



**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: September 17th, Donald Tusk, the outgoing President of the European Council, supported Albania's EU accession negotiations. However, the last say on this matter is up to the Council of Ministers, on October 18th, 2019. The stance of Tusk adds to the positive climate that has been expressed by other members as well, who would want to see Albania pass this test, even under new conditions. *"The biggest medal for me would be opening the EU accession negotiations for Albania. Thanks to your efforts we are closer to this objective. No one should have the smallest doubt,"* Tusk said. Tusk underlined that Albania does not deserve to be treated differently than the other countries of the region, and that it should receive Europe's respect. (www.tiranatimes.com)

- September 19th, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama invited opposition parties that have resigned the Parliament to sit down together to discuss the electoral reform. In an open letter, he wrote that he is ready for unconditional talks at any time and place the opposition would choose, while the opposition's Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë – PD) leader Lulzim Basha's response was that resolving the political crisis is a bigger priority for Albania. After repeatedly publicly reiterating his commitment to discuss with the opposition on electoral reform, Rama addressed the latter with an open letter inviting them to begin a discussion process on what he describes as *"a common national challenge."* Rama pointed out that *"the process has already begun in Parliament and will end there"* but according to him, *"the absence of the main opposition forces in the highest decision-making institution of the Republic does not in*

itself exclude it from the scope of discussing the reform debate." For this reason he invited the main opposition leaders, who resigned the Parliament last February, to meet and discuss this common challenge, at any time and place that would suit opposition, and only if it is *"interested in getting involved in the process, unconditionally,"* concluded Rama's letter. Basha's response came immediately after Rama's letter. *"Electoral reform is important, but resolving the political crisis requires political will. Open letters, provocations such as the involvement of 184 file suspects in processes like the electoral reform, show a lack of political will. Therefore, the first step in resolving the crisis should be to acknowledge the grave situation in the country, the lawlessness, where the cooperation of this Government and this Prime Minister with organized crime has taken place,"* Basha wrote. Basha's statement was at the same time a response to the planned meeting, but also to the electoral reform, by the co-chairmanship of the Special Reform Committee and the OSCE in Tirana, regarding which PD leader did not hide his critical position. *"I still wait for the OSCE in Tirana to comment on the OSCE/ODIHR report, I still wait for its opinion regarding the three Mayors with past criminal records, I still wait for its opinion on the grave violations of the Constitution and the law. I think these are important things for Albanians to hear. We have not heard the OSCE speak about either of these or other things directly related to the OSCE mandate,"* Basha said. Later in the evening, Basha called his allies in a meeting, confirming the same attitude towards Rama's invitation. (www.tiranatimes.com)

- September 20th, “Yesterday’s Court verdict regarding the case of the former Interior Minister, Saimir Tahiri, shows that the judiciary’s impartial independence is growing, and the impunity of people with strong ties is coming to an end,” said the US Embassy on social media. While Tahiri’s conviction on abuse of office charges signals an important step forward, the sentencing is discouraging given the seriousness of the charges. Those who abuse the public trust and violate the law should face meaningful consequences. The US will continue to partner with Albania in support of further progress on justice reform, transparency, and good governance. The British embassy said “The verdict on Saimir Tahiri shows that Albania’s legal system is growing in maturity. But the failure to convict against the more serious charges raises questions and shows the importance of seeing through the judicial reform to the end.” For opposition, this is a shameful verdict. Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë – PD) leader, Lulzim Basha, said that that it did not give justice for Edi Rama’s right hand who filled Albania with cannabis. Tahiri, was sentenced by the Court of Serious Crimes with three years in probation. The Prosecution accused the former Minister of cooperating with criminal gangs for allowing drug traffic. However, the judges did not accept any of these charges. He was sentenced for a charge that was not requested by the Prosecution, that of power abuse. Prosecution did not accept the Court’s ruling and decided to appeal it. (www.top-channel.tv)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

A natural disaster was added in the turbulent Albania. An strong earthquake hit the country

causing damages and injuring several citizens. The national mechanism against natural disasters will be tested relieving people. On domestic politics, the Prime Minister Edi Rama made a political maneuver calling opposition to “unconditional talks” regarding electoral reform. However, opposition rejected his invitation stressing that resolving political crisis is more important than the electoral reform. The country has entered in an endless crisis undermining its democratic function according to the European values and standards. In other words, Albania is under a political and constitutional chaos. Such situation strongly affects 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 October 2019. Although, top EU officials send encouraging messages it is rather in question if the country will get a positive answer. Rama’s Government collapse and snap elections is a possible scenario, especially if the country will not get a date of opening accession negotiations with the EU. 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. Latest Court verdict against the former Interior Minister Saimir Tahiri is a positive sign taking into consideration that a member of the ruling party was convicted, but on the other hand it raises questions about justice credibility. Tahiri was accused of very serious

crimes related to drug trafficking and finally was convicted for abuse of power. 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:

September 17th, Chaired by Prosecutor General of BiH Prosecutor’s Office Gordana Tadic, a meeting of the Task Force on Combating Terrorism and Strengthening its Counter-Terrorism Capability was held.



meeting of the Task Force on Combating Terrorism and Strengthening its Counter-Terrorism Capability

(Photo source: www.tuzilastvobih.gov.ba)

Central topics of the meeting were related to the analysis of the situation regarding the return of BiH citizens from foreign fronts, their acceptance and processing in BiH, as well as the future steps and activities that the law enforcement agencies will take to implement this process. Prosecutor’s Office of BiH, together with partner Police and

security agencies from BiH and abroad, continues to undertake intensive activities to detect, prevent and prosecute terrorist offenses, in which all institutions participate in accordance with their respective competencies, which is the position of the Impact Group. The meeting was attended by directors and officials of state and entity Police agencies, as well as the Brcko District of BiH, followed by officials of the Prosecutor’s offices of BiH, entities and Brcko District, as well as security and law enforcement agencies. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

- September 18th, the top international Administrator, Valentin Inzko in Bosnia deplored the fact that the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije - SDA) decided to formulate its vision about the future of the country based on a concept which is not acceptable for some other political options, The Office of the High Representative said Wednesday. *“The High Representative would like to be clear that under his mandate he is bound to insist on full compliance with the Dayton Agreement. This includes the BiH Constitution, which clearly guarantees the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of BiH, and provides that BiH shall consist of the two Entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. Any change to the internal organization of BiH must be adopted in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Constitution, which requires a comprehensive process of consensus-building and agreement across the entire political spectrum,”* said the message from the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in charge of overseeing the civilian implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement which ended the 1992 - 1995 war in

Bosnia. Last Saturday, the main Bosniak (Muslim Bosnian) party in the country, SDA held a party Congress in Sarajevo where they adopted a declaration, outlining the party's future goals. Some of those goals include the creation of a democratic, regionalized, lawful and welfare state under the name of 'Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina,' which should have state, regional and local Governments. This caused a storm of comments from major Serb and Croat parties in the country, arguing that the declaration is a call to conflict, intolerance and that it violates the Constitution. The statement by the OHR said that the High Representative deplores the rhetoric of some party officials at the SDA congress, who praised and glorified persons prosecuted for alleged crimes committed against innocent victims during the war. *“Such positions by any political or public figure are detrimental to the process of reconciliation between communities in BiH and therefore unacceptable,”* the statement said. The High Representative called upon all political and institutional leaders in this country to cease endless divisive rhetoric and establish a climate conducive for the formation of the authorities at all levels. (www.sarajevotimes.com)

- September 21st, Bosnia's Serb Presidency member Milorad Dodik said that last week's program declaration by the main Bosniak party Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije - SDA) is nothing but an all-Muslim declaration which will lead the secession of the country's Serb-dominated entity of Republika Srpska and its accession with Serbia. *“It is not Democratic Action Party's declaration, but a Muslim declaration. All political parties, NGOs and associations supporting it want the RS to disappear. If someone thinks that the RS should*

not exist, then it is completely reasonable that the RS should build its own pats. The only possible path is to declare independence and unification with Serbia,” Dodik told the Serbian Prva TV. He said that war is not possible in Bosnia, but that a decision on Republika Srpska's independence is. According to Dodik, during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia *“NATO had aligned itself with the Muslim side and had it not been for their intervention one could only guess what the situation would have been today. Had it not been for NATO's pressure and bombardment, the RS would have been an independent state by now.”* He reiterated that joining the Alliance is not an option for the RS, but he would not exclude the possibility of cooperation with them. (www.ba.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

In a country where there is not a central Government for almost a year reaching a stalemate, nationalism and ethnic division find fertile soil to grow up. The main Bosniac (Muslim Bosnian) party SDA raised domestic tension by releasing its declaration about its main goals and its vision for Bosnia. In fact, SDA fully rejected the Dayton peace agreement promoting a state without ethnic division. It is true that Dayton agreement has a lot of weaknesses, but at it has achieved so far to guarantee the co-existence of the three main entities; Serbs, Croatas, and Muslim Bosnians (Bosniaks). Only Bosnian Serbs criticized so far the agreement declaring their will for secession. Muslim Bosnian entity is the second one which seeks to change its character. Such actions are assessed of high risk undermining state's viability and raising ethnic division. It is estimated that escalation of tension is due to Bosnian Serbs denial to allow the country to strengthen its cooperation with NATO. It is rather

difficult for the Euro-Atlantic structures to allow a Western Balkan country to remain out of the collective security structures. Taking this into consideration, it will not be a surprise to see rapid political or even security developments in the country. Definitely the country must move forward with its NATO path. As already "HERMES" has assessed Bosnia is a "captured" state with no Government, no state budget, and no growth sliming slowly but steadily towards interethnic tension conflict. Establishment of a new Government is a necessity for Bosnia and it is related with state's viability. Political and ethnic rivalries do not allow formation of a Government since October 7th, 2018 parliamentary elections. Although, the three main parties representing the three constituent entities (Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats); HDZ (Bosnian Croatian party), SDA (Bosnian Muslim or Bosniak party), and SNSD (Bosnian Serbian party) have agreed on forming a Government, have failed to implement it. A strong dispute has broken out regarding Bosnia's route towards NATO. Bosnian Serbs refuse any progress in the NATO accession process, namely to submit the Annual National Program (ANP) to NATO. The other two parts; Bosnian Muslims and Croats seek to move forward the whole procedure having the goal to join the Alliance. Failure of establishing a Government raises major concerns of Bosnia's future national security. 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. 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 rope. 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. Bosnia faces a significant problem of illegal migration which may lead in new disputes between state's ethnicities. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and other Muslim countries approach the country mainly through "investments" and/or funding ethnic or religious groups according to their interests.



BULGARIA: September 16th, the Council for Electronic Media will hear Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) Director General Svetoslav Kostov and the Radio Board of Directors regarding the suspension of the radio signal for 5 hours on Friday. The same day, Prosecutor General Sotir Tsatsarov ordered an investigation for stopping the Horizont signal. After the scandal over the downloading and subsequent resumption of broadcasting and the removal from the line of BNR journalist Silvia Velikova, acting Program Director Nikolay Krastev resigned. President Rumen Radev today demanded that the BNR leadership to explain the real motives for the unprecedented 5-hour stop of the radio. He added that freedom of expression in Bulgaria is in crisis. *"Freedom of speech is at the heart of democracy, it is of fundamental value, and*

obviously in Bulgaria it is in crisis. The BNR did not stop even during the war. And this case reaffirms the question of who and how governs the public media. Obviously, the state is also governed by someone's phone, not through institutions, as it is normal in the other European countries. And I think it is about time to put an end to it. Yet, in my opinion, there is a ray of hope. And this is in the behavior and reaction of the BNR journalists, who clearly showed solidarity and supported by their colleagues from other media gave an example of how to defend dignity, how to defend freedom of speech and professional standards," Radev said. (www.novinite.com)

- September 16th, Bulgaria's Defense Ministry has invited bids to supply four propeller-driven training aircraft for the Bulgarian Air Force. The call follows Bulgaria spending more than one billion euro on the acquisition of eight US-made F-16 fighter aircrafts and about 76 million euro on overhauls of its ageing Soviet-made MiG-29s and Su-25s. The deadline for bids is mid-October and the offers will be opened on October 21st, 2019 the Defense Ministry said. The financial framework for the four aircraft is 1.2 million euro, not including Value-Added Tax. The tender document says that the aircraft should be delivered within two years of a contract being signed. Technical requirements for the aircraft include that they should be capable of day and night flight, and to perform complicated aerial maneuvers. (www.sofiaglobe.com)

- September 20th, Bulgaria seeks to pursue a balanced policy towards Russia, Prime Minister Boiko Borissov said during Question Time in Parliament. Replying to a question from Anton Kutev, an MP for the opposition Bulgarian

Socialist Party (Bulgarska Sotsialisticheska Partiya - BSP), Borissov said that Bulgaria had good relations with Russia and the only unresolved problem is a lack of agreement about weapons licenses. Bulgaria is continuing to negotiate on this issue, Borissov said. On the issue of the Russian-linked Belene nuclear power station project, he said that the project had failed years ago because of a lack of clarity about its cost. But situation is different now, with 12 companies applying to be involved in the construction of Belene, Borissov told Parliament. He said that without Russia it would not be possible to complete the plant because the reactor supplier for it is the Russian state-owned Rosatom. Construction of the expansion of Bulgaria's domestic gas infrastructure, needed in order for the country to handle the transiting gas from the Turkish Stream pipeline, had already begun. Borissov said that the project will not be completed by New Year's, when it is expected to the transit of natural gas is expected to stop through Russia, but Serbia would not be ready by then. The Prime Minister also commented on Europe's sanctions on Russia. He said that it is not possible for Bulgaria to interfere with the position of the EU. Many countries oppose sanctions against Russia, but when it comes to voting on them in the European Council, they all support them, Borissov said. Borissov's comments in Parliament come against a background of recent dramas over relations with Russia. One involved Bulgaria's Foreign Ministry objecting to a Russian Embassy depiction interpreting events at the close of the Second World War in a way that Sofia found offensive, while that was followed days later by Bulgaria arresting the head of the country's Russophile

Movement on charges of espionage for Russia.
(www.novinite.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Bulgaria has engaged (as most Southeastern Europe countries) in a pro-western – pro-Russian rivalry case. Prime Minister Boyko Borissov tried to reassure the Parliament that relations with Russia have not been harmed. The country is fully dependant on Russian energy supplies and there is a significant number of Bulgarians who are in favor of Russia. Although the minor partner of the ruling coalition, the United Patriots, faces “structural” problems, the Government is stable. Political parties are entering the pre-electoral period of local elections scheduled for October 27th (first round) and November 3rd, 2019 (second round). Corruption and organized crime remain significant obstacles for the country’s development and should be addressed decisively. Modernization of Armed Forces is a top priority for Bulgaria and huge armament projects are ongoing (fighter jets, armored vehicles, vessels etc). However, military operational capability of the state is questioned especially in the Air Force. Bulgarian Armed Forces are far from NATO standards.



CROATIA: September 17th, Interior Minister Davor Bozinovic has said that Croatia will not change its policy on migrants, underscoring that the country will continue protecting its border against illegal crossings. At the same time, Bozinovic said, Croatia would facilitate integration of migrants who want to stay in Croatia. “We are ready to respond to any situation in the event of a stronger influx of migrants,” Bozinovic told reporters at an

international conference on homeland security in Zagreb on Tuesday. Addressing the conference, President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic warned about possible recurrence of migrant crisis, and said that Croatia would respond to such developments in a responsible manner and by protecting its borders. Bozinovic said Croatia is keeping a close eye on developments in the Middle East and North Africa, areas that are the sources of a large number of migrants hoping to reach Western Europe. “Currently, there is no direct threat,” Bozinovic said, adding that Croatia had stepped up control of migration. He also underscored that there had been a rise in the number of human traffickers arrested as a result of both higher pressure from migratory routes and more effective law enforcement. (www.glashrvatske.hrt.hr)

- September 20th, Parliament discussed a final bill on the ratification of an agreement between the Croatian and Hungarian Governments on cooperation in military aviation aimed at expanding cooperation in antiaircraft defense. Defense Ministry state secretary Tomislav Ivic said the agreement would not result in a loss of sovereignty over Croatian skies but make them more secure. The agreement will be signed for an indefinite time, the signatories can walk out of it at any time and it can be changed only with the consent of both sides, he added. He said Germany, for example, had such an agreement with France, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Belgium. MP Ante Plazonic of the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica – HDZ) said Croatia and Hungary had a very high level of defence cooperation. (www.hr.n1info.com)

- September 20th, the Croatian Parliament ratified the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe

Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism which aims at facilitating mutual cooperation between member states and ensuring the efficient prevention and combating of terrorism. The protocol makes a number of acts, including taking part in an association or group for the purpose of terrorism, receiving terrorist training, travelling abroad for the purposes of terrorism and financing or organizing travel for this purpose, a criminal offence. By ratifying the protocol each party obliges to undertake the necessary steps for the timely exchange of all available and relevant information regarding persons travelling abroad for the purposes of terrorism. With this protocol Croatia joins in international cooperation to prevent and sanction terrorism which today is a problem of global extent and is a direct threat to the freedom and lives of individuals. (www.hr.nlinfo.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

The country enjoys political stability and support from EU towards its Eurozone goal. Croatia implements a hard-line foreign policy with its neighboring countries maintaining open disputes with Bosnia, Slovenia, and Serbia. Unofficial sources claim that the country has fulfilled all Schengen zone criteria and it is a matter of time (during September 2019) to officially announced. However, the matter may become a new field of confrontation with Slovenia due to the Piran Bay border dispute. Croatia implements a policy of Armed Forces' modernization trying to form a reliable and well equipped force according to NATO standards. Failure to complete successfully the purchase of a modern fighter jet maintains a long period of an ineffective and weak Croatian Air Force.



CYPRUS: September 16th, Cyprus on signed agreements with France's TOTAL and Italy's ENI for exploration in block 7 of Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Contracts were signed at the Energy Ministry by Energy Minister Giorgos Lakkotrypis in Nicosia with representatives of the two companies in the presences of the Ambassadors of France and Italy. In July the cabinet announced that the TOTAL - ENI consortium had been granted a license for exploratory drillings in block 7. TOTAL was also granted a license for blocks 2, 3, 8 and 9 where ENI is already a licensee. For the block 7 license, the two companies have a share of 50% each. In addition, TOTAL will receive from ENI a share of 20% for blocks 2 and 9, and 30% for block 3, and 40% for block 8. With the new contracts, ENI remains the major stakeholder in 2, 3 and 9 with a 60% stake in block 2, a 50% stake in block 3 and a 60% in block 9. TOTAL now owns 20%, 30% and 20% respectively in the same blocks, while KOGAS continues to hold 20% in each. At the time it approved the additional licenses, the cabinet also granted 12-month extensions for blocks 2, 3, 9, 8 and 11. Speaking after the signing ceremony, Lakkotrypis called it an "important development" in the island's energy program. He said the timing of the next round of exploratory drilling was currently being discussed with the energy companies. Cyprus expects nine exploratory and appraisal wells to be carried out by the end of 2019 or beginning of 2020, and over the next 24 months. "Today's development strengthens the consortiums in Cyprus' EEZ, technically, economically and geopolitically," he added. One of the main obstacles Cyprus is facing is Turkey's opposition to Nicosia's energy plans. Ankara earlier this year began drilling in areas it

claims both for itself and on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots and has sent two drillships and two exploratory vessels to the region in recent months. Maps published in Turkey's official gazette show that oil drilling permits issued to the Turkish National Oil and Gas Company (TPAO) stretch as far as the Greek island of Rhodes as well as blocks 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 as delineated in the Cyprus Republic's EEZ, south and south-west of the island. Turkey also supports northern Cyprus' claims in the Republic's blocks 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, and 13, including within few kilometers from the Aphrodite gas field in Block 12. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- September 22nd, President Nicos Anastasiades said that just as he is determined to engage in an honest and creative dialogue, he is equally determined to never do so until Turkey ceases its illegal and provocative activities. Speaking on Saturday night at a dinner organized in London by the UK's National Federation of Cypriots, Anastasiades said *"As determined as I am to enter an honest and creative dialogue, I am just as much determined to never enter a dialogue while Turkey carries on with its illegal activities, violating international law, or threatening to settle in Famagusta."* *"I am happy to say,"* Anastasiades added, *"that this is the unanimous position of all political forces,"* noting that negotiations under the threat of new faits accomplis cannot take place. It needs great patience to deal with Turkey's provocations, Anastasiades said, adding that it is with patience that Cyprus is attempting to deal with the matter diplomatically, through the EU and through alliances with other countries, particularly with Greece. (www.cyprus-mail.com)

- September 22nd, Turkish military superiority should not distract us from the aim of reaching a just and functional solution to the Cyprus problem, Demetris Syllouris, President of the Cypriot Parliament said. Speaking during a memorial service for the soldiers of a reserve battalion killed during the Turkish invasion of 1974, Syllouris also stressed that the Greek Cypriot side should realize the gravity of the situation and act with a sense of responsibility and determination. *"Turkey's numeric and military superiority, under no circumstances should distract us from reaching a fair and functional solution to the Cyprus problem,"* Syllouris said. A solution, he added, which would put an end with the long-standing and illegal occupation of Cypriot territory from Turkey, would be premised on European values and principles, the EU acquis and the principles of democracy, while would secure our state's integrity, the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all citizens, serving the interests of the Cypriot people. He criticized Turkey as *"the basic factor in the settlement process, which continues to disregard rules, conventions, the European and international law, the law of the sea as well as UN resolutions."* He also pointed out that *"it is important to realize that a fair solution to our national problem would be conducive to the broader development and prosperity with the modernization of state institutions and mechanisms would eradicate corruption and build a rule of law and equality."* (www.cyprus-mail.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

According to Cyprus, Turkey sets obstacles in the efforts of restarting negotiations on Cypriot question. It is estimated that there are little chances of an agreement for re-launching

negotiation talks. The ongoing crisis with Turkish invasion of drillship *Fatih* (while the second one *Yavuz* has concluded its drilling activity off *Karpasia*, according to Turkey and it will leave for another place) within its EEZ continues. *Fatih* is there for almost four months, while Turkish administration declares that offshore drilling will continue until an agreement between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities will be reached regarding exploration and exploitation of natural gas. Although Turkey announced that it will withdraw *Yavuz* drillship, it has issued a NAVTEX until November 3rd, 2019 showing that it intends to maintain tension in coming autumn. Turkey's objective goal is to force (by the presence and activity of drillships) Cyprus to compromise reaching an agreement with the occupied north part. Despite international calls to Turkey for abandoning its plans of violating the Cypriot EEZ and its sovereign rights, Turkish actions remain "unanswered." Cyprus is trapped failing to act decisively and effectively for protecting its sovereignty. Actually, Cyprus is trapped because it does not have a mechanism of power (military, diplomatic, economic etc) to force Turkey to withdraw its ships. Cyprus lacks of naval and air forces which could deter Turkey of violating Cypriot sovereign rights, while Greece appears reluctant in sending naval units in the region showing presence and exercising deterrence. The EU prepared a draft with sanctions against Turkey but the latter rejected them claiming that it will continue its activity. Turkish message is very clear; we are present in Cyprus, we are present in the energy "game" and nothing works leaving Turkey aside. In other words, energy security includes Turkey; otherwise eastern Mediterranean is not a stable and secure sea. Cyprus signed a new contract with TOTAL

and ENI regarding field 7. As long as Cyprus signs contracts with foreign companies, Turkey will become more and more nervous and aggressive. 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. In this context, next trilateral meeting between Cyprus, Egypt, and Greece will take place on October 8th, 2019 in Egypt. 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. 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. A "hot" incident cannot be excluded during autumn.



GREECE: September 16th, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said that Greece has submitted its request for an early repayment of a chunk of its expensive loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), noting that the move "enhances the country's credibility, improves public debt sustainability indicators and saves resources for the Greek state." Earlier on Monday, Finance Minister Christos Staikouras signed the letters to be sent to the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), to present the plan for the repayment of 2.9 billion euro (which

carries a 5.13% interest rate), out of a total of 8.8 billion euro owed to the Fund. Staikouras said in a statement the move is expected to have *“indirect positive impact on the country's credit rating.”* The process is expected to last around two months and, following its completion, the weighted average interest of IMF's loans is expected to fall below 3%. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- September 17th, Athens said on Monday that it is concerned but not “panicking” over a large concentration of Turkish naval forces in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean as part of a large military exercise, as well as the movement of the Oruc Reis survey vessel near the Greek continental shelf. *“We are monitoring the movements of the Turkish ships. We are watching everything. We are concerned, but we are not panicking. Of course we are not scared,”* Defense Minister Nikos Panagiotopoulos told Parapolitika radio on Monday, referring to the *“Kararlilik”* (determination) exercise, which began on Monday and will end on September 23rd, 2019 covering an area stretching from the island of Limnos in the northeast Aegean all the way to Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean. The scale of the exercise as well as the overall climate in the region in recent months, mainly due to initial pronouncements emanating from Ankara that the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) would begin exploratory activities within Greece’s continental shelf, placed both the Hellenic National Defense General Staff (GEETHA) and the Hellenic Navy General Staff (GEN) on standby. Tensions had mounted in recent months after TPAO requested the the assistance of the Turkish Navy so that it could prospect for hydrocarbons within Greece’s continental shelf south of the southeastern Aegean island of

Kastellorizo and west of Cyprus. However, despite these concerns, Ankara’s latest navigational telex (NAVTEX) on Monday reserved an area for the Oruc Reis to conduct seismic research which is clearly outside the Greek continental shelf and clearly within Turkey’s jurisdiction, as well as a part of Cyprus’ continental shelf. Analysts have attributed Turkey’s decision not to send the Oruc Reis within Greece’s continental shelf to behind-the-scenes diplomacy between Athens and Ankara as well as the prospects for a resumption of Cyprus talks. Moreover, Ankara’s change of course may also have been prompted by the imminent first meeting between Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York later this month. (www.ekathimerini.com)

- September 19th, four bills ratifying a number of leases for the concession of exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in four maritime areas in Crete and the Ionian Sea were submitted to the Greek Parliament yesterday by the Ministry of Environment and Energy. The Ministry in charge characterized the development as *“a vote of confidence of major international oil companies to invest 140 million euro in explorations,”* while noting that the ratification of the contracts – the negotiations for which lasted from 2015 to 2019 – reinforce Greece’s extroversions in the growing field of hydrocarbon research and exploitation. Specifically, the two contracts signed on June 27th, 2019 between the Greek State – represented by the Minister for the Environment and Energy and the Greek Hydrocarbon Managing Authority – and Total, ExxonMobil and Greek Petroleum Consortium

are being ratified for the “Southwest Crete” and “Western Crete” marine areas. (www.protothema.gr)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

The Government focuses on facilitating country’s growth restoring Greece’s country profile. “Novarty’s” case may become source of political tension in the coming months, especially if the Parliament will decide to establish an investigative committee on former Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and former Deputy Justice Minister Demetrios Papaggeopoulos regarding their role in intervening and influencing Justice investigation. Arrivals of migrants from Turkey continue in increased rates. Control of migrant flows coming from Turkey is a critical point for Greek national security and consequently EU’s security. Greek – Turkish relations are in a critical point not only due to Turkey’s decision to violate Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) aiming at conducting oil and gas drills, but also because Turkey maintains a hard rhetoric against Greece regarding its territorial and maritime sovereign rights. Greece is concerned due to Turkish intention to search for hydrocarbons within its EEZ near to Kastelorizo region. The critical question is “how Greece would react if a Turkish drillship would appear in its territorial waters.” It should be noted that situation may be escalated rapidly especially after the end of the touristic season (end of September – mid October). In this context, Turkey has issued a NAVTEX for September 16th, 2019 eastern of Rhodes island and northeast of Crete island not including Megisti complex islands (Kastellorizo) for oceanographic and climate research. Moreover, Turkey has issued a NAVTEX for

September 17th, 2019 in the same area for Turkish Navy exercise. However, Turkey avoided to provoke further Greece; the research vessel Oruc Reis restricted only in Turkish territorial waters, while the Turkish fleet despite the big number of naval units deployed in the Aegean Sea has not provoked the Greek forces so far. It is assessed that the coming meeting of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan scheduled for September 25th, 2019 in New York may be the reason that Turkey decided not to raise tension in the Aegean. Turkish fighter jets keep on violating Greek airspace massively. 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. In this context, Mitsotakis will meet on September 24th, 2019 the US President Donald Trump in the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. Greece seeks to modernize its Armed Forces by receiving US military aid. It is a fact that Greek military force has been affected by the long economic crisis threatening the balance of power with Turkey. Currently, Greece is in talks with France for purchasing two advanced frigates BELHARA. Taking into consideration the ongoing “NAVTEX war” in Southeastern Aegean and the complicated current situation in Cypriot EEZ, security situation is of high risk due to an accidental or preplanned incident by Turkey.



KOSOVO: September 19th, the US special envoy for the Western Balkans Matthew Palmer told the Voice of America that the next Kosovo Government must be prepared to suspend the tariffs on Serbia goods which he said are an

obstacle to continuing the Belgrade - Pristina dialogue. Palmer expressed his hope that Serbia could respond with initiatives of its own which could include a possible suspension of the campaign to withdraw recognition of Kosovo allowing the two sides to get back to the negotiating table in a positive atmosphere. We say clearly that we expect the next Kosovo Government to favor dialogue, be prepared to revoke tariffs and form a negotiation team with strong powers he said adding that the Government has also to be committed to reaching an agreement to normalize relations. According to Palmer, the US will be present in every stage of the process but warned that Kosovo has to take control of its own fate. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- September 20th, the European Commission representatives and Kosovo authorities held the 3rd Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) Sub-Committee on Economy, Financial Issues and Statistics on September 19th, 2019 in Brussels, the EU Office in Kosovo announced in a press statement. The meeting focused on the economy, financial issues, statistics and financial control. The meeting was co-chaired by the Ministry for European Integration and the European Commission Directorates-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, and the one on Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations. Discussion was held in the framework of the SAA which entered into force in April 2016. In all areas, the Commission and Kosovo both agreed on the importance of implementing the relevant European Reform Agenda and Economic Reform Program priorities as well as the recommendations from the Commission's Kosovo Report. According to the press release the Commission and Kosovo Government

representatives discussed a number of policy areas, including Kosovo's macro-economic development, fiscal and financial policies, structural reforms and private sector development, the statistical system and financial control. Authorities presented the state of play of key structural reforms in sectors such as health, public administration, pension reform and privatization. Commission took note of the progress made on other structural reforms, but stressed the need to address pressing issues, such as situation in labor market, widespread informality, and energy supply. In the area of Financial Control, the recent developments in the Public Internal Financial Control were discussed. It was pointed out that attention should be paid to ensuring comprehensive Public Internal Financial Control and Public Finance Management and Public Administration Reforms. Kosovo needs to develop a comprehensive Policy Paper on Public Internal Financial Control with a particular focus on the application of the principle of managerial accountability. The Commission underlined the need of strengthening the Parliament and Government oversight and monitoring function to ensure implementation of the external audit recommendations. (www.gazetaexpress.com)

- September 20th, US officials never mentioned an exchange of territories between Serbia and Kosovo, Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Kosovës - PDK) leader Kadri Veseli told Pristina-based Klan Kosovo TV. He said there was a lot of speculation about that and the damage it inflicted on relations with the US. *"That is not fair because the US never mentioned the option of dividing Kosovo or exchange territory,"* Veseli said, who is running for Prime Minister. He did not want to say whether he

prefers a Community of Serb Municipalities or a change of borders. “Why should Kosovo choose between the two worst scenarios? There will be no Republika Srpska (the Serb entity in Bosnia) in Kosovo,” Veseli said. Veseli said that American officials asked for a 100 day suspension of the tariffs on Serbian goods, claiming that there is a decision to that effect in writing but that partners left him on his own. “They think I was harmed but they harmed themselves and Kosovo even more,” he said. He concluded by saying that he is not afraid of meeting Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. (www.rs.n1info.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Pre-electoral campaign is in progress without major problems. International community (US, EU) has called for fair elections, while the EU will send monitors for the election day. Under these circumstances dialogue with Serbia comes in second priority. International community namely the US and EU will repeat their efforts towards restarting dialogue between the two parties after elections, assessing the new Kosovo political reality. Restart of bilateral negotiations could not be expected before December 2019 or beginning of 2020 provided that Kosovo will revoke tariffs imposed to Serbian goods. During his visit in Kosovo and Serbia, the newly appointed US envoy on Western Balkans Matthew Palmer pushed both sides for restarting dialogue. Palmer’s activity signals a change in US policy in the region strengthening its presence in a more active role. However, Kosovo insists on maintaining high level of tension with Serbia due to a series of provocative actions; ban of Serbian officials to enter north Kosovo populated mostly by Serbs, Police operation in the north arresting

Serbs, 100% tax on Serbian and Bosnian products, Kosovo Assembly resolution that Serbs committed genocide during 1998-1999 war, establishment of Kosovo Army, request for a special Court for Serbs undermining any possibility of negotiations with Serbia. Only through normalization of relations with Serbia, Kosovo will be able to move forward namely to enter the UN, NATO, EU and to achieve a normal status of a state. Kosovo lacks determination over its critical reforms which will establish in the country rule of law and modern functional administration. Kosovo unresolved status, political instability, corruption, and organized crime are not encouraging factors for its future within European community. Path towards the EU and NATO will be long and hard. The possibility of Kosovo Army presence in the north it is assessed of high security risk which may lead in armed violence.



MOLDOVA: September 16th, political bloc ACUM [Dignity and Truth Platform Party (Partidul Platforma Demnitate și Adevăr - PPDA) and Party of Action and Solidarity (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate – PAS)] and Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (Partidul Socialiștilor din Republica Moldova – PSRM) have signed a political agreement, on the actions to be taken in upcoming period. Ion Ceban has said after signing the document that it will be countersigned by President, Igor Dodon, Prime Minister, Maia Sandu, and Speaker of Parliament, Zinaida Greceanii. Ceban has specified that the act contains the reforms to be carried out in upcoming period, but also in the long term. “It is a common commitment of all state institutions. It

establishes what we shall do in the election campaign and after it, and what are our priorities,” said Ceban. He added that the document will be made public. Alexandru Slusari from PPDA announced that the signed act represents a roadmap for several reforms to be implemented in more fields. Slusari has said that the document is not an agreement between the parties, but an institutional one, which does not contain secret annexes and no sharing of functions. Mihai Popsoi from PAS said that the document was signed in order to provide the Government with the necessary stability for implementation of reforms. *“We have a comprehensive reform program to ensure peace of mind that in upcoming months the Government and Parliament will work to implement them,”* Popsoi specified. (www.moldpres.md)

- September 17th, the recent events in the Transnistrian settlement became an object of discussion at the meeting of Deputy Premier for Reintegration Vasile Sova with President Putin’s Special Envoy at the Transnistria Negotiations, Russian Foreign Ministry Ambassador-at-Large Sergey Gubarev in Chisinau. According to the Moldovan Bureau for Reintegration, the interlocutors also considered the dynamic of interaction at the platform of political representatives and branch working groups, the implementation of agreements, implied in the so-called Berlin+ package, exchanged opinions and ideas on accelerating the process of identifying and implementing viable solutions for negotiation agenda. Sova informed about Moldova’s priorities in negotiations, the Government’s vision on a number of relevant issues. He stressed that in 2020 the main efforts will be directed to resumption of discussions within the 5+2 format

both in institutional and political aspects. He added this is necessary for establishing perspectives of the process of regulation with identifying a special model of legal status for the Transnistrian region, based on respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders. (www.infotag.md)

- September 21st, *“the assistance we will continue to receive from the US will help us to build a truly democratic state in which people will feel free and their rights respected,”* Prime Minister Maia Sandu said. *“Assistance will be focused on good governance. This means a state that works exclusively in the interest of citizens. Whenever the citizen interacts with the state, he must feel this, no matter of what kind of services it is - institutional, educational or medical. All the things that the state does, all that is called good governance - will benefit from US support,”* the Prime Minister said. Sandu explained that the Moldovan Government has projects which will be expanded by the US support; *“to create economic opportunities in several areas, for all citizens, especially for women,”* she emphasized adding *“All the things we will do together with the US will have the effect of improving citizen’s life and increasing the living standards on all aspects,”* she said. The Prime Minister made special reference on corruption issue; *“There is evidence related to the theft of the billion and money laundering. As for the theft of the billion, certain individuals, who have benefited from it, have significant properties in the US. At this stage, we will work with the Prosecutor’s Office of Moldova and US authorities to confiscate these properties of those targeted in case of theft of a billion. And if we talk specifically, it is about Plahotniuc who*

has property there and must return what he had stolen to the state,” Sandu said. Sandu paid an official visit to the USA on September 18th – 19th, 2019 and had many meetings at high level. The agenda included visits with Mike Pence, US Vice President, Ivanka Trump, US President's Advisor, Tim Morrison, Special Assistant to US President and National Security Council member, and Congressmen Pete Olson and David Price, co-Chairs of the Political Support Group for the Republic of Moldova in the US Congress. US officials have expressed full support for the Government led by Sandu and for the agenda of democratic reforms promoted by the Chisinau executive. Through various programs and projects, Moldova currently benefits from US aid worth about 1.4 billion dollars. (www.moldpres.md)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

The pro-western ACUM block strengthens its relationship and cooperation with the US. Financial aid of the latter reaching almost 1.4 billion dollars is very attractive for Sandu's Government. The Prime Minister seeks to get as much financial aid as she can from the US and EU in order to implement ambitious projects for the country. The agreement signed by the Government's partners – ACUM block and PSRM – strengthens political stability. Transnistria is a case which concerns Moldova and withdrawal of Russian troops is a priority for the Government. It should be noted that Russia closely follows political developments in Moldova and it will not allow any overcome of its “red lines” such as Moldova's integration in NATO or EU. Moldova is considered as a pivotal country for Russian national security. The “Transnistrian case” is

always a “running sore” for the country working as a potential factor of destabilization.



MONTENEGRO: September 16th, “Enlargement Commissioner, Mr Johannes Hahn, should take care of the standards for settling social and housing needs in his own country, within the EU. We are going to act in the interest of our citizens. This is not the policy that requires standards, this is our national policy and our right,” Prime Minister, Dusko Markovic said, when asked to comment on European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn's statement that the European Commission will investigate the question of allocation of apartments to public functionaries in Montenegro, warning that such practice is not common in the EU Member States. Markovic said he is not sure about the context of the statement. “We are dealing with housing issues of everybody. We are building apartments for pensioners, healthcare employees, education staff, Ministry of Defense staff... We have settled over 1550 housing issues last two years,” he said. Markovic also commented on the statement produced by the Commission of the Faculty of Law which has established that Professor Bojana Lakicevic Djuarnovic unlawfully “borrowed” 97,77% of her former student's scientific paper. Markovic said that if it is true, Professor will be withdrawn from working groups tasked with EU negotiation activities. (www.cdm.me)

- September 19th, forthcoming tasks in the EU accession negotiation process and demanding reforms which Montenegro has to implement require increased cooperation between the Government and civil sector, which is the only way to achieve high-quality results, said Chief

Negotiator, Aleksandar Drljevic. He pointed out that a serious work is ahead of Montenegro. *“We are carefully considering situation within the EU, the new composition of the administration in Brussels, current affairs in member states, and we believe that enlargement policy will be in the focus of the mandate. We need full synergy of potentials, cooperation between the Government and NGO sector, with the aim of contributing to the achievement of key foreign policy priority,”* Drljevic said. He stressed that the entire negotiating structure is open to cooperation with the NGO representatives and reminded that Montenegro is the first country to include NGO representatives in its negotiation structure. *“the Government never wanted to reduce participation of civil sector representatives,”* Drljevic said. (www.cdm.me)

- September 21st, President of the Association of Lawyers of Montenegro, Branislav Radulovic, said the initiative of amending the Constitution of Montenegro means nothing, as numerous preconditions have to be fulfilled before that. In an interview for the weekend edition of *“Dnevne Novine”* daily, he touches on a part of the announced initiative for amending the Constitution, which would protect the Serbian Orthodox Church, noting that such changes do not require a referendum but rather the Constitutional amendment through the parliamentary procedure. *“However, the question is what kind of ‘intervention’ is needed for this Article, as the Constitution of Montenegro is rather liberal in this sense,”* Radulovic said adding *“Constitutional amendments represent a complex and demanding process, and in order to be successfully carried out, they require time and support of the parliamentary majority. In addition,*

Constitutional amendment also requires a referendum where at least three-fifths of all voters have to vote in favor of the amendments,” he said. When asked to comment on the current initiatives that do not meet needed preconditions, he claimed *“those who propose the amendments are responsible for the success of the process.”* (www.cdm.me)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Opposition appears divided in Montenegro strengthening ruling DPS’s power. 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 into a crucial crossroad regarding its EU future and specific reforms and actions should be implemented if it remains committed in its goal to access the EU by 2025. The Government promotes state’s political and economic stability which creates an almost ideal investment environment. However, the state needs more concrete reforms in the field of justice, rule of law, fight against corruption, money laundering, and organized crime, public administration transparency and accountability in order to become a stable and attractive investment environment. Russian influence continues to be considered as a “threat” against state’s national security.



NORTH MACEDONIA:

September 16th, *“if we have no perspective, and that is the stake of getting the date for the start of negotiations with the EU in October, we shall grow weaker and skeptics, nationalistic forces and populists will get stronger. That will*

strengthen those who put in question the European project, which is our strategic orientation. On the other hand, a positive decision will help us to claim that the matter is in our hands,” Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov said in an interview for Agency Europe. He stated that North Macedonia completely supports the European integration of Albania, but the country must not be a victim of putting countries in packages and reminded that the process is based upon individual achievements. Regarding the delay of the decision in June 2018, Dimitrov thinks that the Ministers did not have enough time to see the progress achieved in four key areas that were defined in June 2018 due to the shorter deadline between the publishing of the European Commission’s report and the session of the EU Council. Still, Dimitrov stressed, October is crucial, and the eventual failure to give a starting date for the negotiations with the EU will signal the opening of space for nationalist and populist forces. *“It will not be easy for me, as a Minister, to return home after October saying that the EC will be deciding about it next year and we will need more political fuel in order to continue walking forward,”* Dimitrov emphasized. (www.meta.mk)

- September 17th, the President of the European Council Donald Tusk paid a visit to North Macedonia where he met the President Stevo Pendarovski and Prime Minister Zoran Zaev exchanging views on overall situation in the country and the region as well as the country’s EU membership aspiration. Pendarovski said that North Macedonia has made tough decisions on many sensitive issues over the past two years, including the *“Prespa Agreement”* with Greece and the Treaty Friendship, Good-neighborliness

and Cooperation with Bulgaria, and has implemented substantial and thorough reforms in many key areas, reaffirming its commitment to the EU integration process. Pendarovski voiced expectation that the European Council in October would valorize the country’s efforts and verify the tenth European Commission recommendation and would set a date for the opening EU accession negotiations with North Macedonia. The opening of accession negotiations, as Pendarovski said, will be a strong impetus for further implementation of the country’s crucial reforms, which will contribute to the overall stability and prosperity of the country and the region. Pendarovski expressed his appreciation to Tusk for his clear and direct support to North Macedonia’s European future.



The President of the European Council Donald Tusk during his meeting with the North Macedonia President Stevo Pendarovski
(Photo source: www.pretsedatel.mk)

Zaev expressed gratitude for Tusk’s personal commitment to providing guarantees for a real European perspective of the entire region, noting the country’s progress in achieving reform agenda, especially in the area of rule of law. On his turn, Tusk emphasized *“I wish to make it crystal clear: there is no doubt in Brussels about your political commitment to the rule of law and to fighting corruption,”* adding that the country

can always do more, but that it has so far shown determination and consistency. “*Skopje is the best possible place where I would like to appeal to the leaders of the European Union: Now you do your share. Because North Macedonia has already done its share,*” Tusk wrote on social media during the visit. Prime Minister Zaev voiced expectations for the EU Council to adopt a decision on opening accession negotiations on October 15th, 2019 and the European Council on October 17th – 18th, 2019. (www.mia.mk, www.nezavisen.mk)

- September 17th, the Government reviewed and adopted at Tuesday’s regular session the Draft Defense Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia and obliged the Ministry of Defense to submit the Defense Strategy to President Stevo Pendarovski within seven days of its adoption. According to the Government Press Service, the current Defense Strategy was adopted in 2010, and as a result of the security dynamics, contemporary security threats and challenges, as well as the changed status of the country internationally, the Ministry of Defense drafted a new Defense Strategy that identifies the features of modern security environment. The strategy provides guidance for the further development of defense capabilities of the defense system, as well as for the synchronization and enhancement of defense planning in line with NATO and EU standards. (www.republica.mk)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Government’s top officials intensify their efforts to persuade EU member states that North Macedonia is ready to start accession negotiations with the Union. The EU Council will decide about it on October 15th, 2019 and EU

member states’ leaders will approve or not the EU Council’s suggestion on October 17th – 18th, 2019. Although EU top officials such as the European Council President Donald Tusk, express their support in North Macedonia’s European perspective it is not still certain that all EU member states will vote in favor of the opening of accession negotiations. It is true that there is a more positive climate for North Macedonia comparing to Albania, but there is always a fear that this two countries will move forward to Europe as “a single package.” This actually what North Macedonia’s officials try to avoid. There are several European voices calling North Macedonia to focus on judicial reforms, rule of law, and fight against corruption in order to achieve a positive result in coming October regarding the opening of accession talks with the EU. Major EU countries such as France appear concerned over a positive signal under these circumstances. North Macedonia’s politics are still shaken by a series of corruption and extortion scandals which undermines not only country’s political stability, but also its European perspective. Fancy names such as “Extortion”, “Empire”, “Racket”, “Titanic”, “Monster” are nothing more than scandals involving politicians, businessmen, criminals, and judicial servants demonstrating that corruption, absence of rule of law and non transparency dominate in state’s function. Zaev has strongly promoted his plan for a well-governed state where rule of law and a functional justice system would dominate. He actually based his pre-electoral campaign against VMRO-DPMNE on such rhetoric. Consequently, it is rather contradictory to watch ruling SDSM politicians and state’s servants to be involved in scandals and illegal activities. Implementation of justice reform and transparent investigation of the

“Racket” scandal which touches governmental officials are two “key” points for a successful signal of the EU. It is assessed that no matter what the EU will decide on North Macedonia’s accession talks, snap elections will be called after the EU decision; either under positive conditions for Zaev (in case the country gets a date), or under negative conditions (North Macedonia will not get a date for accession talks with the EU).



ROMANIA: September 18th,

Romania’s Prime Minister Viorica Dancila will go to the US at the end of this week for a working visit that will also have a *“strong economic component,”* the Prime Minister announced. *“We are consolidating our relations with EU member states, but at the same time we are strengthening our Strategic Partnership with the United States of America. I will start a working visit to the US on Sunday, along with several members of the cabinet, during which I will have meetings with American officials. The working visit will also have a strong economic component and will be a good opportunity to present to the American investors the business opportunities in Romania,”* Dancila said at the beginning of the Tuesday Government meeting. Political sources told Mediafax that Dancila would be in the US between September 22nd and September 29th, 2019. Her agenda also includes a meeting with the US Vice President Mike Pence. (www.romania-insider.com)

- September 19th, Romania’s Constitutional Court ruled in favor of Prime Minister Viorica Dancila and decided that President Klaus Iohannis should accept the nomination for interim Ministers she has sent to him, Hotnews.ro reported. The Court also ruled that the President should dismiss

Justice Minister Ana Birchall, as requested by Dancila. The ruling refers only to the nomination of interim Ministers and dismissal requests, which, the Court says, are not among the President’s prerogatives. The Government’s notification regarding a possible constitutional conflict with the Presidency was registered with the Constitutional Court on September 5th, 2019 after President Iohannis refused to appoint interim replacements for the three Ministers of junior ruling partner Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE) who pulled out of the ruling coalition. Ministers Viorel Ilie (liaison with Parliament), Gratiela Gavrilesco (environment) and Anton Anton (energy) resigned on August 27th, 2019 following the decision of Calin Popescu Tariceanu to pull ALDE out of the Government. Dancila argued that the Presidency is not involved in the appointment of interim Ministers while the Presidency’s representatives responded that she does not necessarily have to appoint interim Ministers as long as she can go to Parliament and ask for endorsement of fully fledged Ministers. (www.romania-insider.com)

- September 19th, Romania’s leading opposition party, the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal - PNL) has decided to submit to the Parliament a no-confidence motion against the Government next Friday, on September 27th, 2019 sources within the party’s leadership told G4Media.ro. Prime Minister Viorica Dancila will not hurry with asking lawmakers’ vote, after she had interim Ministers appointed by the decision of the Constitutional Court. According to sources within PNL, MPs of Save Romania Union (Uniunea Salvați România - USR), People’s Movement Party (Partidul Mișcarea

Populară - PMP), Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România - UDMR), PRO Romania (PRO Romania - PRO), and the MPs representing ethnic minorities have signed the motion. In the coming days, PNL will hold talks with Calin Popescu Tariceanu to convince the MPs who have remained in his Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților - ALDE) to sign the motion as well, the same sources said. "So far, we have collected over 210 signatures. We should have a minimum of 233 [which is the majority of lawmakers] when submitting the motion," explained one of the PNL leaders. (www.romania-insider.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Prime Minister Viorica Dancila's Government achieved through the Constitutional Court to force the President Klaus Iohannis to decree the three interim Ministers gaining valuable political time. However, it should be underlined that the political struggle between the Presidency and the Government is detrimental for the country's political stability, while both parties act on the edge of constitutional order. Withdrawal of ALDE from the ruling coalition brought political turbulence and main opposition party, PNL announced that it will file a motion of no-confidence against the Government on September 27th, 2019. Enjoying support from the other opposition parties the motion has a lot of chances to be successful collapsing the Government and calling for early parliamentary elections (estimated to be held on June 2020). Even if PSD Government achieve finally to continue as a minority one it will not a functional Government blocking any major reform in the country. The country enjoys advanced upgrade in US and

NATO strategic plans due to its geographical position located close to Russia. Consequently, Russia reacts in this close military cooperation between the two countries perceiving it as a threat against its national security. Romania keeps strengthening its Armed Forces seeking to achieve NATO standards.



SERBIA: September 17th, the Serbian Trade Ministry said that it has not issued a single permit for the export of weapons, military equipment and dual purpose goods to Yemen, denying reports of Serbian-made munitions being supplied to Islamic extremists in that country. Former Foreign Minister turned opposition leader Vuk Jeremic told N1 on Monday that documents had surfaced showing that Serbian-made munitions had been sent to Yemen and that the father of Internal Affairs Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic was implicated. The report and documents were published by the Arms Watch website which said later in the day that it had come under DDOS (Distributed Denial Of Service) attack from Serbia and blocked access to the site. Jeremic's claimed were denied within hours by the Defense Ministry. The Trade Ministry said in its statement that no export permits were issued for any country which is under international sanctions. "All destinations for Serbian weapons and military equipment are listed in the annual export and import reports which are available on the Ministry website." It added that Serbia has been ranked among the top five countries on the transparency barometer drawn up by the Small Arms Survey organization in Geneva. "Serbia as one of the biggest producers and exporters of arms and military equipment in the region can in no way bear the

responsibility for what the final destination countries are going to do with the goods they import,” the statement said. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- September 18th, a student activist of the “*I in 5 Million*” protest initiative said that the protest at the Belgrade University Rectorate would become more radical if student demands are not met. Mila Jovanovic told a news conference outside the building that students have been locked in since Friday that they want Rector Ivanka Popovic to recommend the dismissal of Finance Minister Sinisa Mali to Prime Minister Ana Brnabic. She refused to specify how the protest would be made more radical. Students locked themselves in the Belgrade University Rectorate, demanding Mali’s dismissal over his doctoral thesis which is reported to have been plagiarized. A University Commission investigated the plagiarism claims, but reached no definitive conclusion and decided to refer the matter to the University School of Organizational Sciences where the Minister completed his doctoral studies. Jovanovic told reporters that students told Popovic about another way to end the blockade of the Rectorate but did not give any details. Rector met with the students inside the Rectorship earlier in the day but made no statement to the media after the two hour talks. “*We repeated our demand for the Rector to go public and recommend the dismissal of Finance Minister Mali,*” Jovanovic said, recalling that the Rectorship depends on the Finance Ministry for funding which produces a conflict of interest. She said the Rector offered them compromises which they found offensive. Jovanovic said that Belgrade University has to condemn the assault on students by members of the Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka -

SNS) at the Rectorship before any negotiations with the students. (www.rs.n1info.com)

- September 18th, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said today after meeting with Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic that the process of solving the problems of Kosovo should be continued and further improved in order to reach a solution. She said at a press conference that she discussed with Brnabic situation in the region, along with cooperation opportunities, and stressed that she is glad that the “*Berlin Process*” has proven to be very useful and has led to great opportunities and activities in view of enhancing cooperation. Merkel stressed that there is good bilateral cooperation between the two countries and that there are 400 German companies with 60,000 workers operating in Serbia, while Germany presents a significant trading partner of Serbia. She said that they also discussed civil society, judiciary, and the difficulties in that area, as well as constitutional reforms. “*I see the will to improve things and this is closely related to the progress in the EU accession process,*” said Merkel, pointing out that Serbia has made quite a breakthrough, and that quite a lot has been done when it comes to opening negotiation chapters. When she was asked whether Berlin and EU have any deadline in mind for reaching Belgrade - Pristina agreement and whether the indicative date for Serbia's EU accession - 2025 is still realistic, as Jean-Claude Juncker said, Merkel stated that there are no set deadlines, sending a message; the sooner, the better. Merkel stressed that the EU wants to maintain a momentum in the reforms and “*that it should be known that prior to the accession, certain things regarding Kosovo need to be resolved. As for 2025, I am not in favor of setting on some dates and times, but rather that*

all candidate countries become eligible for accession, while the preconditions are very clear,” the Chancellor said. Merkel stated she could not say anything about information that has emerged that Germany and France could appoint a special envoy for the Belgrade - Pristina dialogue. She said that Germany and France have tried, and are still trying, to restart that dialogue, as well as to do something about the taxes Pristina has introduced on products from central Serbia. She recalled that the process has been interrupted and underlined that the resumption of the dialogue would be discussed again after the Kosovo elections. *“So far, it hasn't been possible to establish dialogue because of the imposed tariffs,”* Merkel said. Brnabic said that the Kosovo issue is the only point of misunderstanding and disagreement between Serbia and Germany, but that it is important to discuss this topic, because without a long-term sustainable solution to this problem and without reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians, there will be not a better future for the Balkans. *“The issue of Kosovo and Metohija is certainly the only point of disagreement and misunderstanding, but still, Germany is one of the most important partners for Serbia, and as much as we may disagree on some issues, the most important thing is to talk to Germany, to hear their opinion and advice, to present our position and to see if together we can bring our positions closer and come up with a long-term sustainable solution,”* Brnabic said. Brnabic used this opportunity to invite German Chancellor to visit Serbia. (www.b92.net)



Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel
(Photo source: www.srbija.gov.rs)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Amid political turbulence the Government has to address a new problem which could become a major one; Students protest and occupation of the Rector's office could provoke a new wave of demonstrations in the country. Authorities have avoided so far using force showing restrain but students look determined to escalate their reactions. A potential boycott of the elections by the opposition will affect Serbia's political stability, economic growth, and its European process. Serbia advocates equal friendly relations with the US, EU, Russia, and China. However, it is a common "secret" that it is considered by the west as a close "friend and ally" of Russia. Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic's visit to German Chancellor Angela Merkel confirmed that there is "distance of understanding" in Kosovo issue. However, pressure from the US and EU is increasing towards both sides to restart dialogue. At the moment, there is nothing to be expected in the near future; the whole process has reached a deadlock since Kosovo has called for early parliamentary elections on October 6th, 2019, and Serbia is preparing for elections on spring 2020. Security situation is complex and

uncertain. None could predict Serbia's reaction in a possible accidental or pre-planned (provocation including) incident in Northern Kosovo against local Serbs. One should have in mind that top state officials have said repeatedly in public that Serbia will protect Kosovo Serbs by any means including security and military force. Serbia pays special attention in improving operational capabilities of its Armed Forces declaring towards all sides that they are the power of the state.



SLOVENIA: September 18th, Jorge Domecq, Chief Executive of the European Defense Agency (EDA), praised Slovenia's cooperation with the EDA as he paid a visit. However, he called for increased participation of Slovenian industry in EDA programs. Domecq and Defense Minister Karl Erjavec discussed key European initiatives in defense and security, according to the Foreign Ministry. Defense Ministry top officials presented Slovenia's views on all segments of defense cooperation within the EU. *"It is very important for the European Defense Agency to have a clear idea of what the Slovenian authorities expect from the Agency in this crucial moment of EU defense cooperation. After the successful launch of the different EU defense initiatives, the emphasis is now on the implementation of PESCO [Permanent Structured Cooperation] and CARD [Coordinated Annual Review on Defence] as well as the European Defense Fund. At the same time I welcome Slovenia's RES-HUB initiative as the project has the potential to contribute to more energy resilient European armed forces,"* Domecq said. (www.sta.si, www.eda.europa.eu)

- September 19th, the Court of Audit has issued a rebuke of consecutive Slovenian Governments after determining that strategic planning regarding the exploitation of nuclear energy at the Krsko Nuclear Power Plant (NEK) had left the NEK owner in limbo about the future of nuclear energy in the country. The Auditors examined Government strategic planning between 2006 and 2016 and determined that strategic documents had been ignored on several occasions and new ones drawn up in disregard of previous commitments or deadlines. As a result, Gen Energija, the state-owned company which manages the Krsko power station, was *"left in uncertainty as to whether construction of the second unit at NEK will be possible,"* the Court said in a decision released on Thursday. The Court also criticizes Slovenian Sovereign Holding (SSH) for not alerting the Government to the potential hazards of not giving Gen Energija clearer guidance. Despite the shortcomings, the Court of Audit stopped short of issuing an adverse opinion. Instead, it issued a set of recommendations on how Gen Energija should improve its operations while requesting corrective measures from the Government, Infrastructure Ministry, SSH and Gen Energija. The Infrastructure Ministry sees the report as a call to all parties to act in a coordinated and prudent manner in planning the long-term use of nuclear energy. It stressed that the country's energy concept is already in the making and should be debated by the Government in the second half of 2020. Gen Energija interpreted the report as a call for a comprehensive and long-term planning of energy production. Changes are already under way, it added. (www.sta.si)

- September 21st, Modern Centre Party (Stranka Modernega Centra - SMC) members elected

unanimously Zdravko Pocivalsek new leader at a congress in Ljubljana. Pocivalsek, the Economy Minister, taking over from Miro Cerar, the SMC founder who currently serves as Foreign Minister, called for economic stability, a fair welfare state, liberal approach and sustainability. He believes the SMC is about to transform itself and regain voters' trust. (www.sta.si)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT :

Minority Government of Marjan Sarec enjoys relative political stability. Slovenia – Croatia relations may be tested in coming period due to the latter's effort to join the Schengen Zone. It should be underlined that relations between Croatia and Slovenia are in low level and an "underworld war" is ongoing (at political, diplomatic and intelligence context) due to the two countries border dispute. The issue of illegal migrants entering Slovenia mainly from Croatia is high in the agenda lately. The Government deployed military force to support Police tasks. Local communities and municipal authorities in the border with Croatia call for more effective measures against illegal migration. The Slovenian Armed Forces face problems mainly in the field of modern equipment and manning. The annual report on the Armed Forces operational readiness released by the Armed Forces Chief of Staff is disappointing since it assessed that the Armed Forces have limited operational capabilities in war time namely they cannot accomplish their mission. The med-term 2018 – 2023 defense program it could improve situation, but under current political situation it is doubtful if it will be implemented to the end.



TURKEY: September 20th, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reiterated Ankara's determination to protect Turkish Cyprus's rights in the Eastern Mediterranean. *“Those who think the wealth of the island and the region only belongs to them will face the determination of Turkey and Turkish Cypriots,”* Erdogan said. Cyprus declared a total of 13 sea plots in the Eastern Mediterranean within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and invited international oil and drilling companies to operate in these areas, which are anticipated to hold rich hydrocarbon reserves. However, Cypriot Turkish community in the occupied north and Turkey react in the idea of unilateral exploitation of hydrocarbons in Cypriot EEZ claiming share from future revenues. Turkey currently runs hydrocarbon exploration activities with its drilling vessels within the EEZ of Cyprus Fatih and Yavuz. In addition, country's two other seismic vessels operate in the same region. (www.yenisafak.com)

- September 21st, Ankara's national security concerns over the presence of Syrian Kurd People's Protection Units (YPG) near its borders have been recognized by Washington and the Pentagon, according to US officials, despite it continued close cooperation YPG. *“US - Turkey military air and ground patrols demonstrate our continued commitment to address Turkey's legitimate security concerns while also allowing the coalition and our Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) partners to remain focused on achieving the enduring defeat of ISIS,”* Myles B. Caggins, Spokesperson of the Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), told Daily Sabah Friday. SDF is a YPG-led group with

which Washington partnered, purportedly in its fight against DAESH. On August 7th, 2019 Turkish and US military officials agreed to set up a safe zone and develop a peace corridor running from the Euphrates to the Iraqi border to facilitate the return of displaced Syrians, currently living in Turkey, to their home country and provide security for the Turkish border settlements and military outposts. They also agreed to establish a Joint Operations Center (JOC). The agreement envisages the setting up of measures necessary to address Turkey's security concerns. Emphasizing the ongoing joint patrols and coordinated actions with Turkey in the YPG-held areas in northern Syria, Caggins said continued Turkey - US dialogue and coordinated action is *“the only way to sustainably secure the border area, ensure campaign continuity in the global coalition's efforts”* to defeat DAESH. However, he clearly stated that Washington opposes any action of Ankara against the YPG, adding that providing border security-related to *“limit any uncoordinated military operations that would undermine this shared interest.”* A few days ago, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the upcoming months would be indicative of whether the Syrian crisis will be resolved in peace or whether it will deepen. The President reiterated once again that Ankara will initiate its plans within two weeks if the ongoing safe zone plans and implementation with the US in northern Syria prove unfruitful. The US has provided military training and given truckloads of military support to YPG, despite its NATO ally's security concerns. Despite claiming numerous times that DAESH has been defeated, the US support of the YPG still continues. Speaking on the joint mechanism Thursday, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said joint operations between Turkey and

the US for the planned safe zone in northern Syria will end if Washington stalls the process. Akar said the joint operations will continue as long as they align with Turkey's interests and aims. *“We have completed our preparations. If necessary, we will take the matter into our own hands just as the president [Erdogan] has said before. Our plan B and C are ready,”* he said. The Minister once again reiterated that Turkey respected Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. *“No one should doubt it, but we will also not allow any terror corridor to form right next to our borders. Our end goal is to remove the PKK and YPG elements from northern Syria and establish a peace corridor, enabling our Syrian guests to return to their homeland,”* he said. (www.dailysabah.com)

- September 21st, a Turkish Court has blocked the release of the imprisoned former leader of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi - HDP), Selahattin Demirtas after Prosecutors requested his arrest once again over a fresh investigation on *“terrorism”* charges, according to state media. Demirtas, one of Turkey's most prominent politicians, has been in jail for almost three years and faces several other legal cases, mainly on *“terrorism”* charges, which he denies. If found guilty in the main case against him, he faces up to 142 years in prison. Earlier this month, a Turkish Court ruled that he should be freed pending trial as the process continues. On Friday, Demirtas's lawyers applied for his release on parole, according to HDP. But HDP said that Prosecutors launched a new investigation into him and the other former co-leader of the party, Figen Yuksekdag, and requested their arrest once again before they could be freed. On Saturday morning,

state-run Anadolu Agency confirmed that a Court in the capital, Ankara, ordered the rearrest of the two former leaders, following the Prosecutor's request. In an emailed statement sent to Al Jazeera, the HDP called the move “a political conspiracy” ordered by the Turkish Government seeking “political revenge.” HDP called the decision to rearrest Demirtas and Yuksekdag “legal bullying” and “massacring of the principles of universal law.” The independence of Turkey's judiciary has been hotly debated in recent years, especially since a crackdown on the judiciary and other state bodies following an abortive coup in July 2016 and after the country switched to an executive presidential system in June last year. “There is no judiciary, no justice, no law, no judges. Not just for us, for none of you,” Demirtas said earlier on social media, announcing that the new investigation had been launched. Almost three years after the failed coup, tens of thousands of people have been jailed pending trial, while civil servants, military personnel and others have been sacked or suspended from their jobs. Rights groups and Turkey's Western allies have criticized the scope of the crackdown, saying President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has used the abortive coup as a pretext to quash dissent. (www.aljazeera.com)

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT ■ :

Turkey remains nervous regarding its cooperation with the US in implementing the agreement recently was reached by the two parts regarding the establishment of a 32 kilometers long safe zone within Syria eastern of Euphrates river. Although the two countries launch joint military patrols in the region, the US appear reluctant to fully implement the agreement. What actually makes Turkey frustrated is that the US continue to

maintain ties with Syrian Kurd militants of YPG. Under these circumstances, Turkey keeps threatening with a unilateral military operation; an action strongly rejected by the US and if it happens it will make situation extremely complicated. It should be noted that Turkey has adopted a dynamic civil – military strategy emphasizing its contribution in re-building Syrian territories suffered from war; it implements a fancy project of building schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure. On the other hand, Turkey keeps sending Syrian refugees to Europe canceling in fact the EU – Turkey agreement on the matter. As long as the 32 kilometers safe zone is not established, Erdogan will keep the gates to Europe open for refugees. Of course, refugee flows is a way for Erdogan to get extra money from the EU. Nevertheless, Turkey remains a pivotal country enjoying geopolitical importance and having one of the largest militaries (the 2nd within NATO). Due to its geopolitical and geostrategical aspects Turkey has the ability to achieve its national goals and protect its interests either by diplomatic means or by the threat of use or use of force. The US obviously does not seek a full rift with its NATO ally. On the contrary, there are still open official and unofficial channels of communication working on improving bilateral relations. Undoubtedly, the US needs Turkey and the opposite, especially in a period where Middle East is in turbulence. Turkey faces several restrictions in freedom of expression and human rights. Elected MPs and journalists and thousands of citizens are in custody or convicted by the state Courts. Local and international observers claim the country moves towards an authoritarian regime with thousands of citizens being persecuted. Criminal prosecution of Turkish Kurd former leader of HDP, Selahattin


Demirtas who has spent three years in prison without a trial is a typical example of human rights violation. 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 situation remains unchanged. It achieved to establish an almost permanent presence within Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) without any real cost bringing the hydrocarbon exploitation issue on the table of negotiations. The cost so far, for Turkey, is zero achieving simultaneously to question Cypriot sovereign rights. 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.


www.hermesresearch.eu


email: info@hermesresearch.eu


Editor in Chief: Ioannis Karamelas


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.*