

March 27, 2011

Brussels Forum

Bringing the Balkans into Europe

Mr. Craig Kennedy: Okay. So I'm not going to say -it's into Europe and we've asked our good friend Steve Erlanger to be the moderator. And I'll turn the floor over to him, come on out.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you, Craig.

Mr. Craig Kennedy: Thank you.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thanks a lot, while you all get settled. It's not quite as bad as doing the panel after lunch, but it's the panel before everybody leaves. So thank you for staying. And we're going to try to finish, really, on time because as some poet said, "We've all got miles to go before we sleep," and we don't want to be late." It's a pleasure to be here. I've had a fair amount to do with the wartime Balkans. And it's nice to deal a bit with the peacetime Balkans. And it's would be remiss of me to stand here and not simply mention Richard Holbrooke's name. I'm not going

to tell you a Holbrooke story, you've heard enough of those.

But I do think of him at this moment. And I also-- Marc Grossman had a lovely phrase the other day about solidarity with Ron Asmus and I also want to express the same feeling. I think of him here. So having said that, I sometimes think of the Balkans and the EU now. I mean, the famous Trotsky line, "You may not be interested in Revolution but the revolution is interested in you." And I would say to the EU, you may not be interested in the Balkans, but the Balkans are interested in you. And what I hope to be able to do in this session is to pull out a bit, bring us up to date problems, progress. We only have an hour so I'm going to try to be terse and not be in the way.

And I would ask all of you, when the time comes for questions, to try to keep to the same. So I'm just going to--we have a very good panel. I'm going to try to go by protocol. Partly because President Tadić is a President and Prime Minister Lukšić is just a Prime

Minister. He's also younger. So, President Tadić, you've taken over a country that, in a funny way, like Israel has this very strong sense of defensive nationalism. Always feels it's misunderstood. You know, that people are too hard on it. You've done a great deal yourself to move toward reconciliation.

You've even gone so far as to make coalition with the former Milosevic party in the interest of stability and in joining Europe, but there's a strong nationalist party too. Elections are coming sometime in the next six months or so. And you've been hit hard by the economy. So in a way, I--you know, one thinks it's stable but it's not. Serbia, I have the sense, hasn't quite settled into its new role. Could you talk about that, what you're doing to try to get it to fit in this larger world that actually not very long ago made war with it?

H.E. Boris Tadić: Thank you. I mean, a few years ago for Serbia was a critical important to achieve stability, and to create stable society. Especially

carrying in the mind, many problems we were facing with here in the last decade of the 20th century.

Right now, we are a stable society, politically speaking, even though we affected very much because of economic crisis. Having in the mind, the fact that we didn't have a significant investment during the crisis period. Our economy is becoming more vulnerable, which means the old political reforms that we have to implement facing with the real challenge right now.

But we are continuing our efforts in that they direction and really optimistic in them some--Serbian part to which Europe for that implementing reforms.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Because, I mean, not very long ago, you had 50,000 people out on the streets campaigning for change and, I mean, what was bothering them, do you think? What aren't you giving them?

H.E. Boris Tadić: I think, the people has a right to demonstrate, asking for the demands, but at the same time that was a peaceful way and I appreciate that way. That means Serbia is a democracy. Serbia is achieving

that democratic standards and we can expect demonstrations on Serbian street even in the future but we can see that kind of behavior of ordinary people even in London, in all other capitals in Europe, which means people are facing with the challenges. Unemployment is very high all over Europe. We are facing with a specific problems especially because of crisis, but we have to try to solve that kind of problems.

I've been facing always with a challenge to form coalition with my former rivals. I hope this time I'm not going to create this coalition after elections. My intention is to continue reforms with my coalition partner right now, But--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Without Mr. Dinkic?

H.E. Boris Tadić: I hope that he going to stay government, you never know about Mr. Dinkic but I'm not going to explain all details about my old coalition partner. This is going to be very boring. Anyway--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Let me ask you though about the main opposition party, Mr. Nikolic's party, which is the inheritor of Seselj's strong nationalism. How are they moving? I mean, how would you analyze their movement? I mean, are they defanged in some way? Is their nationalism different?

H.E. Boris Tadić: I would like to explain a little bit what happened in Serbia of October 2000 when we had a Milosevic under power. In fact that was a very difficult situation for us, how to defeat him. And the way it was to bring some waters of Milosevic's party in our club. That was a few five percents of Milosevic waters.

In fact, having in a mind, a very small numbers of the waters who were determined to vote for changes (inaudible) and in past few years, we were trying to create paramount shifts in terms of orientation of ordinary people. That was Europe. European integrations and reforms that we have to implement.

H.E. Boris Tadić: And that was also not only political wheel but technique, political technique. And that was very successful, always. I've been working with Kostunica's party even though he is on the end of the day, he declared himself as anti-European political force. Right now I'm in a coalition with a former Milosevic party. They became pro-European political party. And this is a political technique and I'm very happy because of that, but the fact that Nikolic left the Seselj party means that we have a really consensus among the Serbian people in terms of European integrations.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you.

H.E. Boris Tadić: That's one of the most important achievements--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Right.

H.E. Boris Tadić: --in the past few years.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you. Mr. Prime Minister, you're not yet 35, I think. You've been Prime Minister for about three months. So it's unfair

to ask you, you know, whether you've altered everything . But you were the deputy to Mr. Djukanovic for a very long time who had a mixed reputation, shall we say. I mean, I think, he did bring Montenegro into the new world and he was very good at managing the Milosevic challenge and so on, but there were also lots of issues about cigarette smuggling and Italian indictments and crime and corruption. And I just want to ask you, I mean, is this the big change in Montenegro or we seeing simply superficial change to a pretty young face?

MR. H.E. Igor Lukšić: Well, first of all I'm still within 100 days. So--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yes, exactly.

MR. H.E. Igor Lukšić: Still some more weeks to go. And secondly, I believe, it--that question should be asked--I mean, people should be asked that question rather than myself. What I'm trying to do is really to get job done. And that's what he's trying to do. I believe that one of the first, very important, steps we took was, I held days of consultations in January. I

tried to involve in the debate about European prospects of Montenegro. Very segments of the society starting from the civil sector, ending with free--ending with media, in attempt to, you know, change perception that--which sometimes circulates even in--through European offices.

That Montenegro is still not institutionally mature enough to take responsibility for some challenges, some decisions. And I'm pretty sure that very soon the perceptions will change.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: You're a candidate country now. I mean, is this going to help you in this process of change?

Mr. H.E. Igor Lukšić: It will, it will, but I believe--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yeah, how--what do you--what do you need to do most, do you think?

Mr. H.E. Igor Lukšić: I mean, this position of the candidate status country will definitely change Montenegro, but what will change it--further will once

we open up negotiations in accession talks. And what we are now trying to do is to prepare for that, because negotiations will come at some point. Will it be--will we receive a green light from European commission this year or whenever European commission thinks we're ready. Doesn't really matter. What matters is that we use the period ahead of us to prepare for that.

I was referring to similar question yesterday. Talking to young professionals. And what I said was, that Montenegro is a small country, both in terms of population and size. And challenges are very similar to any other country because institutional building process is same for Serbia, for Montenegro. It was same for Croatia, Slovakia and any other country that is now member of the EU.

What we have to do, we have to involve all segments of the society, because (inaudible) skills are not that big so--and in capacity, another big. So we have to involve in the process, people from the civil sector,

people from media, people from university and so on. That's why the whole system changes.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Right.

Mr. H.E. Igor Lukšić: And along that change, what I believe will happen is that culture will change and that's why I believe involving younger people into the politics in Balkans is important, because--not only because we're using social networking to respond to the questions of our people or we communicate in an easier way with our counterparts. It's just that, I believe, we need some new energy involving this.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you.

Mr. H.E. Igor Lukšić: And that's important for the enlargement process as well.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Okay, very good. Stefano Sannino, you've been involved very much with the Balkans, with the OSCE. And you're now working on the enlargement for the Commission. There's just a general feeling that, I think like all of us this morning, you want another hour's sleep. Europe kind of wants

another hour's sleep. It's tired. We talk about enlargement fatigue. Maybe it's worse this morning than other mornings.

But is Europe too tired to take on these countries and challenges? I mean, You'll say no but explain why no.

Mr. Stefano Sannino: Well, first of all, I think that the fact itself that there are so many people around in the morn where there was also the change of the time into the summertime. It's not an element which is worrying me in the sense of the perspective for the future of the enlargement process.

I think that we are not tired. I think that there are good news coming from the region. There are good news in coming from Europe towards the region. Because if I look at the level of the foreign direct investments flowing into countries like Montenegro or Serbia, if I look at the way both countries are dealing with the political crisis, internal political problems, and if I look at the way they are facing the

international environment, the sense is that good news are coming from the region. And this is giving a sense of perspective also to Europe.

What was perhaps creating more a sense of fatigue was the fact that it seemed that region was not moving enough.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Even Croatia was slowing down, right?

Mr. Stefano Sannino: I think that Croatia is an extremely good news and we hope to be able to complete rapidly the process of negotiations with Croatia and to sign the accession treaty. But again, it's not only Croatia, I mean, we need to understand that this is one part of the story and that the other part of the story's are countries like Montenegro, like Serbia but also the others that are lining up.

And more good news are coming from the region. More enthusiasm is going to recreate in Europe.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: One of the reasons I press it is that this was supposed to be the hour of Europe,

which lasted about ten-and-a-half seconds. But in the end, once the conflicts, for the most part, ended, you know, it really was taken over by Europe as a responsibility to integrate these countries into the larger system, but the larger system is worried about the Euro, the larger system's worried about whether it can have a coherent foreign policy. The larger system feels that the Council is getting too strong sometimes, at the expense of the Commission, and feels there's so many voices and so many people to placate, that maybe it's not feeling the same sense of responsibility to finish the job in the Balkans and in Bosnia, for instance.

I don't think you'd find anyone who would say Bosnia is going particularly well.

Mr. Stefano Sannino: Well, first of all, I mean, the international agenda is a complex agenda. And will have seen just in the last few days, if you were looking at the front page of newspapers, one day, it was about Libya and the other day, was about the

earthquake in Japan. So there are competing priorities and we need to be able to tackle with all of them.

Somehow, it is true that once the war in the Balkans was over and once, let's say, the countries have started to move towards a more stable--on a more stable pass that was reducing the level of attention of the international community, but I don't think that this has meant that we have forgotten or that the countries have been left out from the mainstream.

And once again, if I look at the people around, if I look at the kind of commitment, engagement that Europe still has, Vis-à-vis this part of the world, I have a feeling that we have not forgotten and we are still there.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: And also, it's worth saying that, I think, earlier this month were the first direct talks between Serbia and Kosovo. It's going to be a complicated process, but they're happening under EU guidance.

Mr. Stefano Sannino: Yes.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: So I take your point. Michael Turner is a U.S. Representative, he's a Republican, was Mayor of Dayton when the Dayton Accords were signed, but has been very interested in the Balkans and had suggested recently to Secretary of State Clinton, that the region needed a Dayton II Accord. And Congressman, tell us what you meant by that. What are the issues that you think need, still, to be resolved?

The Hon. Michael Turner: Well, thank you. I, too, want to give an acknowledgement to Richard Holbrooke. Obviously, my community where the Dayton Peace Accords were negotiated has a particular affinity for Richard Holbrooke and, of course, his accomplishments with the Dayton Peace Accords.

My first trip to the Balkan area was in '96 with then Commerce Secretary Mickey Canter, on the follow on the economic mission of the tragic Ron Brown crash that occurred.

And one thing I think that, when we look at this issue, that we need to acknowledge, also, is the tremendous amount of progress that has been made. I mean, the fact that the items that we're having in our discussion today are so far advanced of where we were in '96 and when the Dayton Peace Accords first brought a peace to the region.

And now we have, through the process of NATO engagement and EU engagement, Ohio has--our National Guard has a specific relationship with the Serbian military, as we look to the reforms that have occurred throughout the Balkan area in both military structure and then economic--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Dayton II and the problems?

The Hon. Michael Turner: And the issue, I think, that we have though, is that as Montenegro, and as Serbia, and as Croatia continue their progress toward EU and economic stability, it's almost as if the backs are turned to Bosnia, Herzegovina and the issues that need to be resolved there.

We still have the issues of territorial integrity. The tri-presidency, the Constitution that is largely unworkable that is a remnant of the Dayton Peace Accords, including--with the issue of Republic of Srpska and the issues there that may require resolution with Kosovo for them to be resolved.

I think that if you look at the disintegration of Yugoslavia that there's a real opportunity, now that we're 15 years on, to bring all those issues together, perhaps in a Dayton II, and resolve them.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: I'd also make a recommendation; design Bosnia a new flag. This was done very quickly. It's not a very pretty flag, I have to say.

President Tadić, Serbia used to be accused of meddling a lot in Bosnia, for good reason. Others, too. Do you have influence now in Bosnia? What kind of influence do you have? Can you really push it along or has the sort of separation between the sort of Serb part of Bosnia become institutionalized?

H.E. Boris Tadić: We have very good relations, not only with the Serbs and Serbs that are politicians in Bosnia, but also with all other ethnic groups. And that is what we're intending to do to help. We are not having influence like during the Milosevic (inaudible) period and that is exactly what we are trying to avoid, that kind of scenario.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: So are we.

H.E. Boris Tadić: Well, of course, but the main thing in our policy towards Bosnia is to protect integrity of that country. And that is in our common interest. I'm sharing this view with the President of Croatia, Mr. Josipović. That's good news, but we have some concerns about development in Bosnia Herzegovina by Dayton's agreement--these countries are formed by two entities, Federation and Republic of Srpska and they are leaving three ethnic groups.

And everything--what they are going to decide is acceptable for Serbia, for Croatia, but we cannot interfere in their relations.

They have some particular problems but from my point of view, it is very important to avoid any imposition in Bosnia Herzegovina, otherwise, we'll be in trouble altogether. And for that reason, it takes patience, it takes time, but they have to negotiate to each other to find some practical solutions in terms of functioning.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Do you feel that Europe is actually sort of, I mean, that Dayton's failed in the end? I mean, it stopped the war but it hasn't built a state.

H.E. Boris Tadić: I don't think so. That was crucially important in terms of keeping peace, stabilizing country and that is a good basis for the talks.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Okay.

H.E. Boris Tadić: And that is why I don't think so, that Dayton's failed.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Okay. Let me just ask you just very quickly, because then I want to go to the

audience, Kosovo--one has to talk about Kosovo. It's not Bosnia, it's considered still very much a part of Serbia. You won't recognize its independence, it's clear. There's a partition at the Ibar River. I was there when it happened. The French troops could have stopped it; they didn't, but here we are.

I think talk of Preševo and exchanging territory is gone. That's my sense. I don't know if you all agree. What can you offer and what can Kosovo offer the mostly Serbs north of the river to make them actually feel that, or understand that, the world has changed and they're not going to be part of Serbia again?

H.E. Boris Tadić: If you want my opinion--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yes, please.

H.E. Boris Tadić: I think that, regarding Kosovo, we have to start from the reality that is existing on the ground. Which means Albanians, mostly, are not going to--in the future, they didn't want to accept the Serbian sovereign roof. Mainly, Serbs in Kosovo, especially on the north, do not want to accept

Albanians sovereign roof over Kosovo. And that is the reality in which we are living.

In that respect, that dialog between Pristina and Belgrade is very important, in order to deliver some technical and concrete solutions for ordinary people.

Even though we have a different views regarding Kosovo, we cannot block a normal life, and that is why this dialog is very important right now.

We are starting from the technical issues, probably will come to the more difficult issues on the end of this dialog but right now, we just have to solve something concretely. That is very, very, very important for both sides, for Serbs and Albanians.

If you're asking me what Albanian officials from Pristina can offer to Serbs on the northern part of Kosovo--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Well, I was asking more what the Kosovars and Pristina could offer. That's a different question, supposedly.

H.E. Boris Tadić: Kosovars and Pristina can offer. I mean, if you are going to ask Serbs, are they Kosovars, they are going to say, "No, we are Serbs." And that is the reality in which we are living. And we have to understand that kind of reality.

Like in Bosnia, I mean, to be totally honest, if someone is thinking to create new ethnic group in Bosnia, so-called Bosnians, by Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks, this is not reality. And we have to take reality into the consideration, in order to deliver some concrete results. To bring all of us closer to European Union. That means, also, for Kosovo.

I am not sure that kind of idea is existing in the circles and Pristina are going to be acceptable for Serbs that are living on the northern part of Kosovo.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Maybe I can ask Mr. Sannino. Could the government and Pristina be doing more and what might it do?

Mr. Stefano Sannino: I think that there is a quite interesting development that I detected in the new

leadership that's just been appointment in Kosovo after elections with the new president. That's only who, for the first time, embraced people living in--Serbs living in northern Kosovo in Serbia, which I think it's a positive point. The point is how to manage to create conditions for Serbs living in Kosovo to feel at home in their own country.

And this is an element that is important in which we all need to work on. How to get the best conditions for them to integrate into their new state.

If I may, one of the problems of the Balkans is that you shouldn't be a minority in a country, because this has always been a sort of extremely difficult situation to alleviate.

So if we can manage, progressively, to overcome this feeling, the feeling that you can be a minority in a country, this does not mean that you are going to be a second-class citizen. This can be extremely important and helpful in Kosovo, in Bosnia, in Macedonia and (inaudible).

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Well, this is about rights, responsibilities. Sometimes, I have the feeling in Western Europe, it's fine to be a minority, as long as there aren't too many like you.

Mr. Stefano Sannino: Right. And they say (inaudible) sometimes in the European Union, being a minority, you have even more rights, so--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Congressman, is there something that the Americans can do to help push along, finally, a process of reconciliation between Kosovo and Belgrade?

The Hon. Michael Turner: Well, I--Certainly, we've been very much engaged in all of these issues. And looking at the integration toward Europe, NATO has always been in the lead, as far as looking toward a structural change and partnership. And certainly, the United States has taken a lead in that process. And I think we'll certainly continue.

To some extent, there is a hesitation on a resolution of the issues in the area because everyone

looks to the partner to the right to see what concessions that they're going to give before they are willing to give concessions. That's why I think it would be very positive to bring everyone together and put all the issues on the table.

So perhaps that process of compromise and resolution could be done in an aggregate, because the piecemeal process is one that is going to be very slow. We're 15 years out.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yeah, well, that's right. I'm not sure the EU would appreciate the Americans getting too much back involved again, but I was curious. So there are lots of other things that we actually haven't yet talked about. I mean, there's the Macedonia name problem. I remember Condoleezza Rice once, when I was talking to her about this, she was very frustrated by this sort of great fight. And she suggested that Macedonia become the Republic of Aardvark, and that way, it would come first in the

phone book, but somehow, that suggestion was not taken up.

And we haven't talked about Albania, we haven't talked much about Croatia. But time is short and what I'd really like to do is now get out of the way, if I can, and ask the audience for questions. I would again ask you, even if I'm long-winded, that you not be. And if you can possibly introduce yourselves and direct your questions, if at all possible, to individuals.

Sonja Licht first person I see. And I'll take a few questions, like two or three, and then come to you.

Sonja Licht: During this forum--Sonja Licht from Belgrade. During this forum (inaudible) was mentioned many times in the context of what is going on in Libya right now. I think it would be important for the audience to hear somewhat more about two things; one is effort for reconciliation in the Western Balkans; and second, how does the panel believe, especially those who are very much involved, is regional cooperation progressing and helping this process of reconciliation?

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Okay. Let me take one more.  
Is there--where do I--Heather.

Heather: Thank you.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Okay.

Heather Grabbe: Heather Grabbe from the Open Society Institute. One of the remarkable features about the region is that here we are more than a decade on from major international intervention. And yet, there's still a lot of outside players who are often very welcome in the region. We see mediation in Albania going on between the parties, we see the way that both Americans and Europeans are involved very strongly in Bosnia. Of course, the Siege of Kosovo.

But there are also new players coming in, in particular, Turkey, which, as part of the--I think it was four legs of the bridge--has also got involved. It's not quite clear where the relationship between these different powers--you could call them all partners--is going. What, really, do you see from the ground, particularly from Serbia and Montenegro, for

some kind of an agreement about the future of the region? Is it about seeing what each has to offer and taking mediation where it's helpful? Or is it actually about forming some kind of a common vision and what concrete results have really come out of all of this intervention recently?

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Perfect. Great. Do you want to talk about, I mean, the reconciliation question's a big one, this is a big one. Why don't we try to answer those two. Mr. Prime Minister?

H.E. Igor Lukšić: I mean, it's all about regional policy, basically. It's about how countries in the region cooperate and it is about what is it we could do, as leaders in our countries, to promote regional cooperation? And I believe there are many possibilities.

I mean, recently, when we met in January, President Tadić and myself, we spoke mostly about how we could improve economic cooperation between our two countries. How we could harmonize activities, in terms of building

infrastructure, cooperation in energy sector and so on. And I think those projects could really help integrate country.

Unfortunately, all of our countries have lost a lot of time. We have lost, basically, two decades and we have to run very fast to catch up. And therefore, I believe, in the meantime, all other emerging countries, such as, for example, Turkey is, could only help to the process. Facilitate by investing, by helping us improve the economic environment, by helping the influx of the foreign investments. And all of that would actually only help to integrate further, the system of the regional countries. And therefore, I believe our trip to Europe will be faster.

So I very much appreciate. At the same time, the involvement of as many key factors as possible would help, in my view, to resolve in a faster way, some pending issues in the region, by playing a very constructive role.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: President Tadić, do you want to say something?

H.E. Boris Tadić: First of all--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Particularly on the sort of more moral issue of reconciliation, too.

H.E. Boris Tadić: The reconciliation is a key point of our policy. We started from the beginning to work very hard on paying respect to the victims and being very active in the reconciliation process, bringing us closer and defining the common vision.

That is also one of the question about (inaudible). Do we have a common vision? Yes, we have. This is European Union future. We don't have alternate. That is crystal clear, even though we are not sharing views on all particular things. That is our vision, that is how we are cooperating to each other and that is the system we are going to implement in our own countries, taking to the consideration legislative process and the reforms we're implementing every day.

These days, we are talking about common resources in economy. How to use something that we have in our countries. We have some relations with many, many countries, with Turkey, with the countries from Africa, Asia, from the past when we was from Yugoslavia. And we have to use that kind of relations in order to deliver some concrete economic results.

In that respect, we can be helpful also for European Union. From time to time, Europe is faced with the problem of how to communicate with some partners from Africa and other countries.

But that is what we are doing. In next few days, I'm going to have a trilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of Croatia and Slovenia. We are going to define what we can do in terms of new economic appearances, new markets that are going to be available for us. Also Montenegro, we had an informal meeting few weeks ago in Belgrade and that is how we are communicating.

In general, from that perspective, situation is extremely good.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yes. And--

H.E. Boris Tadić: Extremely good but totally different in comparison with the period when we had a Dayton's Agreement. Only few years ago, situation is really very, very good.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: No. I mean, I don't have a lot of Yugo-nostalgia but as an economy, it worked better. There's no question.

H.E. Boris Tadić: I am not talking about nostalgia. I am talking about concrete and very rational processes.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Now, let me ask you something else, if I can, and maybe it's slightly unfair. I don't believe, by the way, at all, in collective responsibility. One has to be very clear about that. But do the people of Serbia understand yet, in a way, what happened and why people outside Serbia responded the way they did?

H.E. Boris Tadić: Many of them are understanding, some of them are not understanding, even today. But the problem is coming from the political sphere. Some politicians are not understanding.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yes, of course.

H.E. Boris Tadić: Even those that are trying to become for European oriented right now, but this is our reality in which we are living and we have to have new efforts in that direction.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you. I'll take some more questions (inaudible). Okay, he's passing. I have hands here. Way in the back that I can't see and then Mr. Dzurinda. Is it Alex?

Alex Rondos: Yes.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yes, hi--Rondos.

Alex Rondos: It's Alex Rondos from Greece. I have a question, which was prompted by, I think, a comment of yours, Steve. I'd like to hear, especially from the participants from the region, how much interference do you actually want from outside, as--in the deeply

internal negotiations about the settlement of outstanding issues? And let me put a real blunt question to President Tadić. When you are negotiation with the Kosovar, do you see the Kosovar in front of you or do you see the United States in front of you?

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Do you want to answer that right away?

H.E. Boris Tadić: Thank you very much.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Do I look like a Kosovar?

H.E. Boris Tadić: I think that my smiling is a crystal-clear answer. Well, we see Kosovars in front of us when we are talking about achieving compromise. But from time to time, we feel huge influence from other countries. And what is very important? Everything, what we can agree, everything what can be compromised for our two parts has to be supported by other players. That is very important.

What we are doing on Bosnia, we are only supporting all ethnic groups and all politicians in Bosnia to reach agreed solution. That is exactly what we are

trying to do with the Kosovars, with Kosovar Albanians, whatever you want.

What is my intention? My intention is to solve historical conflicts that exist in the Balkans. I truly believe that we cannot bring more conflicts in European Union. European Union is a little bit tired because of their own conflicts. And we would like to solve our conflicts and to implement reforms as soon as possible and to prepare ourselves to become member states.

This is a most difficult problem but we are starting from the most difficult problems. That's, I mean, a rational approach, what we are doing right now. That's my answer.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Okay Stefano.

Mr. Stefano Sannino: Just because of the remark by Alex is very interesting. And in away, closer to something that President Tadić was saying before. I think that the--if you look at the situation of the former U.S. (inaudible) after the dissolution and the

difficulties and the problems that they are facing, I think it is important what President Tadić was saying. All the countries shared European perspective. And they share it not only because it's nice, it's good, it's wealth and prosperity, but also, as one of the leaders in the region told me, because it's security.

It's a sort of way of getting our part of the world under a secure roof. And that's why I think that at a certain point, we should also need to if I understand what Alex was saying, to try to get this process really on track and not to face it only from a purely high ideological point of view, but try to face it on a more pragmatic and concrete point of view, where you can have many more things done under the EU umbrella.

If I see a development in Bosnia, we have managed to achieve much more in areas like electricity, or like visa liberalization, in terms of finding a different balance between different the components in Bosnia, much more by negotiating on concrete aspects than

trying to solve the sort of very broad and general ideological political scheme.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: I mean, partly, sometimes I think with Kosovo and Serbia is like the Israelis and the Palestinians, only to the extent that if you left the two of you alone in a room, it would never get settled. You need somebody else pushing and helping and that's you, that's the EU, right?

Mr. Stefano Sannino: Yes. But how you do it, I mean, that's the ...I think that, I don't want to say that we are neutral or honest broker or that we are saints and fantastic. I mean, that's not the point. It's just that we are--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: But you have conditionality.

SANNINO : No. We are trying to look at--I see the process as a sort of built-in conditionality. You don't need from outside. We don't need to impose. It's the fact itself. You want to have Visa liberalization, you need to do a certain number of things in order to allow this to happen. You want to

solve a problem of electricity in [inaudible], we need to do a certain number of things. And this is making things much more easier because it's de-ideologizing--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yeah.

Mr. Stefano Sannino: --if I can use this term, is making much easier. It's also about the dialog. The dialog is about concrete things, about the (inaudible), it's about the--

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Visas, confidence building-- that's perfect, thank you. Foreign Minister (inaudible) please.

MIKULAS DZURINDA, FM OF SLOVAKIA: Thank you very much. First of all, I want tell that we all are very happy to have two leaders of two Western Balkan countries here, especially President Tadić and Prime Minister Lukšić. We have a lot of cooperation together. Many concrete projects. And I believe that these projects could lead to the success for both countries. And I would be very happy if, this year,

the year 2011 would be a year of the beginning of the accession talks for both countries.

Fulfillment of criteria is individual but as Sonja has already thought we need also to develop good neighborly relations and regional cooperation. This is why we organized in October an extended Ministry meeting (inaudible) across the countries of the Western Balkans. (Inaudible) was there, (inaudible) was there, and it was good. We are continuing doing this. I have no question because we speak quite often together.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Well, ask a question for the benefit of all of us.

DZURINDA: But I have only one suggestion, to follow the experience of the former Czechoslovakia. We split peacefully in 1992 in order to be reunited again in the EU 12 years later.

Mr. Boris Tadić: So did we.

DZURINDA: Yes, so follow the way of the--

Mr. Boris Tadić: Very peaceful way.

DZURINDA: Follow the way of the former Czechoslovakia would never happen.

Mr. Boris Tadić: That is exactly what we are doing. We are following you.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you. Well, I think many people wish all divorces should be as velvet as that one. We have a couple other questions down here, please, and there.

AUDIENCE: I want to just--hi. Matthew Horn. I'm a lawyer in Washington, but in '97, '98 I was the (inaudible) legal adviser in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia. On a positive note, we mentioned Albania and Croatia. I think it's amazing that they're in NATO now. If you would have, 10 years ago, said that, people would have bet everything against it.

Now, the not so positive, Mr. President, you had mentioned that you want to solve the problem, I guess, vis-à-vis Kosovo historically. Is that historically Kosovo Polje? Or is it historically post-ICJ? I mean, not to put you on the spot, but how historical do you

want to go, to the battle of the blackbirds or, more recently, to the ICJ--?

Steven Erlanger: Let's not go to 1389 if I'm remembering properly. Please--

AUDIENCE: Gian Giacomo Migone from Italy. I have a question for Mr. Turner whose a member of the House of Representative and is influential on international affairs. In following up the previous question, what are the strategic U.S. interest involvement in the Balkans at the moment, and, more specifically, in Kosovo, where there's a very important American military base--I think it's called Camp Bondsteel--

Erlanger: Bondsteel.

AUDIENCE: --if I'm not mistaken.

Erlanger: Right. It was made out of wood to begin with.

AUDIENCE: Because I feel that, in this discussion, you know, all the important facts should be on the table and taken into consideration. Thank you very much.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you. Do you want to deal with that.

Hon. Michael Turner: I--you know, earlier Srebrenica was mentioned and, you know, a couple years ago I was in Srebrenica where 500 bodies were being returned back to the families as a result of forensics that the United States had participated in to reconcile those with their families. I think that that helps us give some context here as to, really, the interest in the region. And you mention that, you know, many have come to the table--Turkey, the United States, EU, NATO--and EU, of course, are being, you know, structural opportunities for the progress in the region. I think that the strategic interest that everyone has is--we realize that this is not just about economics or economic development. It's not just about government structures. It's about real loss of life that occurred. And I think that there is a real threat that if we don't get this right that we're going to have conflict that, perhaps, could return to the area.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Yes. To (inaudible) this question, anyone. How far back do you want to go?

Mr. Boris Tadić: How about your question?

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Do you want to repeat it quickly?

Mr. Boris Tadić: No, no, no. I don't have a problem with that, but, I mean, we would like to solve historical conflict that is existing more than 100 years between Serbs and Romanians. That is exactly what we are trying to achieve, which means compromise, not to have one side that is losing everything, the other side, it is getting everything, this simple.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you. We have only a short time left, and I do want to end this on time. So does anyone else have a very pressing question before I turn back to the panel? Or are you--someone's pointing somewhere. There. Thank you. Please, sir.

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: And identify yourself, please.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, (inaudible) Kosovar. So my question is to Mr. Tadić. Earlier you mentioned that your country is going towards Europe, and I am very happy with that. Don't you think there is--there are some contradictions in Serbia's policy right now? Just a couple of quick examples to--for what you mentioned earlier. We were talking about Bosnia's integrity. For example, a couple of months ago, the Serbian government held a joint meeting with the Republika Srpska joint government. That can send some mixed signals. Other--another example could be, for example, the ceremony held for the anniversary of NATO's intervention (inaudible). Don't you think that that doesn't help into looking to the future altogether?

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you for speaking out. I think, now, what we really should do is come back to our panel. We'll do it in reverse order, which is perfect, 'cause the last question was addressed to you, President Tadic. So why don't you begin, answer the

question, and then if you have some concluding remarks, please--

Mr. Boris Tadić: First of all, the ceremony because of bombing of my country more than 10 years ago is a normal ceremony. We've been paying respect to the victims, many victims, even kids that were killed in that time, as every normal country is paying respect to the victims that we have been doing every year, and we are going to continue that.

Second, in terms of our meetings with the government from Republika Srpska, that is totally in accordance with the Dayton's agreement, but always on that meetings, we are saying to them, and on the press conference, we are fully supporting integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. And we won't--those kind of meetings with the government from the other entity, and--that is our intention.

And be sure Serbia is not going to do anything that is going to be negative in terms of integrity of Bosnia Herzegovina. This is in our national interest, and

this is in interest of Croatia. That's very, very important. We want to protect integrity of Bosnia Herzegovina as one of the country that is grantor of Dayton's agreement.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: And, Mr. Lukšić, object lessons from the past? What I mean, what message do you have to the EU? I mean, how fast, what should they be pushing, what do you want from them?

Mr. Igor Lukšić: Going back to the beginning of the panel when you said--when you reminded on Trotsky, and it is us who should be the revolution coming to the EU, I don't think we should do it. I would rather read that the other way around. But I believe that European Commission--European Union member states, they should also contribute to the common vision we were talking about, by the region. Because, as President Tadić said, common vision, yes, that's our (inaudible) membership of our countries into the EU.

But I believe--and I believe that it is also up to the European Union countries or member states to keep

communicating that message to us, which is not only defining tasks. We are perfectly okay with reaching high standards in order not to repeat some mistakes from the past. And that's okay. But I believe it is not--that's not what only matters. What matters is that we really have very strong communication from the EU, very strong message from the EU member states, that they are ready to accept Western Balkan countries into the EU, and, by that, encourage us to do more.

And I believe negotiations process (inaudible) talks for both Montenegro and Serbia will actually motivate our governments to do more, in terms of regional policy, in terms of institutional building, in terms of economic cooperation and so on and so on. And I believe that's the best way to go if we really want to sort of round-off the process of integration by letting Western Balkans in, which is not taking any shortcuts in terms of reaching standards. It is just supporting us on that way.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Congressman.

Hon. Michael Turner: Well, I think one of the great parts of this discussion is the tremendous amount of progress that has been made. The to-do list is so much more advanced. When we look at where we were in coming out of the '90's, and I think everyone is just, you know, very pleased with the leadership that you see in Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia. I do think, though, that the to-do list has items that include Bosnia Herzegovina that need to be resolved, that perhaps need that coalition of countries sitting down assisting. And how can we transition from a Dayton Peace Accord constitution to a workable government that can, as the President was saying, ensure the territorial integrity of Bosnia.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Thank you. Well, maybe it's appropriate in the Brussels Forum to give the EU the last words.

Mr. Stefano Sannino: Well, I would say a couple of things. One, we want you. I mean, it's--really, we want you to be members.(inaudible). We want you to be

part of European Union. We want the Balkans--all the countries of the Balkan to be part of the European Union. This is a commitment that we have taken collectively almost 10 years ago. I mean, you have here one of the persons who have worked more on this--it's Alex Lambsdorff--in trying to push this agenda forward. I think that this is really what we are all trying to do, so we want--we want this to happen. There is no fatigue. There is no--we are not tired, quite the contrary.

It's very exciting there, what happens in the Balkans, and it always deserves interest and attention. Second, it is very true what, now, Prime Minister Lukšić was saying, concerning the fact that we need to write a common narrative about the--a new script about how the Balkans have become part of the Union and what it means for the countries, because it's much more, I will say, than just stability and prosperity. It's really about imagining a different future, and if I

have to say, I think that Montenegro has done a lot in terms of anchoring this new perspective.

And last things that is respect for this region, for the leaders of this region. I know it's sometimes complicated. Sometimes it's not always easy to understand how it happens, but we have a tendency of-- from time to time, becoming too prescriptive about how things should go and should develop.

Interaction is important. Peer review mechanism are relevant. In Europe, we have a lot to of it from that point of view, and it's a good experience sitting around a negotiating table and trying to find a common way that's respecting the political will of the people and of the politicians who are also representing peoples in these countries.

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Very nicely said. Thank you to all of you. Thank you to the panel.

Mr. Craig Kennedy: Thank you, Mr. Steve Erlanger.