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**BALKAN REGIONAL PROFILE: THE SECURITY SITUATION AND THE  
REGION-BUILDING EVOLUTION OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE**

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## **I. Introduction**

Three major events in March reflected longer-term processes that have been evolving in the region of Southeastern Europe in the last years:

First, the terrorist acts on 11 March in Madrid, presumably perpetrated by al-Qaida, directly affected the interests of Southeastern Europe: there were citizens of Romania and Bulgaria among the killed and wounded. The *'Balkan Regional Profile'* issues of September 2001, July and November 2002, and January and February 2003 highlighted the assessment that Europe was not adequately aware of the terrorist threat from Muslim extremists. There were also calls for the elaboration of a 'European Homeland' security concept. The EU current security concept is mainly a forceful declaration of intent and not so much a practical counter-terrorist instrument. After the Madrid bombing, EU members started difficult discussions on more intensive intelligence and law-enforcement cooperation; these discussions will probably continue in the next weeks and months. The perception of terrorism in Europe remains inadequate to the magnitude of the threat. Hence, cooperative efforts, including Transatlantic cooperation, also remain low. The EU persists in refusing to accept the concept of pre-emptive attacks. The concept could, probably, be further improved, but ISIS believes it is born of necessity, not of US imperial eagerness, as often presented in some European states. The net-result of all these developments is the degradation of the effectiveness of the Transatlantic community as an instrument of dealing with the new global security issues. The bombing in Madrid constitutes the deadliest terrorist attack in Europe since World War II. It also triggered disagreement on strategies in the "war on terror" and in Iraq. High-level European politicians and EC officials voiced their doubts regarding the effectiveness of the use of force against terrorists. The declaration by incoming Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero that he would pull out the country's troops from Iraq in June prompted the Croatian government to go back on its commitment to send troops to Iraq for stabilization and post-conflict rehabilitation. A full mobilization of counter-terrorism efforts is especially important in Southeastern Europe: in failed or near-failing states in the Western Balkans, post-conflict ethnic hatred and religious prejudices inflamed by well-targeted terrorist acts might easily trigger more fierce clashes than those of the

1990s. We have witnessed how al-Qaida managed to affect the political situation in an established EU and NATO country like Spain. It could eventually be much easier to do so in the Western Balkans if preventive measures against such a development are not taken. There is a wrong and divisive perception in Europe that has been gathering momentum since the Madrid terrorist acts that if Iraq had not been attacked, there would have been no terrorist acts in Spain on 11 March. However, there were already fierce terrorist acts before the war in Iraq. Furthermore, any hopes that al-Qaida will be pacified by an admission of 'wrong-doing' vis-à-vis Iraq (and Saddam Hussein!) are instances of self-deceiving wishful thinking that may have further tragic consequences. A Western democracy should not humiliate itself by accommodating or trying to win the goodwill of the terrorists, who have promised to leave Spain at peace until June, when they will see whether the new prime minister keeps his pledge and pulls out the troops from Iraq. Secondly, the outburst of violence in Kosovo – five years after the beginning of the NATO-led campaign to save the Albanians from ethnic cleansing – showed that the most important lesson of this campaign has not been yet assimilated by many participants in the 1999 events and by some of their political masters, both open and hidden. The lesson was that "ethnic cleansing" would not be tolerated in Europe or anywhere else and will be resolutely stopped and reversed. Albanian nationalists who interpreted the 1999 war in Yugoslavia as the precursor to an ethnically homogenous state in Kosovo (and beyond) were wrong: the war was not waged in support of the 'Greater Albanian' cause, but for the human beings who were treated brutally by an unrestrained nationalist dictator. The investigation of the outburst of violence with the participation of more than 50'000 Albanians in Kosovo that caused the death of 30 people, hundreds more injuries, and the torching of dozens of Orthodox Christian churches and historic monuments found evidence of a well planned provocation to shatter the peace and stability in the province that had been constructed carefully and with high costs to the international community over the last five years. Thousands of Serbs in Kosovo were driven from their homes by well-organized Albanian groups in a manner reminiscent of Milosevic's policies. NATO, the OSCE, the EU, the US, and Russia, as well as neighboring Bulgaria and Romania (who are new NATO members) made it clear that plans for an "ethnically cleansed" Kosovo would not be successful, and that Albanian nationalists or other extremists would

not be allowed to dictate the final status of the province by fire and arms. Fulfilling the UNMIK standards for tolerant and democratic co-habitation in Kosovo is the only chance for the province to move on to an established legal status with autonomous power mechanisms. The response of KFOR was resolute and strong, and stability was swiftly restored, although internal tensions remained.

Third, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia formally became full NATO members on 29 March, with all the consequences that entails for the security, stability, and the geo-political and geo-strategic importance of Southeastern Europe. Together with Greece and Turkey, they add significantly to the arc of stability stretching from the Baltic around the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The Euro-Atlantic community and its defense system have stretched to the northern, central, eastern, and southern Balkans. Any attempts by extremists to subvert democracy and human rights in the Western Balkans by pitting different religions and ethnic groups against each other will be neutralized. The infrastructure and defense of democracy in Southeastern Europe, as well as the prospects for a further expansion of its boundaries, have improved since 29 March 2004.

## **II. Security Threats and Post-Conflict Developments in the Balkans**

### **1. Terrorism, Nuclear Proliferation, Post-War Build-Up of Afghanistan and Iraq**

#### **a. Terrorism**

**1) The Madrid Bombing and Its Consequences for Southeastern Europe.** On 11 March, a terrorist attack in Madrid linked to al-Qaida killed 190 people and injured more than 1'500. Four Bulgarians were killed and seven others injured; 14 Romanians were killed, nine are missing, and 26 are hospitalized. The Bulgarian death toll due to terrorist acts around the world since 11 September 2001 rose to nine. The perception of a terrorist threat in Southeastern Europe is fed by new and more diverse sources: after the state-sponsored terrorism in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, the '17<sup>th</sup> September' group's attacks in Greece until recently, and the bombings in Istanbul in November 2003, there is already no place where one could have the sense of being fully protected from a terrorist attack. This is a new threat perception that has had an increasing effect on the governments in the region. Their reactions and efforts to deal with it are evidence of a stronger concern, and even of panic in some cases. Greece is asking NATO to protect the

Olympic Games, which is quite understandable having in mind the immensity of the event. Croatia has decided to go back on pledges to send troops to Iraq. Bulgarian citizens are calling for a better counter-terrorism performance by the government. The recent provocation in Kosovo, and tensions in Macedonia as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are firing populist scares of a coordinated effort between local ethnic and religious extremists and international terrorists. If politicians should give in to terrorists' pressure, the atmosphere of fear would grow and further depress the respective societies. The official authorities and the major political parties of Romania and Bulgaria confirmed their will to remain engaged in Iraq in support of the "stabilization and democratization" of the country. They declared they would not give in to al-Qaida calls to abandon the US-led occupation of Iraq. In the post-Madrid period, Bulgarian polls showed that approval of the country's membership in NATO had increased by 16 per cent, reaching more than 85 per cent, the highest rate to date. Both the Bulgarian government and the president have demanded a closer involvement of NATO in Iraq. In both Romania and Bulgaria, more intensive counter-terrorism measures have been taken. There is no doubt that terrorism and counter-terrorism will become more influential factors in the security decision-making processes in Southeastern Europe. This tendency will not depend on the level of awareness of the issue in the rest of the EU and EU candidate states.

**2) Greece-NATO/Olympic Games Security Measures.** (1) A three-week exercise began on 10 March focusing on catastrophic scenarios for the Olympic Games, including a dirty bomb attack. The Games will be held in Athens from 13-29 August. The exercise, code-named 'Shield of Hercules 2004', involved 2'000 Greek and US troops. Most of the US troops were commandos training to respond to WMD attacks, hijackings, and other crises. The 2004 Olympic Games will be the first since 11 September 2001. The Greek Constitution forbids stationing of foreign troops on Greek soil, but stand-by forces such as the US 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet would patrol offshore. A Czech battalion of chemical, biological, and nuclear (CBN) weapons experts will probably also be involved. (2) On 12 March, Greece formally applied for NATO help to protect the Olympics. NATO would contribute air traffic control and joint naval patrols as well as protection against a CBN attack. Greece has set-up a seven-nation advisory group, comprising the UK, the US,

Israel, Australia, Spain, France, and Germany, with additional help from Russia and Turkey. NATO vessels are expected to stop and check ships in international waters during the Games.

### **b. Post-War Build-Up in Iraq**

**1) Bulgaria.** (1) Bulgarian Vice President Angel Marin said on 3 March, in a speech in the town of Kazanluk on occasion of the national holiday, that the Bulgarian military participation in multilateral peace missions should move towards a joint contingent of the ministries of Defense and of the Interior. This would be a logical response to the law enforcement aspect of these problems, combined with more intensive forms of military attacks. The vice-president repeated the official position of the government and the president concerning the need for more NATO involvement in Iraq. The security expert community in Bulgaria has for some time been discussing the issue and has recommended a constabulary-type organization to form part of the country's peacekeeping contingents. (2) On 5 March, the Bulgarian and Jordanian Ministries of Defense, including military intelligence officials, agreed to establish facilities in Jordan for the last training stages of Bulgaria's rotating contingent that is part of the occupation forces in Iraq. Training at the Jordanian camps will take one month. Bulgarian medics will collaborate with Jordanian colleagues in Jordanian military hospitals in Iraq.

**2) Southeastern European Nations' Participation in the Iraq Operation: Fact-sheet.** Romania – 700; Bulgaria – 480; Hungary – 300; Albania – 70; Macedonia – 37; Moldova – 50.

## **2. Post-Conflict Developments in the Balkans**

**a. Macedonia.** Because of the death of the country's president, Boris Trajkovski, in an airplane crash on 26 February, early presidential elections will be held on 14 April. The decision was taken on 8 March – one day after the termination of the late president's mandate.

**b. Kosovo.** On 15 March, a hand grenade exploded outside the home of Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova. After an incident involving Serbian and Albanian children in Mitrovica on 17 March, the cycle of violence, hatred, and revenge in Kosovo was re-ignited on a scale unseen since 1999. Thirty people were killed and 600 wounded, including Albanians, Serbs, and KFOR and UNMIK personnel. The clashes involved an

estimated 51'000 people, most of them Albanians, and led to the destruction or burning of 30 Christian churches as well as 11 other monasteries and temples throughout Kosovo. KFOR evacuated many Serbs, thus saving them from possible Albanian atrocities. In Belgrade and Nis, Serbs exacted vengeance, leading to the arson of two mosques; the fires were extinguished by the local fire department. Albanian extremists killed one UNMIK official and one Kosovo policeman on 24 March in an act of revenge for police actions during the 17-18 March clashes.

The government of Serbia and Montenegro reacted strongly, but coordinated all its measures with KFOR authorities. Serbia and Montenegro's Foreign Minister Goran Svilanovic traveled to New York and received the backing of the urgent session of the UN Security Council. It condemned the large-scale violence on 18 March and called on the communities in Kosovo to stop all acts of violence, avoid further escalation, and restore calm, according to the UN Security Council president's report. On 18 March, the NATO ambassadors met in Brussels to assess the situation in Kosovo. They condemned the upsurge in violence, which jeopardizes the political dialog between Pristina and Belgrade. A NATO press release said the alliance had "the will and capability to carry out its mission to provide security for all Kosovars, regardless of their ethnic identity".<sup>1</sup> The ambassadors decided to dispatch 150 US and 80 Italian SFOR troops from Bosnia and Herzegovina to reinforce KFOR. Over the next days, additional support came from the UK (750 troops), Germany (600 troops), and France (400 troops). French soldiers carried the brunt of the attacks from Albanian extremists, and some of them were severely injured. KFOR troops were ordered by their commander, General Holger Kammerhoff, to use force to stop the violence. The checkpoints at the borders with Serbia and Montenegro and Pristina airport were closed. The president of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, condemned the violence and urged a fast decision on the status of Kosovo as a measure to prevent other problems. The Macedonian authorities succeeded in preserving calm within Macedonian society. Russian President Putin condemned the "ethnic cleansing" of Serb areas and sent Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu to Belgrade. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Bulgarian Foreign

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<sup>1</sup> NATO press statement on the situation in Kosovo, 18 March 2004. Full text of statement available at: [http://www.usembassy.it/file2004\\_03/alia/A4031808.htm](http://www.usembassy.it/file2004_03/alia/A4031808.htm)

Minister Solomon Passy, the OSCE chairman-in-office (CiO) for 2004, visited Pristina on 22 March. Their first aim was to de-escalate the political rhetoric and tensions in the province and to urge Kosovo leaders to show the will to build a tolerant society. The NATO secretary-general said that the Albanian majority would never achieve its political aims through violence. On 23 March, Passy visited Belgrade to seek a peaceful and constructive resolution of the tense situation in and around the province. He met with the president of Serbia and Montenegro, Svetozar Marovic, and discussed the need to increase the number of KFOR troops in Kosovo. UNMIK police arrested nearly 200 suspects for looting, arson, murder, and other crimes. KFOR Commander General Kammerhoff told the German press that the stabilization force would not allow ethnic cleansing of the Serbian population. He also said that the number of KFOR troops should increase from 18'000 to 40'000. On 26 March the EU Council called on the Albanian government leaders of Kosovo to demonstrate will for the development of a multiethnic Kosovo if they wish to continue to be trusted and supported.

A few weeks before the outburst of violence in Kosovo, Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica had called for the cantonization of Kosovo as a way out of the deadlocked situation in the province. The final legal status of Kosovo, and how it will be achieved, are the two major political issues that the international community must insist on resolving. The solution should suit Albanians and Serbs and should guarantee the long-term stability of Southeastern Europe. The UNMIK standards are a really high barrier for extremists on either side, but they are the only formula that can offer a perspective for the majority of the people in Kosovo, and for the well-being of the broader Western Balkan region. The official Albanian and Serbian leaders in Kosovo, together with UNMIK, must adhere to these standards until they reach the point when it is possible to start discussing the issue of Kosovo's legal status and its future. Without implementation of the standards, any resolution of Kosovo's statehood would be short-lived and would bring back violence. An indispensable condition in the process of implementing the UNMIK standards must be isolation of extremists on both Albanian and Serbian side. There could be no better option for Kosovo with beneficial consequences for the developments in Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and for relations between Serbia and Montenegro.

**c. Bosnia and Herzegovina.** (1) On 25 February, the ICTY in The Hague sentenced Mitar Vasiljevic, a Bosnian Serb paramilitary fighter, to 15 years' imprisonment. He was accused of aiding and abetting the persecution and murder of Muslim civilians during the 1992-95 Bosnian war. These are considered crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war. (2) On 3 March, General Bogdan Subotic – a former defense minister in the government of Radovan Karadzic and a fugitive from justice, was arrested by SFOR in Banja Luka. He is believed to be part of a network of people supporting fugitives Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic – the war criminals most wanted by the ICTY in The Hague. (3) On 15 March, Bosnia and Herzegovina appointed the first state-level defense minister in a crucial milestone in the country's transition to a sovereign democratic state with a single defense establishment. The defense minister will Nikola Radovanovic (44). His priority task will be the implementation of the defense reform criteria established by NATO as necessary conditions for Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. The capture and handover of Karadzic and Mladic to the ICTY in The Hague will be another major task for the new defense minister and the whole government, and will help the eligibility of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the PfP program.

### **III. The National Perspectives of the Balkan Countries: Specific Issues**

**1. Greece.** On 7 March, the conservative centre-right New Democracy party of Kostas Karamanlis won the early parliamentary elections in Greece. He is the youngest prime minister in the history of post-World War II Greece, and his party won 45.5 per cent of the votes. The Socialist Party of Andreas Papandreou (PASOK) won only 40.5 per cent of the votes and lost the elections after 11 years in power. New Democracy acquired 165 seats in the 300-seat parliament of the country, assuring it an absolute majority in selecting and approval of the government. PASOK has 117 seats and is the main opposition party in the national parliament. The competitiveness of the Greek agricultural sector in the EU, the solution of the Cyprus issue, and the successful organization of the Olympic Games are the issues that will top the new government's agenda. The government faces serious immigration issues. New Democracy is short of the 180 seats needed to guarantee the election of the national president by parliament without problems

for the ruling party. The new foreign minister will be career diplomat Petros Molyviatis, and his deputy will be Yannis Valinakis, a well-known expert on foreign policy, security, and international relations. The latter has been advising the new prime minister on foreign affairs issues for years. The new defense minister will be Spilios Spiliotopoulos.

**2. Bulgaria.** On 12 March, a ‘no-confidence’ vote was introduced by the main opposition party in the Bulgarian parliament, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), but did not pass. It was rejected by a majority of 126 lawmakers, while 93 MPs voted in favor of the proposal. The ‘no-confidence’ vote was prompted by the poor social policy of the government, and all opposition parties supported this argument, though not unanimously, and added new points, including inadequate preparedness for an effective membership in NATO and performance in the peacekeeping missions. One year before the regular parliamentary elections, the Bulgarian right and centre-right parties are in organizational disarray that confuses their potential voters. On the other side, the leader in the polls, the BSP, has not yet presented itself as a strong future government that would attract more voters from the majority group of the ‘undecided’ camp – around 40 per cent. Thus, the BSP is limited to the traditional supporters of the left, which make up about 20 per cent of voters. In this situation, the present government has a comfortable opportunity to end its mandate while not necessarily getting ready for an election success in 2005.

#### **IV. State of the Bilateral, Multilateral and Regional Relations in the Balkans:**

##### **Bilateral Relations**

**1. Bulgaria-Albania.** Albanian Defense Minister Pandeli Maiko visited Sofia from 1-2 March and met with his Bulgarian counterpart, Nikolay Svinarov. He met also with Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, the leaders of the parliamentary commission on foreign policy, defense, and security, and visited the “G. S. Rakovsky” Defense and Staff College. Maiko said Bulgaria’s membership in NATO was a strong example for Albanians. He has twice been prime minister and has served once before as defense minister.

**2. Romania-Bulgaria.** Romanian Defense Minister Ioan Pasco met with his Bulgarian counterpart, Nikolay Svinarov, from 22-23 March. They signed an agreement on the joint protection of the two countries’ nuclear power plants, which are situated along the

common border, the Danube River. The two neighbors became members of NATO on 29 March.

## **V. The Economic Situation in the Balkan Countries and in the Region**

**1. USTDA-Montenegro.** On 11 March, the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) announced a US\$306'711 grant to the Republic of Montenegro to provide technical assistance in preparing development policy documents for the telecommunications sector. According to USTDA, liberalizing the telecommunications market will facilitate the entry of new service providers and promote new investment, leading to economic growth and job creation. The grant will also help the government align its telecommunications priorities with initiatives in other areas, including tourism and information technology.<sup>2</sup>

**2. World Bank (WB)-Serbia.** The WB on 16 March approved a US\$21 million credit to support a project aimed at improving heating efficiency in buildings as well as reducing the environmental impact of dirty fuels in Serbia. The project will finance replacement of heating systems in clinics, hospitals, schools as well as technical assistance, communication program on energy efficiency and training.<sup>3</sup>

**3. WB-Albania.** The WB approved on 16 March a US\$25 million credit for Albania to finance the construction of a new thermal power plant in Vlora and to provide technical assistance on reforming the power sector in the country. The funds are part of the Power Sector Generation and Reconstruction Project in Albania, a US\$112.66 million project aimed at fixing a major electricity crisis in Albania.<sup>4</sup>

## **VI. The Process of Differentiated Integration of Southeastern Europe in EU and NATO**

**1. EU: EU-Romania, Bulgaria.** The European Parliament (EP) adopted resolutions on 11 March concerning the process of accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU on the basis of the proposals made by the EP's Foreign Affairs Commission on 19 February.

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<sup>2</sup> US State Dept. press release, at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2004/Mar/12-218108.html>.

<sup>3</sup> US Chamber of Commerce Central and Eastern Europe Business Dispatch, 22 March 2004, at: <http://www.amcham.ge/res/europe/europe.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

The first resolution said that the accession date of Bulgaria should not be tied to other candidates. The negotiations with Sofia were proceeding as scheduled and with no major problems and could be finished in the framework of the mandate of the present European Commission (EC), the resolution said. Jeffrey van Orden, member of the EP (MEP) and reporter for the Bulgarian case, said there were no obstacles for Bulgaria's EU accession in the beginning of 2007. The resolution dealing with the progress of Romania recommends that the EC re-target its accession strategy for Romania for the period up to 2007. This means that Sofia should not wait for Bucharest and can finish its process for completing its negotiations with the EU by the end of 2004. As Baroness Emma Nicholson (MEP) told Romanian leaders on 12 March in Bucharest, Romania could finish the accession negotiation process in 2005 if it accelerates its economic and political reforms. It would be impossible to join the Union in 2007, the Baroness said, if corruption is not dealt with severely. The Romanian government undertook personnel and structure changes of the leading administration ahead of the EP voting on the 11 March resolutions. Justice Minister Rodika Stanoju was replaced by Christian Diakonescu, a former state secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Three new deputy prime ministers were appointed. They will be responsible for economic issues, the coordination of the social services, and for defense, European integration, and justice. It remained unclear after the adoption of the EP resolutions whether Sofia and Bucharest could sign the EU accession treaties together in 2005. This will probably depend on how the situation in Romania improves and on the preservation of the pace of the negotiations by Bulgaria. On 27 March, Brussels decided to confirm Bulgaria's financial framework of €4.2 billion for the period 2007-2009, as proposed by the EC in February.

**2. NATO: NATO-Seven Candidate Countries.** On 1 March, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer informed the seven candidate countries' foreign ministers that all 19 NATO members had deposited their ratification protocols for the enlargement of the organization with Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia at the US State Department. Thus, the protocols have entered into force, and the NATO secretary-general invited all seven candidates to join the alliance. Membership becomes effective with the lodging of the ratification documents for the Washington Treaty (1949) with the US government. In March, the candidate states (including Romania and

Bulgaria) completed the ratification procedures in their parliaments. After the documents had been deposited at the US State Department, the prime ministers of the candidate states were welcomed by US President George Bush on 29 March on the South Lawn of the White House. Thus, the seven countries became *de jure* members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The national flags of the new members will be raised on 2 April at an official ceremony in Brussels at the Alliance Headquarters. On 28 June the new members will participate in their first NATO summit in Istanbul as full members. NATO now has 26 member-states. Albania, Macedonia, and Croatia are candidates for membership. NATO's door will remain open for further accessions.

## **VII. The Influence of Other External Factors on the Region: National Great Powers and International Institutions**

### **1. US**

**a. US-Serbia and Montenegro.** On 17 March, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia D. Kathleen Stephens told the US Congress House Europe Subcommittee that the US was watching the new government of Serbia closely and would judge it on its actions. At a hearing on the current situation in Serbia, she also said that the US would be there to assist Serbia if it chose to continue along the path toward Euro-Atlantic integration. The US focus in Serbia is on the apprehension and transfer to The Hague of those indicted for horrendous war crimes. Sixteen of them spend most of their time in Serbia and have thus far eluded justice. The US administration is not satisfied with the current level of cooperation with ICTY in The Hague, and this cooperation is key for Serbia's involvement in NATO's PfP program and its progress towards a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, said Stephens. The US is ready to cooperate with Serbia in its defense reform through the IMET (International Military Education and Training) program as soon as Belgrade signs an Article 98 Agreement, under which a country pledges not to turn US citizens over to the ICC (International Criminal Court).

**b. US-Croatia.** On 23-24 March, Croatian Foreign Minister Miomir Zuzul made an official visit to Washington, D.C. Shortly before the visit, his government decided to pull back from a commitment made on 8 February during the visit of US Secretary of Defense

Donald Rumsfeld to Zagreb that Croatia would send a modest contingent to Iraq and would sign an agreement for exempting US personnel from the jurisdiction of the ICC. The position of the new Spanish government, supported by the German government, has had a major impact on Croatia and its commitments. Zagreb is a candidate country for NATO, hoping to join the alliance in 2006.

**2. Russia: Russia-Serbia and Montenegro.** In mid-March, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Razov visited Belgrade and met with the federation's foreign minister, Goran Svilanovic. Razov presented a letter from Russian President Vladimir Putin for Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica. Razov told the press that Russia was ready to develop its cooperation with Serbia and Montenegro to the extent that Belgrade is ready to reach. Last summer, Moscow pulled out its troops from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Kosovo. It is not yet clear whether Russia will contribute to KFOR reinforcements, which are required after the eruption of a new wave of violence in the province.

### **VIII. Conclusions**

Staying Many Balkan countries and societies were determined to stay firm and not give in to terrorist pressure after the Madrid bombing in March. After the wave of violence in Kosovo, it was confirmed that KFOR and NATO would withstand any provocation aimed at destabilizing the province and the broader region. Ethnic and religious tolerance is an indispensable condition for political and social life in Kosovo, no matter what legal status it will eventually assume. The accession of Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia to NATO is a major step in the establishment of a Balkan security community and the integration of the area in the Euro-Atlantic mainstream, turning it into a normal and stable European region.

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#### **EDITORIAL STAFF:**

Dr. Plamen Pantev, *Editor-in-Chief*  
 Dr. Tatiana Houbenova-Delissivkova  
 Mr. Valeri Ratchev, M. A.  
 Mr. Ivan Tsvetkov, M. A.  
 Dr. Todor Tagarev

#### **CONTACT AND REFERENCES:**

ISSN 1311 – 3240  
 Address: 1618 Sofia  
 P. O. Box 231, Bulgaria  
 Phone/Fax: ++(359-2-) 8551 828  
 E-Mail Address: [isis@mgu.bg](mailto:isis@mgu.bg)

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