

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**

**(November 2004)**

**# 67**

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

ISSN 1311 – 3240

## **I. Introduction**

The ongoing reforms in the individual Balkan countries and in the region in general are affected by other important factors of global politics. These same factors have defined the transformation in the region in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Preserving a constructive relationship with all of them is in the long-term vital interest of Southeastern Europe. Regional stability is highly dependent on relations with the EU, the US, and NATO.

The re-election of US President George Bush for a second term will have significant consequences for international relations. The 'lessons learnt' by the first Bush administration are wrongly disregarded as a factor in the policy of the second term by some analysts. Further polarization can be expected in the relations between the US and leading EU countries – a development that could be negatively reflected on the new democracies, including in Southeastern Europe. A consensus on an anti-American basis can hardly be expected in the EU context and the pace of enlargement of the Union would hardly be slowed down in the Balkans because of the special pragmatic relations of the US with Romania and Bulgaria. The perception of US foreign and security policy by Bucharest and Sofia as predominantly a policy of partnership and less of pre-emption would provide working relationship with Washington during the second Bush Administration too. A better understanding of the serious issues and common interests of the US and the EU in the broader Middle East would inevitably lead to improved trans-Atlantic relations in the next four years. This would be reflected positively on the new NATO members – Bulgaria and Romania, who are also candidates for the next wave of EU enlargement in January 2007.

The people in the Balkans continued to follow the developments in the counter-terrorist fight and the new outbursts of terrorist violence. Italian writer and scholar Umberto Eco, who visited Sofia from 25-29 November, called the fight on terrorism a 'Third World War in disguise'. This month another Bulgarian citizen of Jewish origin was killed in a terrorist blast in Israel. Iraqi-based terrorists shot a CARE International activist in Iraq, who was kidnapped in October. Ethnic and religious tensions were triggered by an Islamic militant in one of the most tolerant societies of Europe – in The Netherlands. Two European and Euro-Atlantic institutions that all Balkan countries strive to be members of

– NATO and the EU - strengthened their cooperation with the US in the fight on terrorism. A difficult post-conflict rehabilitation process continues in Iraq and Afghanistan. Macedonia's stabilization process continued, albeit erratically. In Kosovo, what matters for the international community is not so much the status question, but that ethnic cleansing should not be rewarded. Bosnia and Herzegovina is slowly moving ahead towards stability. Its population increasingly perceives the country as a single political entity that needs more initiative to build its future. Serbia and Montenegro – a country with a big economic and social potential - continues to struggle with inefficient policies. The country's full re-integration in the international community has been delayed accordingly. A regional conference in Sofia predicted a strong NATO and EU future for the whole Balkans.

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

### **1. Extremism and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation (PCR) in Iraq and Afghanistan**

#### **a. Extremism**

**1) General Issues.** (1) On 1 November Bulgarian citizen Sami Levy was killed with three Israelis by a bomb blast in a market in Tel Aviv. that injured more than 30 people, including another Bulgarian citizen. The military wing of the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack. An 18-year old Palestinian suicide bomber had carried out the attack. (2) On 2 November an Islamic extremist – a Dutch citizen of Moroccan origin - killed Dutch playwright Theo van Gogh who had produced controversial films dealing with the brutal treatment of some Muslim wives by their husbands. His film had also discussed the problem of arranged marriages. Seven Islamic extremists were arrested in the Netherlands. More than 20 cases of arson against mosques and bombing of Muslim schools were recorded, most likely carried out by citizens seeking vengeance against Muslims. An Islamic terrorist group, 'Tauhid al Islami' warned on 9 November that the Dutch will 'pay dearly' for the repressions against Muslims in the Netherlands. Anti-terror forces prevented a planned attack against anti-Muslim MPs. Earlier this year, attacks on Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, the Burssele nuclear power plant, and the parliament in The Hague had been prevented, Dutch law enforcement officials claimed. (2) On 4 November, after his re-election as US

president, Bush called for global cooperation in what he calls the “war against terror”. Security will continue to be the overriding concern of US foreign policy. (4) On 17 November, Iraqi militants announced they had executed 59-year old Margaret Hassan, who had dual Irish and Iraqi citizenship and had an Iraqi husband. She was the head of the Iraqi branch of CARE International – an international humanitarian organization. The militants had kidnapped Margaret Hassan on 19 October.

**2) US – NATO.** On 10 November, US President George Bush met in the White House with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. They discussed further strengthening of the US-Europe strategic partnership in addressing the major challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, mainly the “fight on terrorism”.

**3) US – EU.** On 17 November a US Treasury official praised the decision of the EU to require anyone carrying more than €10’000 into or out of the EU to make a written declaration to that effect. Stuart Levey, US Treasury under secretary for enforcement and head of the Office on Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, called this an “excellent step” in the “fight against terrorist financing”. He met with EU counter-terrorism coordinator Gijs de Vries in Brussels, one day after the EU finance ministers had agreed on the measure. Levey claimed that over US\$142 million of what he described as “terrorist-related assets” had been frozen worldwide so far, and described “international cooperation on terrorist financing” as one of the greatest successes in the “global fight on terrorism”.<sup>1</sup> The EU is planning to update its counter-terrorism strategy at the European Council meeting in December.

## **b. Occupation and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation (PCR) of Iraq.**

**1) The New US Administration on Iraq.** After his election, Bush said his administration would complete the job started in Iraq and achieve its aims. He said he understood that in some European capitals the war in Iraq was not popular, but he would extend his hand to his allies and organizations as the EU and NATO.

---

<sup>1</sup> Press release, US State Department, Bureau of International Information Programs, <http://www.usembassy.org.uk/econ348.html>

**2) The Coalition Forces in Iraq.** (1) On 3 November, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy said Bulgaria would reconsider its participation in the occupation forces after the Iraqi elections planned for 30 January 2005. However, the wishes of a legitimate Iraqi government would be decisive for Sofia's decision. By 8 November the Bulgarian contingent of 450 moved from Kerbala to its new base in ad-Diwaniya. The fourth rotation of the Bulgarian contingent began on 27 November. The fourth contingent of Bulgarian troops has twice as many special forces as the previous one. (2) Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Durchani said on 4 November in Budapest that his country would pull out its troops from Iraq by 31 March 2005. The mandate of the Hungarian contingent of 300 expires in December 2004. The prime minister said it was his country's sovereign right to decide on this issue. Many countries that originally supported the invasion and occupation of the country have since withdrawn their troops from Iraq, including Nicaragua (February 2004), Spain (April 2004), the Dominican Republic (May 2004), Honduras (May 2004), the Philippines (July 2004), Thailand (August 2004), and New Zealand (September 2004).. In addition to Hungary, the Netherlands and Poland are also planning to end their participation in the occupation regime in the near future.

**3) NATO in Iraq.** (1) On 1 November NATO started conducting its first training course for Iraqi security personnel at its Joint Warfare Centre in Norway – part of the training mission the Alliance took upon itself at the June Istanbul summit<sup>2</sup>. 19 mid-level and high-level officials from the Iraqi military and the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior participated in the headquarters-level training. The training focused on operations management, crisis management, command and control of forces, and civil-military integration on national and international levels, including liaison with UN, Red Cross and other international organizations. The ultimate goal of the NATO training activity is to help Iraq develop its own training capability. Through the NATO Training and Equipment Group, led by NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, the alliance is coordinating Iraqi requests for further training by NATO or other organizations. (2) On 17 November, NATO unanimously decided to send military trainers to Iraq – the first collective, consensus decision the Alliance has made on Iraq in

---

<sup>2</sup> For the following, see US State Department press release, available at website of US embassy in Baghdad, Iraq: [http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/041102\\_nato\\_iraqi.html](http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/041102_nato_iraqi.html)

two years. The decision was to increase the number of military trainers from about 65 to around 400. An additional 1'000 to 1'200 personnel would be needed to support the training by providing force protection, logistics, and communications. The entire mission would number 1'500 to 1'700 people. They would be drawn from among the 16 NATO allies that already have ground troops in Iraq. Most of the new military personnel will be in place by the end of 2004.

**4) EU in Iraq.** On 5 November, Bush spoke with the president of the EU Council, Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende. The US president welcomed the reaffirmation of the EU's commitment to assist in the emergence of a stable, secure, and democratic Iraq. The EU has pledged financial and personnel support for the upcoming national elections on 30 January 2005. The EU also has offered financial contributions for the UN Protection Force and an expert team for planning a mission to Iraq on police, rule of law, and civilian administration. These steps are all important investments in the future of Iraq, of its economic, social, and political reconstruction.

**5) Bosnia and Herzegovina in Iraq.** On 18 November, governmental sources in Sarajevo announced that 36 de-mining experts would be sent on a mission to Iraq early in 2005. They will serve six months and a liaison officer from the federation was already in Florida for the preparation of the mission. The decision was met with mixed feelings by the public, where many felt it would be inappropriate to send troops to occupy another country while international peacekeepers were still in Bosnia for stabilization purposes. On 23 November Bosnia's International Commission on Missing Persons announced its plans to assist the Iraqis to identify missing persons after a visit by an Iraqi official to Sarajevo (see for more details: ISN Security Watch of 23 November at [www.isn.ethz.ch](http://www.isn.ethz.ch)).

**6) The Iraqi Debt Issue.** The G-20 Group of key developed and developing countries decided on 20-21 November to forgive 80 per cent of the Iraqi debt to the Paris Club countries. Russia joined this decision though previous agreement with France and Germany has been for 50 per cent cut of the debt. Iraq owes Bulgaria US\$1.7 billion and Romania US\$1.6 billion. The two Balkan countries are not members of the Paris Club, which initiated the debt cancellation measure. The US wants creditors to forgive 95 per cent of the Iraqi debt. However, in earlier US overtures to Bulgarian and Romanian governments, Washington had promised privileged arrangements for paying back the

Iraqi debt. On 23 November, Romanian Foreign Minister Mirca Geoana declared that his country could not support the position of the Paris Club. A similar position to the Bulgarian and the Romanian one is shared by Poland, Slovenia, and Hungary. However, on 28 November Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov said that it would be unrealistic not to expect reduction of the Iraqi debt to Bulgaria. More important, said Parvanov, would be to engage in a mutually profitable economic activity with Baghdad and not exaggerate the significance of the Iraqi debt. This seems a more realistic attitude on the Bulgarian side.

### **c. PCR in Afghanistan.**

**1) Bulgaria in Afghanistan.** (1) There are plans to plant 40'000 oil-producing Bulgarian roses in an attempt to change the Afghan tradition of growing poppy for opium. The project involves the UN Development Program, the German NGO 'Agro Action', and the Bulgarian government. (2) On 3 November, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy told the press in Brussels after meeting NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer that Bulgaria would reinforce its contingent in Afghanistan. The Bulgarian forces will be responsible for security at the Kabul airport. Very probably, the new contingent will be formed on the basis of the present one participating in SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**2) NATO in Afghanistan.** On 10 November, NATO announced that its members had agreed on a schedule for commanding the alliance-led ISAF until 2007. NATO will provide a commander and a staff for the mission's headquarters in Kabul between 2005 and 2007. This has been more proof of NATO's long-term commitment to Afghanistan. NATO is already expanding its mission to the west of Afghanistan. In February 2005, Eurocorps will hand over the command of ISAF to NATO.

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

**a. Macedonia.** This month, the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia again proved to be one of the most difficult cases of NATO and EU enlargement in the Balkans, though there were no fatal results from the developing hard issues. The disputed "name of the state" issue unexpectedly helped the positive development of the other disputed problem of the referendum on the validity of the administrative decentralization providing more autonomy to the Albanian ethnic minority. And lastly, unexpectedly, despite the positive

results for the Euro-Atlantic future of Macedonia, the country's Prime Minister, Harry Kostov resigned.

First, three days before the referendum of 7 November, the US administration of newly re-elected President George Bush decided to recognize the young state under its constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia, in opposition to the name approved by the UN on 8 April 1993 – 'the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'. The Greek government, state, and Orthodox Christian Church reacted strongly to this diplomatic move by Washington. The aim of the US has been to stimulate the national feeling of the Macedonians ahead of the referendum and prevent a decision that would lead to the territorial destruction of the country from within because of ethnic tensions. However, the Greek view was that claiming this name was an effort to steal Greek history (and potentially to claim Greek territory), and promised to boycott Skopje's advances to join the EU and NATO. Reactions in Skopje to the US move were euphoric. The Macedonian press considered this US gesture to be an expression of gratitude for Macedonia's involvement in Iraq on the side of the US-led forces. Though Skopje immediately demanded that the EU should also recognize the constitutional state name, Brussels communicated to the Macedonian foreign minister on 24 November that the EU would refrain from repeating the US move for the time being out of solidarity with Athens. The name of the republic is a delicate issue because it is also used for the geographic and political region of Macedonia in Northern Greece, and for the southwestern geographic and administrative region of Pirin Macedonia in Bulgaria.

Second, the referendum of 7 November on discarding laws adopted by the ruling coalition in implementation of the Ohrid Peace Agreements was held according to constitutional procedures, but only 26.24 per cent of eligible voters participated. This was far from the 50 per cent voter participation required for the referendum to be valid. In this way, the ruling government and coalition have successfully kept the tendency of Euro-Atlantic integration of the country, though the 'name' issue created tensions with Athens and Brussels.

Third, Prime Minister Harry Kostov resigned on 15 November, declaring his dissatisfaction with the way reform efforts in his country had been side-lined by ethnic issues. The move was criticized by President Branko Crvenkovski, who accused Kostov

of missing the political momentum that had swung in favor of his country after the constitutional name of the state had been recognized by the US. On 25 November, unknown criminals detonated two bombs by the home of the interim prime minister, Radmila Shekerinska. She and Defense Minister Vlado Buckovski were contenders for the post of prime minister.

**b. Kosovo.** (1) On 5 November, the president of the province of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, told the media that he expected US President George Bush to recognize the independence of the entity – as he had done with the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia. Rugova and the prime minister of Kosovo, Bajram Rexhepi, sent Bush their congratulations and stated their wish to get US recognition for an independent Kosovo. (2) On 8 November, UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen announced that he had approved the creation of three new ministries: for energy, for local self-government, and for returns and communities. The post of a deputy prime minister will also be established. It is hoped that the increase in powers of the Kosovo government can stimulate economic progress, improve self-government, and defuse ethnic tensions. (3) On 15 November, the ICTY in The Hague accused three Kosovo Albanians of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the conflict in 1998-99. This was the first trial that the tribunal has opened against Albanians. They were Fatmir Limaj (33), a former senior UCK leader, Hajredin Balaj (57), and Isak Musliu (34). They were accused of murder, cruelty, torture, and inhuman behavior against civilian Serbs and Albanians in the ‘Lapushnik’ camp, built by the Albanians. In 1998, they organized the creation and maintenance of inhuman conditions in the camp, participated in torture and cruel body punishments of the detained. The three said they were not guilty.

**c. Bosnia and Herzegovina.** (1) On 11 November, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers decided to increase the numbers of the country’s contingent in Bosnia and Herzegovina as the EU-led Operation Althea was under preparation. 230 rangers will join the EU force, or 80 more than the present contribution to SFOR. The term of the NATO-led SFOR expires on 1 December 2004. From that moment on, the EU will take the command, but will also keep some units of its own. (2) On 11 November, US diplomats at the OSCE commended the significant improvements that Bosnia had achieved in several areas, including property return and restitution issues, overhauling the criminal

justice system, strengthening the rule of law, and reforming defense structures, military intelligence, and local government. There are, however, a number of pending issues and challenges as such moving towards a representative government, curbing human trafficking, ending discrimination against Roma, dealing with internally displaced persons and refugees, and improving Bosnia and Herzegovina's cooperation with the ICTY.

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

**1. Serbia and Montenegro.** On 23 November, the ICTY chief prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, presented to the UN Security Council a highly critical report on the readiness of Serbia and Montenegro to cooperate with the tribunal. In October, she visited Belgrade and called on the authorities to confirm their will to cooperate with the ICTY until 23 November by handing over the criminals that the tribunal wants to put on trial. As this did not happen, she strongly criticized the Serbian government in her regular report. There is a possibility that the UN Security Council could invoke sanctions against Belgrade. On the same day, US Ambassador to the United Nations John Danforth said that the US remained strongly committed to the ICTY. He added that Serbia's failure to cooperate with the tribunal affected the country's further integration in the Euro-Atlantic community. Del Ponte added that unless the fugitives were turned over for trial in the months to come, the ICTY would not be able to complete its work by 2008.

**2. Romania.** Regular presidential and parliamentary elections were held in Romania on 28 November. In a calm and democratic atmosphere, the voters in the presidential elections chose the present Prime Minister Adrian Nastase (39 per cent) and to the Bucharest Mayor Trajan Basescu (35 per cent) out of 12 candidates. Ultra-nationalist Vadim Tudor came third (12 per cent). At the parliamentary elections, Nastase's Social-Democratic Party won 35 per cent of the votes, and the centrist liberal coalition of Basescu won 32 per cent. A second round of presidential elections on 12 December will decide who of the two front-running contenders will lead the state to EU membership.

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

#### **1. Bilateral Relations**

**a. Bulgaria-Greece.** Greek President Konstantinos Stefanopoulos visited Bulgaria on 8-9 November and met with President Georgy Parvanov. The visit marked a high level of cordial relations between the two countries. Upon his return to Greece, Stefanopoulos demanded that the history books in Greece be rewritten to delete exaggerations that were no longer serving the political purposes of the present relations between the two countries. This step would give a very positive example in ‘Europeanizing’ the Balkans.

**b. Bulgaria-Serbia and Montenegro.** On 11 November, the president of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, Svetozar Marovic, made an official visit to Bulgaria. This was the first visit of a head of state of the neighboring country since 1963. Marovic met with Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov. The two leaders agreed to send in a joint letter a financial request to the EU for helping completing the Sofia-Nis highway.

## **2. Regional Relations**

**a. Stability Pact.** On 11 November, Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov awarded Dr. Erhard Busek, coordinator of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe with the Bulgarian Order of The Madara Horseman, First Class. Busek pledged to work for solving the issue of a second bridge over the Danube with Romania at Vidin-Kalafat during his second term, as well as wrapping up the Sofia-Nis highway issue with Serbia. Bulgaria considers the effectiveness of the infrastructure projects as evidence that the countries of the Balkans have really embarked on a future for the region within the EU and NATO. Despite the huge political, financial, and economic effort by Sofia, the bridge issue with Romania, the highway issue with Serbia, the railway issue with Macedonia (and certain exceptions with the check-points issue with Greece) proceed as slowly. Sofia’s has tried for many years to end the Cold War Balkan infrastructure, which was created to separate and not to connect the people and economies of the region.

**b. Regional Conference on NATO.** On 25-26 November, the NATO Information Centre in Sofia, the Open Society Institute, and the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence and the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, convened an international conference on the theme of “The Balkans in NATO – Our Common Future”. It presented to a broad audience of diplomats, military, academics, media, and NGO opinion-makers of all Balkan countries a view of how Bulgaria’s membership in NATO and the EU impinges on the Euro-Atlantic perspectives of the region. Bulgarian

Foreign Minister Solomon Passy addressed the conference and wished it success in its work. The participants agreed that the Trans-Atlantic link was a long-term commitment and that the lessons-learned and the best practices from the recent NATO enlargement can and will be utilized by the Atlantic Charter countries and the two applicants for PfP membership. There was a general acceptance that the European perspective of regional cooperation was crucial for its adaptation to the global environment. Public diplomacy and NGOs will continue to play a lead role in realizing the Euro-Atlantic perspective of the Balkans.

## **V. The Economic Situation of the Balkan Countries and the Region: ExIm Bank – Southeastern Europe**

According to a US State Department press release, “A conference was convened by the Export-Import Bank of the US on 16-17 November in Bucharest on ways to help advance opportunities for the financing of the infrastructure projects – transportation, telecommunications, water, wastewater treatment, and energy – in Southeastern Europe. The ExIm Bank helps finance the sale of US exports, primarily to emerging markets throughout the world, by providing loan guarantees, export credit insurance and direct loans. The conference brought together business, banking and government leaders from Southeastern and Central European countries, and US and Western European government and banking officials.” ExIm Bank Chairman, Philip Merrill said that “financing significant infrastructure projects and expanding US trade with Southeastern and Central Europe” were “both key objectives of the Bank”.<sup>3</sup>

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

### **1. EU**

**a. EU – Bulgaria and Romania.** On 24 November the reporters to the EU Parliament’s Foreign Relations Commission for Bulgaria and Romania presented their regular reports on the progress of the two countries to EU membership. British MEP Jeffrey Van Orden presented a very positive assessment of the progress of Sofia to membership in the

---

<sup>3</sup>Reposted on US embassy in Romania website, <http://www.usembassy.ro/WF/200/04-11-16/eur207.htm>

Union. He recommended to the European Council and the European Commission to prepare the Accession Treaty for Bulgaria at the earliest possible date in 2005. The purpose is to provide the 25 members with the time to ratify the Treaty so that the country can join the EU on 1 January 2007. The critical aspects of the report dealt with organized crime, corruption, trafficking of people, and illegal emigration, though there has been progress in the area of judicial reform. The macroeconomic situation is stable, but the level of unemployment should be further lowered, the emigration of highly qualified Bulgarians reversed, and the living conditions of the Roma population must be further improved. Alexander von Lambsdorff MEP suggested preparing an individual accession treaty for Sofia based on its individual merits. On 29 November, Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov met with EC President José Manuel Barroso in Brussels and discussed the political details of Bulgaria's preparations for signing the accession treaty. French EU MP Pierre Moscovici presented a very positive picture Romania's progress, though it had not closed the last four chapters in its EU accession negotiations by the end of 2004. Moscovici warned that the 'safety clause' had a high probability of being invoked if judicial reform, freedom of the media, and human rights were not fully implemented. The report contains a lot of critical notes on all criteria for membership. The EU Parliament adopted the final drafts of the reports on 30 November.

**b. EU – Turkey.** According to Turkish media reports, Turkey will start accession negotiations with the EU in the second half of 2005. The news was based on a meeting of the EU Council of Foreign Ministers on 22 November. The period of study should be completed, according to the ministers' meeting, in the first half of 2005. The ministers agreed to stop negotiations with Turkey if the country does not continue its reforms in the areas of human rights and freedoms. This is the major reason for the long delay in considering Turkey's accession to the EU.

**2. NATO: NATO – Southeastern Europe.** On 11 November, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told the UN Security Council that NATO had provided continuous support to UN operations in the Balkans since 1992. This was the first time a NATO Secretary-General has taken part in a formal session of the UN body. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that given the joint UN-NATO success in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was not surprising that NATO support for the UN was viewed as a template to be applied to

other crises. Citing NATO's missions in Macedonia and Kosovo, he added that in response to new strategic challenges NATO has decided to go 'out of area' to build stability in a number of regions that he said had an impact on the security of the Euro-Atlantic area (Afghanistan as well as Iraq, where NATO provides assistance in training and equipping the Iraqi security forces).

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

**Russia. Russia – Serbia.** Serbian President Boris Tadic visited Russia from 14-16 November, on a trip organized by the Russian "National Foundation for the Unity of the Orthodox Christian Peoples". This was his first visit to Russia after his election as president in June this year. Tadic met with the Russian foreign minister and other Russian leaders. Tadic again appealed for a stronger Russian economic and political presence in the Balkans. He again criticised the withdrawal of Russian troops from Kosovo and Bosnia in 2003, though Serbia has accepted the Russian decision. Boris Tadic appealed to Russia to return to the Balkans.

### **VIII. Conclusions**

There is a growing awareness in the Balkans that the homogenization of institutional membership by the Balkan states (mainly in NATO and the EU) would contribute significantly to the progress of the individual countries in the region and of Southeastern Europe as a whole. Persisting issues causing tension in the Western Balkans are already met by growing efforts by the new NATO members and candidates for EU membership, who are trying to narrow and neutralize the negative effects of those issues. Europeanization is becoming the dominant context of political relations in the region.

---

#### **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-) 855 1828  
 E-Mail Address: [isis@mgu.bg](mailto:isis@mgu.bg)

---