Bosnian Serb’s entity RS and Russia’s embassy to B&H in separate statements dismissed as “dangerous” reports that Bosnian Serb paramilitary units are being formed under the joint auspices of the President of RS, Milorad Dodik, and of Moscow. However Dragan Mektic, Bosnia’s Security Minister and member of the Serbian Democratic Party (Српска демократска Странка – SDS), the main opposition party in RS, said the intelligence and security services were aware of the presence and activities of the group. *“There is information about this whole matter; we even managed to document certain things. In the end, you saw people in uniforms in the pictures; that is enough for it to be taken seriously,”* Mektic said. ([www.balkaninsight.com](http://www.balkaninsight.com), [www.zurnal.info](http://www.zurnal.info))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*Country faces several functional and institutional problems (Bosnia’s Federation entity has not adopted 2018 budget yet, etc). RS rhetoric for greater autonomy and rumors for paramilitary units may raise tension although there is not tangible evidence. Security situation stable; no major threats.*



## **BULGARIA:** January 11<sup>th</sup>,

opposition Bulgarian Socialist Party (Българска социалистическа партия - BSP) will table its vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Boiko Borissov's coalition Government on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 basing the vote on the issue of corruption, BSP leader Kornelia Ninova said at Parliament's first sitting for 2018. The BSP will not be tabling the motion in tandem with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Движение за права и свободи - DPS), Parliament's fourth-largest party, after DPS founder and honorary chairman Ahmed Dogan said that no opposition party is ready to take over the Government of the country. Reportedly, however, the DPS will support the vote of no confidence, which most analysts see as unlikely to gain enough votes to succeed. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

- January 12<sup>th</sup>, Bulgarian MPs voted to overturn President Roumen Radev's veto on the new law that envisions the creation of a single body to oversee the fight against corruption, with the opposition socialists standing alone in voting against the motion, which was carried by a tally of 146 MPs in favor and 76 opposed. Last week, Radev took the unusual step of challenging the bill in its entirety rather than just some of its provisions, arguing that the law fell short of its stated goal of fighting corruption, while at the same time "*deviating from the fundamental tenets of the constitution and international treaties that Bulgaria is party to.*" (www.sofiaglobe.com)

## **COUNTRY ASSESSMENT** ■ :

*Bulgaria focuses its efforts on the EU Presidency which in fact is a challenging test for the country. Security situation stable; no major threats.*



## **CROATIA:** January 10<sup>th</sup>, new U.S

Ambassador to Croatia Robert Kohorst arrived in Zagreb replacing Juliet Valls Noyes before her term expired. Kohorst has no diplomatic experience and was appointed by the U.S President Donald Trump as one of his political appointees. (www.total-croatia-news.com)



The U.S Ambassador in Croatia Robert Kohorst  
(Photo source: www.hr.usembassy.gov)

- January 14<sup>th</sup>, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, member of the Croatian Democratic Party (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica – HDZ), and Speaker of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee Miro Kovac in an interview claimed that "*Slovenia's behavior is impermissible in this climate it is difficult to reach an agreement on the border.*" In his opinion and taking into consideration the complexity of situation and that there is no agreement yet between Slovenia and Croatia over the Savudrija Valley, the only reasonable solution is that Croatia and Slovenia should agree on the management of the disputed

Gulf. He repeated that the example of the “Dollart Bay” case and the agreement between Germany and the Netherlands should be adopted in the Piran Bay dispute. Kovac stressed that the Government has no other choice to react but to offer dialogue and bilateral negotiations adding that Croatia should exit from the arbitration agreement due to the fact that Slovenia seriously hurt it. In question why Croatia does not implement the arbitration award Kovac said that *“Croatia’s borders can be changed only by the Parliament’s decision.”* According to his opinion *“under these circumstances it is very difficult an agreement to be reached; it is realistic that this will only be possible after the parliamentary elections in Slovenia,”* and concluded by saying *“Croatia must monitor its territory. When you protect your territory, it means you are a serious state. No deviation from its sovereignty.”* (www.vecernji.hr)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Tension with Slovenia rises and determined messages are sent by both sides. The EU and its member states also express their concern over the dispute. Security risk rises slightly and situation is monitored although tension remains in political level exclusively.*



**CYPRUS:** January 8<sup>th</sup>, President Nicos Anastasiades’ campaign office said the elections in the north had their own political significance despite their illegality. “We hope that they will not create conditions within the Turkish Cypriot community that will lead to further hardening of its positions and its intransigence,” Anastasiades’ spokeswoman Annita Demetriou said in a written statement. Of course, the official

negotiator of the Turkish Cypriot community remains independent of the results, without forgetting that Ankara itself has the main and decisive role.” The National Unity Party (Ulusal Birlik Partisi - UBP) took first place in the elections in the north on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018, gaining 35.58% of the vote and 21 seats in the 50-seat “Parliament”. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- January 14<sup>th</sup>, the trilateral summit between Cyprus, Greece and Jordan could serve as a model for cooperation in the region, says Mohamad El-Fayez, the Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Cyprus. In an interview with Cyprus News Agency ahead of the first trilateral summit in Nicosia, the Ambassador points to the good understanding between King Abdullah II of Jordan, President Nicos Anastasiades and Greek Premier Alexis Tsipras on many issues. Amman, he said, maintains good relations with both countries for over half a century. He also said that King Abdullah will arrive in the Cypriot capital accompanied by high - ranking officials, including Prime Minister Hani Mulki and several ministers of his Cabinet. In the margins of the Summit, Cyprus and Jordan will sign four agreements on education, health, agriculture and energy. Moreover, all three countries are expected to sign three trilateral Memorandums of Understanding on maritime affairs and antiquities. Ambassador El-Fayez said that his country maintains a steady foreign policy for the last 70 years. In relation to the Cyprus issue, he says that Amman’s position is *“very solid and clear. We are always committed to Security Council resolutions concerning many issues in the world, Cyprus being one of them. We support strongly the position of Cyprus to implement the Security Council resolutions and are in favor of the reunification of Cyprus that*



*will allow people to live peacefully, as they did in the past” he said. (www.cyprus-mail.com, www.cna.org.cy)*

- January 14<sup>th</sup>, Greek Cypriot Negotiator, Ambassador Andreas Mavroyiannis is set to have meetings this week in the New York with the UN Secretariat officials and UN Security Council members. The Security Council is expected to adopt on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 a resolution renewing the mandate of the peace keeping force in Cyprus, (UNFICYP) for another six months. The Security Council is to take into account three reports by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres; his good services report of September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017, his report on the strategic review of UNFICYP circulated in December 2017 and his report on UNFICYP of January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018. UNFICYP was established by Security Council resolution 186 (1964), with a mandate *“To prevent a recurrence of fighting and, as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions.”* While the mandate of the Mission remains the same to date, its responsibilities evolved following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, to include supervising the ceasefire lines, maintaining a buffer zone, and facilitating inter-communal contacts. (www.cyprus-mail.com, www.cna.org.cy)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Cyprus entered in pre-electoral period due to the coming presidential elections scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Security risk rises in the region due to the imminent sea drills for gas and oil research and the Turkish reactions which remains in rhetoric level at the moment.*



**F.Y.R.O.M:** January 11<sup>th</sup>,

F.Y.R.O.M's Parliament passed a law allowing wider official use of the Albanian language, fiercely opposed by nationalists who say it will lead to further ethnic division of the Balkan country. The law is key part of a coalition deal between the ruling Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (Социјалдемократски сојуз на Македонија – SDSM) and their junior coalition partners, parties representing ethnic Albanians who make up nearly a third of the 2 million population. 69 deputies in the 120-seat Parliament voted for the law that would allow, among other things, a Parliament speaker to chair a session in Albanian. *“With today's vote on the law on languages we finalized the normative part of the peace deal that ended the 2001 conflict,”* Artan Grubi, a lawmaker from the ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim – BDI) party, told journalists. Opposition Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство - VMRO-DPMNE) said in a statement that the law *“deepens the differences and damages the homogeneity of Macedonian society. Bilingualism will create chaos in the legal order, it will create inefficient institutions.”* F.Y.R.O.M's President Gjorge Ivanov also argued against the law and if he decides not to sign the bill then the law should be returned to the Parliament for re-vote. Prime Minister Zoran Zaev urged Ivanov to sign the bill according to the Ohrid Agreement provisions contributing to a more stable society where all citizens are equal. (www.mia.mk, www.reuters.com)



- January 13<sup>th</sup>, Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov said that there is no name proposal yet and called the UN mediator Matthew Nimetz to propose a preliminary framework at next week's meeting in New York. Dimitrov claimed *"There is still no proposal on the table. We decided to encourage mediator Nimetz to present a preliminary framework as soon as next Wednesday serving as a guideline for essential progress. We are also prepared to engage directly the Foreign Ministers which never happened in the past."* The Minister admitted that there are differences between Greece and F.Y.R.O.M and the coming period will show if they can be overcome. According to Dimitrov *"It is very important for Greece to have a clear distinction between the country of Macedonia and the Greek region of Macedonia. For us it is very important to eliminate any doubts regarding identity issues. Macedonia cannot belong solely to Greece or Macedonia because the geographic region is large."* (www.mia.mk)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Newly elected Government works intensively in stabilizing political situation both inside and outside the country. Resolution of the "name" dispute with the neighboring Greece is the most challenging task "opening the gates" for the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country.*



**GREECE:** January 9<sup>th</sup>, Greece

Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias stated that Greece will propose a compound name for all uses in its negotiations with the F.Y.R. of Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M) on the name issue, which will differentiate it from the Greek Macedonia with geographic qualifiers. He also said that the cabinet has decided on its proposals for the name

which will be presented in meetings with representatives of F.Y.R.O.M. Kotzias emphasized that F.Y.R.O.M will not be able to join NATO if it does not come to an agreement on the name issue first; a condition which Skopje is well-aware of and rejected the need for a referendum in Greece. Finally he commended that a referendum in F.Y.R.O.M is a "domestic issue" for the country but has warned that if the deal is rejected, *"the cost for F.Y.R.O.M will be greater than what anybody can imagine today."* (www.mfa.gr, www.thenationalherald.com)

- January 11<sup>th</sup>, the Greek Government Council for Foreign Affairs and Defense (KYSEA) has accepted a US donation of 70 retired OH-58D "KIOWA WARRIOR" reconnaissance helicopters for the Hellenic Army. KYSEA authorized the Ministry of Defense Panos Kammenos to receive 44.16 million Euros for restoring the helicopters and shipping them to Greece. According to media information only 36 out of 70 helicopters will be operational while the rest will be used for training and stock of spare parts. Introduction of OH-58D in the Hellenic Army creates needs for infrastructure, maintenance, and personnel training. According to the initial operational planning the new helicopters will be deployed in the islands of Eastern Aegean Sea in an effort to strengthen defense capabilities against Turkish threats. (www.janes.com, www.dimokratianews.gr)

- January 14<sup>th</sup>, leader of Independent Greeks party (Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες – ANEL) and ruling coalition partner Panos Kammenos proposed a referendum on the name dispute with F.Y.R.O.M. According to him *"Greek people will have to decide on the unprecedented, in the history of man, [decision to] cede their history and*

*civilization to another people.” Moreover Kammenos said that “Including the term Macedonia in the name would signal the retrenchment of Greek civilization in the centuries to come.” (www.ekathimerini.com)*

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Political and security stability so far. Diplomatic initiatives for resolving the “name” dispute with F.Y.R.O.M may cause political instability due to the different political stance among the two coalition partners. Parliamentary parties assess political cost of their stance in the issue. Turkey keeps on “low level” tension in the Aegean Sea (violation of F.I.R and/or territorial sea by fighter jets and navy or coast guard vessels respectively)*



**KOSOVO:** January 12<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry of Kosovo Security Force (KSF) says that the Draft Law on transformation of the KSF in Kosovo Army will be ready by the end of April 2018 at latest. KSF Minister Rustem Berisha said that the lightly armed KSF which has a civilian mission, is ready to be transformed into army; “The draft law on amending/supplementing the laws related to Kosovo Army will be finalized and proceeded to the Government of Kosovo on 30 April at latest,” noting that it is up to Kosovo Government to vote necessary changes of the Constitution enabling establishment of the Army. In order for Kosovo to transform the KSF into army constitutional changes are needed. Considering current constellation of political forces in the Kosovo Assembly the vote of ten Serbian MPs is crucial for the creation of Army. However Serbian MPs are opposing transformation of the KSF claiming that Kosovo has KFOR peacekeepers and does not need its

army. Kosovo President Hashim Thaci proposed last year transformation of the KSF into army through amending current Law on KSF but the move was criticized by internationals and NATO who stated that they would support transformation of the KSF into army only through constitutional amendments. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- January 13<sup>th</sup>, The Pristina - Belgrade dialogue will resume on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Brussels. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj’s advisor Avni Arifi has been appointed as the chief negotiator of the Kosovo Government. Arifi confirmed that the political talks will be headed by Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci, and the Government’s role will be implementation of the reached agreements. Main task of the Government’s team is to handle the technical level of the Kosovo - Serbia dialogue in Brussels facilitated by the European Union. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- January 13<sup>th</sup>, the President Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, and Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli, are not giving up on their plans to abrogate the war crimes court law. Despite warning of international community to stop the initiative for repealing the law, Kosovo leaders continue backing the initiative launched by 43 ruling MPs to repeal the Law on Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecution Office, which will deal with alleged crimes committed by the KLA during Kosovo war. Request of MPs to repeal the Law is expected to be discussed January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 meeting. The Assembly of Kosovo on Friday issued a press release announcing that a new meeting will take place on 15 January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 but they did not publish the agenda of the topics expected to be discussed. Kosovo President Hashim Thaci and Prime

Minister Ramush Haradinaj stated recently that they would respect every decision coming from MPs, implying that they support abrogation of the Law if voted by MPs. The Speaker of Assembly stated that the special court is inevitable and cannot be stopped. On Friday the EU Office in Kosovo and diplomatic missions of the EU in Kosovo issued a joint press release calling on MPs to give up on their initiative and warning that Kosovo will face serious consequences if it continues efforts to repeal the law.

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration. Kosovo political elite set obstacles in significant issues provoking reactions from international community. Efforts for the establishment of Armed Forces without constitutional amendments may become a source of security instability in the region. International presence guarantees security, law and order in the state so far. Kosovo which is not a UN member is quite far from the Euro-Atlantic path due to structural and institutional problems. Ethnic division between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs is always a possible source of violence.*



**MOLDOVA:** January 10<sup>th</sup>, the interim President, Moldova's Parliament Speaker Andrian Candu, signed the decree on appointing seven new Ministers and vice Prime Ministers. This was due to the suspension by the Constitutional Court of President Igor Dodon, who vetoed twice the new ministers. According to Prime Minister Pavel Filip, the new structure of the Government fits in perfectly in the framework

of the reform of the central administration and in the technocratic dimension. Thus, the cabinet was completed with two Deputy Premiers: Iurie Leanca – Deputy Premier for European Integration and Cristina Lesnic – Deputy Premier for Reintegration, and five Ministers: Chiril Gaburici – Minister of Economy and Infrastructure, Svetlana Cebotari – Minister of Health, Labor and Social Protection, Liviu Volconovici – Minister of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, Tudor Ulianoschi – Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Alexandru Tanase – Justice Minister. The suspended President Igor Dodon reacted to the appointing of the seven Ministers, claiming they lack the needed legitimacy, entering their positions with a presumption of guilt for the way they were appointed, but also for the way they behaved in other corrupted Governments. Moreover, Dodon warned that he and the Socialist opposition reserve their right to “mobilizing hundreds of thousands of citizens to put an end to these unlawful acts and constitutional abuses.” ([www.moldova.org](http://www.moldova.org), [www.gov.md](http://www.gov.md))



The new members of the cabinet took the oath  
(Photo source: [www.gov.md](http://www.gov.md))

- January 11<sup>th</sup>, Russia plans to open 24 voting centers in the Transnistrian region of Moldova for the presidential elections taking place on 7 March

7th, 2018. The number of voting centers was agreed in December 2017 between the separatist Electoral Office and the Russian Embassy in Moldova. There are around 180 thousand people holding Russian citizenship and living in the Transnistrian region. ([www.moldova.org](http://www.moldova.org), [www.novostipmr.com](http://www.novostipmr.com))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Political life is “hostage” of the pro-Russian President Igor Dodon and pro-Western Government rivalry which undermines the institutional function of the country. In the wider framework Moldova is between the Euro-Atlantic structures on the one hand and the Russian influence on the other. The “Transnistria case” is always a “running sore” for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.*



### **MONTENEGRO:** January

12<sup>th</sup>, the Commander of NATO Combined Air Operations Centre Torrejon, Lieutenant General Ruben C. Garcia Servert paid a visit in the Air Force of the Armed Forces of Montenegro (VCG). Servert expressed his satisfaction with the current situation and capacities of the Air Force, as well as the implementation of the NATO integrated air defense system. Servert met the Chief of the General Staff of VCG, Brigadier General Ilija Dakovic at the military airport in Golubovci. The Montenegrin Ministry of Defense emphasized that the visit of the Commander is of exceptional importance, as Montenegro will perform Command and Control within the Air Policing Mission in cooperation with the NATO Combined Air Operations Centre Torrejon, as well as the airspace control and monitoring

centers located in Italy and Greece. ([www.cdm.me](http://www.cdm.me))

- January 12<sup>th</sup>, in a meeting between Montenegrin Parliament Speaker Ivan Brajovic and the U.S Ambassador in Podgorica Margaret Ann Uyehara both people agreed that the return of a part of the opposition to the Parliament contributes to a better political dialogue, which was pointed out in the previous period both in the domestic and international public. The US Ambassador congratulated Brajovic on the results achieved since he came to the post in November 2016, particularly emphasizing the further improvement of electoral legislation, bearing in mind the upcoming presidential and local elections. On this occasion, Brajovic thanked the United States for continuing support to reform processes aimed at further democratization of Montenegrin society, which was confirmed by Montenegro's NATO membership. ([www.cdm.me](http://www.cdm.me))

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*It is important political dialogue to start again in the country in view of the coming presidential elections which will be held by April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. Major reforms should be implemented in order to take steps which will bring the country closer to the EU.*



### **ROMANIA:** January 8<sup>th</sup>, leaders

of the three political parties representing the Hungarian minority in Romania, Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România – UDMR), Hungarian Civic Party (Partidul Civic Maghiar – PCM), and Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania (Partidul Popular Maghiar din

Transilvania – PPTM), signed a joint statement asking for the territorial autonomy of the region known as Szeklerland, in central Romania. Furthermore the three parties also ask for a special bilingual status for the Partium region, in North-Western Romania. The three party leaders announced they would submit to the Parliament law drafts for various degrees of autonomy for the Hungarian community. They want regional autonomy for Szeklerland where a lot of Hungarians live, local administrative autonomy for the localities with Hungarian majorities, and cultural autonomy for all Hungarians in Romania. UDMR leader Kelemen Hunor said he wants to discuss with the Romanian majority about changing the Constitution to allow new forms of territorial organization. UDMR holds 30 seats in Parliament and is an ally of the ruling Social Democrats in the legislature. Although not formally part of the governing coalition, the ruling Social Democrats need the votes of the Hungarian MPs for legislation that demands an absolute majority in Parliament. (www.romania-insider.com, www.balkaninsight.com)

- January 12<sup>th</sup>, Romanian Minister of Defense Mihai Fifor signed a contract for 227 Piranha V infantry fighting vehicles for the country's Armed Forces. The eight-wheel drive vehicles will be purchased under a deal worth 1 billion Dollars,. The modern PIRANHA 5 vehicles will be produced in Romania under a strategic cooperation and transfer of technology project between General Dynamics European Land Systems - Mowag and the Romanian company Uzina Mecanică București (UMB). This year, the first 36 out of the 227 vehicles will be delivered to Romania, of which six will be produced in Romania at the Bucharest Mechanical Factory," Fifor said at the official signing ceremony. The

contract is part of Romania's ongoing efforts to replace Soviet-designed military gear with new vehicles. (www.defensenews.com, www.gd.com)



PIRANHA 5 IFV

(Photo source: www.gd.com)

- January 12<sup>th</sup>, Romanian Prime Minister Mihai Tudose had a harsh reaction after the leaders of the three political parties representing the Hungarian minority in Romania signed a joint statement asking for the territorial autonomy of the region known as Szeklerland, in central Romania. *"Without minimizing or ignoring the subject, my opinion is that this year will be one of trying to push the stick through the fence, we will jump on them, they will jump on us, and this year will become one of quarrels instead of a year of unification. These are not three major parties, it's true that we shouldn't ignore them, but I am simply telling you: I told them that if the Szekler flag will fly on the institutions there, everyone will fly next to the flag. Such autonomy for the Szeklers is not possible,"* Tudose said at local TV station Realitatea TV. Furthermore the Romanian Prime Minister published in social media that *"Discussions about the autonomy of the Szeklerland are out of the law and are not worth taking into consideration, representing only an attempt to destabilize Romania's unity in the Centenary."* Leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată



Maghiară din România – UDMR) Kelem Hunor said Tudose's statements are "*absolutely unacceptable*" and he added "*In the EU, you can not propose without political consequences the reintroduction of the capital punishment and then say, for a smaller or bigger community, that you don't agree with the ideas of that community and that they will fly, they will be hanged, killed. So from this point of view, I believe that this statement cannot be without consequences.*" Meanwhile, the Hungarian Foreign Affairs Minister summoned Marius Lazurca, the Romanian Ambassador to Budapest, to give explanations. The Hungarian Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Szijjarto also said Tudose's statements are unacceptable, and is now demanding an apology. (www.romania-insider.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Political rivalry between Romania's Prime Minister and ruling party leader may cause a political crisis. Hungarian actions for territorial and administrative autonomy enjoy the support of Hungary and should be approached by Romanian political institutions carefully. However Romania as member of the EU and NATO enjoys stability.*



**SERBIA:** January 10<sup>th</sup>, the Prime Minister Ana Brnabic said in a radio interview with "The Economist" that 2018 is a year in which a lasting solution for Kosovo could be found. "What we are doing now is looking for a lasting solution, so as not to leave a frozen conflict for those who will come afterward. We have a historic chance to find a sustainable solution. If we do not use this chance in 2018 we will not have another one for decades to come,"

Brnabic said. In the interview Brnabic commended the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) claiming "*I do not think that it had brought justice to the former Yugoslav republics or helped reconciliation. Not argue about convictions themselves but about people who weren't convicted. I speak about terrible crimes in [Croatia's] Operation Storm*" with more than 250,000 people [Serbs] expelled from Croatia, basically ethnically cleansed with nobody held responsible, and a similar situation with Bosnian Muslims and the Kosovo Albanian KLA." (www.b92.net)

- January 11<sup>th</sup>, ruling Serbian Progressive Party (Српска напредна странка – SNS) leader and President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic announced that party's presidency decided against holding early parliamentary elections. Vucic said the presidency of the ruling party voted "*almost unanimously with only two votes against although in the debate there was an equal number, or a few more people in favor of calling early parliamentary elections.*" Vucic concluded "With all our strength and determination, we decided to fight for victory in the Belgrade [local] elections and no to support the holding of extraordinary parliamentary elections." (www.b92.net)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Serbia avoided early parliamentary elections maintaining relative political stability. Security situation is stable although the Kosovo issue creates a fragile balance on permanent basis.*



**SLOVENIA:** January 8<sup>th</sup>, Slovenian President Borut Pahor visited in Brussels the President of the EU Commission

Jean-Claude Juncker. The two men had talks over the Slovenia – Croatia border dispute and Juncker highlighted that the problem affects the entire EU and the European perspective of the Western Balkans. He also stressed that in the future all open border issues will have to be settled before a country becomes a member of the EU. According to Juncker, the first step should be bringing the two sides together. He added that the differences were not as big as they were presented to be. He emphasized that an arbitration award does exist and that it should be fulfilled to the greatest extent possible. Juncker also called on both sides to avoid any incidents. Slovenian President called on the European Commission to assume a more active role stressing that it had a political, legal and moral duty to do so. However Brussels is referring to the possibility that European Commission President could invite the Prime Minister of Slovenia and Croatia in the coming weeks to a meeting on the realization of the arbitration award. (www.rtv slo.si, www.sta.si, www.dnevnik.si)

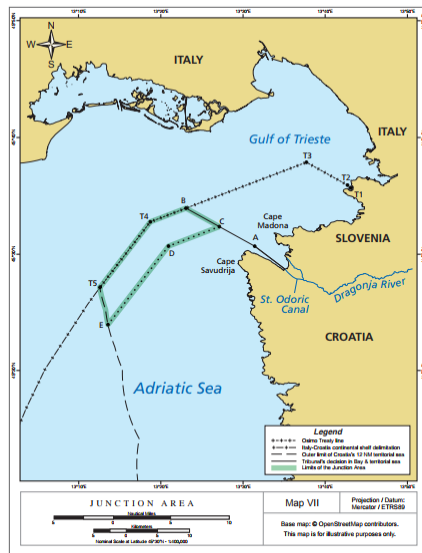
- January 9<sup>th</sup>, Slovenian President Borut Pahor concluded his visit in Brussels by meeting NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg refused to comment the current Slovenian – Croatian border dispute claiming that *"This is not an issue for NATO and we didn't discuss it, so it's not for me to go into the substance of that issue. I think the President can do that but it's not a NATO issue. In general we are of course focused on how we can help to reduce any tensions in the Western Balkans. NATO has a history in the Western Balkans, but this issue of the arbitration is not for NATO to go into."* Pahor stressed *"I cannot imagine that one country would use force to implement an arbitration decision or to prevent*

*implementation"* adding that diplomacy and the EU are the ones who need to find the right path for the implementation of the arbitration award. Talks of two men focused on the security situation with Russia and in the Middle East. Both interlocutors also spoke about Slovenia's failure to devote 2% of GDP to defense spending, as predicted by NATO. Stoltenberg called on Slovenia to call for a gradual increase in defense spending. Pahor highlighted that *"I do not believe that we will achieve the promised 2% in a few years, but it is important that we are slowly investing more in defense."* (www.dnevnik.si, www.nato.int)

- January 10<sup>th</sup>, Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Erjavec underlined that Croatia must implement the arbitration award in full, and not only partially. His statement came after media information that Croatia is ready to recognize a large part of the arbitration judgment, but only in the framework of bilateral agreements. *"Partial consideration of the ruling and negotiations with Croatia on certain parts of the border are not considered,"* said Erjavec. Foreign Minister added *"As the Slovenian ambassador in Zagreb said, Croatia would implement the part of the verdict that suits it, while the other part of the ruling, which was not in favor, would be discussed and negotiated with Slovenia."* Erjavec highlighted negotiations with Croatia do not come into consideration; *"We are ready for dialogue, but the possibility of partially taking into account the arbitration award and negotiating certain parts of the border with Croatia is not appropriate."* Erjavec also commended that Croatian politicians still deceives the domestic public that arbitration has no direct effects and that it does not exist at all. Regarding a possible solution Erjavec said that Slovenia and Croatia, as neighboring



countries are close but this does not mean that the solution to the dispute is close. Finally he stressed that Croatian fishermen are victims of the adopted Croatian policy over the case. (www.siol.net, sta.si)



Map of arbitration award

(Photo source: www.pcacases.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

*Tension with Croatia remains in political level exclusively. Although there political voices calling for dialogue Slovenia looks fully determined to implement the arbitration award acting unilaterally. Security situation is closely monitored*



**TURKEY:** January 9<sup>th</sup>, EUROSAM and Turkish firms ASELSAN and ROKETSAN have signed a contract with Turkey to study the possibility of producing a long-range missile. “Scheduled to last 18 months, this definition study aims at preparing the development and production contract for the future system meeting the operational requirements of the Turkish Air

*Force,”* MBDA and THALES said in a statement through their missile-based joint venture EUROSAM. The study will define Turkish requirements and architecture of the weapon system, which will be based on the Aster Block 1 New Technology missile and the accompanying future radar. If all goes well, the study will lead to a development and production contract for Turkey. The study is expected to lead to cooperation between France, Italy and Turkey over a Turkish long-range air and missile defense program, with a weapon delivered around 2025, EUROSAM said. The missile is intended to hit ballistic and cruise missiles, stealth aircraft, and UAVs. The planned weapon is intended to meet the partner nations’ “basic operational needs” while guaranteeing Turkey “full employment autonomy” and “sovereign choice of integration within NATO,” the joint venture said. The work is expected to support Turkey’s domestic programs and open up export prospects among France, Italy and Turkey. (www.defensenews.com)

- January 11<sup>th</sup>, in a meeting held in the presidential palace leaders of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AK) and the opposition Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - MHP) Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Devlet Bahçeli talk about a possible alliance in the upcoming presidential elections next year in which the two parties will support President Erdogan as their candidate. Erdogan thanked the MHP leader for his "national" stance and discussed the election alliance and the adjustment laws for the new system. Bahçeli has called it a “people's alliance” while Erdogan termed it a “domestic and national alliance.” An AK Party-MHP alliance would bring together nationalist voters with the center-

right, making it one of the strongest alliances in Turkey's domestic politics. (www.dailysabah.com)



Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Devlet Bahçeli  
(Photo source: www.tccb.gov.tr)

January 14<sup>th</sup>, The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has threatened to clean Turkey's "southern borders of terror" by targeting the Kurdish-held city of Afrin in Syria. He warned the U.S against supporting the Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG), calling it a "terrorist organization." A large number of military convoys are being dispatched to the Syrian border as part of the preparations for a new operation; convoys of heavy weapons including several tanks, were dispatched to the Syrian border in Turkey's southern Hatay province, as well as to security posts inside Idlib province which were established in late 2017 as a part of a de-escalation agreement. "We will continue our operations begun with Operation Euphrates Shield to clean our southern borders of terror in Afrin [northern Syria] in the days ahead," Erdogan said. Rojhat Roj, the YPG spokesman in Afrin, said Kurdish forces will "defend our gains, our territories" in the event of an attack. The Syrian city came under YPG control after Syrian forces withdrew from the city in 2012 as the

country's civil conflict heated up. Roj added that his military unit and Turkish troops had clashed near the border, leaving one Kurdish fighter dead and several civilians injured. Erdogan also warned his country's Western allies of engaging with Kurdish forces after the U.S announced it will create a border security force with 30,000 troops, including Kurdish fighters, in northern Syria. "I hope that during the Afrin operation, these powers will not make the mistake of appearing to be on the same side as a terrorist organization," Erdogan said. (www.dailysabah.com, www.dw.com)

## COUNTRY ASSESSMENT   :

*Turkey faces several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs and journalists are in custody or convicted by the state Courts. In southeastern region of the country there is an ongoing armed conflict between the state's security forces and Kurd guerillas. An imminent military operation against Kurds in Syrian borders adds more security risks. The country moves towards an authoritarian regime with thousands of persecution of citizens. Significant security concerns.*


www.hermesresearch.eu


email: info@hermesresearch.eu


Editor in Chief: Ioannis Karampelas


## NOTE

  Stable situation. No security risk

 Rather stable situation. Security risk is monitored

 Major concerns over stability and security. significant security risk in specific regions

 Imminent major incidents regarding stability and security. High security risk

 Evolving or ongoing crisis or violent/armed conflict