

**CENTER FOR
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**THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE:
A CHALLENGE FOR SMART POWER**

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**SPEAKER:
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JOHN HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. Good morning. If there was anything that was going to bring sunshine to Washington, it was going to be the foreign minister. She's got the most radiant smile and we need it right now today. It's kind of a cold, miserable day in Washington. We welcome her back. We welcome her back here to CSIS. We welcome her back to Washington.

I remember, I think it was two years ago when you were here, foreign minister, and you gave a good speech. It was a tough speech. You said some things we didn't like to hear, but that's the best sign of a friend, when they tell you things that you don't want to hear, but you need to hear. And we welcome you back. I suspect we'll probably get that again today, so we're delighted to have you here. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming.

I'm John Hamre. I'm president of CSIS. And my role here is entirely ornamental and that is simply to introduce Brent Scowcroft. Of course, you know, how do you introduce a man that everyone in Washington knows, but I'm so grateful that Brent has – is one of my bosses. He's on the board at CSIS and has been my mentor. I'm still a very inadequate protégée. So be patient with me, Brent, and thank you for coming today and helping us to introduce us. So I introduce to you the honorable Brent Scowcroft.

BRENT SCOWCROFT: Thank you, John. If you're ornamental, I don't know what that makes me. (Laughter.) Anyways, good morning. It's great to be here and it's a real privilege for me this morning to be able to introduce to you a member of Forbes' magazine list of the most powerful women in the world and a dear friend of mine, the foreign minister of Greece.

I first met Foreign Minister Dora a little over 15 years ago, when she was a key aide, undersecretary of state, I believe, in the administration of her father, Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis. President Bush, Sr. was visiting Greece and Dora was, informally at least, taking care of us. I worked closely with her for those few days and at the end I thought to myself, now here is a young lady, she's smart, intelligent, energetic, diplomatic. She should do well. What an understatement that was.

Just a short time before the president visited Greece, in 1999 to be precise, she had been elected to parliament to fill a seat of her husband, who had been assassinated by the November 17th terrorist organization. She went on in 1992 to become minister of culture, and when her party went into opposition, she became chairperson of the party's executive committee.

In 2002 she was elected as Athens' first female mayor, by a larger majority than had ever before been received in modern times. In 2005 she was voted world mayor from among 550 mayoral contestants, and in 2006 she assumed her present duties.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm really delighted to present to you Dora Bakoyannis, the foreign minister of Greece. (Applause)

FOREIGN MINISTER DORA BAKOYANNIS: Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. Thank you, Dr. Hamre, and thank you, Brent Scowcroft, two men I deeply respect, for your kind introduction. Special thanks to the Center for Strategic and International Studies for the kind invitation.

Today I wish to speak of transformation and smart power, both to the service of Southeastern Europe. You may ask, why Southeastern Europe and smart power? And I admit it may appear odd to delve into Southeastern Europe when the focus of international attention is on Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, or the other tumultuous Middle East. Well, yes, ladies and gentlemen, I plead guilty to a certain geographical bias. Being closer to home, this is a region of utmost concern for Greece, but I assure you, it is much more than that. Southeastern Europe remains today a fragile, post-conflict zone. That is always the picture drawn up by a recent New York Times opinion column. The Balkans, and I quote, "have a dismal way of living up to their stereotype as a region of ancient, intertwined, and irreconcilable feuds."

Since 1989 the region has witnessed extraordinary change, both positive and negative. Yet despite all they have endured, the peoples of the Balkans are now building the springboard from which to jump towards their dreams of a better life. It is disquietingly clear, however, that peace in the region is far from guaranteed. Stability and economic development are far from sustained. Ethnic tension, weak rule of law, organized crime, porous borders, and sluggish economic performance continue to haunt considerable areas of the wider Balkans. Simply put, to complete the region's transformation, we still have a long way to go.

Ladies and gentlemen, one lesson we have learned, only integrated strategies can carry the day. A comprehensive approach is essential. We need, as coined by your own Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, smart power, a potent plan of hard and soft power. We are not the first to discover the merits of such a strategy. Thucydides faithfully records the famous words of Anhedomos (ph), the king of Sparta, who defined good allies, and I quote, "Not as those who were forced but rather persuaded, as those who will not welcome a friendship because of our power, but who will be disposed towards us as friends."

Smart power is much more than brains, if you will pardon the pun. Much of our success depends on the heart, on the force of our values. These common principles include respect of democracy, human rights, free trade, free enterprise, tolerance of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. Attention to these values forms the very roadmap which determines the course of accession of aspirant countries to the Euro-Atlantic family.

In 2003 the European Union during the Greek presidency outlined the European perspective for the region. Coupled with NATO enlargement, the European Union

prospect is an important driving force for these countries. It provides them with the impetus to make the necessary change and reform. The road to NATO and the European Union fostered peace, breeds security, and provides space for viable and sustainable development. In the words of Constantine Cavafy, towards Ithaka is a road well worth taking.

Now I must admit I'm not sure whether I would go as far as to call the European Union or NATO enlargement as paradigms of smart power, but I can definitely say it's smart politics. The fruits of these policies are more than evident. Look no further than Slovenia, the current holder of the European Union presidency, a country of the region that was invited to NATO in 2002, and welcomed into the European Union only in 2004. Croatia, amongst others a newly elected non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, is an exemplary candidate for both the European Union and NATO, and one can safely assume will join both organizations very soon.

Albania's efforts in social and financial reform have been recognized with a signing of the Stabilization Association Agreement, the SAA, with the European Union. Montenegro, a new entrant in the world of nation-states, has managed in a very short time to endorse the SAA with the European Union and join NATO's Partnership for Peace program. Bosnia-Herzegovina's Euro-Atlantic perspective gained new impetus when the SAA with the European Union was authorized last December. Of course 12 years after the Dayton accords, much will remain to be done, especially when it comes to streamlining decision-making, yet it is significant that countless prophecies of doom never materialized.

Turkey is well down the long and difficult road of reform. Two thousand and eight, I hope, will provide us with a window of opportunity for the Cyprus problem. Should Turkey be ready to comply with the European acquis the European Union must in turn honor its commitments and grant full member status.

Our neighbors' European Union membership will for Greece be a moment of great satisfaction. It will mean that years of negotiations and of labor's efforts have borne fruit. Abiding by our set of values, ladies and gentlemen, we must honor our promises. Whatever internal turmoil we may be facing in the Union or in the Alliance, we must ensure that our credibility remains unchallenged. This means sticking to our basic principle that full compliance means full membership for Turkey. This was tangibly demonstrated by Romania and Bulgaria, who joined NATO in 2004, and the European Union in 2007. These very historic events with profound regional significance, events that carried with them hope and optimism for the Balkans, but also send a clear message. Countries that meet requirements must and should join the Euro-Atlantic family, and this must be remembered.

In the framework of multilateral initiatives, as well as on a bilateral level, Greece has, and continues to contribute decisively to the implementation of necessary reforms. As the region's oldest NATO and EU member, Greece feels a heightened sense of

responsibility for our neighborhood and the obligation to be constructive, supportive, and practical.

In socioeconomic terms, a snapshot of the region often reveals poverty, inequality, displacement, unemployment, inflation, and corruption, all significant barriers to foreign investment. For Greece economic development is an essential tool for political stability. This explains our dynamic presence in the region. We are at the forefront in terms of investment, with over \$20 billion invested. More than 3,500 Greek enterprises are active in the region. An estimated 200,000 new jobs have been created. Greece is the primary foreign investor in Albania, former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, and Serbia. The second foreign investor in Romania, and the third in Bulgaria. In the banking sector alone, nearly 2,000 branches of Greek banks operate across Southeastern Europe. At the same time, a five-year plan for Greek development assistance is well underway for the period 2004-2011.

Ladies and gentlemen, with regard to the region's road to Ithaca, serious political issues remain unsolved. They call for rigorous efforts and closer collaboration from all of us, on both sides of the Atlantic, in NATO and the European Union. It is clear that all our labors will be futile if we fail to establish political stability in the region. For the international press, as of late the Balkans have been synonymous to Kosovo. Exponents of a more traditional hard power approach will be happy to hear that of a total of 17,000 NATO-led troops deployed in the Western Balkans today, 16,000 are stationed in Kosovo, including a significant Greek commitment.

Today Kosovo faces a series of complexities and qualms. It is one Europe's poorest regions. More than half of its inhabitants live in deprivation. Over 50 percent of its population is under 30 years of age, while unemployment is one of Europe's highest. Moreover, it is a land-locked area, with few competitive advantages and a long history of economic mismanagement. Add to this the tension between the region's ethnic Albanians and the remaining Serbs, making Kosovo in the very least volatile.

I understand that there is a sense of urgency over Kosovo's final status. Frankly speaking, however, we in Athens, like in several other capitals in the region, do not share this haste. Defining Kosovo's future status is a very complicated and fragile task. There is no easy solution, no easy way out. Many view independence as a magic wand of sorts, which once waved will produce jobs, running water, electricity, education, health, and prosperity. But let's be realistic. We all know that independence is no panacea.

Prime Minister Thachi made the parallel point from Pristina in a note published in the International Herald Tribune a few days ago, and I quote. "We need more than independence. We need economic, social and political development. The way we live from here on will depend on how well we manage development," end of quote.

Make no mistake, ladies and gentlemen. At the heart of the European continent Kosovo's stability concerns us all. Europe has a central role to play, both now and in the future, and it is imperative that the European Union speaks in a single voice. Any

solution reached must be in line with European Union values. This provides the necessary safeguards for the region's stability. Kosovo must be democratic, multi-ethnic, and multicultural. It must display tolerance and ensure that the rights of all the inhabitants are protected, regardless of religion or ethnic origin. For a solution to be viable, it must foster stability and security.

One must admit that it is difficult to manage and control development. Even the best laid plans can get out of hand at some point. However, whatever the outcome of the day after, the international community in general and Europe in particular will need to remain committed to Kosovo. Hence, the launching of the EECp mission the soonest possible presents fewer legal and political hurdles than any other alternative. Needless to say that the EECp mission will allow the European Union to play a balancing and constructive role in Kosovo, to the benefit of all parties involved, and in our opinion Resolution 1244 offers the basis for such a move. This very conclusion was also reached at the tripartite meeting of the foreign ministers of Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, held in Athens the past December, when coordinating a common regional approach.

Of course no discussion can be complete without Serbia, one of the region's key states. Indeed, no Balkan equilibrium can ignore Serbia. It is perhaps less known that Serbia's structural reform progress has been impressive, making it even more unfortunate that European Union-Serbian relations have been at a stalemate for so long. This particular unraveling of EU-Serbian relations is a setback for both Serbia and the region as a whole. We envision Serbia as an integral part of Southeastern Europe. In our European neighborhood, it has a great deal to offer to the European Union, and likewise the European Union has a great deal to give in return. Serbia can no longer be haunted by its past. It must move forward in order to reach its full potential.

Europe recently demonstrated its flexibility by inviting Serbia to sign a political agreement of cooperation. This was a clear-cut and unequivocal political message. Serbia belongs to the Union and its people are an essential part of the European family. Likewise, Serbia's invitation to NATO Partnership for Peace program was catalytic. It is vital, however, that the PFP be not allowed to lay dormant. President Tadic's re-election is a good omen. He has a clear Euro-Atlantic perspective that must be encouraged by the international community.

Ladies and gentlemen, most often good news does not travel fast, but I'm hopeful that Southeastern Europe will soon find its way into the international media in the weeks and months ahead for a different reason – NATO enlargement. In the coming NATO Bucharest summit the Alliance is expected to decide on whether to extend invitations to three aspiring partner countries – Croatia, Albania, and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. Having patiently heard me speak for so long, I'm sure you will have concluded that on principle Greece wholeheartedly supports NATO enlargement. We believe that NATO enlargement can contribute significantly to enhance stability and security for all countries in the Euro-Atlantic area. Enlargement will reinforce the overall tendency toward closer integration and cooperation in Europe, strengthen the Alliance'

ability to contribute to European international security, and boost transatlantic partnership.

As a 1995 study carried out by the Alliance concluded, enlargement would, amongst others, contribute, and I quote, “by fostering patterns and habits of cooperation, consultation and consensus building characteristic of relations among members of the Alliance, and promoting good neighborly relations.”

Croatia and Albania, I’m happy to say, have made considerable headway in the past few years, proving that they are in a position to further the principles of the North Atlantic treaty. However, it saddens me that I cannot speak the same of our neighbor, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As many of you are aware, for over 15 years our two countries have been involved in U.N.-sponsored negotiations regarding FYROM’s name. Greece has real concerns over the issue.

What’s a name, you may ask? A great deal, I assure you. Geographically Macedonia is a wider region. More than 50 percent of it belongs to Greece. There are today more than 2.5 million Greeks who consider themselves Macedonians. You may have met some of these proud Macedonians who live in the United States – 2.5 million Greek Macedonians, who feel that the very core of their identity is under siege. Why? Because of Skopje’s nationalistic, anachronistic policy of attempting to monopolize Macedonian identity. Our neighbors use the language of the 19th century and they hope to be understood in the 21st.

This is not a question of political psychology or mass sentiment; it is an issue of regional stability. Greece has repeatedly demonstrated its good will and expressed its eagerness to support FYROM both politically and economically. As the largest foreign investor and one of the biggest trade partners in FYROM, we have spared no effort in responding to the country’s quest for economic growth and stability.

Under the U.N.’s auspices, Greece has come to the table with a clear objective – a long overdue, mutually acceptable composite solution which includes the geographical term Macedonia, but yet makes a mark. This reflects the letter and the spirit of the U.N. Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and the 1995 interim agreement. We have engaged in this process constructively and with an open mind. We have proven to be considerably flexible in our quest for a win-win solution. However, our friends in Skopje must also cover some ground. They have not done so thus far. They tend to define compromise rather elitically (ph) as a state in which everyone agrees with them, but they do not move an inch.

Skopje has but one route to NATO and to the European Union – respect for the principle of good neighborly relations, and this includes a mutually acceptable solution. Alliances and partnerships can only be fostered between countries if there is a mutual trust and good neighborly relations.

Ladies and gentlemen, concluding, let me stress that we must not fall in the risk of focusing purely on the rubble which unavoidably is part of every work in process. We must not overlook the resilience and commitment of the peoples who with courage and optimism look to the future; or better said, to the Euro-Atlantic future. We cannot ignore the involvement of the European Union and its member states in the countries of Southeastern Europe. We must not neglect NATO's commitment to consolidating stability and security in the region. And we cannot overlook the important role and the influence the U.S. exerts in the region. This is the smart power that is in demand today. In this light, Greece is aware of its key role and responsibility and it's prepared to rise to the challenge. Prominent French-Romanian playwright and dramatist Eugene Ionesco once wrote that ideologies separate us. Dreams and anguish bring us together.

In an unstable world, common dreams alleviate our fears of an unpredictable tomorrow. We believe that our shared dream should be the birth of solid partnerships, partners of the global community and for the global community. This for us is our ultimate Ithaca. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, we are very lucky that the foreign minister has given us – we've got about 35 minutes that we can take for questions and answers. So I would ask you to identify yourself and your affiliation. And please, no little sermonettes. We've all come here to listen to the foreign minister.

Okay, first question, please. Yes, sir. Please wait for the microphone. It's coming.

Q: Hi. (Off mike.) Madame Secretary, as you told, Greece supports Turkey's EU membership. So my question is about that. What has been – (unintelligible) – Turkey's EU membership? Secondly –

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: What? What has been? The reason.

Q: Doing support Turkey's EU membership. And secondly, how much as your optimistic at a solution such as going on in this. Thank you.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: I answer everyone.

MR. HAMRE: Why don't you go ahead and answer it, and it may set off some other questions.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: Well, I was think very clear, but I will repeat myself. Greece supports the European perspective of Turkey. We believe that it is in our – in Greece's strategic interest but also for Europe important if of course Turkey meets all the requirements, the European requirements of the *acquis communautaire*, which means that full compliance should lead to full membership.

I know that a lot of my European partners think in another way, but I mentioned those in my speech, that we believe that we have made a decision. This decision was a decision by all 26. We should stick to our decision and give Turkey a fair chance, give Turkey the possibility to make the necessary reforms, and to meet us with the *acquis communautaire*.

Cyprus. Turkey can never be full member of the European Union without having solved the problem of Cyprus. The problem of Cyprus must be solved. Today there are 40,000 Turkish military on this island.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me just mention the number so that you make a comparison. It took the whole international community six months to put the UNIFIL together for Lebanon, and there we managed to send 11,000 troops to keep the peace in Lebanon, and 40,000 are today on Cyprus. We have to solve the problem of Cyprus. The Nicosia wall has to come down, and I hope that for the benefit of both the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriots they will live together in one European Cyprus. (Applause.)

Q: Hi. My name is Baculos Volionatos (ph) and I'm a writer. The question I'm going to ask you, Ms. Bakoyannis, is the following. FYROM has been an enemy of Greece, and it continues to be to this very day. If that's the case, why is Greece treating this country with such gentle love, so to speak? You said you continue to have Greek businessmen investing huge amounts of money in that country, which is actually hostile to Greece. Why is that so?

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: We do not see FYROM as an enemy of Greece. We see it as a country who tries to build his own European future in a region which historically is full of problems. This is also the reason why Greece felt a responsibility towards FYROM. They're our neighbors. They're a new democracy. They have to build up this democracy, a multicultural democracy, a multi-ethnic democracy, a country for its stability we also feel responsible. So this was also the reason why Greece came forward and came up and in the last – after these elections the Greek government went to parliament and openly stated that we are looking for a composite name, a mutually acceptable solution.

You know very well because you are a Greek how difficult that was for any Greek government to state because for 17 years this was taboo in Greece. Now we openly stated it because we believe that we should have to do the first move towards FYROM. I really hope that they – our friends in Skopje will understand that the common Euro-Atlantic future cannot be based on irredentist ideas of yesterday, but on positive ideas for a better European future of tomorrow.

Q: Minister Bakoyannis, my name is Vedran Andonovski. I'm from Voice of America Macedonian Service. Just a follow-up question. Macedonian Minister Antonio Milosevski, after meeting with U.S. Secretary Rice yesterday, said that NATO is not about naming a certain country; NATO is something more, meaning more towards global

security and answering to security threats. In that view, would Greece veto Macedonia's invitation to NATO at the upcoming summit? Thank you.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: I have a big respect for Foreign Minister Milosevski, but that does not mean that we fully agree on a way to see NATO. We are old members of the alliance, I told you, very old members of the alliance. We have lived all the alliance transformation. There was one question which was never put. If the alliance – if you can be member of the alliance and have bad neighborly relations. It was always taken for granted. And allied relations must be on a solid base. So what we are asking Foreign Minister Milosevski and Prime Minister Gruevski is not to try to interpret it what NATO is – all of us know what NATO is – but to stick to his commitments and under the U.N. negotiator try constructively with Greece to find a solution on the name issue which will allow us to look in the future.

MR. HAMRE: I've got many questions, so I'm going to try to do early bird. The first right down here and then I'm going to back to right behind you on the aisle. (Off mike.)

Q: (Off mike) – Your Excellency, if Turkey joins the European Union as a full member, the following will occur. Greece's political power in the area will diminish and will suffer economically since it provides similar product services such as tourism, et cetera. In addition, hundreds of thousands of Turks will occupy Greek islands in the Aegean as well as Thrace. Specifically, how would you respond to these obvious threats to Greece and the Greek people? Thank you, Your Excellency.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: From the first moment when we talked about the European accession of Turkey, free movement was one of the restrictions which was put from the very, very first beginning. So there will be some kind of special arrangements with Turkey. Free movement is one of it, which is taken for granted in the rest of the European Union, but it will not happen for Turkey because of the very big numbers which Turkey has. So I don't see any kind of danger about the Greek islands, as you say.

On the contrary, I believe that it would be – I would like to live the moment when the Aegean would be the Aegean of peace, without any kind of tension, and where the people could travel freely from one country to the other, not to stay, but to travel as tourists. So this is how we see it. I understand that there are a lot of second thoughts also in Greece, also in the whole of the European Union. But let me tell you my personal belief. We are not speaking about the Turkey of today and it would be unfair to judge Turkey as the Turkey of today. We should see the Turkey of the future in 15 years, 20 years. Will they be able to make all these reforms and these radical change inside their society? Well, if they are willing to do it, then we have to stick to our promise. This is what I believe.

MR. HAMRE: Right back here.

Q: Yeah, Mark Taft (sp) – (inaudible) – from Van Sweck (sp) Associates. I'd like to hear your views about the war in Afghanistan. Defeating the Taliban is a key element in the war on terrorism, yet European and NATO support for the operations in Afghanistan seem to be uneven, if not waning, so I'd like to get your views on Afghanistan.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: I think that Afghanistan is the greatest challenge for NATO. And I think it is very important that we win in Afghanistan. But I think all of us know the truth. It will take many years, persistence, and not only arms. So the Greek position was from the very beginning that we will win the war in Afghanistan if we win the battle of development, if we give the people a future which is not based on the cultivating of drugs and if we give them a future which covers the needs of the population.

So I understand that our societies are tired. I understand that our societies would like to see results tomorrow if possible. I would like to see the results tomorrow. But the alliance will be judged if in time and by its persistence and continuity of the double strategy we have to follow in Afghanistan.

MR. HAMRE: The lady in the back, please.

Q: Isabella Chocholi (sp), Voice of America Albanian Service. On Kosovar state, Your Excellency, Kosovar is widely expected to declare independence from Serbia as early as Sunday, the 17th of February, 2008 and it's also widely expected that the United States and many European Union members will move in and recognize it. Is Greece one of them? Thank you.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: You know more than me. I have – I'm listening to rumors that there might be declaration of independence by Mr. Thaci on Sunday. We have a general first council on Monday, as you know, in Brussels, where we will see what the European feeling more or less is. But let me repeat what I said in my speech. I don't believe that too much haste is productive in the Kosovo question. And allow me to say that the regional powers know that the water is not going backward; we know that. But we feel that one should be much more cautious and preparing with less haste and taking into account also that we need to be united in the European Union.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is a very big difference between the United States and Europe. I don't want to go back to the ideas of Kissinger who will be calling me from the European Union, but the truth is that the European Union needs much more discussions if we want to have a united position. And it is needed on Kosovo more than on any other place because Kosovo will be the first test for the European Union's unity after the Lisbon Treaty was signed. So if I can give one message, please no pressure and no haste.

MR. HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, let me just first say, I hope you all appreciate the candor and the forthrightness and the directness that she's giving us today. This is exceptional. And I just have to say that. (Applause.) Second hand (?).

Q: Thank you. I'm Julian Josephson (sp), a local science writer here in town. Madame Minister, if you –

MR. HAMRE: Microphone, please.

Q: Madame Minister, if we can shift gears a little bit, could you expand on Greece's role with sustainable development of Southeastern Europe and particularly perhaps the reversal of the current degradation of the Mediterranean Sea and its better exploitation, improved exploitation, for fishing, minerals and whatever else wealth comes from there so the degradation of the Mediterranean no longer proceeds. Thank you.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: At the beginning, I thought you asked me about the development program which Greece has for the whole Southeastern Europe. Greece is committed. We have a development aid program of 550 million Euros for the region. Most of it will go in infrastructure projects in FYROM, Serbia, Albania, and Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, badly needed infrastructure programs. And part of it will go in giving the incentives for entrepreneurship in the region because you heard me speak also before. For us, it's very important that people find jobs, that you have to create jobs in these poor regions. If you don't create jobs, the only thing you can do is give visas for the people to leave and this cannot be the answer to the problems. We will have a visa facilitation program, but this cannot be enough. So this is the development program of the region.

On the Mediterranean, Greece is a very fervent supporter of a very close cooperation in the Mediterranean region. This is also the reason why we've strongly supported the French idea of the Mediterranean Union. We strongly – we started – I mean, it was a Greek initiative, the cooperation of the European members, Mediterranean members of the union, which means Cyprus, Italy, Spain, France, and now also Slovenia asked to be member, Malta. We started this cooperation because we believe that only by cooperating can we really protect and develop the Mediterranean.

Now, the third phase of it is, of course, what we did in Malta before yesterday where I was, the cooperation between the north and the south of the Mediterranean, which means our Arab partners on the one side and the European partners on the other. If we don't cooperate, then the problems of the Mediterranean will not be solved.

MR. HAMRE: Right down here in the front. Then I'm going to go far in the back.

Q: My name is John Bosnich (sp). I'm a journalist who covered the war in the Balkans for about eight years and I also coincidentally or otherwise also happened to be an ethnic Serb. You spoke of the Southeast European region as plagued with problems

including a weak rule of law, none in Kosovo, organized crime, a government of criminals in Kosovo, poorest borders, actually open borders to Albanians, but closed to the Serbian president, if he wants to visit, he needs permission. And you spoke of the need for integrative strategies, yet we're facing a disintegrative declaration of separation in perhaps a few days.

MR. HAMRE: Question, please.

Q: Here it is: my question is, now that we've all heard about how the Slovenian presidency of the EU is being remote-controlled from the State Department with the resignation of the Slovenian official –

MR. HAMRE: Question, please.

Q: – would you say that the best thing that Greece could do now would be to respect the sovereignty of Serbia and use its veto to either refuse or delay this EU policing mission which was described specifically as a camouflage for independence?

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: Let me say that we may agree on a lot of what you said, and as you know, Greece has a long-standing and very close relations to Serbia, and this was also the reason why we strongly supported Serbia's SAA agreement as soon as possible with the European Union. Where we don't agree is about the role of the ESDP mission. We believe that the ESDP mission is a stabilizing factor for Kosovo and for the protection of the minorities. And I want to be there very clear because we feel very strongly about that. I don't want to say what would happen in case the ESDP mission did not go, who might come in to cover the vacuum, this is another question. But if we want to really know and assume our responsibility, the ESDP mission has to be the European mission in Kosovo for both or for all, let's say, people who are involved.

MR. HAMRE: I'm sorry, in the very back –

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: For the very simple reason that they cannot deliver anymore, we need more people in the ESDP. Now, on Serbia, if Greece is going to recognize or not or when or what, this is something which has not been decided. We will study the situation on the ground, we will talk to our regional partners, and we will evaluate it. So there is no answer now because my government has not made any decision yet.

MR. HAMRE: In the very back.

Q: Madame Minister, Father Kouzamas (sp) Karavellis (sp) from Annapolis, Maryland with the – (inaudible). I would just like to ask you. What is the future of the minorities in Northern Epirus, or in southern Albania?

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: Well, as you know, we are in close contact with the minority in southern Albania. We have – they are going also to have some elections, I

think, very closely. We have some problems. One of the biggest problems which we have is that we have to see with the Albanian government about the cemeteries. It's incredible that we are speaking 45 years after the World War II about the cemeteries of the dead of this year, but unfortunately it is true. We have also issues open about the properties which we are discussing. But I see a vibrant and economically well doing minority there.

Q: May I make a follow-up on just one point?

MR. HAMRE: No, I'm sorry, I've got seven people. I'm sorry.

Q: This is Umit Engensor (ph) with Turkish NTV (?) television. Madame Minister, could Kosovo's independence have any implications on the Turkish – (inaudible) – of Cyprus or the Kurdish north in Iraq? Thank you.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: My opinion is there very clear. The Kosovo should be seen as a sui-generis situation and recognized also as such. I know that there are a lot of people who are afraid of interpretations or of a Kosovo paradigm which could be used either in Turkish Cypriot – (unintelligible) – occupied Cyprus or in Kurdistan. But I think this will be – and this is also one of the main arguments – this will be a bad recipe for the whole region.

MR. HAMRE: Sir, right in the back, yeah. Thanks.

Q: Hello. Meto Koloski, a Macedonian-American. First, I'd like to say that I've been a great fan of your career, particularly becoming the first foreign minister woman in Greece and mayor and I think you did an extraordinary job with the Olympics, so thank you very much for your presence here. My question deals with human rights in Greece and it ties in sort of with the issue with northern Epirus.

Back at an address at Georgetown University, you mentioned that – you expressed the importance of respecting minorities' rights in the interest of peace. In an interview following that in Macedonia, you stated that, I am proud of the capacity of the Greek democracy. All citizens of Greece have equal rights. I am sure you already know that in Greece there is only one minority in Western Thrace and those are the Muslims. There is no such thing as a Macedonian minority.

You discuss minority rights in Kosovo and other countries. What is Greece doing to pass the framework convention on the rights of national minorities in Greece, which it signed in 1997? And what is Greece doing to give all human rights, freedom of peace, freedom of religion, speech, to Macedonian minority in northern Greece? Thank you.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: Well, we are very proud about minority policy for which even in the European Union we are congratulated. As you know, in Greece, and you have studied very well, we have one Muslim minority recognized by the Lausanne Treatment and this is a treatment which we have with Turkey. Now, this minority has

three different kind of ethnic descendants in. They are Romas, they are Pomaks (sp), and they are from Turkish origin people. In Greece, religious freedom and any other freedom is completely given. We are a European country and we are a very old European country. And in Greece, it's not only this freedom which is given. In Greece, whenever you want to study the history of Greece, the archives of the Greek state are open. There is no one who does not allow you to look in the archives of Greece if you want to make any kind of studies. So trust me, you are talking to a European democratic foreign minister for which we are really proud. (Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: Well said.

Q: My name is Lee S. Taylor. I'm professor of Sociology at University System of Maryland, up in Baltimore. I would like to know and shift a little bit the question – I would like to know your general reflections or expectations that you might have about the Greek American community in your efforts to promote policies of smart power in Southeastern Europe, especially in reference to the professoriat (ph) that we have great number of people here. In what way do you expect us in some ways to assist you in that process?

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: Well, thank you for the question because we always need assistance. And we need assistance because we need a better understanding of the region. Some of us, very often, are confronted with questions or with even reactions where there is a difficulty for Americans to understand why is history so present in this region, why are the reactions the reactions which come up, why is it not given – I remember when minorities, for example, I remember there was an American paper – of the State Department, I don't know what – and it said about minorities and under this, it read, Albanian minority. And when we came up and said, look, there is another way in which minorities are perceived in the States and another way in which minorities are perceived in the Balkans. Minorities in the States is anybody who is over 10 people who comes up and says I am the creton (sp) minority of the States or whatever. But in our region, and in Europe, the way to accept and to admit minorities is another one.

So I'm saying that as an example to just explain that it is very important that you who are the cultural product of two democracies, of two countries, and have this cultural knowledge, are the best possible bridge for all of us to communicate and have a better understanding for each other. So we are very thankful for your efforts.

MR. HAMRE: Colleagues, I only have five more minutes and I've got five people with questions, so I'm going to ask people to ask their question quickly. I'm going to go through all of the questions and then I'm going to let the foreign minister wrap up. First one right here and then next is going to be in the back.

Q: Madame Minister, I'm Ike Gulis (sp), I'm the supreme president of AHEPA and as you know the AHEPA work closely with the Greek government to help Greece join acceptance into the visa waiver program. We understand that DHS recently had a team in Greece and we want to know if you can give us input on that.

MR. HAMRE: Okay, next question in the back. Yep, please.

Q: I'm Basil Nikus (sp). I'm a Greek American entrepreneur. I think we missed a lot of the first portion of your presentation is how much Greece has done to penetrate the Balkans with business and enterprise. As a Greek American, I'm pretty familiar with what's happening and this is all news to me. How do we help you promote the fact that you're building businesses in the economic section that's developing those countries?

MR. HAMRE: Okay, right down here in the front, please.

Q: Deputy foreign minister, in 2004, the United States recognized FYROM in its constitutional name, arguably saying that this really created an uneven playing field and caused a problem in terms of your possible future negotiations to resolving this issue. Mr. Volka (sp), who's going to be the next ambassador to NATO, said last week that the name should not be the deciding factor of getting into NATO. What do you want the United States to do for you now as we approach the eleventh hour on this decision?

MR. HAMRE: Okay, the lady in the back right here. And then you're going to get the last one.

Q: So Elenora Siliprandi (ph) from the Wilson Center. With reference with what you said about freedom of religion and the treatment of minorities in Greece, I would just like to ask you how you justify the fact that in Europe we speak of a specific jurisprudence for the breach of freedom of religion in the European court of human rights, basically Greece made history in this field. And the second question is the same is true for the treatment of minorities. You can read the reports of the Helsinki Monitor and of the U.S. Department of State and Greece is normally one of the last countries in Europe.

MR. HAMRE: And then the last question is going to right on the aisle right in front of you. There we go. I'm sorry everybody, but we've just – too much interest.

Q: Madame Minister, Turkish Embassy – (unintelligible) – welcome to Washington. Well, just very briefly, we have good improving relations with Greece now, good channels of communication, and our economic relations are also improving and we are on the positive side. We also have our differences, of course –

MR. HAMRE: Question, please.

Q: – with regards to Cyprus and the Turkish minority, just some of them. But I will stay on the positive. What will Greece do in 2008 to support a solution in Cyprus? Thank you.

MR. HAMRE: Okay, thank you. Please everybody, I apologize, and this is – you're going to pick and choose what you want to go through here, so we'll wrap this up.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: Visa waiver program, I think that Greece has a unique biometric passports. This is recognized now by also the different responsible people who came. For us, it's an important issue. We feel that we have made all the effort to make sure that whoever comes from Greece to the United States is covered. We are not an emigrating country anymore. We are receiving our Greek Americans back. And so we expect and we have the assurance from the administration that we will be included in the visa waiver program in 2008.

Building business in the Balkans, yes we are building business in the Balkans. We are renowned as being very good businessmen. Whenever the Greek businessmen go, practically they are even in front of the government, but they go before any kind of government, but now also they government is encouraging them and is giving incentives to build up business. Economic diplomacy is very important for us. This is the reason why we are everywhere and we are starting elsewhere in different regions now. My secretary general of the ministry is here. You can get all the data. And I think it is very interesting data.

Two thousand four recognition of the name. We felt very badly about this recognition of the United States. Greece felt badly about it because we felt that this was a movement which gave to Skopje the wrong message. And what was the message? The message was, we don't need to make any kind of effort anymore, we have American support. Well, NATO needs consensus and the European Union needs consensus. So it was a wrong message and I'm afraid it was wrongly interpreted by our Skopjan friends. So I think it's much better if the administration today keeps the line which was also said that in case there is a mutual acceptable solution, we will encourage it, and we will try to be as helpful as possible for both parts to agree on a mutual accepted solution. So this is what we expect.

About the minorities, I see an anger there. I don't feel angry and I don't think that there is anybody in Greece who will come up and say that he feels that he is not free. There might be reports – come on, we can discuss it if you want later, but there might be reports. I'm sorry to say, I don't believe that all American reports are right. (Laughter.) And I don't say it – (applause) – sorry, but you can find reports which we can use, you can find reports which others use. But I'm coming from a country in which human dignity, human rights, and religious freedom is one of the bases on which our democratic system is working. And Greece is the oldest democracy in the region. So trust me, we are making every effort.

The only thing we did – and we are proud for that, too – is that we have a positive discrimination in the last law which we brought to parliament 15 days ago, where we have a positive discrimination for our Muslim minority so that they have a positive discrimination and get easier to the universities by 0.5 percent and to the civil services. We did that, but this is a positive discrimination, not a negative one. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen.

MIN. BAKOYANNIS: Thank you.

MR. HAMRE: I just would like to say I hope you all appreciate how exceptional this has been. The foreign minister has taken 16 questions and she's answered every question with an honesty and a forthrightness. She's assumed the best intention in every questioner. This is remarkable and I think we're grateful to have her here. Thank you all for coming. Thank her. (Applause.)

(END)