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Foreign Relations Subcommittee on European Affairs

Hearing:

**Unfinished Business in Southeast Europe:
Opportunities and Challenges in the Western Balkans**

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TESTIMONY

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Madame Chairperson, Senators, it is a truly great honor to be invited to speak today before this Subcommittee of the United States Senate at this significant moment in the dynamics of Euroatlantic integration of the Western Balkans region as it continues the consolidation of democracy, peace and stability. I am here to offer my personal views on the current issues and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Introduction: Western Balkans: Ten years after Milosevic, Fifteen years after Dayton

This year marks two important anniversaries: ten years of the end of the Milosevic regime in Serbia through a peaceful electoral process and fifteen years of the Dayton/Paris Peace accords. The region of the Western Balkans has in this period moved forward with significant successes yet sometimes with ongoing challenges and unresolved issues. The fact that it lies in

core geographic Europe, an “inner courtyard” of Europe surrounded by EU and NATO members (Italy, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece) has been conducive to the advancement of the region in European and Euroatlantic integration processes. The joint transatlantic, U.S., and EU support to the processes of stabilization and democratization of the Western Balkans has been a key element in this forward-moving dynamic.

In my introduction to a hearing before the U.S. Senate on 14 July 2004, I wrote:

“The point of these introductory thoughts is to say that there is a positive story in the Balkans that is not getting out. The reasons are many: attention internationally has shifted elsewhere, there are more burning issues in other parts of the world, the Balkans seem by comparison in less need of attention, but also because when focus on the Balkans occurs it is most often solely because of the outstanding and still unresolved issues.”

Nearly six years later this situation still holds. The Western Balkans are firmly on their way to join the EU and NATO (with the exception of Serbia on NATO). Whatever the remaining challenges, and these should in no manner be underestimated or belittled, they seem be of a nature that with engagement and commitment of all parties, domestic and international, prudence and realism, lead in a reasonable time frame to resolution.

That is why it is important to not forget the Western Balkans and to see this democratic peace project through to its Euroatlantic haven.

European Union: The Peace Project and the Promise of Membership

The European Union as it stands today is at origin an emphatic political post-World War II peace project. It has created an institutional framework encompassing twenty-seven member states, comprising close to half a billion citizens. The Western Balkans constitutes the next crucial chapter of that project.

As with other countries of the post-communist world, the Western Balkans strongly aspire and endeavor to join that peace project and its present institutional framework.

The soft-power of the European Union with its policy of open doors to further enlargement is both a strong incentive and an enabler and facilitator for the necessary difficult and deep-seeded democratic and market reforms required for these new European democracies to become consolidated.

As with the enlargement of the EU (then European Community) to the two post-dictatorship countries of the Iberian peninsula, Spain and Portugal in the 1970s, and to Greece after the dictatorship in 1981, so the embracing of the Central and East European countries after 1989 – the “return to Europe” – has been a fundamental shift in the political geography of Europe.

The Balkan Peninsula, after the Apennine and Iberian Peninsulas, is the final Southern European component that will join the EU – thus continuing the unfinished business of creating a Europe whole and free and at peace.

Geography matters and the case of the Balkans confirms it. But history has an equal if not greater impact. The former Yugoslavia took “a wrong turn” in 1991 and descended into a violent breakdown when all others were “returning to Europe”. Now the region with its difficult historical legacy, both of communism and of the devastating 1990s has chosen to join the others who have preceded it on the path to Euroatlanticism.

The promise that the EU gave at its summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003 was crucial in opening the route forward. Predictability and credibility of the path were essential to the endeavor and have brought the region to where it is today. Without this broad road-map, without the realization of the polities of region that they too were in reach of joining their European kin, it would have been much harder to engage in the painstaking work of changing these societies and economies that had been left in a dire state after the violent conflicts of the 1990s.

The presence and support of the United States to these efforts has been of the essence in the whole region. Only by joint action has forward movement been possible.

Two fundamental positive presuppositions

That one can be cautiously optimistic about this dynamic of democratization and Euroatlantic integration is predicated upon two fundamental agreed upon positions of all of the democratically elected leaders and governments of the region:

- All of the Western Balkans leaders and governments have been democratically elected and have committed their countries to integration into the European Union and NATO (with the exception of Serbia for NATO)
- All of the Western Balkans leaders and governments have underscored that whatever outstanding challenges and unresolved issues stand before them they will address them solely by institutional, legal, and diplomatic means.

We have been seeing the positive consequences of these clear policy choices in the recent past and we are witnessing them today in a reinforced and multifold way.

Euroatlantic Enlargement

- The European Union

All of the Balkan countries are now at some stage of integration with the EU. Croatia is the furthest ahead and is negotiating the final chapters of its accession. Macedonia is a full candidate awaiting a date for the beginning of its negotiations for entry. Montenegro has fulfilled the extensive questionnaire of the EU and awaits candidate status. Albania is in the process of filling out the questionnaire. Serbia presented its candidacy in December 2009 to the Swedish presidency of the EU and awaits the month of June 2010 to see whether it will be moved to the next stage, receiving the questionnaire and seeing the beginning of the ratification process of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. Bosnia-Herzegovina has signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement and is expected to pose its candidacy for membership as the next step. Kosovo has a separate, parallel track and the EU is in the process of assessing next steps.

Visa-free travel remains a goal for Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo after Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia successfully attained this status in November 2009. This is crucial because it is probably the most tangible measure for individual citizens on the long road to accession. The visa-free regime is very simply a message from the EU which says: we do not wish to build walls; on the contrary you are welcome in our midst.

All are thus now embedded in and encompassed by the institutions, rules, and procedures of the European Union. This is of historical significance for the region, for Europe, for the U.S., and for transatlantic relations. The processes of democratic reform, strengthening of rule of law, improving governance and transparency, fighting organized crime and corruption, and developing mutually beneficial regional relations are fully engaged to a greater or lesser extent. As the countries get closer to the EU these processes require more intense engagement and results.

The experiences of the EU accessions of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 have made the rules of entry more stringent and rigorous for the Western Balkans countries. The governments of the region are well aware of this fact. It is clear that there will be no free pass for EU entry.

It is of paramount importance that the movement of EU integration progress on the basis of the merit of accomplished domestic reforms. The incremental integration of these countries is essential in motivating those who work on reform processes, but also because it helps address the outstanding unresolved issues in the region. The EU and Euroatlantic process has an enabling and soothing element in tackling the most difficult issues.

The Lisbon Treaty has given new impetus to the enlargement process. It has been very important that Baroness Catherine Ashton the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign and Security Policy made her first official visit outside of the EU, after visiting the U.S., to the Western Balkans in February. She came with clarity of purpose emphasizing that the Western Balkans enlargement was a priority of the EU and her office. She was quickly followed by the new EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy, Stefan Füle.

Frequent visits to Brussels EU headquarters, but also European member-state capitals, by all regional leaders are equally important for the ongoing exchange of information. This is vital in particular in view of the challenge of so-called “fatigue” with enlargement among certain quarters of the European Union states and publics. This is an issue that both the EU and the aspiring Western Balkan countries must bear in mind as they go forward. This is also where the U.S. can be supportive in stressing the importance of the continued forward movement of integration without fits and starts.

- **NATO**

The enlargement of NATO has been a parallel and equally important process for the stabilization of the region and the consolidation of peace. The accession of Albania and Croatia to full membership in NATO in April 2008 at the Strasbourg-Kehl summit was a landmark in security for the region.

Unfortunately, Macedonia had fully qualified for membership but could not accede due to the veto from Greece. It is of the utmost importance for Macedonia and the region as a whole that the name issue between the two countries be resolved after 18 years in the shortest possible time frame because it is not aiding the Euroatlantic integration process, nor allowing Macedonia to begin negotiations with the EU. There are certain cautious signs that maybe 2010 could be the year in which there will be positive movement on this issue.

The November 2006 acceptance of Bosnia- Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia into the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP) was a judicious, although somewhat belated, decision. It helped foster further stabilization and greater security for the region.

Montenegro has applied for and received a Membership Action Plan (MAP) in December 2009, while Bosnia-Herzegovina applied for a MAP in October 2009. It would be conducive to the further security of the region and in the interest of Bosnia’s sovereignty and integrity were it to

receive a MAP sooner rather than later. It is not without significance that Serbia is fully supportive of Bosnia's Euroatlantic aspirations and path.

Serbia is a PfP member and will open its mission at NATO in the coming months, the Ambassador having already been appointed. Serbia is currently an exception to the rule of all countries in the region moving fully toward NATO membership. This is not surprising given the bombing by NATO in 1999. Irrespective, cooperation with NATO is intense and ongoing on all issues. The Serbian armed forces, as with others in the region, are adopting and complying with NATO standards. There is a vivid and lively debate in Serbian public opinion and civil society about the benefits and disadvantages of NATO membership. This open approach to an unresolved policy question is proof of its open-ended character. Serbia, in 2000, after the fall of Milosevic under the Prime Ministership of Zoran Djindjic, was fully in favor of joining NATO and stated this in official documents. This policy was then halted and a policy of neutrality instilled under Prime Minister Kostunica.

NATO is most importantly present in Kosovo through its KFOR (Kosovo Force) Mission. The NATO mission in Kosovo, which also involves non-NATO countries, has now been brought down to 10,000.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, NATO handed over its mission to the EU mission EUFOR, which currently has 2,000 soldiers.

It is important to note that bilateral military relations between all of the countries of the region and U.S. defense and military institutions are developing in a positive way. For example, in Serbia, Minister of Defense Sutanovac made his first official visit to the Pentagon in the fall of 2009, followed by a visit of the Serbian Chief of Staff General Miletic rapidly thereafter. Admiral Mullen made a visit to Serbia, and military cooperation with the Ohio National Guard has been outstanding by all counts.

Regional Cooperation – Key Indicator

If the recent reopening of the railway connection between Belgrade and Sarajevo is anything to go by, then it is clearly there are positive developments in the region.

Regional cooperation has been ongoing at all levels. It has been substantive and varied over the past ten years and has not seriously suffered from the passing political surface tension created by a number of situations related, in particular, to issues of the recognition of Kosovo's

independence by countries neighboring Serbia. Economic relations have been enhanced, mutual investments have been made across borders, and visits of and cooperation between governmental and nongovernmental actors has been constant.

There has recently been a substantive political improvement in regional and bilateral relations within the Balkan region. For example, the understanding reached between Slovenia and Croatia last year to move toward resolving their border dispute, the election of President Ivo Josipovic in Croatia in February opening a new chapter in Croatian-Serbian bilateral relations, the visa liberalization for Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia that came into effect in December 2009 to enable travel to Europe, and Serbia putting forward its candidacy for the EU in December 2009 cementing its orientation to the EU – each has shown that the leaders and countries of the region want to move forward.

Presidents Tadic and Josipovic have given a powerful show of what they have themselves termed “European partnership”: a strong desire to move not only their own countries but also the entire region toward full stability and consolidated democracy. In a short span of time, they have already met twice in March for substantive meetings – once in Opatija, Croatia, and then three days later they joined each other on a panel at the Brussels Forum 2010 organized by the German Marshall Fund of the United States. They have charted a way forward demonstrating strong political will, determination, and commitment to resolving their outstanding bilateral issues. Both presidents, as well as their governments, have also repeatedly and continually underscored their strong support to the integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Albanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ilir Meta made an official visit to Belgrade last month and reiterated Albania’s interest in developing the closest possible relations with Serbia. President Tadic accepted an invitation to visit Tirana this year. Ilir Meta visited the south of Serbia, where a sizable community of ethnic Albanians who are Serbian citizens live. He said, while visiting with the Serbian Minister for Local Government, that Albania and Serbia would work together in helping better their existence.

In a demonstration of Albania’s good will toward enhancing close neighborhood relationships, the country permanently abolished the need for visas for Serbian citizens yesterday.

All the countries of the region have been affected by the global economic crisis and this has raised awareness of the extent to which they depend on each other for enhanced economic activity, trade, and exchange. They also fully understand that only as a region are they economically significant on the world market.

A trade fair that was opened for two days in the Bosnian city of Mostar by President Silajdzic and President Tadic of Serbia, as the special guest country of the fair, is a testimony to the awareness of the importance of regional economic and trade cooperation, particularly during globally difficult economic times. “Nobody will invest in countries captured by the past but will in those facing the future and agreeable to the fact that we must rely on each other” said Tadic at the opening.

The fact that the Western Balkans have now been for several years part of a unified Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) which is a mechanism allowing for the free flow of goods has helped them weather the global crisis to a certain extent. They have not been hit as severely as some other countries.

This does not mean that that growing unemployment, decline in economic growth, and loss of foreign direct investment has not caused serious difficulties, social pressures, and tensions (in some countries more so than in others). Interestingly, remittances from abroad have remained at levels comparable to those in prior years, which has somewhat alleviated the strain. The governments of the region are struggling to cope, and to find ways to develop productive activities and enhance exports.

The Regional Cooperation Center in Sarajevo, the legacy organization that followed the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (created in July 1999 in Sarajevo) has an important role to play in aiding a variety of efforts at the regional level. It is now in the process of defining its next three-year strategy.

- **Fighting Organized Crime Together – Another Transatlantic Endeavor**

Another very positive development has been provoked by the realization that criminals “cooperate” across borders with the greatest delight. The tragic assassination of the editor-in-chief of a Croatian daily newspaper in downtown Zagreb that involved “regional cooperation” between Croatian and Serbian criminals made authorities aware that if they did not robustly reinforce their own cooperation and exchange of information, that there was a severe danger of organized crime delving ever more deeply into state structures.

This new, intense cooperation produced effective results, including arrests of the assassins and organizers. There is now concerted talk of creating a regional center for fighting organized crime to be located, possibly, in Belgrade.

Cooperation with U.S. agencies, in particular the DEA, and with British agencies over a longer period of time produced the dramatic capture of 2.5 tons of cocaine on a ship in mid-Atlantic. Yesterday, the prosecutor for organized crime presented an indictment against Darko Saric, the

alleged crime-boss, and 18 other people for criminal activities and money-laundering on a huge scale.

Fighting organized crime and the trafficking of drugs, people, and weapons, only makes sense if tackled jointly in the region and globally. These challenges, that have their roots in the criminalization of the region that occurred during the conflicts of the 1990s, will have to be dealt with in an intense manner with important human and intelligence resources. Again, the role and support of the U.S. has been extremely fruitful and significant in this area.

Fighting global terrorism is also an important issue in which the region can give a valuable contribution.

- **Confronting the Past**

The consequences of the 1990s conflict will remain with us for many years to come. Justice is being conducted in domestic war crimes tribunals and at the International Court of Justice for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Netherlands. But the work of society with itself in understanding and condemning what was done in its name will be a much longer process, as we know from other historical precedents.

An important step was made on March 31 when the Serbian National Assembly voted in a Declaration condemning the massacre in Srebrenica in July 1995, calling upon the ruling of the International Court of Justice in the Hague that qualified Srebrenica as a genocide, expressing condolences and regret to the victims' families, condemning the fateful decision in the 1990s to use violence in resolving existing challenges, and reiterating the determination to arrest Ratko Mladic. This follows the presence of President Tadic in Srebrenica for the tenth anniversary of the genocide perpetrated there. The declaration was met with international approval. In Bosnia-Herzegovina itself, there were mixed appraisals but Suleiman Tihic, leader of the main Bosniac party SDA, hailed the declaration and stated he would visit Belgrade soon.

There is still much to be done. First and foremost Serbia must arrest Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic, the two remaining indictees of the ICTY. In November 2009, the chief prosecutor of the ICTY gave a positive assessment of Serbia's efforts and will most likely produce a similar report in June this year. Until these indictees are arrested, this chapter will not be able to be closed.

Equally important, civil society organizations and journalists have been doing their part in contributing to these efforts at confronting the past and helping heal wounds that the conflicts created. One important effort is a region-wide project with civil society organizations from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro called RECOM which intends to establish a regional process of truth commission work. Several meetings have already been held, the

most recent one in Novi Sad last month. This initiative is directly supported by the European Union, among others.

The renewed dynamic of overall cooperation heralds a new dawn in the Western Balkans.

Remaining Challenges

The region, as compared to other parts of the world that have unresolved issues, fares relatively well. Peace has been achieved, stability is being reinforced, and a common awareness is arising about the need to champion each on the way forward.

The region is small. It holds 20 million inhabitants. It will join an EU of half a billion citizens. In the words of an entrepreneur, it is a “micro-region” in global economic terms and can only fare in the global market if it links up its economic potential. Late Prime Minister of Serbia Zoran Djindjic used to say: “We are only significant as a region of 50 million people in economic terms” (he was speaking of the Balkans as a whole, including Romania and Bulgaria).

Success for all – foremost for the citizens of the countries of the region, and then for all those around them, as well as for friends and allies, and for the U.S. and EU – is relatively close at hand. The final chapters of the unfinished business have to be written together.

It is the region and its Euroatlantic movement that will ultimately cure the remaining ills. We already see this dynamic at work. It is just as with the fact of being geographically part of Europe. The effects of the EU are palpable in the way the region is conducting itself. There is bond of mutual responsibility of the aspiring member-states and of the Euroatlantic family to see the process of integration come to fruition.

Nothing is simple or quick about this dynamic and thus determination and political will are essential.

I wrote in my testimony to this Committee on July 14, 2004:

“When domestic actors are incapable of solving a contentious issue and require a third party to mediate, then all parties become stakeholders. The crucial stakeholders are the domestic ones and unless they arrive at a solution based on compromise through negotiations then no solution will be found, or only half measures will be achieved. The lack of a solution in Cyprus, because one of the key communities was not on board with the proposed agreement, is an example of this, again all things being equal. [...] as in other similar/dissimilar seemingly “intractable” conflict or post-conflict situations (Northern Ireland, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Basque country, Israel-Palestine, etc.) the solution is in bringing the voices of moderation, pragmatism,

and realism forward while blunting the arguments and basis of grievance of the extremists wherever they may be. The engaging of the dialogue is essential [...]. This long and arduous dialogue [...] should be resumed, reengaged, and broadened”

Bosnia-Herzegovina will need the commitment of its citizens and of its leaders to find it in themselves to move forward. They will have to take responsibility and realize that the rest of the region is moving and that they must not lag behind. An example of what is possible was given when the announcement of visa-free travel was announced last year for Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Suddenly, the Bosnian administration began fulfilling requirements of the EU “visa road map” bringing Bosnia close to getting a visa-free status during the course of the year and maybe even by this summer.

The EU has clearly stated that until the Office of the High Representative is closed, Bosnia-Herzegovina cannot make its next step forward. This means that Bosnia needs to fulfill the remainder of the five conditions and two objectives.

One cannot not help but recall the failure of the so-called April constitutional reform package in 2006, when everyone had accepted what was proposed except for one political party that impeded its passage in the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Missed opportunities of that magnitude lead to the situation that we all find ourselves in today: an apparent impasse with jockeying of all political actors for pole position in the pending parliamentary elections in October 2010.

It is thus unlikely that any agreement can be reached before then in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The unhelpful rhetoric from one or the other side is detrimental to the search for a compromise.

The visit of Vice-President Biden, made on behalf of President Obama, to the Western Balkans in May 2009 was of great importance, visiting Sarajevo together with then-High Representative of the EU Javier Solana, and also visiting Belgrade and Pristina. This was a strong message with a unified position of the U.S. with the EU on the future of the region.

It was of the utmost importance that U.S. Vice-President Joseph Biden reiterated the principle that no-one was questioning the fundamental structure of post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, namely the bi-entity structure, but that a way forward for greater functionality of central government had to be found. All things being equal, the example of Belgium could possibly both inspire and soothe the key political actors, in that it is possible to have a structure of two entities with all of their identity, rights, and prerogatives, and yet have a functioning government.

Serbia and Croatia are among other guarantors of the Dayton Agreement. They have a key supportive role to play, along with the U.S. and EU, and they have been playing it.

The continued recent involvement of the U.S. through the presence of Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg during the so-called (and temporarily failed) Butmir process, trying to help Bosnia to add a level of functionality to its central government so as to be able to make the next step to the EU, was a significant step in continuing U.S. commitment. Steinberg visited the region once again last week and this engagement and constructive concern has been well-received in the region.

Kosovo declared independence in February 2008. The presence of international organizations is and continues to be of the greatest significance. UN resolution 1244 is still in vigor. The KFOR military mission acts under UN SC resolution 1244 as does the OSCE mission.

It has been two years in which an EU rule of law mission, EULEX, numbering some 2,000 policemen, judges, prosecutors, and customs officials, has been in operation. Even though five EU member-states have not recognized the independence of Kosovo, they are all in agreement on the EULEX mission.

KFOR has said that it has reduced the number of troops on the ground after assessing that there was a degree of improvement in the security situation. Yet much needs to be done for the lives of all citizens, and particularly in the Serbian community in Kosovo.

Kosovo, to date, has been recognized by 65 states, roughly a third of UN members. They are, however, the most important countries for the Euroatlantic integration of the region. A question has been put to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by the UN General Assembly in 2009 and the ICJ is supposed to give its non-binding opinion on whether Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence was in line with international law. Whatever the opinion of the ICJ, and it will be significant for the practice of international law in similar complex situations, the situation on the ground will not change. The opinion of the ICJ will be an opportunity for Belgrade and Pristina to possibly move toward settling what remains unsettled and to work toward further stabilization and peace.

President Tadic of Serbia has spoken of the need for Serbia to be part of the solution, a need for a more flexible approach to the challenge of Kosovo, about the year 2010 as a year in which a step forward in further stability and resolution of open issues is possible. He has spoken of the

understanding and need for Pristina to be part of regional meetings, but under the label of Kosovo-UNMIK.

Authorities in Pristina have, for their part, voiced a willingness to engage as good neighbors with Serbia.

The two sides remain firm on principled positions: Serbia is clear that it will not recognize Kosovo's independence, while Pristina maintains the fact of its independent status. It has been clearly stated, though, that these principled positions have not impeded the way toward finding solutions to a number of existential issues.

While both sides are committed to bettering the lot of ordinary citizens, and of the Serbian community in particular, there is space to move toward a framework solution of the outstanding issues. What that will be it is hard to say at this juncture. One can detect signs of a willingness to address what remains unresolved and to look for closure.

Europe has seen similar, although always different, historical examples of this. Europe and the international community have a tool box and many precedents. It can be surmised that given the EU and Euroatlantic orientation of all leaders involved, there will be a way because there is a will.

A pragmatic and constructive approach which reinforces and underpins the positive domestic and regional dynamics that are at work is what is warranted at this juncture in the Western Balkans, given the above-stated clear commitments of all in the region to Euroatlantic integration and to resolution of all outstanding issues through peaceful means.

Unfinished Business in 2004 versus Unfinished Business in 2010

I was first honored to be invited to testify in the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 14 July 2004. The title of the hearing six years ago was "U.S. Policy toward Southeast Europe: Unfinished Business in the Balkans".

Understandably, the unfinished business of 2004 is different in large part than that in 2010 and yet in other respects similar. The domestic challenges of strengthening democratic institutions, a democratic political culture, the rule of law, more effective governance and transparency, and the fight against organized crime and corruption have made headway but much remains to be

done throughout the region. Each of the region's governments are now fully part of the EU integration process, which means pursuing deep-seated reforms in key sectors of society and preparing their economies to join a single market where competition will be fierce and unyielding. But as they all prepare entrance and then enter as full-members, they will benefit from the support of the so-called structural funds that help align the economies of the new countries with the rest of the EU nations.

The EU itself will change in time and will grow to a Union of around 36 states.

One of the key reasons why there is overwhelming support for EU integration in the public opinion of these countries is that citizens realize, without needing to comprehend the intricacies of the workings of the *acquis communautaire*, that there is simply a little more security, a little more certainty, and the possibility for somewhat more prosperity by being a member of the EU rather than remaining outside of it.

The same goes for NATO integration in nearly all the countries. Metaphorically, citizens wish of their own free will to construct, as with the EU, a political, economical, and security roof which will make life somewhat more predictable after the devastating experience they had lived through during the 1990s.

All this still requires, above all, the close concerted efforts of the vital transatlantic partners that are the U.S. and EU.