

AN ISN-SPONSORED MONTHLY ELECTRONIC PERIODICAL
INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, SOFIA

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

(April 2004)

60

© Institute for Security and International Studies (ISIS), Sofia, 2004

ISSN 1311 – 3240

I. Introduction

The current security situation in Southeastern Europe continues to be driven by two major factors: a) the local regional developments with Balkan and external participation, and b) the participation of Southeastern Europeans in multilateral international missions outside of the region.

The terrorist attacks in the major European cities of Moscow, Istanbul, and Madrid demonstrated that the perpetrators are indiscriminate in choosing their targets. The large death toll caused by the terrorist acts in these cities clearly shows their purpose – intimidating and eventually destroying the states and their governments. It should be clear to Europeans that there is no escaping al-Qaida's terrorism. Selfish national or even continental considerations on this issue may prove to be short-sighted and ineffective. The "fight against terrorism" has entered a decisive psychological stage where the determination to fight terror is measured against intimidation by terrorists. Spain, Japan, and Italy were among the states engaged in Iraq that were directly threatened in the past month in al-Qaida statements. The other coalition forces have also been intimidated in various ways to give up their occupation of Iraq. Now is the time to stand firm and turn both Afghanistan and Iraq into success stories in the Greater Middle East. Additional efforts are also required to mobilize democratic societies in order to foil terrorist destabilization plans in the individual member-countries of the coalition forces. The alternative is escalation of terrorists' demands, as was seen this month: after Iraq, Madrid has been urged by al-Qaida to leave Afghanistan leaders, otherwise Spanish soldiers would become again targets.

The problems of reconstructing Iraq are real: to state the obvious, there is no adequate security to launch bigger-scale reconstruction projects. An insurgency of Sunnis, Shi'ites, supporters of the old regime, unidentified armed dissidents, and global terrorists is underway. The environment of rebellion would favor any potential al-Qaida operations in Iraq. The present difficult situation in Iraq was caused by political, personnel, and ideological mistakes and missed opportunities to use the potential of non-compromised Ba'ath party activists in re-building Iraq, by the fact that the occupiers are lagging behind Moqtada al-Sadr in offering the Iraqi public a modern and constructive form of nationalism

This month, the al-Qaida terrorist network focused on political intimidation and on driving wedge between Europe and the US.

The counter-terrorist coalition is still reacting through its individual members, some of whom have decided to pull out troops from Iraq, while others will stay. The solid US and UK presence is the major guarantee of the continued existence of the coalition, but individual members and non-members should provide more political, military, and security contributions.

The ongoing fight on terrorism definitely distracts Southeastern Europeans and their resources from completing the stabilization process in the Western Balkans and from focusing on the economic and infrastructure modernization of the region. The only valid option for Southeastern Europe, which itself strives for security, economic prosperity, and effective integration into the EU and NATO, is to work for the stability of Afghanistan and Iraq, and to cooperate and pool resources in fighting al-Qaida. The discussion of these issues by regional state and government leaders in April in Sarajevo highlighted this aspect of the Balkan situation.

The European Council's decision to propose taking up EU accession talks with Croatia in the autumn of this year sent a very promising signal to the rest of the Western Balkans and to Turkey, showing that once a candidate from Southeastern Europe is ready, Brussels has no second thoughts about launching formal entry negotiations.

The new NATO members from the Balkans officially began taking part in the political and military structures of the alliance.

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

1. Terrorism and Post-War Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan

a. Terrorism

1) Change of Terrorist Tactics, Methods. The change of tactics and methods used by the al-Qaida terrorist network in the last month will inevitably have repercussions on counter-terrorism efforts, including in the Balkans and by Balkan nations. Al-Qaida's

next goal, after the Spanish government and South American states have decided to pull out of Iraq, is to further press Madrid to leave Afghanistan as well. Osama bin Laden on 15 April offered a “truce” to European countries that do not attack Muslims. The “truce” would begin when European soldiers leave Islamic nations. The US and Israel were excluded from the offer. This was no doubt an attempt to drive a wedge between Europe and the US. At the same time, this may indicate the effectiveness of the coalition. The offer was also an attempt to manipulate the anti-war mood in Europe that could lead to additional pressure on the governments supporting the US. There are reasons to suppose that the al-Qaida masterminds perceive a rift between Europe and the US and try to deepen it. On 15 April, the governments of Spain, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia as well as the European Commission rejected the offer. During his visit to Iraq on 25 April, Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov underscored Sofia’s intention to continue its coalition engagements. Some observers used bin Laden’s political overtures to construct a tenuous link between the activity of the terrorists and the developments in Iraq. **2) New Reactions and Persisting Problems of the Counter-Terrorist Coalition.** On 20 April, four people were arrested in Sweden with charges of belonging to Islamic terrorism. The suspects were seized at the urging of the US authorities because they had helped organize attacks on occupation forces in Iraq. A representative of the Swedish Security Service said ‘it is Islamic terrorism that does not have anything to do with Europe’. What remains a big question mark is “the extent to which terrorists have been able to penetrate Europe’s most open societies,” as Alan Cowell asked in the New York Times on 21 April¹. In light of the risk that extremists could acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the adoption of a UN Security Council Resolution, initiated by the US, would mobilize the UN member states to combat by all means the spread of WMD to terrorists. “If adopted, it will require states to ‘adopt and enforce appropriate effective laws to prevent any non-state actor from being able to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery’”.²

3) Bulgaria, Romania. On 6 April, a Bulgarian driver contracted by a Bulgarian transport company serving British troops in Iraq was killed during the Shi’ite insurgency.

¹ <http://www.iht.com/articles/516088.html>

² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A25458-2004Apr19?language=printer>

In another incident, a Romanian citizen serving as a guard in a Romanian company was also killed.

b. Post-War Reconstruction in Iraq

1) The State of the Coalition Forces. The Spanish government decided to pull out all its troops from Iraq by 27 May – one month earlier than initially announced and without waiting for a UN Security Council Resolution, as Spanish Prime Minister José Rodríguez Zapatero had declared earlier. The troops from Honduras and the Dominican Republic, part of the Spanish contingent, also decided to leave Iraq. The Kazakh contingent also leaves Iraq in May. The withdrawal of these coalition forces further complicated the situation, which is already characterized by troop shortages that have prevented stability in Iraq since May 2003. During Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov's visit to Iraq on 25 April, he assured US Administrator Paul Bremer that the Bulgarian engagement remained firm. Romania and Albania also confirmed their obligations to the coalition forces in Iraq. Sofia declared it would cooperate in adopting a UN Security Council Resolution that gives the UN a bigger post-conflict rehabilitation role, encourages the transfer of power to local Iraqi authorities and the careful preparation of democratic elections.

2) Bulgaria. On 23 April, a Bulgarian soldier was killed by Moqtada al Sadr's insurgents in Kerbala during an ambush. He was the sixth Bulgarian soldier killed in Iraq. The difficult city of Kerbala, the centre of the Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq, is the home base of the Bulgarian contingent. At the start of the insurgency in the beginning of April, the Bulgarian soldiers were the only ones who stayed and protected key government institutions in the city. They are continuously threatened, including possible attempts to poison their food and drinks. The Bulgarian government remains firmly engaged with the occupation troops, and the military command is undertaking measures for strengthening the overall capabilities of the contingent. Measures have been taken to improve the security of the country's nuclear plant in Kozloduy on the Danube. During Parvanov's visit to Baghdad and Kerbala, he met Bulgarian Polish soldiers and reaffirmed Bulgaria's commitment. Though Parvanov was already the most popular politician in Bulgaria before the visit, he received even greater public and political approval after his risky trip to Iraq as the Commander-in-Chief (CIC) of the national armed forces. Earlier, on 16 April, US President George Bush had written to thank him for Bulgaria's support in Iraq.

Upon his return to Sofia, Parvanov suggested measures for improving the effectiveness of the Bulgarian military during their mission in Iraq. In a meeting with Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski on 29 April in Warsaw, Parvanov discussed ways to improve the coordination and performance with the Polish command in Kerbala.

3) Kosovo. One Jordanian and two US police officers were killed on 17 April after an exchange of fire in Mitrovica. The investigation is still underway.

4) United Nations. “At a press conference in Baghdad April 14, Lakhdar Brahimi outlined a political framework for setting up an interim government, organizing a national political conference, and creating other confidence-building measures that he hopes will help Iraq move toward recovery, peace, and stability.”³ “Despite the “extremely worrying” security situation in Iraq, a “viable and credible” political process to form a caretaker government to govern the country on June 30 is possible, U.N. Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi told the Security Council April 27.”⁴ Re-examining the “de-Ba’athification” policy is considered to be an important step on the road to national reconciliation. An increased UN role in Iraq would mean additional political and economic investment in the future of Iraq by the coalition forces, including from Southeastern Europe. The experience accumulated by the coalition troops in Iraq would be extremely helpful in dealing with the issues of the war-torn country. It must not be forgotten that the coalition troops are not the only targets of the resistance movement in Iraq. The UN representatives and offices have been deliberate targets of terrorist attacks with a lot of victims. That is why an eventual deeper involvement of the UN would not necessarily guarantee an easier return of the Iraqi society and state to normalcy.

c. Post-War Build-Up in Afghanistan.

1) NATO. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said on 31 March at the international donors’ conference on Afghanistan in Berlin that Afghanistan was a top priority for NATO, and that NATO was determined to make its mission there a success. The goal is to take charge of more of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams that are working to secure and stabilize areas outside of Kabul. NATO will support the upcoming

³ US State Department press release: <http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2004/Apr/14-20721.html>

⁴ US State Department press release: <http://tokyo.usembassy.gov/e/p/tp-20040428-03.html>

presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan, which are planned for September, within its means and capabilities.

2) Bulgaria. (1) The US Defense Department asked the Bulgarian government in the beginning of April to appoint permanent instructors to the Afghan National Army. Bulgaria has 63 soldiers in Afghanistan, of which 18 are instructors, and the rest serve with ISAF. (2) On 3 April, Ljubomir Ivanov, the President of the Bulgarian Atlantic Club – a Bulgarian NGO favoring closer ties to the US - visited Kabul. He met with Babaham Islami, leader of the Bulgarian-supported Afghan Association for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation. They discussed the different forms of relations between the new organization and Bulgarian NGOs. (3) On 13 April, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy visited Kabul. He met with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Passy was accompanied by businessmen interested in working in Afghanistan to train locals in rose-oil production, building construction, and establishing a telephone network.

2. Post-Conflict Developments in the Balkans

a. Macedonia. Early presidential elections were held on 14 April after the tragic death of President Boris Trajkovski in a plane crash. The turnout was low, with only 55 per cent of voters casting their ballots. Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski of the Social Democratic Party led with 43 per cent, followed by the opposition VMRO-DPMNE candidate Sashko Kedev with 35 per cent of the votes. The Democratic Union for Integration, an Albanian party headed by Ali Ahmeti that is said to command 65 per cent of the Albanian votes, called on its backers to support Crvenkovski. During his term in office as prime minister, the leading presidential candidate reported an increase of unemployment to 380'000, as well as the emigration of 220'000 citizens. After winning the second round of elections, Crvenkovski passed on Macedonia's problems to the next prime minister. Some 53 per cent of the voters participated in the second round. The winner received 63 per cent, while Sashko Kedev received 37 per cent of the votes on 28 April. Though Crvenkovski has often been labeled a 'pro-Western' prime minister, many of his domestic critics point out that he is supported politically by Ali Ahmeti, whose Albanian party is blamed by some for past violence. The opposition candidate and the political parties backing him did not recognize the election results, which they said were fraudulent. The newly-elected president has sent the people of his country a wrong signal

to the effect that NATO and EU membership would magically solve the persisting problems in Macedonia. This message adds to the negative legacy in the economic and social areas inherited by the next prime minister.

b. Kosovo. (1) The EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana on 25 March called upon the Kosovo Albanian parties to purge themselves of extremists. He said that intelligence had shown that certain groups were planning to take advantage of the first spark of trouble. (2) US Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman visited Kosovo on 29 March to condemn the violence in the province earlier that month. 'Violence is unacceptable', he said. 'It must never happen again,' he said, adding that the perpetrators had to be found, arrested, and brought to justice. (3) On 2 April, UNMIK head Harri Holkeri met with Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica in Belgrade. Holkeri said that the violence in Kosovo last month had been well organized and ethnically motivated. UNMIK's task was to find those responsible and arrest them, he added. Kostunica said the violence in March was a logical continuation of Albanian extremists' behavior since 1999. The UN Security Council discussed the situation in Kosovo on 13 April. (4) NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told Russian media on 8 April, during his two-day visit to Moscow, that he would not mind if Russian peacekeepers returned to Kosovo. That question could be discussed either at the UN or NATO-Russia Council (NRC) level. Russia pulled back its troops from the Balkans in August 2003, and does not plan to return to the area for the time being. Earlier, the NRC meeting of foreign ministers had condemned the recent ethnic violence in a statement released in Brussels on 2 April. (5) In mid-April, the Albanian government of Kosovo announced that it would organize a referendum on independence in September 2005. After the violence in March, which was yet to be properly investigated, this step has all the hallmarks of a campaign to raise pressure on the international community. The future of the province depends on the level of implementing the 'standards for Kosovo', and some observers say that any rush in deciding the status issue would mean giving in to violence. (6) On 13 April, the World Bank (WB) announced that it had "approved a \$15 million grant to Kosovo that will support efforts to strengthen economic policy, improve the business environment to encourage growth and jobs, and restructure the critical mining and energy sectors. The new program will build on existing Bank assistance for

rehabilitation and development in Kosovo, for which the Bank has committed \$80 million since the end of the conflict in 1999.”⁵

c. Bosnia and Herzegovina. (1) The ICTY in The Hague sentenced a former Bosnian Serb politician to 10 years in jail on 30 March. Miroslav Deronjic, a prominent political leader, pleaded guilty to persecution, a crime against humanity, in the village of Glogova during the 1992-95 war. (2) Six Bosnian Croat war crimes indictees surrendered to the ICTY in The Hague on 5 April. They are accused of involvement in “ethnic cleansing” against Muslims in Bosnia during the 1990s. The government of Croatia facilitated this transfer. (3) On 19 April, the Appeals Chamber of the UN ICTY unanimously ruled that the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of Bosnian Muslims constituted genocide. The genocide took place on 10-19 July 1995. Radislav Krstic received 35 years in prison sentence in connection with the massacre of 7’000-8’000 Bosnian Muslim men in Srebrenica. Krstic led the troops together with Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic.

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

Serbia and Montenegro. (1) The Speaker of the Serbian Parliament, Predrag Markovic, announced on 4 April that the presidential elections in the country would be held on 13 June. After three unsuccessful attempts to elect a president, the country has remained without a head of state since December 2002. The June 2004 elections will return a valid result since the quorum of 50 per cent voter participation has been cancelled. (2) Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic of Montenegro said on 28 March that his republic might withdraw from the union with Serbia. Negotiations with Belgrade officials over a friendly split are already under way. More than 50 per cent of Montenegrins would vote for independence.

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

Regional Relations. The 7th summit meeting of the countries participating in the security and cooperation process for Southeastern Europe was convened on 21 April in Sarajevo. The forum in Sarajevo was attended by the presidents of Bulgaria (Georgi Parvanov),

⁵ US State Department press release: <http://www.usemb-tirana.rpo.at/pg1news/0415%20WB%20Grant%20to%20Kosovo%20eng.pdf>

Serbia and Montenegro (Svetozar Marovic), and Romania (Ion Iliescu), as well as the prime ministers of Greece (Konstantin Karamanlis), Albania (Fatos Nano), Croatia (Ivo Sanader), and Turkey (Tayyip Recep Erdogan), and the speaker of the Macedonian parliament (Ljubco Jordanovski). As always during these meetings, many bilateral contacts were established over specific issues of joint interest. Bulgarian President Parvanov suggested convening of a regional forum in Varna on the Black Sea in September to promote the so-called ‘cultural corridors’ in Southeastern Europe. All participants accepted the proposal. The next, 8th regional summit will be held in 2005 in Bucharest.

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

1. USTDA-Serbia and Montenegro. The US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) announced on 31 March that it had awarded two grants on 25 March to modernize and increase the efficiency of the aviation industry in Serbia and Montenegro: “A March 25 grant of \$643’261 to the Serbia and Montenegro Air Traffic Service Agency (SMATSA), Ltd. will partially fund the technical assistance in conducting a tender procurement associated with a \$100 million air traffic management (ATM) modernization project. A March 30 grant of \$414’219 to Serbia’s Ministry of Capital Investment will partially fund a feasibility study on the redevelopment and expansion of the Belgrade International Airport. The grant follows an earlier \$376’000 USTDA award to fund a Phase I feasibility study on the project.”⁶

2. ExIm-Romania. On 30 March, the Export-Import Bank of the US (ExIm Bank) announced it had approved a US\$38.7 million loan guarantee that would enable Romania to purchase US meteorological technology and services to modernize its flood warning capabilities. The funds would be used for computer models, sensors, and other equipment that will allow the National Institute of Hydrology and Water Management to better predict flash floods. The guaranteed lender on the transaction was Commerzbank AG in New York City. In recent years, floods in Romania’s 11 basins have caused fatalities and millions of US dollars in economic damage.

⁶ US State Department press release: <http://belgrade.usembassy.gov/current/040331b.html>

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

1. EU: EU-Croatia. EC Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen and EC External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten announced on 20 April in Brussels that Croatia could start accession negotiations with the EU this year. The EC's decision to recommend Croatia's membership application signals a new phase of EU enlargement. If the EC recommendation is accepted at the EU summit in June, negotiations could start in autumn. Depending on the pace of the accession talks and of reforms, Croatia might be ready to join in 2007 along with Bulgaria. Romania also aims to prepare for full membership in 2007. The signal from Brussels to the rest of the region is that the door for EU membership is open to all countries.

2. NATO: NATO-Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia. (1) A NATO Ministerial was convened on 2 April in Brussels with the participation of the foreign ministers of the new members, including the three Balkan countries. Among the topics of the informal talks were counter-terrorism, the stabilization of Iraq and Afghanistan, activities in the Balkans, and outreach programs for the Greater Middle East. A meeting of the NATO-Russia Council also took place. (2) The flags of the three Southeastern European states were raised on 15 April at NATO's Supreme Allied Headquarters Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium along with the flags of the other four new members and the 19 old ones. By the end of April, the new member-states had made concrete proposals for the individual countries' defense contributions to NATO.

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

US: US-Serbia and Montenegro. The US State Department announced on 31 March that it could not certify to the US Congress that Serbia and Montenegro was cooperating with the ICTY in The Hague as required for receiving US aid, and that therefore, new assistance for Serbia had stopped as of 31 March. Fugitive indictees, particularly Ratko Mladic, have not yet been arrested and transferred to the Tribunal. If Serbia and Montenegro should take action in the future, the US secretary of state would be prepared

to review such actions to determine whether they meet the requirements of the law. Humanitarian assistance, assistance to promote democracy in municipalities, and assistance to Kosovo and Montenegro were exempted from the freeze. The US government wishes to see Belgrade meet its international obligations so that it could move forward to full integration with the Euro-Atlantic community.

VIII. Conclusions

The Southeastern European countries' drive towards economic, technological, and political modernity and democracy has coincided with new global threat perceptions of terrorism. The countries of the Balkan region withstand the terrorist pressure in the territory of the peninsula and take part in the fight against it elsewhere in the world as part of the solidarity with those who contribute to the emancipation of Southeastern Europe and as realisation of the direct security interest and value to be part of the global anti-terror coalition. This was not the format the people from the Balkans wished to have while dealing with the deficits of their own past, but realise they live in the real world and have no illusions of the security needs. Resources are diverted to counter terrorism, human life is lost, important issues get a lower attention. Some of the Balkan countries have prioritised this issue, while others keep a lower profile on it, hoping the big US ally would do the job, especially its harder part, and at the same time the evil may be diverted from the own national territory. Solidarity in dealing with terrorism remains the most needed public good to amalgamate the effort that would effectively deal with terror.

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
