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

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I. Introduction

In December, Southeastern Europe continued its transition from a region needing stabilization and outside support towards a more active role in the building-up of its own security and historical responsibilities in driving processes of peace and integration both in the Balkan region and further on to the east. Completing the 'unfinished business' in the Western Balkans and undertaking more responsibilities in the Black Sea-Caspian Sea geopolitical zone would not have been possible without the crucial engagement of NATO, the EU, and the US in emancipating the Southeastern European region and helping it in coping with the post-Yugoslav and post-totalitarian legacies, stabilizing the security situation, and overcoming the belated modernization of the economy, technological and transport infrastructure, political and social relations.

During the past month, the US sent clear signals to its European allies indicating that the US' "global war on terror" relied to a significant degree on European contributions and higher levels of engagement – a message that was not lost on the new (and old) US allies in Southeastern Europe. Albanian unrest was reported in Southern Serbia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. The unwillingness to embark on a fresh political course in the Western Balkans that would help the Serbs was indicated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose cooperation with the ICTY in The Hague was said to be lacking. Institutional problems arose after pressure was exerted on key figures in government, placing the very existence of Republika Srpska as a single entity within the Bosnian Federation at stake. The smooth transfer of responsibility for stabilization from NATO to the EU, the continuing link of both the Alliance and of the US with the goals of guaranteeing stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not allow any chance of testing the resolve of the international community to stay on course in this Balkan country. NATO's declaration that it will preserve a robust presence in Kosovo adds more arguments in this direction. Serbia refused to withdraw its accusations against NATO from the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ), but the court refused to handle the claims saying it had no jurisdiction over the case. Serbia's declaration of intent to join NATO's PfP Program appears to clash with its determination to sue several member states in court.

A real political and conceptual breakthrough was achieved this month after the EU summit's decision to confirm the date for signing the accession treaties with Bulgaria and

Romania in the spring of 2005, to launch the accession negotiations with Croatia early in spring next year, and to initiate a similar process with Turkey in autumn of 2005. The processes of geopolitical, economic, defense, social, and cultural integration of the whole Balkan region in the EU are on track. The sooner the individual Balkan actors realize the magnitude of this chance and historical responsibility, the faster they can make steps towards stability, normalization, and progress. Perceiving Turkey's long negotiation process for EU integration, Russia proposed a big package of economic projects to its Black Sea neighbor for the next years. The US confirmed its decision to establish solidly in the Balkans by inaugurating a large diplomatic mission complex in Sofia and by pushing forward with stationing US military bases in Bulgaria.

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 – Germany. (1) On 3 December, the German General Prosecutor's Office announced that the authorities had prevented an attack by terrorists on the Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi in the last minutes before its launch. Allawi was on a two-day working visit to Berlin. The purpose of the visit was to negotiate German help in reconstructing Iraq with Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. The extremist Islamic group 'Ansar al-Islam' had reportedly designed the assassination plan, according to German officials, adding that the alleged plot appeared to have been conceived at very short notice. Three Iraqis were detained. According to unconfirmed statements by intelligence officials in the German media, Berlin was to have been the venue of the attack. The police said searches in Berlin, Stuttgart, and Augsburg had returned evidence of a plan that one policeman described as "not very professional". Allawi's itinerary was changed after that and tighter security measures were put in place.

2) General Issues – US-Europe. Lincoln P. Bloomfield, US Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, spoke to a Chatham House conference in London on 6 December on Europe's ability to deliver according to its commitments.¹ The strategic

¹US State Department press release, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rm/39737.htm>

success of the US security priorities for the next four years, said Bloomfield, would depend upon cooperation and contributions by the nation's allies, especially in Europe. He said the European view of US security policy during Bush's first term – that the US preferred unilateralism and was guilty of wrong-headedness – was simply “wrong”. What was truly different about the philosophy of the Bush administration, compared to its predecessor, was a more realistic acceptance that some international treaties included obligations that the US would never be able to accept, Bloomfield told the conference. As examples, Bloomfield noted the US change of policy on the International Criminal Court, and the Ottawa Convention banning all anti-personnel landmines. In both cases, the treaties' final terms contained provisions that the US Senate would never accept, he said. Bloomfield identified the following US security priorities for the next four years: to prevent further terror attacks on the US; to disrupt and defeat the international terror threat; and to fulfil other basic commitments to allies and friends around the world. The US would judge success of these goals by how much of the burden and the sacrifices were shared, Bloomfield said. This was because, first, Americans were expending much blood and treasure, and they needed the help and partnership of all the countries waging the war on terrorism. Second, it was unhealthy for the US and other countries to see the world through very different lenses. This undermined solidarity at the political level, he said. Bloomfield said Bush clearly preferred multilateral responses to security challenges, as long as the responses solved those challenges. But he contended that the more salient question was whether Europe would accept its full share of ownership of what Bloomfield called “the global problem manifested by terror and extremism”.

b. PCR in Iraq. NATO agreed on 9 December to expand its training mission for Iraqi security forces. At a NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels, ministers decided to increase the training mission personnel in Baghdad up to 300. Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, and Spain refused to send their NATO officers to help train Iraqi forces. US Secretary of State Colin Powell and NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer criticized what they perceived as a contradiction between the political endorsement for training Iraqi security forces by the governments of NATO countries and the unwillingness to send troops for that purpose. However, Poland, Hungary, the

Netherlands, and some other NATO countries did contribute personnel that may yet save the training mission in Iraq.

2. Post-Conflict Developments in the Western Balkans

a. Macedonia. (1) On 29 November, Macedonian Defense Minister Vlado Buckovski was elected as the new leader of the Macedonian Social Democratic Party and as prime minister-designate. Negotiations with allied Albanian parties took place. The EU encouraged the implementation of the Ohrid peace accords as a cornerstone of Macedonia's future accession to the EU. European Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn underlined this requirement during his visit to Skopje; the country officially applied for membership in March 2004. (2) On 6 December, Albanian extremists occupied the village of Kondovo near Skopje. Ali Ahmeti (a former guerrilla leader and chief of the political party 'Democratic Union for Integration of Macedonia') and Menduh Thaci (leader of the Democratic Party of the Albanians) held negotiations with the leaders of the group of about 200 insurgents in black uniforms. The Macedonian police suspected that Lirim Yakupi, a fugitive from justice for war crimes in Kosovo and Serbia, was the leader of the rebels. On 29 November, Albanian insurgents from the southern Serbian town of Presevo flew the Albanian national flag and demanded more autonomy for their community. The claims were made during the celebration of the Albanian national day by the Albanians of Southern Serbia.

b. Kosovo. On 4 December, the parliament of Kosovo elected Ramush Haradinaj as prime minister after getting the support of the ruling party of President Ibrahim Rugova. Haradinaj has twice been called by the ICTY in The Hague to provide evidence on war crimes. Serbian authorities have accused Haradinaj of 67 murders, of ordering 267 more, and of organizing the kidnapping of more than 400 people. Serbian media reports have accused Haradinaj of torturing and raping non-Albanian citizens. The Serbian government called on UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen to annul the decision taken by the parliament of Kosovo. In an official statement, the Serbian government points to the danger that the election of this Kosovo prime minister allegedly poses for the province. The UNMIK authorities in Kosovo, however, rejected Belgrade's complaint. Later in December, the chief prosecutor of the ICTY, Carla del Ponte, formally accused the

Kosovo prime minister of the murder of 40 Serbian and Albanian citizens in 1998 near the town of Glodzane. Haradinaj said the accusations were false and had been invented by the Milosevic regime.

c. Bosnia and Herzegovina. (1) A ceremony in Sarajevo on 2 December marked the end of the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the beginning of the EU's follow-up mission, EUFOR.² SFOR came to a successful conclusion almost nine years to the day after NATO deployed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina in its first-ever peacekeeping operation. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, speaking at the handover ceremony, called the occasion “a day for celebration, for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also for the wider international community” that highlighted a new level of cooperation between NATO and the EU, which gives the EU access to NATO planning and assets. The EU mission assumes the bulk of security operations in the country. As the US State Department’s Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs puts it in its 6 December 2004 “Fact Sheet”, “The people of Bosnia have welcomed a continued international security presence as they take the remaining difficult steps on the path toward integration into a Europe whole, free, and at peace. The EU has established a military mission, operation ALTHEA, to provide this support.”³ EUFOR derives its mandate from a new UN Security Council resolution and will have an initial strength of 7,000, equal in size to SFOR. NATO is retaining a military headquarters in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a staff of around 150 will focus on defense reform in the country, counter-terrorism, apprehending war-crimes suspects, and intelligence gathering. “The United States remains committed to the security and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including through a significant contribution to the NATO headquarters and a continued presence at Camp Eagle in Tuzla,” the US government statement concluded.⁴ (2) On 16 December, Paddy Ashdown sacked nine Bosnian Serb officials for failing to

² See also text of US State Dept. press release, at: <http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/p/tp-20041206-32.html>

³ US State Dept. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, „Fact Sheet“ (6 December 2004): <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/39436.htm>

⁴ Ibid.

arrest wanted war criminals (see more on this issue in ISN Security Watch of 17 and 20 December 2004)⁵.

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

1. Romania. At the presidential run-off elections in Romania on 12 December, Trajan Basescu, the mayor of Bucharest, won with more than 51 per cent of the votes against less than 49 per cent for the opponent, Prime Minister Adrian Nastasse. Basescu won by a margin of about 600'000 votes. Basescu promised to abolish the paternalistic style of government associated with former president Ion Iliescu. On 20 December, the new Romanian president took office. Basescu has pledged to establish a government by the end of December. It will most probably be headed by Kalin Popescu Taricanu from the president's Union for Justice and Truth party . Basescu said he did not expect any changes to his government for at least the next six months.

2. Serbia and Montenegro. In mid-December, the ICJ formally rejected Belgrade's request to investigate the legality of NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia. The ICJ declared that it had no jurisdiction over the case, as former Yugoslavia had not been a member of the United Nations on 29 April 1999 when it presented its demands, and had thus not been a party to the Statute of the ICJ. Eight NATO countries – the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal - defended their countries at the court, discarding the Serbian accusations that were outside of the ICJ's jurisdiction. The former FRY joined the UN in 2000. Any future involvement of NATO in a legal case concerning Yugoslavia could be only at the ICTY in The Hague for treating war crimes of Serbs and Albanians.

IV. State of Bilateral, Multilateral, and Regional Relations in the Balkans: Pact of Stability Multilateral Meeting in Tirana

A summit meeting of six heads of states from Balkan countries was convened on 9-10 December in Tirana . They discussed the development of the inter-ethnic and the inter-

⁵ ISN Security Watch, at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=10391> and <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=10399>.

religious dialog in the Balkans. The presidents of Albania (Alfred Moisiu, the host of the meeting), of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Borislav Paravac), of Bulgaria (Georgy Parvanov), of Croatia (Stipe Mesic), of Macedonia (Branko Crvenkovski), and of Serbia and Montenegro (Svetozar Marovic) were joined by the coordinator of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, Erhard Busek, UNESCO Secretary-General Koichiri Macuura, Norwegian Prime Minister Hel Magne Bunevik, and by spiritual and religious leaders from all over the world. Sharing visions of applying in practice ethno-religious models was a useful direction of the discussions that took place. There was an agreement that social-economic hardships could be translated into ethno-religious tensions and conflicts.

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

1. EU – Serbia

On 23 December, the EU and Serbia concluded a trade agreement on textiles. Under this agreement, the EU would lift all textile quotas applied to Serbia. In return Serbia would dismantle tariffs applied to EU textile imports. In addition, both parties would refrain from applying any non-tariff barriers to each other's textile and clothing exports.

2. AMBO Project. On 28 December, the prime ministers of Albania (Fatos Nano), of Bulgaria (Simeon Coburgotski), and of Macedonia (Vlado Buckovski) signed a cooperation agreement to implement the AMBO (Albania-Macedonia-Bulgaria Oil) project. It is envisaged that this project will eventually transport Caspian Sea fossil fuel via the Bulgarian port of Burgas to Skopje and Vlora on the Adriatic Sea, from where the fuel could be transported further westwards. The US has supported the project for many years.

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

1. NATO

a. NATO – The Western Balkans. On 9 December, the NATO foreign ministers met in Brussels and reiterated the alliance's commitment to maintaining a robust presence in Kosovo. The assessment of those present at the meeting was that Kosovo had entered a critical period, during which all communities should "participate in its institutions and

take their share of responsibility for building a better, common future”, according to the final communiqué of the meeting on 9 December 2004.⁶ As the security environment remains fragile the NATO foreign ministers agreed that KFOR would maintain its operational capabilities until an assessment was made that improved security and political circumstances allow for change. KFOR would continue to cooperate with UNMIK, OSCE and the EU. It was confirmed NATO would remain politically engaged through participation in the Contact Group Plus. The communiqué also stated NATO's commitment to maintain a presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina in support of the new EU mission there; NATO's long-term commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina remains undiminished. NATO foreign ministers reaffirmed their support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all the countries in the Western Balkans and declared they remained committed to the development of a peaceful, stable, and democratic region, fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures. The final communiqué urged these countries to continue to cooperate in their own region and promote good-neighborly relations, find mutually acceptable solutions and reach agreements on outstanding issues. They had to assume ownership of the reform process and build enduring multi-ethnic democracies, combat organized crime and corruption, and firmly establish the rule of law. They had also to cooperate fully with the ICTY, the NATO ministers' statement said, including bringing to justice in The Hague all those who were indicted by the Tribunal, notably Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, as well as Ante Gotovina, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 1503 and 1534. In this context the ministers stated they were deeply concerned by the most recent assessment provided to the UN Security Council by the Prosecutor of the ICTY on the level of cooperation she was receiving from the countries concerned. The foreign ministers welcomed the progress made by Albania, Croatia and Macedonia in implementing their Annual National Programs under the Membership Action Plan, and encouraged them to continue pursuing the reforms necessary to progress towards NATO membership.⁷

b. NATO-Bulgaria. (1) On 16 December, Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov met with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in Brussels. Parvanov assured the

⁶ Full text of NATO communiqué: <http://belgrade.usembassy.gov/current/041209a.html>

⁷ Ibid.

secretary-general that any change in Bulgaria's position about its involvement with troops in Iraq after the elections there in January 2005 would be consulted with the other countries participating in the occupation forces. The Bulgarian president told de Hoop Scheffer that Bulgaria would increase the number of its troops in Afghanistan by 25-30 soldiers. Sofia devotes 2.6 per cent of its GNP to defense. De Hoop Scheffer encouraged the Bulgarian leader to maintain this expenditure level. (2) On 20 December NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer extended his gratitude for Bulgaria's financial and other contributions to cleaning anti-personnel land mines on the territory of Serbia and Montenegro. Canada and Austria play a leading role in this international project. (3) The Bulgarian armed forces' general staff announced on 27 December that Bulgaria would contribute 5'000 troops and 1'300 fighting and support equipment to NATO's forces by 2007.

2. EU

a. EU-Romania. Romania successfully closed the last two chapters of its accession talks with the EU - dealing with justice and internal affairs and with competition - on 8 December. This opened the way for the 16-17 December EU summit meeting to decide on the date of signing the accession treaty next year. The concessions made by Romania during the negotiations over its EU accession were among the most hotly disputed topics during the presidential and parliamentary election campaigns in Romania. Romania hopes to become a full EU member on 1 January 2007. Its accession treaty will include a safety clause allowing Brussels to delay the country's accession by one year if Bucharest fails to carry out certain reforms it has already pledged to implement.

b. EU-Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Turkey. From 16-17 December, the heads of states and governments of the EU countries took some very significant strategic decisions concerning the next steps of EU enlargement. Bulgaria and Romania will sign their accession treaties in April 2005. Both treaties will have safety clauses as described above, though Romania's will be tougher than Bulgaria's. Croatia will start accession negotiations in March 2005 and is expected to proceed fast over the negotiation chapters. Zagreb is also expected to join the EU in 2008 or 2009. The EU's main precondition for

starting the accession talks in the early spring of 2005 is full cooperation with the ICTY in The Hague concerning cases of war crimes with Croatian participation during the 1990s. The question is extremely delicate, as Zagreb would have to hand over men to the ICTY who are considered national heroes in their fight for the country's sovereignty. The most disputed strategic decision of the EU summit was on starting accession negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005. The EU has to distance itself clearly from the concept of a "clash of civilizations", and criteria for membership must be clearly set out. French President Chirac underlined that Turkey had to acknowledge atrocities committed against Armenians in the early part of the 20th century. By 3 October 2005, Turkey should have solved the issue of the recognition of Cyprus, an EU member. More should be done for fully aligning civil-military relations in Turkey with EU practice.

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

1. OSCE-Bulgaria. From 6-7 December, Sofia hosted the regular annual OSCE meeting, having chaired the organization in 2004.

2. Russia

a. Russia-Greece. In the first days of December, Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis visited Russia and met with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov. The two countries confirmed their strategic partnership, both on a bilateral basis and within the framework of EU-Russia relations. Karamanlis highlighted the importance of bilateral links in economy, investments, tourism, trade, and energy. The Greek leader also met with Russian President Putin and Russian Patriarch Alexei.

b. Russia-Turkey. Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Turkey and met with Turkish President Sezer and Prime Minister Erdogan on 7 December. This was the first visit of a Russian head of state in the last 32 years and one of the most important events in the 522-year-history of the two countries' relations, according to Turkish assessments.

Putin proposed an investment package worth US\$20 billion in the fields of energy, defense, infrastructure, and privatization. Russia is one of Turkey's biggest trade partners with 7.6 per cent of the total exchange. Terrorism and Chechnya were discussed and the two topics already unite the two countries, according to the foreign ministers of the two countries, Abdullah Gul and Sergei Lavrov. Russia promised to support the solution of the bilateral Turkish-Armenian problems. The defense ministers agreed on more cooperation in the fight against terrorism and illegal trafficking of people, drugs, and arms.

3. US: US-Bulgaria. (1) In the beginning of December, the media reported that US European Commander and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) General James Jones would visit Bulgaria and inspect training fields and airports for potential US bases there. (2) The new US embassy worth US\$70 million was officially opened in Sofia on 14 December. It is the second-biggest US mission in the Balkans after the embassy in Athens. The US ambassador to Sofia, James Pardew, said that this new and huge complex was a proof of US confidence in the future of Bulgaria.

4. Japan: Japan-Bulgaria. Bulgarian Prime Minister Simeon Coburgotski and a large Bulgarian business delegation visited Japan from 14-16 December. He met with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. Japan cancelled visa requirements for Bulgarians at the end of December. In 2002, Bulgaria lifted visa requirements for Japanese citizens. The two delegations discussed various Japanese investment projects in Bulgaria.

VIII. Conclusions

The Balkans made a very significant step forward to membership in the EU in December. Bulgaria and Romania will sign their accession treaties in the spring of 2005; Croatia will start its membership negotiations in March 2005; and Turkey will do the same on 3 October 2005. NATO has confirmed it will keep a robust presence in the Western Balkans to guarantee the stability in the area. The EU launched its operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, replacing SFOR – a major test for EUFOR.

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