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

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## **I. Introduction**

During the past month, the regional security situation and efforts towards region-building in Southeastern Europe were characterized by four terms: hope, impatience, awareness, and activism.

Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey have hopes in their drive for EU membership: the last EC report on the candidate countries confirmed Bulgaria's stable accession course and a probable date for EU membership on 1 January 2007. Romania received long-expected recognition by the EU as a 'functioning market economy' and also received encouraging signals from Brussels to the effect that, in case it accelerates the negotiations and completes the reforms it has committed to, Romania and Bulgaria will join the EU together on 1 January 2007 – a development that would be welcomed by both countries. The biggest hopes, however, were cherished in Turkey this month after it relinquished its 'candidate' status and was invited to start accession negotiations with the EU. Croatia is another hopeful Balkan candidate that will start accession negotiations in 2005 and has the ambition to end them successfully in a very short period and join the EU on 1 January 2007 together with Bulgaria and Romania.

Eight of the countries of Southeastern Europe are directly involved in Afghanistan, Iraq, or both. The impact of the developments in these two unstable countries is felt on a daily basis in the involved Balkan states. The aggressive US policy on terrorism, Iraq, and Afghanistan, the obligations of NATO in both countries, and UN Security Council Resolution 1566 on Terrorism have substantially increased an awareness of the significance of terrorism and post-conflict rehabilitation among the Southeastern European governments, according to some experts

Growing impatience was another feature in the Balkan region in the period under consideration. Individual Western countries are growing impatient with the situations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, where improvements are slow, and with the pending risks in Macedonia. There are good reasons to be critical of the slow pace of change in certain spots of tension in the Balkans. However, any impatient urge to accelerate the processes of change might favor instability. Change for the better cannot be achieved quickly and smoothly. Higher standards need time and patience to enter the

social tissue of this region. And positive achievements should not be risked because of artificial timetables drawn up in the capitals of Europe.

Bulgaria's Southeastern European policy was mainly characterized by activism this month. Bilateral visits and meetings of the president and the foreign minister of Bulgaria, backed up by other governmental and non-governmental actions, showed that Sofia does not intend to relinquish its traditional obligations and responsibilities in stabilising the region and integrating it into the European mainstream, despite its role in NATO and imminent EU membership. The political content of both these memberships is to complete the job of integration of the Western Balkans into NATO and the EU, with no exceptions for the individual states in the mid- to longer term. The US has also displayed an increased bilateral activism relative to the new and prospective NATO members.

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

### **1. Terrorism and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation (PCR) of Iraq and Afghanistan**

#### **a. Terrorism**

**1) General Issues.** Violence in Iraq and elsewhere intensified in October ahead of the Afghan, US, and Iraqi elections. On 8 October, Islamic terrorists in Iraq beheaded British citizen Kenneth Bigley. One day earlier, on 7 October, 31 people had been killed and more than 120 wounded in three separate terrorist attacks in resort sites in Sinai, Egypt. Ten people were wounded in Paris, France on 8 October after a bomb was detonated in front of the embassy of Indonesia. On 14 October, Iraqi rebels decapitated a Turkish driver. 'Jama'at al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad', the group allegedly led by Abu MUSb al-Zarqawi— on 17 October decapitated 11 Iraqi policemen and members of the National Guard. The massacre appeared to have been preceded by professional reconnaissance efforts. On 19 October in Iraq terrorists kidnapped an Irish citizen working for an international charity, and a Polish citizen ten days later . On 22 October 43 Iraqi soldiers and 5 civilians were killed in an ambush on a road near Baquba. On 23 October a US diplomat was killed in a mortar attack near the Baghdad airport. Earlier, on 1 October authorities in the United Arab Emirates found an audiotape attributed to al-Qaida, in which Muslim youths were urged to attack the US and its allies. On 16 October, five Christian churches in Iraq in Baghdad were bombed. The attack resembled similar acts on

2 August this year in Baghdad and Mosul. The perpetrators seem intent on fanning religious antagonisms in the occupied country. Osama bin Laden on 29 October urged US citizens to change the country's foreign policy and to vote US President George Bush out of office.

The issue of terrorism was a major topic during the US presidential campaign. The candidates differed on nuances and accents, particularly over the question of whether the invasion of Iraq had increased or diminished the perceived threat. The NATO Defense Ministerial Meeting in Poyana Brasov, Romania on 13-14 October pushed ahead NATO-Russia cooperation. Russia would support NATO naval units with two ships in the Mediterranean Sea, countering efforts of WMD proliferation monitoring international sea-lanes.

**2) UN Security Council Resolution 1566.** The UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1566 on 8 October. It declared terrorism to be one of the most serious threats to peace and security and called on countries to prevent terrorism and punish or extradite those who participate in terrorist activities as well as their supporters. The Resolution declared acts of terrorism, including those against civilians to be under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature. The Resolution also established a working group that would submit recommendations to the Security Council on practical measures to deter terrorism, including more effective procedures to bring perpetrators to justice, freezing their financial assets, preventing their movement and preventing their supply. The working group was also directed to consider establishing an international fund to compensate victims of terror and their families.

**3) US –Macedonia.** On 1 October, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman met senior officials and political leaders in Skopje. He thanked the people and government of Macedonia for their support in the so-called “war on terrorism”, noting that Macedonian forces operated alongside American forces in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The US were grateful for this “extremely important contribution to global security”, and Washington would not forget it, said Grossman.

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

- 1) Donors' Conference on Iraq in Tokyo.** A donors' conference on Iraq was convened on 13 October in Tokyo. The US announced its decision to shift US\$3.46 billion away from humanitarian reconstruction projects, such as electricity and water infrastructure, towards programs aimed at strengthening Iraq's security forces. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage invited international donors to raise their commitment to Iraq for such projects that the US had decided to stop supporting. Armitage said that US\$1.4 billion of the US\$18.4 billion supplemental appropriation for Iraq's reconstruction had been paid out so far, and said that the US aim was to step up disbursements to a rate of US\$400 million per month. Of the Iraqi external debt of US\$125 billion, Washington has signaled that it is ready to forgive the majority, but other states are not of that disposition.
- 2) NATO in Iraq.** The regular NATO Defense Ministerial Meeting was convened on 13-14 October in Poyana Brasov, Romania. Participants decided to increase the number of NATO military advisers from 50 to 300. However, the number of NATO personnel in Iraq may increase to 3'000. The new NATO military group will train Iraqi security forces near Baghdad under the command of Lieutenant-General David Petraeus. By the end of November, Denmark and Norway will also send military advisers. Germany will train Iraqi security personnel on German territory.
- 3) The Iraqi Elections.** The US has spent a total of US\$871 million in FY2004 for the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund in support of democracy, governance, and elections programs. The fund includes US\$30 million for the National Endowment for Democracy for providing technical assistance and training for moderate and democratic political parties in Iraq. Attacks on Iraqi security forces by the resistance movement in the reported period aimed to raise the tensions ahead of the upcoming elections. The disappearance of 380 tons of dual-use conventional explosives from a former Iraqi military installation under US supervision contributed to these tensions.
- 4) Bulgaria.** On 24 October the group 'Secret Army of Islam' killed Bulgarian sergeant Vladimir Pashov (35) near Kerbala in Iraq. Three others were injured. He was the seventh Bulgarian soldier killed by insurgents since August 2003. Two Bulgarian civilian drivers were decapitated earlier this year by Islamic terrorists in Iraq. By the end of November the Bulgarian contingent of nearly 500 is scheduled to move from Kerbala to Diwaniya.

**c. PCR (Post-Conflict Rehabilitation) in Afghanistan** National elections for president were successfully convened on 9 October in Afghanistan. . Voter turnout– both men and women, was very high. The vote was not split along ethnic lines – another big achievement of the Afghans. On 12 October, the UN Security Council and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan congratulated the Afghan people on the conduct of their first presidential elections. In the spring of 2005, Afghans will select members of parliament and local governments. Despite efforts of al Qaida and the Taliban to disrupt the voting, the election was held without a major security incident. Excellent intelligence information pooled and channeled appropriately to the 120'000 soldiers of the Afghan, US-led Coalition ('Operation Enduring Freedom') and NATO-led ISAF forces guaranteed an adequate response to the threats of the Taliban. 260'000 Afghan refugees voted in Iran and 540'000 in Pakistan. Pakistan prevented cross-border incidents. The winner of the Afghan presidential elections was interim president Hamid Karzai. His present challenge is to select cabinet members who are professionals and respected public figures rather than politicians with personal connections with the president.

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

**a. Macedonia.** (1) On 1 October, US Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman said in Skopje that the Macedonians should complete the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and decentralization, follow the vision of multi-ethnicity, democracy, participation in the EU and NATO, and economic growth. He said that the US had approved a US\$9.5 million program to support decentralization. (2) US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited Skopje on 11 October. He said that Macedonians faced a choice between a future with NATO, stability and economic growth, on the one side, and going back to the past, on the other. This was his comment on the 7 November referendum on the new law for territorial division of the country. The law favours the interests of the Albanian minority and is considered contrary to the interests of the Macedonians, according to some opposition parties.

**b. Kosovo.** The parliamentary elections in Kosovo took place on 23 October. Though they were peaceful only 970 Serbs took part and practically boycotted them. Unlike President Boris Tadic of Serbia, Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and the Serbian Orthodox Church urged Kosovo Serbs not to vote. Voter turnout was 53 per cent. The

League of Democratic Kosovo of President Ibrahim Rugova won with 46.98 per cent of the cast votes. The Democratic Party of Kosovo of Hashim Thaci came second with 27.03 per cent; third – the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo of Ramush Haradinaj with 7.94 per cent, and fourth – the ‘Time’ Party of the writer and media man Vetton Surroi with 6.16 per cent. By law, ten per cent of the seats in the 120-seat parliament belong to the Serbian ethnic minority in the province.

**c. Bosnia and Herzegovina.** Municipal elections were held on 2 October in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The elections were funded and organized by the Bosnian authorities for the first time since the war. The nationalist parties of the three ethnic communities – SDA, HDZ, and SDS - were the winners at the polls. The nationalists won almost 70 per cent of the seats in the municipal councils. Membership in NATO’s “Partnership for Peace” (PFP) remains a crucial challenge and test for the ability of nationalist parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to concentrate on the real priority issues of the federation. The same holds true for the future negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement – an indispensable step on the longer road to European integration. The political system and economy of Sarajevo are still far from the Copenhagen criteria, and the prospect of membership in the EU is far away. That is why the Bosnian politicians should start proposing something meaningful to their people and for the future of the country. The war has left a very negative mark on everything, but it cannot be an argument forever that explains the lagging behind others.

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

**1. Serbia and Montenegro.** On 1 October US Under Secretary of State, Marc Grossman reminded that Belgrade has made no steps to arrest General Ratko Mladic, who is wanted by The Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The present Serbian government is still divided on the Tribunal. Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica insists that war crimes suspects should surrender voluntarily and be tried in Serbia. Montenegrin leaders refuse to get involved in the issue, responsibility for which will rest solely with Serbia after Montenegro leaves the state union.

**2. Slovenia.** The general elections in Slovenia on 3 October ended with a victory for the center-right opposition party SDS (Slovenian Democratic Union). Its leader Janez Jansa

defeated Prime Minister Anton Rop's Liberal Democratic Party (LDS). Jansa said that a policy of EU integration was a priority for his party and government.

**3. Bulgaria.** On 6 October the Bulgarian parliament adopted changes to the Law of Defense and the Armed Forces. According to the new law soldiers cannot refuse to participate in foreign missions and face expulsion from the armed forces if they do. Thus participation in international missions abroad firmly entered the national defense system and could no longer be considered an exception of the regular service.

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

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

**a. Bulgaria – Turkey.** On 5 October Bulgarian Coast Guard vessels shot with mortars at two Turkish boats after they refused to obey orders. Being in Bulgarian territorial waters the Turkish vessels have been exchanging loads and have been warned of an inspection by the coast guard. Black Sea routes of drugs, arms, and human beings are well known to the Bulgarian authorities. Bulgaria as a border country of NATO and as a future border state of the EU is not compromising on the issue of illegal trafficking. The Turkish authorities have been informed in a timely manner about the two intercepted vessels.

**b. Bulgaria – Greece.** On 11-13 October, Greek President Konstantinos Stefanopoulos visited Bulgaria at the invitation of Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov. The two leaders cleared the way for the signing of two bilateral agreements on social insurance and seasonal workers by the end of this year. The presidents of Bulgaria and Greece also agreed on re-shaping the two trilateral formats of multilateral cooperation: Bulgaria-Romania-Turkey and Bulgaria-Romania-Greece. They would become a quadrilateral forum – Bulgaria-Romania-Turkey-Greece after both Turkey and Greece agreed to that change.

**c. Bulgaria – Western Balkans.** On 18-22 October a Bulgarian delegation led by Foreign Minister Solomon Passy made official visits to Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania in his capacity as OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CIO). In Skopje the Bulgarian foreign minister signed a bilateral agreement on the support of Sofia for Macedonia's preparations for NATO and EU membership. Passy reminded as a CIO of the OSCE that the referendum in November, aiming to block the territorial

administrative re-arrangements, risks provoking a violation of the Ohrid Peace Agreement. In his meetings with the leaders of the ruling and opposition parties, he received mixed messages about their expectations and attitude to the referendum.

Macedonia may soon again become the focus of Balkan tensions.

In Pristina, Passy met with the president of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova. Though Passy stressed the 'standards before status' principle for Kosovo, the Kosovo Albanian leaders would hardly accept it and would continue to press for an independent statehood.

In Belgrade, Passy met with Serbian President Boris Tadic and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica. He promised Bulgaria's support for Serbia and Montenegro's efforts to join the EU. He also presented a list of the key infrastructure projects that Bulgaria considers priorities in the bilateral relations. Passy's appeal to Belgrade to urge the Serbs in Kosovo to vote was of no effect.

In Podgorica, Passy inaugurated a Bulgarian consular office – the first after more than nine decades.

The last stop of the tour was Tirana. Passy insisted to his hosts that the Central Election Commission had to improve its activity to guarantee transparent and honest elections in 2005. This is a major recommendation by the OSCE to the Albanian politicians. Passy opened a production facility for soft drinks from the Coca Cola chain built with a Bulgarian investment.

**d. Macedonia – Bulgaria.** The chief of the general staff of the Bulgarian armed forces, General Nikola Kolev visited Skopje from 20-21 October and met with his counterpart, General Georgy Boyadzhiev. They agreed to organize joint exercises at squad level in 2005. They also agreed to build a common airspace, in which Bulgarian air force would protect the air sovereignty of Macedonia. Macedonia may become a member of NATO if it manages to deal with its domestic stability issues and to complete its defense reform along NATO standards.

**e. Slovenia – Bulgaria.** On 26-27 October Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov made an official visit to Slovenia at the invitation of President Janez Drnovsek. The Slovenian leader shared his country's experience in adapting to EU membership. The volume of trade between the two countries will reach US\$100 million by the end of 2004.

**f. Croatia – Bulgaria.** On 28-29 October Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov made an official visit to Croatia and met with Croatian President Stipe Mesic. Parvanov also held talks with Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader. The leaders of the two countries discussed their countries' policies of EU integration. The Bulgarian president confirmed Sofia's support for Croatia's NATO membership bid and encouraged Croatia to start accession talks with the EU in 2005. Bilateral and regional cooperation were also discussed. The project of opening an airline link between the two capitals was supported during the high-level bilateral talks.

**2. Multilateral Relations: Trilateral Cooperation of Romania – Bulgaria - Serbia and Montenegro.** On 24 October the foreign ministers of these three countries (Mirca Geoana, Solomon Passy and Vuk Draskovic) met in the Romanian city of Kalafat on the Danube, opposite the Bulgarian city of Vidin. The three leading diplomats approved a trilateral Plan for Action, consisting of infrastructure, trade, and investment projects. Passy said the Danube was a river of unity; Draskovic promised that Serbia would do its best to restore its bridges destroyed in 1999, and Geoana pledged to have a bridge constructed in two years between Vidin and Kalafat (an old project of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe).

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

**1. EU – Bulgaria, Romania.** (1) On 6 October in Brussels, the European Commission (EC) published its report, which was presented to the European Parliament, concerning next steps in EU enlargement. Bulgaria and Romania should be ready to join the EU in 2007, according to the report. The two countries could sign the accession treaty in 2005. The treaty could enter into force on 1 January 2007, provided it is ratified by the 25 EU countries. The EC Report does not differentiate between the two accession cases. The only difference is that Bulgaria has completed its accession negotiations, while Romania continues the negotiation process. If Sofia and Bucharest do not fulfill the agreed conditions, a 'safeguard' clause could delay both countries' EU entry until 2008. This clause aims to stimulate the completion of reform efforts undertaken by the governments of the two states. The 'safeguard' clause has four components: a general economic one;

for the internal market; for justice and interior issues, and a special one for Bulgaria and Romania. All EU members must be in agreement to apply this clause. If one of the two countries drastically violates its engagements, the ‘safeguard’ clause would be applied on the violating party, not on the other one.

The EC report has a list of critical recommendations concerning both countries. Bulgaria has been warned to reform its police and judicial systems. The fight against organized crime must be continued in a more effective way, the report states. The EC report recommended some improvements of the freedom of media, public administration, and fighting corruption.

Romania was criticized for its endemic problems of corruption, lack of an independent judiciary, for an inadequate free press, and for police torture. Romania also has to complete negotiations on very sensitive issues as government subsidies, anticorruption measures, and judicial reform.

(2) The international NGO Transparency International on 20 October published its 2004 conclusions on the corruption index of Bulgaria and Romania, as well as of other countries –146 altogether. Bulgaria rates 54<sup>th</sup> with an index rating of 4.1, while Romania is 87<sup>th</sup> with 2.9. If the figure is not over 5.0 the respective country is assessed as not achieving success in the fight with corruption.

**2. EU – Turkey.** On 6 October the EC Report announced a conditional “yes” to the start of accession negotiations with Turkey. A date for the start of the negotiations has not been recommended, leaving the final decision on this question to the EU summit in December. However, a historical “yes” opens the way to a very complicated social and geopolitical experiment in European international relations

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

### **1. US**

**a. US – Bulgaria.** (1) On 3-5 October the US Chief of Staff of the land forces, Gen. Peter Scumaker visited Bulgaria and met with his counterpart Gen. Zlatan Stoykov. The US military chief visited Marino Pole base and the test grounds Tsrancha and Anevo. He also met the fourth Bulgarian battalion, preparing for mission in Iraq. (2) On 9 October US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld met with Bulgarian Defense Minister Nikolay

Svinarov on board the US aircraft carrier 'Enterprise'. They discussed the situation in Iraq, the future of the Coalition Forces and the eventual stationing of US military bases in Bulgaria.

**b. US – Slovenia.** On 4-7 October US airmen from the Aviano Air Base in Italy practiced rescuing downed pilots with Slovenian partners. The training was part of Adriatic Rescue 04 – a US-Slovenian combat search-and-rescue exercise for improving interoperability. The exercise involved air and ground operations. Croatian, Macedonian, and Albanian representatives observed the training.

**c. US – Albania.** On 20 October, US President George Bush “obligated funds for the destruction of chemical warfare agents stockpiled in Albania and named the US Department of Defense as the government agency to carry out the project”.<sup>1</sup> The funds come from the US Cooperation Threat Reduction (CTR) program (“Nunn-Lugar program”) to dismantle WMD.

**2. Russia: Russia – Bulgaria.** Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov visited Bulgaria from 19-20 October – the first visit in the last nine years by a Russian head of government. The minister for industry and energy, Victor Hristenko, also attended. The Russian delegation and their Bulgarian counterparts signed agreements concerning the participation of companies from Russia in the privatization of Bulgarian power plants. Prime Minister Fradkov met with Bulgarian Prime Minister Simeon Coburgotski and with President Georgy Parvanov. Russia clearly stated its interest to invest in the construction of the second Bulgarian nuclear plant at Belene. Bulgaria views its economic relations with Russia with its future EU membership in mind, while Russian interests in Bulgaria are measured in terms of the broader economic engagement of Moscow in the Balkans. Bulgaria’s trade deficit with Russia, caused by the unilateral dependence on the import of natural gas and oil, has been a burden on the country’s economy for many years, and Russia has not undertaken any meaningful steps to introduce more balance in the trade relations.

**3. China: China – Bulgaria.** On 17-23 October, Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Lydia Shuleva visited China. She met governmental officials,

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<sup>1</sup> Press release by US embassy in Tirana, <http://www.usemb-tirana.rpo.at/pg1news/1022%20Bush%20Earmarks%20Chemical%20Warfare%20Funds%20eng.pdf>

including Prime Minister Wen Jiabao – a rare exception in the rigid Chinese protocol. China promised preferential conditions for imported Bulgarian goods, for participation in the four biggest Chinese fairs, and special treatment for joint Bulgarian-Chinese companies. The Chinese government promised to help in improving the trade balance, which is now in favor of Beijing. Shuleva promised equal conditions to Chinese companies competing for Bulgarian telecommunications, infrastructure and energy facilities currently undergoing privatization. China provided Bulgaria with the status of “tourist destination”. Bulgaria promised a relaxed visa regime for Chinese tourists. Many Bulgarian businessmen in the delegation succeeded in concluding deals with Chinese partners.

**4. UN: UN – Greece.** On 15 October Greece was elected to the UN Security Council as non-permanent member for a two-year term, beginning January 2005. Greece is the second Balkan country representing the region of Southeastern Europe in this prestigious institution of the UN, after Romania.

## **VII. Conclusions**

The impatience demonstrated by external factors to the Balkans as to the pace of improvement of the situation in parts of the Western Balkans logically coincided with the rise of the hopes for the faster integration of the region in the EU. Both the impatience and the hopes need to be tailored to the realistic opportunities of changing the region to the better – by not insisting on the adoption of standards for social life that are indispensable for any European state and by keeping high and critical requirements to the states, joining the Union. The cooperation in the fight on terrorism remained a main feature of the region’s security profile. A way of preventing tensions between the newly integrated Balkan countries in NATO and the EU and those that stay out of them is the continuation of the active regional cooperation and providing support to those that are lagging behind in their accession to both institutions. The policy of Bulgaria in October was a good example of that attitude.

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