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"BOSNIA'S EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION:  
PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES"**

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JANUSZ BUGAJSKI: Okay, I think we are going to start right on time. Good morning, everyone. Thank you all for coming in this unseasonable bad weather we are having in Washington. It is my pleasure to welcome back today by – back by popular demand His Excellency Haris Silajdžić. He seems to be here every year. But every year, there is a lot to talk about in terms of developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He needs no biographical introduction in Washington, so I won't bother. He is actually one of the – I think the best known political leaders from Southeast Europe for, I would say, almost 15 years, if not more, in Washington. He visits us at, I think, at a very important time in the region, both for positive and negative reasons. And let me just sort of outline a few factors. On the positive side, I think the recent NATO Summit moved two of Bosnia's near neighbors, Albania and Croatia, into the alliance, but also offered the prospects of membership for Macedonia – hopefully this will be completed by the end of the year – as well as Montenegro. On the negative side, unfortunately, there is still uncertainty over the future of Serbian politics and Serbian policy over, as I mentioned, Macedonia's resolution with Greece on the name dispute, as well as Kosovo's progress towards normal statehood and regional corporation.

And it is in this context, I think, that Bosnia-Herzegovina presents us with another challenge. And that challenge is how to transform a relatively weak state with two, in effect, autonomous regions into a more integrated, functional, and successful state that can take constructive strides towards European integration and NATO integration. I think that is going to be the challenge over the coming years. So with that said, I'm not going to say any more, let me hand over to Haris to try and indicate the way ahead, which way we should go.

PRESIDENT HARIS SILAJDŽIĆ: Should I do it from here?

MR. BUGAJSKI: Yeah, you can do it from there.

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen and dear friends because I see so many familiar faces today in this room, and I thank you, Janusz, and the center for inviting me again. This was – okay. I think it is now full year since I had the opportunity to exchange my views with you in this center. And I think it is important that from time to time, you hear from Bosnia because I believe Bosnia is – and I am trying to be objective here – Bosnia is, if not the key factor, it is one of the key factors of stability in the region for different reasons.

Of course, you all know that Bosnia sits on this fault line that has been there for some time, meaning for over, at least over 1,000 years. And that line, generally between the East and the West, refuses to go away. Of course, there were the Western Roman Empire and then the Eastern Roman Empire that survived the Western Roman Empire for 1,000 years. And that fact has shaped the events and the history in that part of the world. And then there was, of course, from 1054, there was the Eastern and the Western Church, and then throughout the history, the empires from the East and the West, and then the Eastern bloc and the Western bloc. And even

today, this very day, that line is still there. And popularly called the Yalta line is where we sit, where we are. So I think it is strategic.

In our times, in the events of the last two decades and even today, the fact is that Bosnia has become the focus of the international community for different reasons, the main being the aggression on Bosnia-Herzegovina, culminating in genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina unfortunately. And the fact that Bosnia now plays a part – or can play a very constructive part, I believe, in the new era of globalization because of its dimension of pluralism. Bosnia is an authentic pluralist country. We may name it ethnic. It has different connotations depending on the definition of what ethnicity means to the cultural or conventional differences. I'm sure you know that in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we speak three languages. That is official, but if you ask me, I think it is one language with three names. Even four names now, there is a Montenegrin language, so one language has four names, which reflects our situation.

There is also the conventional factor, upon which those differences are actually built around which those cultures have emerged. Among them is the Muslim factor or the fact that Bosnia-Herzegovina has a considerable Muslim population, which is in our times, an important issue. So there is pluralism. Globalism is pluralism. And globalism happens whether we agree with it or not. It is happening with both positive and negative side of it. Bosnia is plural, authentically plural. Where I say authentically, I mean that for hundreds of years, we lived with different cultural basis (?) if you like. Before the Ottomans in Bosnia, there was a Bosnian church. There was the Catholic Church, there were the Orthodox Church. And then the Ottomans came, and then we had the Jewish culture introduced there together, of course, with the Islamic culture. So the result is what is Bosnia today.

And this Muslim factor is important because there is a dialogue. There are many important dialogues in our day. And the dialogues are about dulling the edges between those cultures. I am not a believer in the clash of civilizations. But I believe that we have to work very hard to avoid clashes and to avoid misunderstandings. One of those dialogues is the ongoing dialogue, very important dialogue between the Muslim world and the others. There is such a confrontation. We must admit that. And there are so many misunderstandings, so many points of meeting, too. As Octavio Paz said in one sentence, Islam is alone because it insists on monotheism. But that is the subject for a different kind of talk. But there is this dialogue going on, and I think that Bosnia-Herzegovina with the name recognition that it has, especially throughout the Islamic world, can help conduct this dialogue in a constructive manner.

The population, the Muslim population in Bosnia – I am one of them, and we call ourselves Bosniaks, as related to our country Bosnia-Herzegovina. This population has come out of the test room from '92 to '95 with a civilized face, has come out clean, if you like, despite the very severe tests. And that is one of the factors we have to take into consideration when we make conclusions about what it means for Bosnia, for outside of Bosnia, for the region as a whole. It is true that there was a genocide in Bosnia. But it is true that this country intervened, the United States of America, somewhat belatedly, but it intervened. And I think that is important for the ongoing dialogue between – (inaudible) – of the world and the United States of America and the West, too.

That is why I hope you understand that we have to say a few words about the NATO alliance. And that is why the NATO alliance – this is because the NATO alliance is important for us. The NATO alliance brings the roof, creates the roof over our heads in the region together with the European Union, so Euro-Atlantic integrations. Those two integrations are the top priority of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and there we have no difference.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina we have differences, political differences, very important differences, but there we are as one and we all want to become full members of the NATO alliance and the European Union as soon as possible. We have made an important step at the last summit in Bucharest. We began so-called intensified dialogue with the NATO alliance. That's one of the phases or stages.

And we hope to be invited to the MAP, which is Membership Action Program, which is the last stage before we are actually invited to the full membership. Now, as Janusz said, in Bucharest, we were – actually, I was happy to see that countries in the region like Croatia and Albania have come closer to the NATO alliance and that Macedonia is – I actually did hope for that. But, obviously, it was for the reason that I do not want to elaborate here. For well-known reasons, Macedonia, Macedonian invitation was delayed.

Generally, we believe that it is in our strong interest that the countries of the region go forward. It's good for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The model that – the model that NATO – the security, the most secure in the region. And I hope that the next summit that we will make the next step. For us, it's an important thing and it's one of the strategic goals. So is our membership, full membership, in the European Union, one day. We have made some good and important steps toward this membership. We hope to sign the Association and Stabilization Agreement with the European Union, which is the first contractual agreement with the European Union on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. So it's in a couple of weeks.

And that will mark an important beginning for Bosnia-Herzegovina, a new beginning. So, so far, actually, this is the first time that I can say that I come with good news from Bosnia and that I'm hopeful really despite all of the differences that we have there, which are to be expected after all that has happened there. It is to be expected. But we have come closer to those two integrations and that means that we will have a strong roof over our heads, and that we can use the talent and the genius of our citizens in the region to progress towards a better world. And there is talent there. There is genius. There is – there are a lot of good things there so that we can contribute with whatever we have.

And I think we have things to offer to the world, to offer to the European Union. And I will not – I will just mention the fact that Bosnia-Herzegovina has considerable potentials in economy: energy. As you all know, the energy is becoming more expensive and more demanded daily. We are – I think there are – I am not sure, but I think that we are one of three or four European countries that are endowed with this very important energy potential. We have to develop it. We are slow at that because of the system that we must change. But, still, especially in clean energy, the green energy, which is the order of the day, is there is Bosnia-Herzegovina in large quantities.

We now export the energy and we will be able to contribute to the European energy pool in a considerable manner. That is good because I personally would like to see the European Union now accepting Bosnia-Herzegovina as a new member because of our geographic position, but because we are relevant to the European Union. And we will become relevant to the European.

There are other, of course, possibilities and potentials. And there is a new thing in that that I noticed in papers like New York Times and magazines like Leisure, that the Americans are becoming more and more interested in Bosnia-Herzegovina as tourists. And they are asking for information. They are asking for – they would like to come to Bosnia-Herzegovina. And it's up to us, both the government and the private sector, to take this opportunity and promote Bosnia-Herzegovina and make some money bringing Americans to Bosnia Herzegovina.

As you all probably know, there is a lot to see there. There is a lot to learn and it will – we will profit from that both politically and, of course, on the economic side of it. There are other potentials, but I am not here today to elaborate on this and I would like to say a few words more about the Dayton agreement.

As you know, in 1995, there was a peace agreement made in Dayton. The American government, of course, took the initiative. It did end that bloody war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We always must recognize that fact. But the implementation of it never materialized really completely and especially one of the annexes which is the core of that agreement and the core of what happened in Bosnia really. That Annex 7 is about the return of refugees or displaced persons in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

So, in addition to those who were killed during the war, we have hundreds of thousands of our citizens around the world and that the consequence of this is that we have now in our country territories without its citizens, without the inhabitants. That creates a political problem. So, in a way, the failure to implement fully the Dayton agreement resulted in the political problem because of the way of voting and people are missing from one territory and we have a political problem resulting in blocking the decisions, especially in the parliament. And that is something that has to be changed.

Now, the question is, how, because we have at least two diverging concepts of the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina. One is it's about political representation. One concept is that the political representation should be based on the civic identity. And the other concept is that it should be based on the ethnic identity. I vote for the first one. And I believe that modern democracy and ethnocracy cannot coexist, that ethnocracy cannot really be real modern democracy. But we have differences there.

That is why we need to have a new constitution in Bosnia-Herzegovina, what are considerably amended or a new constitution, but we have to have a constitution in Bosnia-Herzegovina that will unblock this situation. This has become the main stumbling block in our country. And that is why in my meetings with the senators and congressmen and – I am asking for the American presence in Bosnia to assist us in providing a good and fertile ground for a new

arrangement because the current arrangements stifles Bosnia-Herzegovina and impedes us on our way to the Euro-Atlantic integrations.

That process must be transparent and must be institutionalized, meaning that the way to do it is through the parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina, being totally transparent about it as opposed to some attempts, lately, of the amendments of our constitution in a different way. We also would like to have foreign experts, American and European experts, constitutional experts, to help us do this in the best of manners. But I also believe that this assistance should also be political assistance. I know it's somewhat strange to ask for the political assistance in creating a constitution of a country, but it's still better than going on for years like this and continuing this blockade that has resulted from the system. The system is dysfunctional.

The other day, a gentleman, an investor in Bosnia-Herzegovina told me, asked me, can you please help us with the investment in Bosnia-Herzegovina because you have 14 finance ministries here? How can I swim through all of these problems? And it's true, but it was made to make peace. And it made peace. Now it's time to change it to simply to let Bosnia-Herzegovina show all its riches and talents and simply take its place in Europe and the world. We do not want to be a problem.

And I believe Bosnia is a part of the solution to it; it's not only a part of the problem. It's more and more part of the solution in this world because of those factors that I already mentioned here, because the importance of Bosnia-Herzegovina transcends its borders. Bosnia-Herzegovina with its symbol, very much needed in today's globalized world, is larger than itself. And thereby we can also contribute to the dialogues and the efforts to prevent wars in the world, to prevent extremism. Bosnia is a buttress against extremism in the world if properly used for that purpose. And that is the confirmation of this thesis can be found on the ground. And that's why Bosnia-Herzegovina is important.

Now – and I don't know if I used my time – you may hear of our problems, those who follow Bosnia-Herzegovina, that there are unresolved, open questions. It is true. But I must say that generally, this is the first time that I come here to this country speaking to people in Congress that I really feel that we are now on the way to those integrations and we will stay there on that course. This is for the first time that I feel with all the problems, all of the differences that we have.

It will be very difficult to churn out a new constitution. It will be very difficult to solve some very important problems, very important like state property, problems of the property of the state in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But, in the same time, I believe that with a little help of our friends, we can actually find a way to solve all of these questions. And there is the new dimension of the new generation.

The new generation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is, of course, like the rest of the young people around the world, but they have a disadvantage. And the disadvantage is that the system prevents them from integrating within Bosnia-Herzegovina. So the main task and probably the longest process that we will have to go through is the integration of our society. The system is conducive to creating ghettos in Bosnia. It is not only the fact that I am with my whole being

against ghettos and the ethnic divisions, but also that it may become dangerous, especially if there is frustration that may be fueled by economic woes, by infiltration of different ideas and so on and so on. The fact is that young people from Sarajevo rarely go to, for example, the town of Banja Luka and vice versa. So they don't know each other. That is not a good thing for the society, of course.

And also, we still have – and I think it is a disgrace not only for Bosnia-Herzegovina, but for all of us – we still have segregated schools in our schooling system. And I think we must do everything. We are doing what we can now to get rid of a system that creates this false, artificial segregation that has no place in Bosnia in history and that has no place in the modern world. So children who live in one building go to separate schools or they call two schools under one roof, but they are segregated, separated, which is something that we really have to deal with in order to integrate the society.

So the conclusion would be that we shall become members, full members of the European Union and of the NATO alliance. We shall have an economy that would be satisfactory, I think, because we have some many potentials and human potentials, too. That all we shall have. But if you do not change the system, we shall also have society that is divided on ethnic lines. And that would be a failure for all of us. That is why we must begin to change that system, and the system will be changed once we change our constitution, which is contrary to all that we know as modern – not only modern democracy, but modern society.

One more thing – the rule of law, as we all know, is the core of the democratic system. The rule of law cannot be introduced without respecting the international law because the importance of the international law grows with the globalization. Now, I must say that the international law is not respected in Bosnia-Herzegovina in one very important instance. Last year, we had the judgment of the International Court of Justice on the genocide in Srebrenica stemming, of course, from the Geneva Genocide Convention. As far as I know, this is the first time in history that we have such a judgment. And it is important to do the right thing.

But that has been largely ignored; that judgment was ignored. And in so many subtle ways, we have been asked not to bring up this question. I think it is dangerous for the world to ignore this judgment. Amongst other things, that judgment, the verdict says that Serbia must deliver persons responsible for crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. So the verdict must have, as any other judgment because this is the court and this is the International Court of Justice, the United Nations court, that must have legal consequences. Otherwise, we play games with the international law. And if that is the case – and that is the case, unfortunately – then, how can we convince the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina that we must have the rule of law in Bosnia-Herzegovina if we do not respect the law that all nations agreed upon and we have it as such?

So those issues cannot just be ignored, not for the sake only of our present, but for the sake of the future. It must not be ignored. We must deal with that as difficult as it is, but we must deal. And the countries in Serbia must respond. And I will tell you a meeting that I had with President Tadić of Serbia lately in Ohrid. We talked about this. And he says that he intends to comply with this judgment. He intends to deliver those persons responsible for crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina as soon as they're found. It remains to be seen – I have to no reason not to

believe this – but it has not happened yet. It's one of those things that has an impact not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but in the region too.

Now, this is mainly what I wanted to share with you today. It may be a little sketchy because I wanted to cover all the important subjects, or those subjects that I deem as important. And, as always, it was a great pleasure to see you all here. And, again, I'm grateful to you, Janusz, and to the center for inviting me. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. BUGAJSKI: Thank you very much, Haris. I think you've given us a good overview. Now we can get to some questions and see what's on people's minds. I think we have a couple of microphones that are circulating, so please raise your hands and introduce yourselves and your affiliation. Over here. Nice and controversial hopefully, Ed.

EDWARD JOSEPH: Not today. Thank you, Janusz, and very nice to see you, Mr. President, very nice to see you again. Edward Joseph with Johns Hopkins SEIS.

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Thank you.

Q: Welcome back, very nice to see you. You know, in your presentation you made reference to the important political differences in Bosnia that are well now. And in fact some would say that maybe that's understating it, given that last fall the rhetoric was serious enough that there was open talk of renewed conflict. And then today, many of us, of course, are very encouraged about the imminent signing of this stabilization and association agreement.

My question for you is, are you at concerned that with that seminal moment, to finally sign this agreement with the European Union, that people will again – especially here in the United States – will again see Bosnia as a European problem for Europeans to deal with. And are you at all concerned then that there will be diminished US engagement and, of course, the departure of the high representative, who, as you know, has performed an important function. Thank you very much, sir.

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Thank you, yes. The answer to the question is, yes, I am concerned. And that's why I'm here. I had the opportunity of meeting congressmen yesterday; there were about 30 congressmen and senators in the club of Bosnia, the caucus of Bosnia, the friends of Bosnia. And that's exactly what I asked them to do. That was a plea. There is an unfinished business in Bosnia. We must finish it; we began this all together. The Dayton agreement, after all, is an American project, and it brought peace.

But the job is not finished. All those differences are very strong, as you know. And we have to have a constitution that reflects whatever is the will of the people there, but it also must reflect the modern democracy. And how can we do this if we do not have a little help from our friends? That is why I said this openly – it should not only be the expert help. There should be a determined leadership also on the part of the United States of America to solve this because I



think it's in the interest of this country for all those reasons that I have mentioned today that we have peace and stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

So, mainly, I'm here today not to complain and, you know, you followed my visits and you know what we did sometimes together and so on. But today I say, there is good news from Bosnia, but we are not yet there. The main stumbling block is the new constitution, and the main problem of that constitution is two competing and diverging concepts of what Bosnia should look like. It is civic democracy? Or is it ethnocracy? That is the question.

I vote for civic democracy because I believe in an individual. And I share those values with this country. That's why I'm here. I know the Americans will understand this. And then there is this Dayton agreement. There is a continuity of commitment, if you like. And I'm concerned that with all the problems around the world, this country will simply – not go away, but, you know, play less active role – which is not the case now. I must tell you that the American representation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is very active. But I'm here to underline the need for the American presence in Bosnia for the same reason that you just mentioned.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Okay.

Q: The high representative – (off mike).

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Well there is little we can do, except – and that's, again, we have the difference there too. I think the high representative should stay there because the Dayton agreement, because of the understanding of the Dayton agreement. And that we should have a high representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina because the job is not finished. As you know, there was talk about the early departure last year. Well, that would have been a mistake. We all agree now; that would have been a mistake. So we do not want to commit that mistake, and I think the continuation of that office in Bosnia-Herzegovina is necessary. But we do not all – in Bosnia-Herzegovina – agree on that subject.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Okay. Further questions, please? I see a hand over there on the left.

Q: Hi, Mr. President. I wanted to ask to about Annex 7. Oh, my name is Jared Toll. I'm a professor at Virginia Tech. You said that Annex 7 was a failure, but a lot of people who are involved in the implementation of that would disagree. Under a million people returned according to UNHCR figures. As of September 2004, Annex 7 allowed people to stay or to return to their homes. So there was that particular option. So, could you explain why you see Annex 7 as a failure?

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Well, that point is interesting and debatable. You allow them to go back, so it's their choice. Sounds nice – it's not like that. You have really to create conditions for sustainable return, not to block them at every corner, which has been done in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It's easy to say, well, if you want, you can go back because there is such law in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The proof of it is that – now, we are going to St. Louis Friday. There is only in St. Louis 50,000 Bosnia citizens today. 50,000 – only in St. Louis. Why are they there?

We are a small country. It is a few million people. We need all of them, but they are not there. Why? Because they could not return normally. It's true that 100-percent return has never been achieved in the history of refugees. But still, you have many places where the return is 7 percent, 8 percent, 10 percent, in some case more. But, generally, we have hundreds of thousands of Bosnian citizens around the world, starting from Australia, Europe, the United States, everywhere. So that is why it is a failure. If they say that one million returned – probably including displaced persons – that means that we have another million that has not returned, because half of the population was moved in between the refugees and the displaced persons – displaced persons meaning, in this case, the internal displacement within Bosnia-Herzegovina.

So if that is a success – and, of course, some organizations would present their work as a success; that's understandable – but still, why do we have so many hundreds of thousands of refugees around the world if the Annex 7 – which is the crucial annex and which is, not only the annex, it's a moral obligation. So, to some extent, yes, there was return; there is still return. We still have 43,000 families registered for return today. But is very difficult because the time does not worked for us. It works the other way. People have children; children go to school; they identify with their new country; it's very difficult to move them and so on and so on. The problem is that all those attempts to block return were not sanctioned properly and timely. This is the problem.

So the return, yes, there is return. But then, there is also failure there because of – big number of people – the number is big because 100,000, 200,000, 500,000 for Bosnia is a lot of people because we are not the United States of America. Even for America, it would be – I think for America, it would be – I am not good in mathematics, but it would be like something like 17 million not returning. It is a lot for Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is a lot in – especially because, of course, we need all those potentials. But have we created the conditions for return? No. Was there deliberate prevention of return? Yes. Was that sanctioned? No. That is why it is a failure.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Questions, please. At the back.

Q: Mr. President, General George Joulwan, former supreme allied commander of NATO. I greatly enjoyed your remarks and your current assessment of Bosnia. Twelve years ago when we entered your country to stop the atrocities, one of the things we were trying to achieve was some integration of the security forces of the three ethnic groups. Where do we stand on that now in 2008 because like the school problem, there has to be some integration of the security element? Where does that stand now?

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Well, as you may know, we have today one ministry of Defense in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that is a considerable achievement. And, of course, the NATO alliance played a big role there. And it is playing a good role even today. We are on the way to the integration of those forces. There is still a considerable ethnic component to this. It is not yet completely integrated until there is one command, and it is a civil command. The staff is of mixed ethnic origin and so on. So it is a success in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And it continues to be a success, and it is our main card to show to our NATO partners when we talk about the integration into the NATO alliance.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Okay. Thanks very much. Over there.

Q: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning. My name is Robert Benjamin. I am with the National Democratic Institute. I was very interested in your remarks concerning constitutional reform. I wanted to ask you if you believe that such reform by necessity means putting on the table the functioning and the powers vested in the entity governments vis-à-vis the state level, or whether or not conceivably one can move toward a civic democracy, to use your phrase, without touching too much on the powers vested in the entities. And relatively, do you think the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina are ready to have a dialogue on constitutional reform in which such questions are put on the table? Are they ready to consider some rather significant changes to the government system that allows Bosnia to cohere as a single state or are they not? Thank you.

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Well, are they ready? It depends whom you are talking to. The entities – obviously, you are familiar with the system. Why the entities are the problem. It is because of the fact that the Annex 7 has not materialized. That is why. Because if you do not have enough representation in the parliament, then it becomes a problem, a big problem; it blocks the country. And one ethnic group can block the work of the parliament because there is not enough representation. Why? Because the people have not returned, so they could not vote.

So we had an attempt to amend this constitution two years ago. And the attempt failed amongst others. I was against those amendments because it turned out that according to those amendments, 23 percent of the parliament could actually block the rest of the parliament, kill the constitution and the state by blocking it, legally, had we accepted those amendments. So this is the problem.

It has become the ethnoterritorial arrangement that is blocking Bosnia-Herzegovina. So when we talk about the entities and the state, well, we have to talk about the Dayton agreement – has it been implemented – because the Dayton agreement has annexes. Those in favor of the entities remaining there, quote Annex 4. They say that Bosnia-Herzegovina continues as a state and it has two entities, which is constitution. The Annex 4 is our constitution. But they never mention the Annex 7, which is also a requirement. Otherwise, the Annex 4 is not there, too, if Annex 7 is not there. It is like a contract. You cannot approach the problems selectively, a la carte menu. I want this; I do not want that. And this is what happened, and that is why we have the problem today.

As I said, if there are annexes and there are a lot of them, you have to equally implement all of them. Otherwise, there isn't this balance. And that is why we have the problem. So it will be a problem for us, but we must hope that there is a way to actually balance in between the individual and collective rights because this is what it is all about. I do not believe in collective rights. I do not believe in that personally. I believe in individual rights, and I think that the primary focus of our sovereignty should be laid on the individual. Other people think that it is collective, that it should be the collective protection of their rights.

Of course, I acknowledge that there are peoples in Bosnia, there is this need for collective protection of some cultural rights or religious whatever it is – means identity. But if we do not

introduce the citizen, the primary focus, the individual, then how can we talk about democracy? That is how I understand democracy. There must be the individual right. Of course, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, people vote individually. But when they come to the parliament and their will is spoken, then, all of a sudden, it becomes ethnic because that is the system.

And then the entities can block the state. And that is why we are blocked. And that is why we are not yet full member of the European Union and NATO because we are blocked by the system. And the system is in disbalance. The whole thing is dysfunctional because the application and the implementation of the Dayton agreement is not yet there. Have I been clear enough? Thank you.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Okay, please.

Q: Your Excellency, I am retired Lieutenant General Soyster. This is really a follow-on to my former colleague, General Joulwan.

MR. BUGAJSKI: He left.

Q: He did. George left. At the time, he was with NATO forces separating the three elements in your country. As a result of the Dayton Accords, the United States offered a train-and-equip program to your country. I was the vice president for international operations for MPRI, the company that did that. And I would tell you, as you know, at the time, the offer of equipment and then the training was done by a private company, quite a difficult, although I think pretty successful program in terms of integrating the Bosniaks and the Croats into one army. We got them in the same uniform, et cetera, with one minister and military head. Was that helpful, do you think in terms of the follow-on process, which you are now doing? Were there lessons learned for you? Thank you, sir.

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Yes, I believe it was helpful. And it is helpful today as an example. That is why I call for such an engagement in Bosnia on this political side, too. That was successful. And it surprised a lot of people because it wasn't easy, as you know. But we can do it again. What we need is determined leadership, including the leadership of the United States of America. I thank you for helping explain myself. That is why we need the American engagement in order to have this success once again, to repeat the success that you had with the – if you called them three elements of the forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I think we can be successful there, too.

But I do not agree with those who say, oh, let them talk to each other. No. That is not fair to our citizens. We can talk for the next 20 or 50 years. Not much would happen, as you know, knowing the mentality and the political culture in our parts. You see, even the case like the name case between Macedonia and Greece how difficult it is. With this country and other countries fully engaged, it is still very difficult. And it is about the symbols. It is also about symbols in Bosnia. That is why I ask for the leadership here. We have an unfinished job. We must finish it. And this is an American project. And I think we can be successful, as successful as you were in the military.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Questions, please. Let me throw one in actually, Haris, regarding the regional perspective. We spoke a little bit before we came in. Assuming there will be a more, let's say, pro-EU coalition in Serbia following the elections, how do you see Serbia's role, potentially a constructive role vis-à-vis Bosnia? I mean, what do you see as the challenges? What could they do to help Bosnia along the path that you have outlined?

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Well, if there is a pro-European government, I think it would be helpful for Bosnia. It would signal to Bosnia and especially the victims of the Serbian aggression in Bosnia, it would signal them that Serbia is finally going through the long-awaited catharsis, and that the region is settling, and that the tremors are settling after the big earthquake. They are not yet sure. I am not sure. You see, I see Serbia sitting on the fence. What will we do? And I think the path is quite clear for Serbia, and there is no alternative. Even if we live through an episode of a government that will not be pro-European, pro-Western, whatever, I think it will be short-lived because there is no alternative.

And especially the young generation in Serbia, I believe want something else, and that is the place they belong to. But it also surprised me that only 43 percent – it worries me that 43 percent of the voters in Serbia opted for parties that are sometimes openly and virulently against joining the European Union or NATO. That is worrying. What I believe – I believe that history cannot be stopped. In the long run, I am an optimist providing that we do not have a big upheaval in the region somehow, that something does not happen that we all wish of course not and that all the big players in the region play their game carefully and they not use Bosnia or Serbia for short-term political game or experience. And this is what happens sometimes to the region. We are not big countries. Sometimes we are being used for like pawns in the bigger game. That can be dangerous. The reward will be very positive for the world because of the significance and the condensation, the accumulation of history there, the power that is there. The reward will be very big for the world peace.

But I sense sometimes that this fault line, especially in recent couple of years, have been actually underlined because of the new factors in the region and the new geopolitical operations, if you like, starting with the ascendance of Asia and the new factor, Asia being, of course, the main focus of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and some unsold problems in the wider region. So all I hope that we will not be a bargaining chip there because it is too dangerous. The region has a capacity to produce major problems, as we all know from history. So there should be care taken to leave us alone, mainly to leave us alone and not to try and play game in the region.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Okay. Please, at the front.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. BUGAJSKI: Could you wait for the mike? Then introduce yourself.

Q: I'm Alexandra Panite (ph). I am an intern at Eisenhower Institute. I'm – (inaudible) – from Ohio, but I am from Romania. And it is a pleasure meeting you. You mention about this pro-Western ideal that Bosnia is going through like most Balkan countries have been through. And to be honest, that kind of parallel, what Bosnia is going through, through Romania because

we had the same process of 15 years of trying to adopt Western institutions. But from my generation's perspective, even the EU status is pretty like disillusionment because it is not offering like a lot within our country.

The problem with the system – and we have funds for infrastructure, everything, within our country, but nothing is changing. If you actually go into Romania, nothing has changed a lot. And I was wondering do you think Bosnia, if it enters NATO and European Union in the next, let's say, 10 years, will it go to the same – (inaudible) – like Romania is going right now or not? Thank you.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Maybe you are too young to see the changes, but anyways.  
(Laughter.)

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Well, I couldn't see much of Romania. I saw parts of Bucharest, attending this summit in Bucharest. Bosnia is changing. There is one advantage, few advantages of the war. War is a phenomenon that you start anew. I think there are too advantages actually coming out of war. You start from anew. And then during the war, you know really where people stand because the masks fall. You know who you are dealing with. Otherwise, you don't know. When it comes to life and death, then you know what people really are. That is one of the advantages. The other advantage is that you have a chance to start – to have a fresh start in almost everything. It can be an advantage.

And I think Bosnia is there. We now have our economy, which was like in Romania, a kind – not quite the same, but a kind of directivistic, socialist economy, and so on. Now it is changing. There are new entrepreneurs, new companies. There is a new atmosphere. And physically, Bosnia is rebuilt a great deal. If you come to Sarajevo, you practically will not see any building or street destroyed. And there was a big destruction there. As you know, Sarajevo suffered the longest siege in history, but no traces almost. So it is okay.

In Romania, it was difficult because they couldn't start anew. They had to change things. And then Romania is, of course, a bigger country with a lot of population. So it is not easy. But from the numbers I heard from President Băsescu, it is doing well, and it has oil and, you know – when were you last there? Maybe you can –

Q: (Off mike.)

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: It takes time; it takes time, especially with people changing political culture, changing culture, changing mentality. It takes time. It is a process – very, very difficult. You can change buildings and companies and economy, but the state of heart and mind is very difficult to change. So what I saw was maybe they presented as a nice face, I don't know. But everything was okay, especially the theatre – I was impressed. President Bush was there and everybody, we were all impressed with that building. Now, of course, that is not all.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Okay, I think we have time maybe for one more, please.

Q: I am Brian Beary. I am a reporter for Europolitics. I am just wondering how you feel about the delay that there has been in this signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. And also looking more long-term, how long would you like the international community to stay in Bosnia?

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: So your second question first. That I do not know, but my view is that as long as Dayton agreement is there, there should be representation – whatever is high representative, whatever it is called. I always found this high representative thing rather strange thing, higher – what is a lower representative?

MR. BUGAJSKI: Medium.

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Medium. (Chuckles.) Anyway. I support the presidents of the international community's efforts and time. It is better and cheaper than risking regression. As for why the signature of the European Union was delayed – I am not sure I will answer that question because you want me to fall out with the European Union? I had some problems with them on that front. And I did not buy all the arguments. So I protested. But anyway, we are going to sign this on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. It is a good thing for Bosnia. It is a good thing for the region. And I hope all countries in the region go forward. It is in our interest.

And then we have to – that is in agreement that we have to fulfill. And hard work starts there. So I do not know why they did not sign it earlier. Of course, there are different considerations. But anyway, we are going to sign soon.

MR. BUGAJSKI: Thank you very much. I would like to acknowledge, by the way, Ambassador Turkovic from the Bosnian embassy. Thank you very much for being here, as well as all the other ambassadors, and high, medium, and low people. (Laughter.)

Anyway, Haris, thank you very much for coming. And great job. And hopefully next time you come to CSIS, you will have even better news for us. So see you soon.

PRES. SILAJDŽIĆ: Thank you.

(Applause.)

(END)