

# THE BALKANS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION

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## HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## **THE BALKANS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION**

**Tuesday, December 8, 2020**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:20 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Eliot L. Engel (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman ENGEL. The Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any point. All members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous materials, and questions for the record, subject to the limitation in the rule. To insert something into the record, please have your staff email the previously circulated address or contact full committee staff.

As a reminder to members, staff, and others physically present in this room for guidance from the Office of Attending Physician, masks must be worn at all times during today's proceedings, except when a member or witness is speaking.

Please also sanitize your seating area. The chair views these measures as a safety issue, and, therefore, an important matter of order and decorum for this proceeding.

For members participating remotely, please keep your video function on at all times, even when you are not recognized by the chair. Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves, and please remember to mute yourself after you finish speaking.

Consistent with House Resolution 965 and the accompanying regulations, staff will only mute members and witnesses as appropriate, when they are not under recognition, to eliminate background and noise.

I see that we have a quorum, and I now recognize myself for opening remarks.

When I entered Congress over 30 years ago, more than anything else the majority leader at the time, Tom Foley, who was later to become Speaker, asked what my top three choices for committee assignments would be. I told him Foreign Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Affairs. For as long as I could remember, I had followed the Middle East, the cold war, and, of course, like everyone from my generation, the Vietnam War. But little did I know the passion I would develop for a small corner of Europe called the Balkans. Sure, I knew about Yugoslavia. They hosted the Olympics in 1976. World War I started there. But beyond that, my knowledge was somewhat limited.

Yet, days after I was first elected to the House in 1988, I was visited in my Bronx office by my now-close friend, Harry Bajraktari. Harry told me of a place called Kosovo, or Kosova, in Yugoslavia, which was populated largely by Albanians. Confused, I asked him how this place could find itself Kosovar or Yugoslavian or Albanian. Thus began my education about a region for which I am now considered an expert, the Balkans.

I have traveled to every country in the Western Balkans several times, met with so many leaders from so many parties, and come to love the rich variety of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. But no place has touched my heart more than Kosovo.

My first days in the House of Representatives in 1989 were followed shortly thereafter by a now infamous speech by then-Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. That speech is seen by many as the beginning of several years of war and ethnic cleansing, ending with the breakup of Yugoslavia, and the creation of seven independent countries.

I spent many of my first years in the House of Representatives with a small, bipartisan group of Congress Members, fighting the horrors. Only a few of us still Serbia today—Steny Hoyer, myself, Pete King, Alcee Hastings—but our efforts never had a partisan flavor. We stood together on the House floor, we traveled to the region, and we demanded American leadership to end the killing.

In many ways, American involvement in the Balkan Wars of the 1990's was the pinnacle of our post-cold war power and influence. It also represented how such leadership can be put to good use. We stopped the killing and, along with our NATO allies, stepped in with peacekeepers to prevent the brutality from recurring. We stopped genocide in Europe cold.

In Bosnia, the conflict ended with the Dayton Accords, and in Kosova, most of the world moved to recognize the new republic. But while we did so much good, we did—there also remains a large amount of unfinished business, not only in those two countries, but throughout the region, demanding American leadership and closer work with our European partners.

I would like to start in Kosova. First, the good: Kosova is an independent country, and it has been for more than a decade. Frankly, if you run the clock back three decades, this was a mere dream. I never thought I would actually utter those words, but today, Kosova has joined the World Bank and the IMF. And more than 110 other countries recognize its independence, including, of course, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, and so many other important nations.

Kosovars are showing up as leaders in a variety of professions, including some world-famous popular singers and soccer players and in my hometown of New York City, as successful real estate owners, popular restaurateurs, and so much more.

Yet, the end of the story has not been written, and serious challenges remain. Most importantly, it is time for Serbia to move on. Kosova is independent. It is never going back. Frankly, blocking Kosova's recognition in places around the world and its membership in the United Nations only holds up Serbia, because its bid to join the European Union will not be approved until it recognizes Kosova.

So I call upon Serbia to get on with it, so all of the people of the region, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religion can take their rightful place as citizens of Europe, alongside their French, German, Italian, and other brothers and sisters across the continent.

You know, but I am very, very proud of what we did in 1999. We prevented genocide on the European Continent and that is a major, major undertaking and something which we should be very proud of. But it is not the end of the discussion. So many people were killed then, 1999, disappeared, maimed, and raped, during the Kosova War. And justice remains a long way off. We had a hearing not long ago in this committee about the atrocities committed against Albanian women during the 1999 problems.

Justice remains a long way off. In Serbia, bodies are still emerging from mass graves. Of Kosova, Albanians struck back and quickly buried to hide the magnitude of the crime. Three Americans, the Bytyci brothers, were among those murdered. The families of these victims deserve justice, but have been given little, if any.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia closed. And Serbian prosecutors have brought very few criminal cases, despite the evidence. President Vucic even promised then-Vice President, now President-elect Biden, Vice President Pence, and me, that he would ensure justice for the Bytycis. We have seen absolutely none.

While most of the crimes during the war were committed by Milosevic and his brutal army, the international community has forced Kosova, not Serbia, to set up a special court to deal with wartime crimes. The court came about in response to a report by a European parliamentarian, in large part, about a debunked claim of organ trafficking by the Kosovo Liberation Army. Yet, the Specialist Chambers remains.

Let me be absolutely clear. Anyone who committed war crimes on any side should be prosecuted and brought to justice. Period. But I must ask: What is justice in the wake of the Kosovo War? Right now, it seems like Serbia, the party responsible for most of the war crimes, faces virtually no pressure at home, or from international communities to bring its perpetrators to account.

At the same time, the victim in the war, Kosovo, is forced to create a hybrid court with an international prosecutor and judges. Friends, if this was Denmark, we would be thinking something was rotten here.

As I said, if the Kosovars committed war crimes, they should be held to account. But here is the problem: I have read the statute that created the court, and nowhere does it say that it should prosecute only one ethnicity, but that is exactly what is happening. I know my tenure in Congress is coming to a close, but the problems with this court are continuing, and I strongly caution the courts, the United States, and our allies, that we must now—we must not allow it to become an ethnic court, because if we do, we are only perpetuating problems, which cause the region's difficulties and conflicts and divisions in the first place.

Read the law. The Court has jurisdiction over all war crimes committed in Kosovo, no matter which side committed them, all war crimes during the wartime period, and it must carry out its

mandate fairly without ethnic bias. Still, this court is part of a larger problem with how the United States has been approaching Kosovo. We only see it partially as an independent State, not as a true sovereign partner, not as a regular country with which we have normal bilateral relation.

Too often, we deal with Kosova as a war in the dialog with Serbia. We subsume our bilateral ties to such an extent that we, the United States, are limiting Kosova's sovereign choices to avoid to offending Belgrade. We told Kosovo it cannot base its trade with Serbia on the principle of reciprocity, one of the cornerstones of international trade law.

Sadly, the Trump Administration actions were a contributing factor in the fall of the Kosovo Government not too long ago. We have even put the brakes on Kosovo's tiny defensive military. These things have to stop. And I hope President-elect Biden's Administration will reground our relationship with Kosovo on its own terms, not on irrational fears emanating from its larger neighbor.

Now that larger neighbor has its own problems and concerns, first and foremost, its robust relationship with Russia. As U.S. Ambassador Hoyt Yee has said, Serbia cannot sit on two chairs at the same time. Serbia has been importing Russian fighters and tanks and conducting military exercises with the Russian Army. A U.S. Defense Department report told us that Belgrade's drift toward Moscow has mostly occurred since President Vucic took power.

At the same time, Democratic space in Serbia has shrunk in recent years. Freedom House describes Serbia as a, quote, "hybrid regime," unquote; not a democracy, because of declining standards in governance, justice, elections, and media freedom. If Serbia wants to become part of the European Union and the North Atlantic family of Nations, it needs to get off the fence and embrace a Western path.

I would like to shift gears now and talk briefly about Bosnia. Before I do that, let me say as an American, any American—I have been to Kosova many, many times—any American comes to Kosova, they are treated like royalty. I have never seen anything like it. I traveled the world but the people of Kosova love Americans, love everything American, and understand that we are be mainly responsible for their freedom, for the fact that they are a free and independent nation.

So, if you go there, people will talk with you. People will approach you. People will hug you. It is just an amazing thing that I've seen nowhere else the world, the great affection that they have for Americans. When they put their independence and declare independence, there were as many, and even more American flags flying all over Kosova than there were Kosova flags or Albanian flags. The American flag was paramount because Kosovars really appreciate what we did for them by presenting—preventing a genocide on the European Continent.

So I would like to shift gears now and talk briefly about Bosnia. Next week marks the 25th anniversary of the formal signing of the Dayton Accords, which ended the war in Bosnia. That negotiation was very difficult, but finally brought the horrors to a permanent conclusion.

But Dayton only created a stalemate. Under the agreement only a unanimous decision of the collective presidency comprised of ethnic-controlled republics could move the country forward.

Bosnia became stuck, unable to advance. We see now that this system has not worked. In so many ways, it put Bosnia in a deep freeze, where Republika Srpska blocks decisions in the country's national interests in favor of widely expanding autonomy and a loosely veiled breakaway agenda. This has to end.

The incoming Biden Administration needs to ask a simple question: Dayton has taken Bosnia as far as it could, but it no longer works and it has not for years. So what should come next, and how do we get there?

Friends, this is the last hearing I will conduct on the Balkans. And it has allowed me to remember some of the high points of my work in the region. In the 1990's, in Kosovo, I remember seeing walls built in schools to separate Albanians from Serbs and to separate healthcare system created by the Nation's Kosovar majority. I remember cutting the ribbon on the USIA office in Prishtina in 1996, an outpost we sometimes called the first American embassy in Kosovo.

I remember talking to President Clinton and Secretary Albright about the need to step in and halt the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Thank you, Madam Secretary, for everything you did and all your work. Everything you did is an inspiration to us all. Thank you for everything you did.

I have been honored to address the parliaments of several countries in the region, and to be present when we opened—when we cut—opened the beautiful new U.S. Embassy in Prishtina. Cutting the ribbon was just—meant so much to me.

And, Madeleine, Secretary Albright, I am so glad that you are, again, testifying for the Foreign Affairs Committee during one of my final hearings as chairman. We have known each other a long time, and I see the world change a great deal, and I am honored to count you among my friends.

Today, it is hard to recognize the region which I first visited in 1993. Countries are independent, democratic, and developing. They have young, intelligent population, ready to liberate their entrepreneurial spirit, their rich cultural heritage, and so much more.

Let's finish the work we began when I first entered Congress. Let's stand with the people of this region and let's lead the international community and complete the job of bringing every country of the Balkans into the heart of Europe. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

First, I will yield to my good friend, the ranking member, Mr. McCaul of Texas, for any opening remarks he may have.

Mr. McCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I am so glad that Speaker Foley appointed you to the Foreign Affairs so many years ago. You have certainly distinguished this committee. It has been an honor to serve with you, and it is fitting, I think, and appropriate to one of your last hearings to be on Kosovo, which I know you have been—have done so much for the people of Kosovo and the country.

The collapse of Yugoslavia three decades ago brought substantial chaos and suffering to the Balkan region. Yet over the last 30 years we have seen significant progress. Today the Western Balkans is largely at peace, and it has made great progress on its path toward Western integration. Earlier this year, we welcomed North Macedonia into NATO. They are now anchored to the world's most successful political, military alliance, and to the West.

However, serious challenges still exist and keeping the Western Balkan countries on the path toward security and stability will require active engagement by the United States and our European allies.

One such challenge currently facing the region is the political division in Bosnia. Last month, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Dayton Accords, which brought an end to almost 4 years of fighting in Bosnia. However, Bosnia has still not been able to establish a sustainable democracy. In addition, American leadership will be especially critical to the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

In that vein, I want to praise the U.S.-led agreement signed this September to increase economic cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia. I urge the next Administration to work with our European allies to build on this agreement. We must continue to support these two countries as they work to reach a political resolution centered on mutual recognition.

At a full committee hearing last year, we heard heart-wrenching testimonials from witnesses that had firsthand experience of the atrocities that occurred during the Kosovo War. Too many of the perpetrators of those war crimes remain at large. One way for these two countries to move forward together would be to focus on bringing these war criminals to justice. Only when they can find closure and peace can a truly lasting political solution be achieved.

The people of Kosovo deserve to live in an independent and democratic country that is fully incorporated into the international community. Serbia, too, must demonstrate that it sees its future in the West. Reversing the unacceptable deepening of security cooperation with Russia would be an important step for Belgrade.

The Serbian leaders must know that both Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping are not their friends. But the consequence of malign influence by authoritarian regimes, like Russia and China, are not specific to Serbia. Unfortunately, while the United States and its European allies seek to help the Western Balkans build a more secure, prosperous, and democratic future, the Putin regime is promoting a destructive agenda. By sowing division and inciting ethnic tension, Putin and his cronies aim to stifle the democratic progress being made in the region and obstruct Western integration.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party is making dangerous inroads in the region, exporting corruption, environmental destruction, and debt traps through its Belt and Road Initiatives. The CCP's goal is to create vulnerabilities in these countries that can later be leveraged for geopolitical gain. In the face of these threats, the West must act. We cannot leave a political vacuum in the Western Balkans for Mr. Putin and the CCP to exploit. I hope today's witnesses will provide concrete recommendations on how we

can confront Russia and China, their malign influence throughout the region.

Madam Secretary, it is such a great honor to welcome you this morning. I will never forget our dinner at the Munich Security Conference a couple of years ago. Your steadfast support for NATO intervention that ended the ethnic cleansing by Serbian forces and liberating the people of Kosovo has been inspiring to all of us.

Finally, I would like to thank my good friend, Chairman Engel, for holding this hearing. As all of you know, Eliot has been Kosovo's greatest champion in the U.S. Congress. He was among the first U.S. lawmakers to call on the Clinton Administration to intervene in the Kosovo War against Serbian forces, and he was the most outspoken advocate in Congress for U.S. recognition of Kosovo when it declared its independence in 2008.

To honor Mr. Engel's dedication to promoting peace, the people of Kosovo named a street after him in the town of Peja, as well as a highway that runs from Albania to Kosovo. In addition, the chairman appears on a stamp in Kosovo. That is quite an accomplishment. I am not aware of any other Member of Congress that has his own stamp in a foreign country or a street named after him. So I urge my colleagues to work to continue his legacy to advance the cause for an independent Kosovo, fully integrated into the international community.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Chairman ENGEL. I thank the ranking member, and I thank him for his kind words. It has been a pleasure to work with him, to be a partner of his, and I know it is going to continue, even after into the indefinite future. So thank you. Thank you so much, Mr. McCaul. Thank you.

It is now my honor to talk about our panelists. Let me start with Secretary Albright. Dr. Madeleine K. Albright is the chair of Albright Stonebridge Group, and was the 64th Secretary of State of the United States, at the time becoming the highest ranking woman in the history of the U.S. Government. Prior to serving as the Secretary of State, Dr. Albright served as permanent representative to the United Nations from 1993 to 1997.

She previously also served as a member of President Jimmy Carter's National Security Council and White House staff, and served as Chief Legislative Assistant to U.S. Senator Edmund S. Muskie.

And I must add that Secretary Albright is a good friend of mine, and I am honored to be her friend, and I so respect her. I am really in awe of the work she does and how she conducts herself, and how smart and effective she is.

So, Madam Secretary, thank you for coming here to testify.

Professor Daniel Serwer directs the Conflict Management Program at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and is a senior fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, and affiliated as a scholar with the Middle East Institute. His current interests focus on the civilian instruments needed to protect U.S. national security, as well as transition in State-building in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans. Formerly vice president for Centers of Peacebuilding Innovation at the United States Institute of Peace, he led teams there, working on rule of law, reli-

gion, economics, media, technology, security sector governance, and agenda. He was also vice president for peace and stability operations at USIP, where he led the peace-building work in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, and the Balkans and served as executive director of the Hamilton-Baker Iraq Study Group.

Mr. Serwer has worked on preventing interethnic and sectarian conflict in Iraq and has facilitated dialog between Serbs and Albanians in the Balkans, also a stellar witness.

Janusz Bugajski is a Senior Fellow at the Jamestown Foundation. He is the host of a television show, "New Bugajski Hour," broadcast in the Balkans. Mr. Bugajski has authored 20 books on Europe, Russia, and transatlantic relations, and is a columnist for several media outlets.

Without objection, the witness' complete testimony will be made a part of the record of this hearing. I will recognize all of our witnesses for 5 minutes each to summarize their testimony and then we will have a chance to question.

Let's begin with Secretary Albright.

Madeleine, welcome back to the committee. It is great to see you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT, FORMER  
SECRETARY OF STATE**

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Thank you, Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul.

Good morning, and thank you for convening this hearing on a topic of great interest to me, and of great importance to U.S. national interests.

I want to begin by saying how grateful I am to you, Chairman Engel, for your relentless focus on the Balkans, even when attention in Washington was directed elsewhere. You have always been a critical ally for those working on behalf of peace and democracy in the region. They are going to miss your leadership in Congress, as will I. But we also know that you will remain a great advocate and partner for years to come.

And, Congressman Meeks, I am looking forward to working with you on the full range of critical issues confronting this committee.

More than two decades have now passed since the U.S. military intervened in Kosova, and next week will mark 25 years since the formal signing of the Dayton Accords, which brought the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina to an end. I believe the United States and our allies did the right thing by taking action to end the bloodshed in both places. And whenever I am asked about my proudest accomplishment, I talk about our efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo, which show the difference that U.S. leadership and American diplomacy backed by force can make.

Our hearing this morning will focus, as it should, on the many challenges that face the region. But it is important to begin this conversation with some perspective. Today, the Balkans are more peaceful and stable than many thought possible 25 years ago. The countries have not disintegrated or returned to ethnic violence. Instead, they are working to join the European Union and to deepen their ties with the United States, and I expect that the people of the region will find a ready partner in the incoming Biden Administration.



As you know, Mr. Chairman, the President-elect has been personally engaged in the Balkans since his time in the Senate. And he was one of the most outspoken leaders in Congress, calling for the United States to help end the conflicts. And I was honored to work closely with him throughout my time in office, and I know that he understands the region and its importance for the United States.

The national security team that President-elect Biden is putting in place is deeply knowledgeable and committed to helping all the countries of the region move forward as part of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace; and that is important, because today, this vision is in peril.

The nations of the Western Balkans are suffering deeply from the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. Corruption remains a serious problem, and nationalist leaders continue to stoke and exploit ethnic tensions. China and Russia are also exerting new influence in the region with Serbia, in particular, the target of much anti-Western propaganda.

As the pandemic eases, there will be an opportunity for the United States and Europe to help the region build back better, particularly as Western European countries seek to bring supply chains closer to home and, as new funds become available to invest in energy diversification and environmental protection. Supporting the region's democratic progress must also be a priority, pushing back on authoritarian interference and building on the work that organizations, such as the National Democratic Institute, which I am honored to chair, are doing on the ground.

Still, I fear that this opportunity could be missed. To ensure we help the region meet this moment, the next Administration must develop and implement a new regional strategy. And I would suggest that such a strategy buildup three elements:

First, we must establish and maintain close cooperation with the European Union. The six States of the Western Balkans want to be in the EU, which is their largest and natural trading partner. The United States can help the EU use its influence to good effect, and our influence in the region, including with some EU member States, can be useful in keeping political problems from imperiling the region's progress.

Second, we must attack the rampant corruption that is crippling political institutions and undermining the rule of law across the region. In every country, leaders seem to regard political office as a source of patronage to stay in power. Addressing this so-called State capture and, rooting out these influences, must be a top priority.

Finally, the United States and its allies in Europe should shift toward more of a regional approach. The current EU and NATO strategies deal with each country one by one. This is necessary to reward governments when they make the tough decisions needed to move forward. But a strategy that considers only each country in isolation risks leaving behind States that have the most work to do and the fewest political champions in Europe.

The answer is for the United States and the EU to work together to champion initiatives that help Kosovo, Bosnia, and others build

economic ties to Europe and the neighborhood, while also pushing for needed political reforms.

Mr. Chairman, I know that you have a number of specific issues you would like to discuss, and I look forward to your questions but let me quickly stress two topics that are top of mind.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. On Kosovo, our shared goal should be for it to become a normal country in the United Nations, part of the regular international system, and with all the rights of international law to defend its territory. This should not be subject to a veto by Belgrade.

On Bosnia, the Dayton Accords stopped a war and continue to keep the peace but the governing arrangements are now captured by leaders among the three groups that negotiated the peace. They want to hold on to power, even if it means holding their society back, while Bosnia's neighbors move toward EU membership.

The United States and the European Union must focus their efforts in Bosnia on the abuse of government and State-owned enterprises, taking away the leverage of powers that keep the current system in place. This is, obviously, all easier said than done, but the key lesson of the past 25 years is that sustained engagement by the United States can help the region move forward.

With Joe Biden as President, I am confident that the United States will, once again, be a force for good in the region. And I am prepared to do anything I can in partnership with this committee to help the new Administration succeed. And thank you again for your continued attention to this critical issue.

And, Mr. Chairman, I look forward so much to continuing to work with you, no matter what angle, you know, where you are coming from, because you have really, really cared so deeply about that part of the world.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Albright follows:]

## FEATURE

# THE DAYTON ACCORDS

**A retired FSO and veteran of the Balkan crisis offers a clear-eyed assessment of Bosnia and Herzegovina a quarter-century after Dayton.**

BY DANIEL SERWER

# AT 25

**T**wenty-five years ago, the United States brought forth on the European continent a new state dedicated to the proposition that citizens are not equal as individuals but rather endowed with group rights. Those three groups (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats), denominated as “constituent peoples,” are entitled to block numerical majority decisions. We have tested whether that state—Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H)—or any state so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.

The answer is now clear: It can endure, but it cannot function effectively to enable its citizens to prosper and enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. B&H is trapped in a scheme of governance that permanently empowers those who appeal to group

ethnic identity and disempowers those who try to appeal across ethnic lines to people as individuals or groups that include more than one ethnicity. There is no real possibility of alternation in power or representation of civic interests, only reformulation of elite bargains among ethnically defined and centrally commanded political parties.

## Political Paralysis

This ethnically based scheme is not a total failure. It ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, attracted massive international reconstruction assistance and permitted some people to return to their homes and restart their lives. B&H today has a per capita gross domestic product close to double that of the former Yugoslavia before the 1990s wars. People of all ethnicities can travel safely in the entire country, even if living and working in areas where they are in the minority can still be difficult. Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim Bosnians worship freely, many of them in restored churches and mosques.

But politics at all levels remains frozen in a constant struggle of conflicting ethnic group rights. The elaborate architecture of the state—division into two “entities,” majority-Serbian Republika Srpska (R.S.) and the (Croat-Bosniak) Federation; division of the Federation into cantons; and, ultimately, division of both entities into municipalities—ensures ethnic vetoes over all important decisions and many unimportant ones. Government jobs, state-owned companies and other public resources



*Daniel Serwer, a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies since 2010, retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in 1998 after serving as deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires in Rome, providing support to the Bosnian Federation during the war, and negotiating the first agreement reached at the Dayton peace talks. He served thereafter as vice president for peace and stability operations at the United States Institute of Peace. He blogs at [www.peacefare.net](http://www.peacefare.net) and tweets @DanielSerwer.*

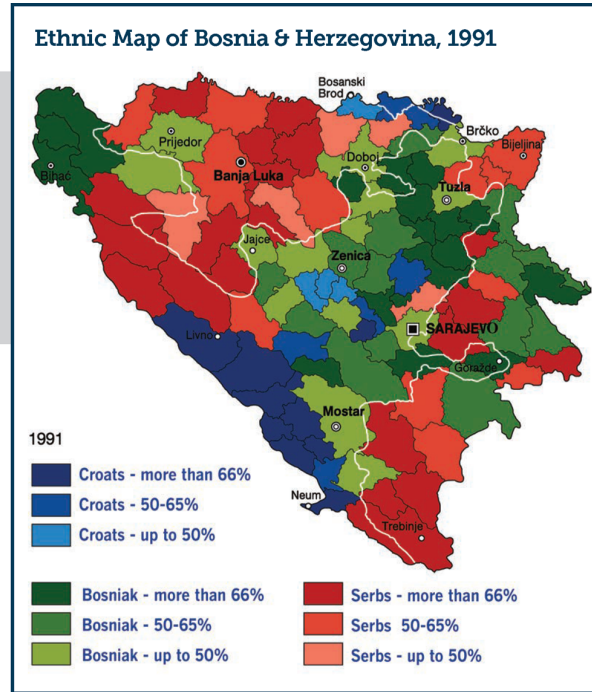
are divided up on an ethnic basis. Difficult-to-remove party bosses thrive and stash ill-gotten gains abroad, while citizens complain and hope to emigrate.

The promise of eventual European Union membership, a strong incentive for reform

when it was first enunciated in the early 2000s, is now in doubt, as Europe is preoccupied with its own problems and unreasonably delayed accession negotiations with qualified candidates like North Macedonia and Albania while refusing Kosovo visa-free travel. With the United Kingdom exiting, and ethnic nationalists dominant in Poland and Hungary, the European Union is no longer the beacon of liberal democracy it once was.

Nor is the United States, where the Trump administration has applauded Brexit and is trying to undermine the E.U. The substantial successes of peace implementation in the first 10 years after Dayton resulted from the United States and Europe working in tandem for the same ends. That has become far more difficult. The current dissonance between Washington and Brussels echoes in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

What is to be done?



#### A Near-term Threat

Nothing needs to be done in haste. B&H has been peaceful, if poorly governed, for most of the past 25 years. It can continue in that state a while longer, if only because those in power benefit from its dysfunctionality. But there is a risk that an ethnicity-based land swap between Kosovo and Serbia could destabilize the country. That proposal would exchange majority-Serbian territory in northern Kosovo for majority-Albanian territory in southern Serbia, with dire consequences for the future of Serbs living elsewhere in Kosovo and Albanians living elsewhere in Serbia.

Milorad Dodik, the Serb representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina's collective presidency, has said that such a land swap will trigger his promise of declaring Republika Srpska independent. He has already prepared the ground for this move by denying the validity of the constitutional court's decisions in R.S. and arming



## A Critical Reform

As necessary as that division seemed at Dayton in 1995, it is a birth defect that prevents B&H from ever qualifying as a serious candidate for E.U. accession. Belgium is constitutionally similar, but it is a charter member of the European Union, and Brussels is the Union's executive capital. The E.U. will not be taking in any new members whose governance is as dysfunctional as Belgium's, and B&H's is far worse. Only with the best intentions, which do not exist, would it be possible for Dayton's Bosnia and Herzegovina to qualify for E.U. accession.

There is no reason other than its hard-to-amend Dayton constitution why B&H could not be governed without the entities of R.S. and the Federation (including its 10 cantons). The central government in Sarajevo

affairs (including trade and customs), monetary and fiscal policy, and defense, as it is today, as well as have all the authority needed to negotiate and implement the *acquis communautaire*, the body of E.U. law and regulation that all new members are required to accept.

The Sarajevo Parliament would need to be liberated from the various ethnic vetoes by which it is now constrained. But simply requiring a supermajority (60 percent or more) to form a governing coalition would ensure that no single ethnicity could rule alone. The court system's independence, professionalism and capacity to protect individual rights would need to be improved. The constitutional court would need to continue to have three foreign members, to break ethnic blockages.

Without the entities and the cantons, the basic unit of subnational governance would then be the municipalities (aggregated in the larger population centers to form city governments), which have long had far more potential to get things done. Since they became popularly elected in 2003, B&H's mayors have learned how to govern more effectively than their party masters in most of the cantons and Sarajevo. No matter their ethnicity,

the R.S. police far beyond the level required to counter criminality. He has also gotten Russian paramilitary training for them and boasted of wiretapping his opponents, many of whom might line up to support R.S. independence.

Citizens who are loyal to Bosnia and Herzegovina will not let Republika Srpska go without a fight. If Dodik moves toward independence, a Bosniak-led force might try to seize the northeastern municipality of Brcko, the scene of horrific Serb atrocities and ferocious fighting during the 1992-1995 war. It links the two wings of Republika Srpska: one in the east and one in the north and west, where the R.S. capital of Banja Luka lies. The Republika Srpska cannot survive without Brcko, so it will be the center of gravity of the next war, even though today the municipality is a model of reintegration as the result of successful American arbitration and supervision that made it constitutionally distinct from both the Federation and R.S.

How can such a disaster be avoided? Most immediately, by avoiding any land swap between Serbia and Kosovo and moving all (European) troops still stationed in B&H to Brcko, where they would prevent both R.S. and the Federation from gaining exclu-

## What needs to be done is to end the division of the country into two ethnically defined entities derived from the warring parties of 1992-1995 and embedded in the current constitution.

mayors need to fill potholes, attract investors, keep the schools running, and maintain law and order. It is hard to reduce governance at the municipal level to ethnicity.

Ethnicity would not, however, evaporate as a political factor. Devolving additional authority to B&H's 143 municipalities would empower local ethnic majorities. Most (if not all) of the 64 municipalities in Republika Srpska are majority Serb. Most of the 79 municipalities in the Federation are majority Bosniak, but a significant number are majority Croat. Eliminating the entities and cantons would still leave ample opportunity for ethnic nationalists to prove their point at the ballot box, but there would also be electoral competition within plurality or majority ethnicities, raising the political value of local minorities.

This is not a new idea, but it contradicts the current constitution and would weaken B&H's ethnic warlords, who for more than 25 years have commanded the resources required to muffle dissent. The moment to move forward with such a reform may have arrived. Tight fiscal conditions in the aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic will provide a powerful incentive to simplify the constitutional architecture. Croatia and Serbia, also weakened financially, will want to reduce subsidies to their co-nationals in B&H. Strained finances could incentivize massive popular mobilization. Bosnians would need to insist on reform, as they began to do in the aftermath of disastrous floods in 2014 and continued to do in multiethnic demonstrations against police abuses of power in 2018 and early 2019.

### International Support Needed

Bosnian mobilization will need international support to effectuate change. The United States and the European Union are the prime candidates for foreign partners. Bosnia and Herzegovina is smaller in population than more than half of U.S. states, whose counties and other local subsidiary governments are roughly analogous to B&H's "municipalities." B&H is also smaller than 20 of the European Union's 27 members. There is no need for either entities or cantons to govern a country of this size, and the E.U.'s principle of subsidiarity (doing things at the lowest level of governance possible) favors empowering the municipalities. Strengthened municipal governance in both Macedonia and Kosovo since their 1999 and 2001 wars has

been successful and has empowered numerical minorities.

Some may worry about a ripple effect in the region, especially in the municipalities of Serbia's Bosniak-inhabited Sandzak or Vojvodina and Montenegro's Serb-inhabited municipalities in both the north and south. But those areas have a mutually deterrent relationship: Anything Serbia asks for municipalities inside Montenegro it should be willing to concede to municipalities inside Serbia. Reciprocity is one of the most fundamental of diplomatic principles.

Twenty-five years after Dayton, this is the constitutional reform Bosnia and Herzegovina needs: simplification of its state architecture, with devolution of powers to the municipalities while the central government (B&H citizens call it the "state" government) focuses on preparing the country for E.U. and NATO membership. The Brčko District, in all but name a municipality that has had a special, autonomous status for more than two decades, points in the right direction. It has prospered while managing its ethnic tensions better than most of the rest of the country.

There is no sign that the powers that be in Bosnia and Herzegovina will seize the opportunity without tandem pressure from Washington and Brussels, which has been vital to all substantial progress since the war. In the aftermath of COVID-19, they, too, will lack the means to subsidize B&H as they have for 25 years. The United States and the European Union would need to convince Turkey and Croatia to use their considerable leverage in B&H with the Bosniak and Croat communities, respectively. Belgrade and Moscow would likewise need to use their influence in Banja Luka. Belgrade knows that strengthening municipal governance has benefited Serbs in Kosovo, and Moscow understands it could be part of the solution in Ukraine's Luhansk and Donetsk, as well.

The United States and the European Union have good reason to be proud of what they did for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 and thereafter. But the process has stalled short of completion. Enabling the country to enter NATO and the E.U. as a fully functioning state of all its citizens would be eloquent testimony to renewed American and European commitment to democracy worldwide. Municipalization, combined with refocusing the "state" government on NATO and E.U. membership, would hasten that day. ■

Chairman ENGEL. Well, thank you. Thank you, Madam Secretary. And I look forward to continue working with you for many, many years to come. I think that you are certainly unique, as far as I am concerned, in what you have done for our country and with our country, and being so smart and knowing what should happen. You were a voice when there were very few voices, and I thank you for it, and I am always in awe of everything you say and do. So, thank you, Madam Secretary.

Professor Serwer.

**STATEMENT OF DR. DANIEL SERWER, DIRECTOR, AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, DIRECTOR, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY**

Dr. SERWER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, not only for this opportunity to testify once again, but also for your decades of commitment to Europe whole and free.

But the job isn't yet finished. Problems remain between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as inside Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Serbia is also a factor. The essential precondition for solving the remaining Balkan problems is American recommitment to the region, in tandem with European alliance. Recent competition between the U.S. and EU, which has demonstrated it cannot do the job on its own, hampered progress. As part of this global reassertion with democratic values, President Biden should consult the Europeans and announce a joint vision for the Balkans region.

Mr. Chairman, independent Kosovo is still completing its Statehood. Its security forces are progressing toward NATO. Other sovereign institutions are also gaining capability, but lack universal recognition. The Prishtina/Belgrade dialog the EU leads can help, but needs more U.S. engagement. The Americans should focus on implementation and reciprocity. The dialog needs a monitoring mechanism, including for past agreements, as well as commitments like Kosovo's EU visa waiver. Reciprocity should include extension of the Special Chambers' mandate to crimes committed in Serbia including the postwar murder of three Americans.

The main U.S. goal for the dialog is mutual recognition and exchange of Ambassadors. President Biden and Chancellor Merkel should make this goal explicit and press the non-recognizing EU members to declare they will recognize Kosovo no later than Serbia does. U.N. membership will require the Americans to convince Russia and China not to veto.

Mr. Chairman, Bosnia sovereignty and territorial integrity are as fraught and Kosovo's. The Dayton Accords reached 25 years ago entailed territorial division and ethnic power-sharing, ending a terrible war. That formula no longer makes sense for the international community, which pays many of Bosnia's bills, or for its citizens who suffer dysfunctional governance.

Dayton today serves the interests of ethnic robber barons. One arms his Statelet for secession, while another eggs him on and the third complains. The U.S. should press the Europeans to sanction those who advocate Republika Srpska independence, and to strengthen and reposition their troops, visibly backed by the U.S., to the northeastern town of Brcko, to block secession. The U.S.

should seek to block Russian arming of entity police, as well as Croatian and Serbian political interference.

Europe and the United States want a post-Dayton Bosnia that can qualify for EU membership. That Bosnia will be based, not on ethnic power-sharing, but, rather, on the majority of citizens electing their representatives. The cantons and entities, as well as ethnic vetoes and restrictions, will need to fade. The Americans and Europeans should welcome the prospect of a new civic constitution.

But no one outside Bosnia and Herzegovina can reform its constitution. A popular movement is needed. The United States, along with the Europeans, needs to shield any popular movement from repression, while starving the entities funding and redirecting it to the central government and municipalities.

Mr. Chairman, everything I have suggested will be easier if Serbia helps. President Trump allowed President Vucic to tighten control of Serbian courts and news media, which often indulge in hate speech, and to promote pan-Serb ambitions destabilizing to Bosnia, Kosovo, and Montenegro. The Biden Administration will need to toughen up on Belgrade, together with Europe. If Vucic continues to prefer autocracy and alignment with Russia and China, the Americans and Europeans will need to await the day Serbia is committed to real democracy at home, and better relations with its neighbors. Serbia's citizens, more concerned about jobs than Kosovo or Bosnia, need to help.

In the meanwhile, we may want to think about an interim arrangement between Serbia and Kosovo, provided it gives Kosovo a seat at the U.N. Getting a good deal requires readiness to reject a bad one.

Mr. Chairman, President Biden will have bigger problems than the Balkans. But few regions promise better returns. Cooperating with Europeans, the U.S. can save the sovereignty and territorial integrity of two potential allies, Kosovo and Bosnia, and help Serbia escape its legacy of autocracy and war. President Biden should support those prepared to make Europe whole and free, and counter those who block progress.

Mr. Chairman, I hope you will allow me to submit for the record an article that appears this month in the Foreign Service Journal that I wrote on the Dayton Accords at 25 which goes deeper into some of the arguments I have presented just now.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Daniel Serwer follows:]



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Hearing on

**The Balkans: Recommendations for the Next Administration**

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

December 8, 2020

Daniel Serwer

Professor and Director, Programs on Conflict Management and American Foreign Policy

Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, not only for this opportunity to testify once again but also for your decades of commitment to Europe whole and free. But the job is not yet finished. Problems remain between Serbia and Kosovo as well as inside Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Serbia is also a factor.

The essential precondition for solving the remaining Balkan problems is American recommitment to the region, in tandem with European allies. Recent competition between the US and EU, which has demonstrated it cannot do the job on its own, hampered progress. As part of his global re-assertion of democratic values, ***President Biden should consult the Europeans and announce a joint vision for the Balkan region.***

#### **Completing Kosovo statehood**

Independent Kosovo is still completing its statehood. Its security forces are progressing toward NATO. Other sovereign institutions are also gaining capability but lack universal recognition.

The Pristina/Belgrade dialogue the EU leads can help but needs more US engagement. ***The Americans should focus on implementation and reciprocity.*** The dialogue needs a monitoring mechanism, including for past agreements as well as commitments like Kosovo's EU visa waiver. Reciprocity should include extension of the Special Chambers' mandate to crimes committed in Serbia, including the post-war murder of three Americans.

The main US goal for the dialogue is mutual recognition and exchange of ambassadors. ***President Biden and Chancellor Merkel should make this goal explicit and press the non-recognizing EU members to declare they will recognize Kosovo no later than Serbia does.*** UN membership will require ***the Americans to convince Russia and China not to veto.***

#### **Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Bosnia's sovereignty and territorial integrity are as fraught as Kosovo's. The Dayton accords reached 25 years ago entailed territorial division and ethnic power-sharing, ending a terrible war. That formula no longer makes sense for the international community, which pays many of Bosnia's bills, or for its citizens, who suffer dysfunctional governance.

Dayton today serves the interests of ethnic robber barons. One arms his statelet for secession while another eggs him on and the third complains. ***The US should press the Europeans to sanction those who advocate Republika Srpska independence and to strengthen and reposition their troops, visibly backed by the US, to the northeastern town of Brcko, to block secession. The US should seek to block Russian arming of entity police as well as Croatian and Serbian political interference.***

Europe and the US want a post-Dayton Bosnia that can qualify for EU membership. That Bosnia will be based not on ethnic power-sharing but rather on majorities of citizens electing their representatives. The cantons and entities, as well as ethnic vetoes and restrictions, will need to fade. ***The Americans and Europeans should welcome the prospect of a new civic constitution.***

No one outside Bosnia and Herzegovina can reform its constitution. A popular movement is needed. ***The United States, along with the Europeans, needs to shield that popular movement from repression while starving the entities of funding and redirecting it to the central government and municipalities.***

### Redirecting Serbia

Everything I've suggested will be easier if Serbia helps. President Trump allowed President Vucic to tighten control of Serbian courts and news media, which often indulge in hate speech, and to promote pan-Serb ambitions destabilizing to Bosnia, Kosovo, and Montenegro. ***The Biden Administration will need to toughen up on Belgrade, together with Europe.*** If Vucic continues to prefer autocracy and alignment with Russia and China, ***the Europeans and Americans will need to await the day Serbia is committed to real democracy at home and better relations with its neighbors.*** Serbia's citizens, more concerned about jobs than Kosovo or Bosnia, need to help. In the meanwhile, we may want to think about an interim arrangement, provided it gives Kosovo a seat at the UN. Getting a good deal requires readiness to reject a bad one.

### Conclusion

President Biden will have bigger problems than the Balkans. But few regions promise better returns. Cooperating with Europeans, the US can save the sovereignty and territorial integrity of two potential allies—Kosovo and Bosnia—and help Serbia escape its legacy of autocracy and war. ***President Biden should support those prepared to make Europe whole and free and counter those who block progress.***

Chairman ENGEL. Without objection, so ordered.  
 Thank you, Professor Serwer. Thank you for your testimony.  
 Our third witness, Professor Bugajski.

**STATEMENT OF JANUSZ BUGAJSKI, SENIOR FELLOW, THE  
 JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION**

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul, as well as members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to offer—to be able to offer recommendations for the next U.S. Administration, specifically in its policies toward the Western Balkans. I will very briefly summarize my written testimony, and, as requested, my recommendations focus on two regional challenges: the Kosova-Serbia dialog, and the Bosnia-Herzegovina impasse, as well as two external threats, Russia and China.

So let me begin. I think the goal of the Serbia-Kosova dialog should be to devise a roadmap for interState recognition. This is the only sustainable solution that would free both countries to pursue their aspirations toward EU integration and economic development. U.S. partnership with European Union in reaching a final settlement is essential.

The White House meeting with leaders of Serbia and Kosova in September reengaged Washington in the dialog, but the U.S. cannot simply focus on economic linkages and neglect key political decisions. Economic relations will not be normalized if political relations remain abnormal.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Dayton Accords were not designed to construct an integrated State with an effective central government. Instead, ethno-politics has blocked the country's progress into international organizations. The result of Bosnian impasse, U.S. and EU representatives must devise a roadmap for constitutional, administrative, and electoral reform. Support for specific politics must be significantly increased, and the rule of law strengthened. Economic instruments can also encourage reform and a more empowered central government, while squeezing out funds to entities and cantons that block the functioning of the State, or threaten partition.

Persistent threats against Bosnian integrity limit economic development, promote interethnic discord, encourage radicalism, and endanger the survival of the State.

Two foreign actors directly contribute to instability in the region, Russia and China. Both adversaries view the region as Europe's weak pressure point, where competition with NATO and the U.S. can be increased, conflicts manipulated, new allies captured, and economic opportunities exploited. For Moscow, the Balkans are a strategic asset to expand its geopolitical reach, fracture Western cohesion, undermine international organizations, undercut the U.S. presence, and capture allies.

In trying to imitate Titoist Yugoslavia by balancing Russia and China with the U.S. and the EU, Serbia is subverting its own links with Western institutions and weakening security on the Balkan Peninsula.

The U.S. Administration can support a regional initiative focused on the vulnerabilities has the Kremlin exploits to its advantage, including disinformation, corruption, and the funding of nationalist extremism. Such an initiative can expose Russia's illicit money flows, media connections, disinformation campaigns, and the links of Russian oligarchs and intelligence services with local politicians, nationalist parties, religious institutions, and social organizations.

Moscow views Serbia, in particular, and the Republika Srpska in Bosnia, as useful tools to subvert regional security and limit Western integration.

Sanctions, asset freezes, and arrest warrants can be imposed on Russia oligarchs and entities engaged in corrupt activities, or inciting ethnic conflict or coup attempts. Media outlets and civic organizations must also be assisted to better coordinate efforts in countering disinformation spread by Russian and Chinese sources.

Western Balkan inclusion in the Three Seas Initiative and its north-south transportation corridor will enhance economic performance and help provide alternatives to dependence on Russian energy and Chinese loans.

Washington must pay greater attention to nearby States that can exert the negative influence in the Western Balkans, especially Bulgaria, Hungary, and Croatia. For instance, Bulgaria's blockage of EU accession talks for North Macedonia mobilizes the pro-Russia lobby in Bulgaria and weakens Balkans' security.

The new U.S. Administration must avoid the self-defeating reset with the Kremlin in the hope that a major adversary can be transformed into a credible partner. A more assertive U.S. policy can help neutralize Moscow's Balkan ambitions by spotlighting Russia's own vulnerabilities, including its economic weaknesses and escalating domestic turmoil.

International democracy initiatives as proposed by the President-elect should zero in on the Russia Federation by supporting human rights, individual freedoms, political pluralism, ethnic equality, and genuine federalism in this increasingly unmanageable State. In restoring the vitality of the Western alliance, Washington can demonstrate that it is not in conflict with the citizens of the Russian Federation.

Very briefly on China: China's long-term ammunitions are to replace the U.S. as the leading global power. Its expanding influence is based primarily on investments and development assistance, which creates indebted independent States that undermine transatlantic unity. In exchange for investment, Beijing seeks diplomatic support for its policies in international fora. Western governments need to contain Chinese influence, but without damaging the economic development of vulnerable countries. They must work together to prevent the takeover of key economic sectors, invest in new technologies, and improve conditions for private and public investments.

And, last, similarly, to probes of Russian activities, Chinese money flows, political connections, business links, and media inroads must be systematically investigated. More attention must be paid to China's political, social, and cultural inroads, and how these can negatively impact on democracy and security. Beijing is increasing its engagement in academia, media, culture, and civil

society to promote China's foreign policy goals, and to weaken American influence in Europe and elsewhere.

I think I have run over my time. I have not even looked. But, anyway, I will stop there because I have run out. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bugajski follows:]

## U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee

Tuesday 8 December 2020, 10.00am

### The Balkans: Policy Recommendations for the Next Administration

*Janusz Bugajski, Senior Fellow  
Jamestown Foundation, Washington D.C.*

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Chairman Eliot Engel, Ranking Member Michael McCaul, and members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer recommendations for the next U.S. administration in developing its policies toward the Western Balkans.

This hearing comes at an opportune moment, in the wake of a deadly pandemic that has exacerbated economic decline, political disputes, and social tensions in the region, and on the cusp of a new U.S. administration that can reinvigorate the trans-Atlantic alliance. President Donald Trump's national security team helped to strengthen NATO's military capabilities along the eastern front in facing a hostile Russia and included two West Balkan states in the Alliance – Montenegro and North Macedonia. However, trans-Atlantic disputes mushroomed in several arenas and weakened a necessary common approach toward the Western Balkans. A concerted U.S.-EU policy can enhance security and Euro-Atlantic integration in a region facing both internal and external assaults. This testimony offers recommendations for resolving two regional challenges (the Kosova-Serbia dialogue and the impasse in Bosnia-Herzegovina) and combating two external threats (Russia and China).

#### *Kosova-Serbia Dialogue*

1. The goal of the Serbia-Kosova talks should be to devise a roadmap for inter-state recognition. This is the only sustainable solution that would free both countries to pursue their aspirations toward EU integration and economic development. Dialogue without a clear purpose distracts and paralyzes both sides.
2. U.S. leadership and partnership with the EU in reaching a final settlement between Serbia and Kosova is essential. Without U.S. involvement the EU is a weaker, more divided, and less influential interlocutor. Without a consistent American role, the region becomes more exposed to ethno-nationalism, irredentism, and subversion by outside powers. Washington has demonstrated its political, diplomatic, and military capabilities in resolving disputes and dealing with external threats. The resolution of the Macedonia-Greece dispute through the 2018 Prespa agreement demonstrates that positive results are achieved with more intensive U.S. engagement.

3. Although the White House meeting with the leaders of Serbia and Kosova in September 2020 re-engaged Washington in the dialogue, the U.S. cannot simply focus on economic factors and neglect key political and diplomatic decisions. Economic relations will not be normalized if political and diplomatic relations remain abnormal. Since the 2013 Brussels Agreement talks have focused on such issues as minority rights, police reform, energy, telecommunications, legal reform, and a host of smaller technical questions. It is time to move the talks forward toward mutual inter-state recognition otherwise both sides will remain indefinitely paralyzed in the past.
4. The talks have been sidetracked by several questions, including government turnovers in both capitals, democratic deterioration in Serbia, the work of the Specialist Chambers investigating war crimes allegations in Kosova, and discussions about land exchanges between Serbia and Kosova that have little chance of realization but generated fear and dispute throughout the region.
5. Belgrade and Prishtina can take several important steps as part of a bilateral "normalization package." Kosova can unblock visits by Serbian officials to northern Kosova, provide Serbian Orthodox religious sites with a special status as internationally protected shrines, and implement an agreement on the Association of Serb Municipalities but without executive functions to preclude state partition. Serbia can unblock opposition to Kosova entering international institutions such as Interpol or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), permanently suspend its global de-recognition campaign, and drop its objections to Kosova gaining a seat in the UN General Assembly.
6. Such steps could convince the five remaining EU states to recognize Kosova while demonstrating Serbia's independence from Russia, which uses its blocking tactics in the UN as leverage over Belgrade. Trying to balance West and East, in imitation of Titoist Yugoslavia, is no longer a rational option for Serbia when Russia is intent on undermining the West and uses Belgrade to achieve its goals. Simultaneously, Prishtina can declare that the progress made in the "normalization package" should certify Serbia's compliance with Chapter 35 in its EU accession agenda. This display of bilateral goodwill grounded in self-interest would hasten Belgrade's progress toward meeting the criteria for EU entry.
7. Washington would need to be closely involved throughout the normalization process. It may even consider appointing a special envoy with an intensive knowledge of the region to underscore its determination to resolve the dispute. The envoy should work closely with the EU's Special Representative for the Serbia-Kosova Dialogue, former Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, who played a key role in Montenegro's successful independence referendum in May 2006.



8. The U.S.-Kosova bilateral relationship has been weakened in recent months, particularly as it is widely believed in Kosova that the newly elected government led by Prime Minister Albin Kurti was maneuvered out of office in March 2020 with alleged U.S. compliance. Whatever the truth of such assertions perceptions are important in maintaining trust. The best way that trust can be reinforced is by Washington re-engaging fully in the talks between Belgrade and Prishtina and stating clearly that the ultimate goal of “normalization” is equality between Kosova and Serbia through mutual recognition. In addition, Washington should intensify its cooperation with Prishtina in developing the Kosova Armed Force into a fully capable military force than can help the country qualify for NATO membership in the years ahead and thereby contribute to Allied security. This would transform Kosova from a “consumer” to a “producer” of security.

### *Impasse in Bosnia-Herzegovina*

1. Bosnia-Herzegovina is not a multi-ethnic democracy but an association of ethnic fiefdoms, in which nationalist parties maintain divisions in order to control their co-nationals and protect their spoils. Politicians seeking a more cohesive state that guarantees equal citizenship regardless of ethnicity have been consistently sidelined even though they have significant public support as recent local elections indicate.
2. The Dayton accords were not designed to construct an integrated state with an effective central government. Instead, they created a complex administrative structure in which ethnic balancing predominates and layers of governmental bureaucracy contribute to inefficiency and budgetary burdens. This system has obstructed effective decision-making, as ethno-national identity predominates over civil-state interests. Ethno-politics has stymied the development of state citizenship, individual rights, and a competitive democracy.
3. In this climate of state paralysis, the Serbian entity has steadily moved from autonomy toward sovereignty and its leader Milorad Dodik, with Moscow’s financial, political, and propaganda support, has raised the prospect of separation. This has tempted some Bosnian Croat politicians to call for a third entity and the partition of the Bosnian Federation. Meanwhile, Bosniak Muslim leaders remain committed to defending Bosnia’s territorial integrity.
4. To resolve the Bosnian impasse, U.S. officials working closely with EU representatives must devise a roadmap for far-reaching administrative, constitutional, and electoral reform. Without progress over the coming few years a new frustrated generation 25 years after Dayton could again reach for other weapons as a way out of the impasse. Unlike in the 1990s, Washington needs to prevent violence from erupting and not try to extinguish it after it has flared up. The status quo between the two Bosnian entities is not a viable long-term solution and can degenerate into regional havoc.

5. The U.S. administration working in tandem with the EU has several tools available to promote reform and nurture a civic Bosnia. Diplomatic, political, and material support for civic politics across the country can be significantly increased, the rule of law can be strengthened to ensure that the justice system is separated from political interests and judges and prosecutors become independent actors. Economic instruments are both carrots and sticks – encouraging reform, a more empowered central government, and more effective local governments, while squeezing out funds to entities and cantons that block the functioning of the state. Separatists can be sidelined and sanctioned by exposing their corruption and illicit ties with Russian oligarchs. Persistent threats against Bosnian integrity must have consequences and penalties, as they limit economic development, curtail foreign investment, promote inter-ethnic discord, encourage radicalism, and endanger the survival of the state.
6. To curtail destabilizing influences from Moscow, steps toward NATO membership for Bosnia-Herzegovina have to be pursued. The Reform Program signed in 2019 by the Bosnian Presidency is in effect its first Annual National Program (ANP) that places Bosnia on the road toward NATO accession. Qualifying for NATO will underscore that the security of the Bosnian state guarantees the security of all ethnic groups and reduces the prospects for armed conflicts and territorial partition.

***Destabilizing External Factors: 1. Russia***

1. Two foreign actors are directly contributing to instability in the Western Balkans – Russia and China. Both adversaries view the region as Europe’s weak spot where competition with NATO and the U.S. can be increased, disputes manipulated, new allies captured, and economic opportunities exploited. America’s increasing focus on China must not distract attention from a more immediate Russian threat. Kremlin officials may view Washington’s growing preoccupation with China as an opportunity to intensify their own policies. Although both Russia and China are expansionist powers that challenge U.S. and European interests, their current impact is not equivalent. While China is a long-term threat, Russia presents the most pressing short-term danger to NATO allies and partners.
2. Moscow views the Balkans as a strategic asset and pursues four main goals:  
  
First, expanding Russia’s geopolitical reach. Traditionally, the Balkans are a stepping-stone to the Adriatic and Mediterranean and an inroad into Central Europe. Moscow’s influence over Balkan governments, its role in multi-national formats (including the Peace Implementation Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina), its military deployments (as in Serbia), and its institutional presence through various arms of the Russian state, provide it with a major stake in the region’s evolution.

Second, fracturing Western cohesion and undermine Western institutions. Fomenting conflict not only contributes to unsettling the Balkans, it also divides international responses. One recent example was the territorial exchange gamble between Serbia and Kosova supported by Moscow and accepted by some Western officials. Even debates about partition promote rifts in the region and policy disarray between Western governments. Unresolved conflicts and disputed states also enable the Kremlin to claim that despite its expansion NATO has failed to stabilize the Balkans.

Third, undercutting the U.S. presence. The main reason for obstructing NATO enlargement is to prevent a growing American military footprint and to preclude any firm security guarantees to countries in the region. The Kremlin tries to block Balkan states from joining the Alliance, as this enhances Washington's role in defending Europe. It also seeks to weaken EU and NATO from within, as its growing influence in Hungary and Bulgaria demonstrate. Joining NATO helps strengthen state security but it does not ensure immunity from subversion.

Fourth, capturing allies or supplicants. Economic, energy, and financial connections are a tool for corrupting, blackmailing, or bribing officials who can assist Moscow in its international goals. Although Moscow is not a leading economic player in the Balkans, compared to the EU or China, its investments and expenditures are targeted for maximum political impact and the propaganda of Russian assistance is widespread. Simultaneously, state directed disinformation campaigns claim that Western democracies are a failing system, as evident in the recent U.S. elections, the EU will disintegrate, as evident in Brexit, and closer ties with Russia offer a valuable alternative.

3. To achieve its strategic objectives, Moscow pursues several policies:

- Promotes ethno-nationalist, xenophobic, and populist movements to help incite regional conflicts.
- Assists the autonomist government in Bosnia's Serb entity (*Republika Srpska*) to keep the country divided and encourages Bosnian Croats to push for a third entity and split the Bosnian Federation.
- Blocks Kosova from UN membership and courts the Serbian minority to fan internal disputes.
- Exploits Montenegro's domestic turmoil and North Macedonia's obstructed path toward the EU to promote inter-ethnic conflicts.
- Favors ultra-nationalist and pan-Serbian irredentist groups in Montenegro to disrupt the country's independence and pro-Western direction.
- Benefits from Bulgaria's blockage of EU accession talks for North Macedonia and helps mobilize the pro-Russia lobby in Bulgaria.

- Supports close links between Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches to undermine religious freedom and the independence of autocephalous churches in Montenegro and North Macedonia.
  - Corrupts national politicians to favor Russian interests by remaining neutral or backing Moscow's positions in various foreign policy offensives.
  - Fosters energy dependence by tying Balkan countries into its pipeline projects and purchasing refineries and other energy facilities. Energy dependence is used as a method to ensure political compliance.
  - Engages in disinformation offensives through local media and internet networks to enhance Russia's prestige and undermine Western institutions. Its messages are designed to appeal to anti-globalists, Euroskeptics, and ultra-conservatives in which Russia masquerades as the defender of traditional values, while the EU and U.S. are portrayed as deviant. The Kremlin also appeals to the radical left as an anti-imperialist and anti-American vanguard.
4. Moscow views the government in Serbia as a useful tool to undermine stability in the Western Balkans, limit Western integration, and expand Russian influence. Under Aleksander Vučić's presidency connections with Moscow have expanded. Serbia has signed a free trade agreement with the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union, despite strong opposition from the EU. It has refused to join the sanctions regime imposed against Russia for its invasion and partition of Ukraine. It has acquired heavy weapons from Moscow, including anti-aircraft systems, fighter jets, and attack helicopters despite warnings of U.S. sanctions. Belgrade also continues to expand the "humanitarian center" in Niš in southern Serbia with Russia's security services. The center enables Russian intelligence gathering throughout the Balkans.

In the economic arena, Serbia remains reliant on Russian oil and gas. The second leg of Gazprom's Turk Stream gas pipeline will traverse Serbia, its biggest oil company, *Naftna Industrija Srbije*, is majority-owned by Gazprom, and Gazprom holds a majority stake in the largest gas storage facility in southeastern Europe, Banatski Dvor in Serbia. Serbia continues to expose itself as a conduit for Moscow's interests. In trying to imitate Titoist Yugoslavia by balancing Russia and China with the U.S. and EU, Serbia is subverting its own links with Western institutions and weakening security on the Balkan peninsula.

5. In confronting Russia's attempts to destabilize the Western Balkans the new U.S. administration can pursue the following policies:
- Promote a regional initiative focused on vulnerabilities that the Kremlin exploits, including disinformation, corruption, and the funding of nationalist extremism. The degree of cooperation in combating Russia's inroads will indicate the strategic orientation of each government and their willingness to counter Moscow's destabilizing policies.

- Expose Russia's illicit money flows in the region, its media connections, disinformation campaigns, and the links of Russian oligarchs and intelligence services with local politicians, nationalist parties, religious institutions, and social organizations.
  - Impose sanctions such as asset freezes and issuing arrest warrants against Russian agents, oligarchs, and entities engaged in corrupt activities or inciting ethnic conflicts or coup attempts in the Balkans.
  - Assist media outlets and civic organizations to better coordinate their efforts in exposing and countering disinformation promulgated by Russian and Chinese sources through on-line social networks.
  - Undercut Moscow's influence by helping to facilitate faster EU integration for Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Stronger U.S. leadership can help consolidate the rule of law and invigorate anti-corruption campaigns.
  - Encourage the inclusion of the Western Balkan in the trans-continental Three Seas Initiative (3SI). The north-south transportation corridor will boost economic performance, initiate commercially viable cross-border infrastructure projects, and help provide alternatives to dependence on Russian energy and Chinese loans. This can also accelerate the entry of participating states into the EU by meeting the regulatory and legal standards of 3SI membership.
  - Pay greater attention to nearby states that can exert a negative influence in the Western Balkans, especially Bulgaria, Hungary, and Croatia, by enabling them to resist Russian penetration and strengthen the NATO alliance, including required levels of defense spending. Moscow is intensifying efforts to undermine EU and NATO from within. Joining NATO does not ensure immunity from foreign subversion, especially if local leaders calculate that they can profit politically or personally from Moscow.
6. A successful U.S. policy has to be undergirded by a strong NATO and a firmer approach toward Russia's government. The new U.S. administration must avoid another self-defeating "reset" with the Kremlin in the fruitless hope that America's chief adversary can be transformed into a genuine partner. Moscow views compromises as weaknesses that embolden its revisionist ambitions. A more assertive U.S. policy needs to spotlight Russia's growing vulnerabilities, including its economic weaknesses and escalating domestic turmoil.

International democracy initiatives proposed by the President-elect should zero in on the Russian Federation by supporting human rights, individual freedoms, political pluralism, ethnic equality, and genuine federalism in this increasingly unmanageable state. In this way Russia's offense against the trans-Atlantic alliance can be turned into a much more difficult defense in which the Kremlin regime will be increasingly confronted by Russian citizens demanding their basic freedoms. In restoring the vitality of Western alliances and democracies Washington can demonstrate that it is not in conflict with citizens of the Russian Federation.

*Destabilizing External Factors: 2. China*

1. China's long-term ambitions are to replace the U.S. as the leading global power. At present, its expanding influence is based primarily on investment, trade, and development assistance that can undermine trans-Atlantic unity. Russia is a minor player in geo-economics, apart from its supplies of fossil fuels. China has become the key rival for the U.S. in a sphere where global leadership is ultimately decided - economic power. It has the world's second-largest economy and is the largest exporter and second-largest importer of goods. China's expanding global role is not dependent on military power but on economic penetration and leadership in advanced technology. The Chinese regime has no plan to impose its system of government on European states but aims to change global standards for trade and investment that will favor Beijing over its competitors.
2. China's global ambitions are encapsulated in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), involving more than 20 countries and aimed at developing land and sea corridors linking China with Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Unlike Russia's failing Eurasian Economic Union, China's Eurasian ambitions are backed by substantial resources and they prey on poor countries with high levels of corruption and limited immediate prospect of joining the EU.
3. Beijing has steadily increased its investments in many BRI countries, especially in telecommunications and physical and digital infrastructure, and seeks to set regulatory standards that will advantage Chinese enterprises. Beijing has selected investment targets that are viewed as politically profitable inroads into the EU and bought or invested in assets amounting to over \$300 billion. State-owned Chinese companies finance the construction of roads and railways throughout South East Europe. This forms part of Beijing's plans to link China with Europe and is a conduit for exerting political influence. China "17+1" investment project with 17 countries from Central-East Europe (CEE) is a direct inroad into the continent. Serbia has become a center of Chinese investments, accounting for more than half of announced funding in the Western Balkans since 2012.
4. In exchange for economic investments, Beijing seeks diplomatic support for its expansive agenda or to mute criticisms of its policies in international institutions. It aims to divide Europe from the U.S. and prevent the emergence of an anti-China front. Beijing's offers to boost local economies are difficult to resist, particularly by poor countries along the BRI route in search of capital. Beijing's geoeconomic strategy increases dependence on Chinese finances and technology and disregards Western regulatory and legal standards. Beijing's spying networks are also expanding. They penetrate the business sectors of Western states and steal intellectual property and industrial secrets to benefit Chinese companies.

5. Western states need to implement policies that can contain Chinese influence but without damaging the economic development of BRI countries. They must boost Western competitiveness in foreign markets while ensuring that China's investments adhere to international standards and do not push governments into becoming permanent debtors. The U.S. and EU will need to work together to prevent the takeovers of key economic sectors in the Balkans and CEE, invest in new technologies, and improve conditions for private and public investment. This is especially urgent given the negative long-lasting economic impact of the pandemic. The EU's Economic Investment Plan that will reportedly allocate up to nine billion euros for projects in the Western Balkans is an important starting point. The recent commitment of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation to finance several projects in the region is a valuable addition.
6. Similarly to investigations of nefarious Russian activities, Chinese money flows, political connections, business links, and media inroads must be systematically investigated and neutralized where they violate legal standards. Although there is a growing analysis of China's economic penetration in the Western Balkans, more attention must be paid to Beijing's political, social, and cultural infiltration and the negative impact on democracy and security. Beijing has developed sophisticated cyber hacking operations and similarly to Russia it can blackmail or bribe vulnerable politicians and businessmen to favor Chinese geopolitical interests. Beijing is also expanding its presence through funding in academia, the media, cultural initiatives, and civil society activities to promote China's foreign policy goals.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Bugajski.

Let me start by asking Secretary Albright this question: I have often referred to the NATO bombing, which, of course, we led, and you were such an integral part of it, we prevented ethnic cleansing on the continent of Europe with the bombing in 1999. We prevented another catastrophe. I am really proud of what the United States did. But since that time, we have sort of been locked into a time warp. There has been very little progress beyond everybody holding, staying in place. And we see the court, which was formed to prosecute both Serbs and Albanians, anyone who created these war crimes, but so far, it only seems to be going after Albania and, therefore, the court is really looked upon as an ethnic court, and not one that is really serious about trying to move progress in the Balkans.

Could you please comment on the court, what is happening, and the fact that we, again, prevented genocide on the continent of Europe? What do we need to do now to make sure we move forward, because it has been, as you know, very little movement forward since the 1999 bombings?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Mr. Chairman, thank you for asking that, because I think it is a crucial aspect of how we deal with the issues.

And let me say, I do not think that—I am not exaggerating when I say about how much time while I was, whether at the U.N. or then as Secretary, we spent on the Balkans. And one of the first votes I took at the United Nations was to create the War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and it did a lot of work but, of course, it isn't operating at this stage.

And so, I think that is a question. It needs to be dealt with that exactly the way that you are discussing the fact that now there is the special Kosova court, and, in fact, is dealing with what they are saying: Were crimes committed?

And so, I do think that justice and the use of the rule of law is something that is very important in trying to bring the country and the people back together. The bottom line is we have always had problems trying to show the role of the Serbs in the ethnic cleansing. And when the War Crimes Tribunal was operating, Milosevic and Karadzic, he, in fact, is serving a life sentence. Milosevic died.

But I do think that we need to look very carefully at what the law can do, because it is able to identify individual guilt, and not have collective guilt for things, because I think there needs to be a recognition that the countries that are in the Balkans that used to be able to communicate with each other need to again do that and not put everything on the lines of ethnic conflict, but try to solve some problems together.

But you're absolutely right. I would love to just insert here something, because we were talking about what President-elect Biden can and should do. In 2009, he gave a speech in the parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina. And he said the following:

When will you get tired of this divisive, nationalistic rhetoric? The U.S. expects you to start working across party lines to make Bosnia function as a normal State.

That is telling it like it is. I really believe in making sure that we deal with the past and move to the future of dealing together.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.



Let me ask Mr. Bugajski a question.

Bringing the Western Balkans into the Western family of democratic and free-market-based nations has been a largely successful project since the 1990's. Two countries have joined the EU, five have joined NATO, and democracy has taken hold. But the job is obviously not done. Russia is working overtime to divide our Balkan partners from the United States and Europe, while China is quietly advancing into the region as well.

So what do you see as the big steps that the incoming Biden Administration can take to cement the region into the North Atlantic and keep Russia and China at bay?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman.

I mean, first of all, working very closely with the European Union is essential. As the Secretary pointed out, each of these countries, including Serbia, do want to enter the European Union. If America supports the European Union project, if it supports integration of the entire region as specified in the initial Thessaloniki agreement, then I think we are going to make some progress, and America has a role to play in helping these countries to achieve the kind of reforms they need to achieve in order to qualify.

Plus, the kind of steps that myself and Dan has outlined on trying to reform the Bosnian Government, and the Bosnian State itself, to make sure it is capable of qualifying for European Union is essential. And, of course, NATO. NATO does provide an umbrella of security for each country that has entered. We can tell by the degree of Russian opposition how effective NATO actually is.

However, with one caveat, I would say. Even countries that are within NATO have to be very closely monitored, one, in terms of their defense contributions, which the current Administration has rightly pointed out, in some cases, does not meet the requirements; but, second, also to fight back against Russian influence, Russian corruption, and Russian political sway, particularly in countries such as Bulgaria and Hungary, which could be open to more pernicious Russian influences to destabilize the region.

So a few things that sort of, off the top of my head that I would recommend.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you very much.

Let me ask Mr. Sewer. The Balkans is a diverse region. It is rich in history and culture, ethnicity, and religion. The variety of those elements can strengthen a region. When tapped with sensitivity and respect, they can serve as a wedge, driving apart societies when abused. So what is the way forward do you see for the diverse peoples of the Balkans? Are there lessons from other countries with diverse societies, and what can we in the U.S. who have experienced such division in recent years learn from the Balkans?

Dr. SERWER. What we can learn from the Balkans is not to go there. Ethnic identity conflicts are extraordinarily difficult to resolve, and we should avoid them as best we can. All of us have multiple identities. I am a professor. Some people think I am a white guy. I am a Jew. I am many different things. And I want all those layers to be respected in the country that I happen to be a citizen of.

And I think that is where the Balkans have to go. The Balkans have, for historical reasons, emphasized ethnic identity above all

others, especially in the post-Yugoslav period. People in Balkans, like me, have multiple identities, and they need to recognize that, and demand that their governments and that their courts, that those multiple identities be respected, and that the whole person be respected.

To tell me that I cannot be a candidate for President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, except if I am a Croat Serb or Bosniak is outrageous, and yet, that is what the Dayton Constitution did. It also enabled the European Court of Human Rights to strike down that provision of the Dayton constitution. But, of course, the constitution has not been amended to allow others to be candidates for the presidency.

So what we need to expect of the Balkans is to stop this over-emphasis on ethnic identity, start recognizing we all have multiple identities, and that individual rights have to be respected, and they are not well-respected in the Balkans today.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you. Thank you very much.

And thanks to all the witnesses.

I will now call on our ranking member, Mr. McCaul.

Mr. MCCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary and Mr. Bugajski, just to followup on the chairman's question about—I am concerned about the growing footprint in Serbia, Kosovo, and the wider Balkan region of both the Chinese Communist Party and the Russians, the Russians being disinformation campaign, the CCP with the Belt and Road Initiative, to basically have PRC investments that come with strings attached, debt traps, financial implications, environmental and societal.

We had, last Congress, Congressman Ted Yoho, probably one of the best things this committee's ever done is we passed the Development Finance Corporation as a counter to malign Chinese activity across the globe, with respect to the Belt and Road Initiative.

Can you talk a little bit about, No. 1, the threat that is posed by the PRC and Russia in the region, and, also, what do you see are some of the solutions to stop that, and particularly looking at private sector investments with the Development Finance Corporation?

Chairman ENGEL. Mr. McCaul, is there someone you want to direct the question to?

Mr. MCCAUL. I said at the outset to Madam Secretary and to Mr. Bugajski.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Thank you very much, Congressman McCaul.

I really do think that I am very concerned exactly about the same things you are.

The Russians have wanted to have a very direct relationship with Serbia for a long time. A lot of the history, even during the Tito period, had to do with that relationship. Partially what is happening is the Russians are practicing in Serbia the things that they are doing in other parts of Central and Eastern Europe, which is operating to undermine democracy there, and then separate the countries from being a part of the West, and they are using the tactics of a KGB agent. That what is we are dealing with.

And so, I do think they see themselves as having a natural partnership, quote, with the Slavs in the Balkans, and that kind of re-

lationship that they think is natural and important for their own sake and for undermining what we are doing in democratic development.

The Chinese have, in fact, been investing through the Belt and Road. And they have been doing it in a number of areas that are important in the region, which has to do with transportation, with mining, a number of things that the region needs. And I do think what is interesting, the Development Finance Corporation is a huge step forward, and I think something that is very important. There has been an office opened recently in Belgrade. I do think that we need to use that as a tool in terms of helping on the investment, and I also do believe the private sector needs to get in there.

What is interesting—and I do not know whether this is true or not, I just read it—is that the Chinese have all of a sudden decided that maybe they cannot afford the Belt and Road, literally, that they are having their own economic issues, and that they are not going to be investing in much abroad. I think we need to follow that very carefully, because, obviously, our relationship with the Chinese is going to affect not just what happens in the Balkans, but many places. So I think we have to watch.

I do think we really do want to see economic development in the Balkans. And the more of it that can be done regionally, the more important it is, because they there are not that many people that live in the region. The countries are small, and some kind of co-operation economically would help everybody.

Mr. McCAUL. Thank you, Madam Secretary. I agree with you 100 percent.

Mr. Bugajski.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Yes. I would simply add that it is important to look at the impact of the pandemic in the region. I mean, even after the vaccine is distributed and taken, assuming there are no other strains of this virus in the near future, the long-term economic impact is quite devastating through most of Europe but particularly in the Balkans. They are going to need a lot of assistance from the European Union, a lot of assistance from us, as well as the conditions for private investment.

But there are also, I would say, social and political implications of economic disruption. I mean, it sort of encourages nationalism. It encourages conflicts in the region. It encourages populists. And it also encourages foreign actors, bad actors who want to undermine security in the region. And this is where I believe Russia and China come in.

Russia, by the way, is more of a short-term danger. I would say China is a longer term threat. It will have ups and downs. Of course, a lot depends on its own internal economic performance and its ability to actually construct this Belt and Road Initiative. But we need to push back. We cannot become complacent.

I think investments, whether through development funds with the European Union, working closely with the United States, as well as making conditions to attract private investment, I think that is essential, legal conditions, bureaucratic conditions, you know, local conditions and so forth.

This is why I think the economic—establishing closer economic relations in Kosovo and Serbia is important, but I think they can

only be fully equal once the two States recognize each other. And the sort of nontariff barriers on Kosovo goods have to be lifted and both countries need to recognize each other's paperwork, each other's legitimacy. I think all that would help us to fight back against very nefarious Russian and Chinese influence.

Mr. McCAUL. Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. McCaul.

Mr. SHERMAN.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Chairman, it has been an honor to serve with you on this committee for decades. You are a hero in Kosovo, you are a hero in Albania, and you are a hero in room 2172. Thank you for your years of dedication and leadership. You are leaving the committee in good hands, those of Greg Meeks and Mike McCaul, and I look forward to extraordinary contributions on this committee in the future under that leadership.

One observation about Kosovo, and that is America often is accused of being anti-Muslim. Nothing could be further from the truth, and nothing could illustrate that to a greater degree than the fact that we bombed a Christian country in order to preserve the Kosovars and to prevent ethnic cleansing. And that story needs to be repeated again and again throughout the Muslim world by both the United States and Kosovo.

I hope that we get time to focus on Bulgaria and Greece in this hearing on the Balkans, but, naturally, we are focusing our attention on the former Yugoslavia. As I turn to my questions, I realize this may be the last time I ask my questions immediately after the gentleman from the Bronx and maybe the last time I get to ask questions immediately before the gentleman from Queens.

Following the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, Erdogan blamed the followers of Imam Gulen. Bosnian officials were reportedly pressured to shutter schools that had ties to Gulen's movement. Then in 2016, six Turkish nationals were arrested in Kosovo and secretly extradited to Turkey. We know that there were false charges issued by the Turkish Government, and as a result, journalists, human rights defenders, and politicians associated with Gulen and others who would like to see a greater degree of democracy in Turkey have been subject to pressure or arrest.

Secretary Albright, does Turkey continue to pressure countries in the Balkans, both with regard to harboring any Turkish national that Erdogan does not like and with regard to other matters?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Congressman, I am very concerned about Turkey's behavior generally. In terms of the kind of activities that Erdogan is undertaking, it raises—I hope we spend more time at some point really talking about what their role is, what is happening in NATO as a result of Turkish behavior and buying Russian arms. And I do believe that there are isolated cases of pressure that the Erdogan government is putting on other governments.

But I think that one has to be very careful not to kind of fall into a trap where some people are saying that, all of a sudden, the Muslim population in Kosovo is being manipulated from the outside, that it is not thinking about what is happening to the people of Kosovo, but that they are under pressure. They have been dealing

I think very positively with some people that went to fight on with ISIL and bringing some of them back in order to have them understand what has been happening in the country.

But I do think that, on a general answer, the role of Erdogan is something that is very troubling in so many different ways, of its relationship with Greece, what it is trying to do in the Balkans, and what it is doing in the Middle East, and something that is definitely worth a closer look by this committee of yours which has to deal with the various repercussions of it, not just in the Balkans but generally.

Mr. SHERMAN. And Turkish actions recently in the Caucasus.

The President of Serbia has deepened military ties with Moscow. Should the United States also pursue deeper military ties with Serbia to try to wean them away from Moscow or should we avoid that? And should Serbia be sanctioned for its purchases of Russian military equipment, which could constitute a violation of U.S. sanctions laws against Russia, particularly CAATSA? Madam Secretary?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Well, I do think we need to look much more at what is happening in terms of the purchase of Russian military equipment generally, and I think it is something that is subject to sanctioning and trying to understand what they are buying.

And I think we also need to look at—and this is a really hard question in terms of not just Serbia, but as I said earlier, what Turkey is doing as a NATO member, using our arms and the Russian at the same time for activities that do not respond to what is necessary in the region. I think this is something that bears very much investigation and action by Congress.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Sherman.

Mr. CHABOT.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My wife sent me to the post office in my district this past Saturday to buy postage stamps for our Christmas cards. And it was mentioned earlier by the ranking member that not only do you have a street but postage stamps. And I know you are Jewish, but I would have been proud to purchase those stamps if they were legal here in the U.S., which I am assuming they are not coming out of here.

But you deserve tremendous credit for your leadership on this committee for so many years, particularly as chairman. I am proud to have served on this committee with you for two and a half decades now, and I wish you nothing but the best for the future. And you are a great Member, a great friend, great chairman, and I wish you nothing but the best in the future.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chabot.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

And I will go first to Mr. Bugajski. How has Putin used his U.N. Security Council veto to complicate efforts to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Thank you very much for the question. Well, basically, Russian Federation continues to block Kosovo's membership in the United Nations through its veto powers in the U.N. General Assembly. It is on the one hand backing Serbia's position now not

to recognize Kosovo, but it is also exploiting the fact that it has that power over entry of any country into international institutions to raise its own stature. And I think, actually, it does Serbia a disservice, because the more Serbia becomes dependent on Russia for such things as blockages in international institutions, the more it will become dependent in other areas, diplomatic, political, economic, military, as we have already discussed.

Blockage of any governments that we recognize I think is destructive for stability in the region. Five European Union States, by the way, also do not recognize Kosovo's independence. And I think here the incoming Administration can also play a role in persuading them that the future is Kosovo's independence—I mean, it is independent now, but its full membership in international organizations—and to persuade governments, specifically the Greek Government, which I think has acted very well in terms of the agreement it had with Macedonia, now North Macedonia, something we did not expect a few years ago. And I think the Greek Government behaved very astutely, very bravely to come to that agreement. There is no reason why Greece cannot recognize Kosovo. It already recognizes the paperwork and so forth.

And, of course, countries that we really helped in the past, Slovakia, Romania, these countries should also be recognizing Kosovo. And I think if there is a flow of recognitions in the European Union, that will help, I think, increase pressure on Russia to waive that veto power in the future in the United Nations.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Bugajski.

And with my remaining time, let me followup with another question. Among other measures, the U.S.-brokered agreement that Kosovo signed in September included mutual diplomatic recognition of Israel, while Serbia pledged to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Could you describe why those measures are so significant?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Well, I think, first of all, they are significant for Kosovo, because one of the things that Serbia has been doing is not only blocking entry of the country into international institutions, but mounting an international campaign of derecognition. In other words, they have persuaded, mostly through bribery, they have persuaded several countries in Oceania and even in Central America to derecognize Kosovo.

Second, I would say that it is important for Kosovo itself to be recognized by a country like Israel. The Holocaust, of course, defines in many respects the importance of why the Jewish people need their own independent State. The ethnic cleansing or attempted genocide of the Kosovo population just 25 years ago in a way defines for the Kosovo people the importance of having their own independent State. So at the symbolic political level, that is also extremely important.

It also frees up, I would say, this U.S., let's say, advance in terms of helping to persuade other countries to recognize Kosovo. And, on the other hand, of course, for Israel it is extremely important as well. And it is extremely important for Israel to have the embassy in Jerusalem, which is traditionally viewed as the capital of Israel.

And Serbia, I have not heard the latest on whether they have actually accepted this. They did sign it. Hopefully, they will go through with it.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, my time has expired. I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chabot. Thank you for the kind words.

I now will call on a very good friend of mine for many years, someone who will succeed me as the chairman of this wonderful committee. Our districts are not far from each other. It is probably about a 20-minute cab ride from one district to another, maybe a half hour at most.

And let me just say that I am glad that Mr. Meeks will be chairing this committee, because I know with him the committee is in good hands. We have through the years traveled together, talked about issues together. His philosophy is very much like mine when it comes to these issues, and he is well steeped in the issues that this committee will carry. I am delighted to see him as my successor, and I know that he will do a wonderful job. And we have traveled together, as I said, and have been personal friends for many, many years. And in my hours of need, he has always been there for me, and vice versa.

So I want to just congratulate him, look forward to working with him, and now call on the next chairman of this wonderful committee, Mr. Gregory Meeks.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for those words.

And becoming the chair of this committee is bittersweet. It is bitter because you are my great friend and you have done a tremendous job as chair of this committee. We talk often. We strategize often. And I would like to say that will not change, so that I will continue to lean upon you and the experiences that you have had in your many great years as a Member of the U.S. Congress and as the chair of this committee and a member of this committee.

We do have similar backgrounds. Many people do not realize that we both come from public housing. And as a result of that, we come with a specific type of view, world view on how we can make this place a better place. And you definitively, Mr. Chairman, have made the world a better place. And that is why you have streets named after you and stamps with your face on them is because you have made a significant contribution to this place that we call Earth, the United States and all over. And I thank you for that leadership, and I look forward to our continuing friendship as we move forward. And, as I say, you will be getting phone calls from me quite often. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for all that you have done.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you. Thank you so much, Mr. Meeks. I am really, really touched and look forward, again, to continue working together. We served together in Albany in the State legislature, and we, of course, served in Washington for many, many years. And you have been a very welcome and important member of this committee in so many ways for so many times. And, as I said before, I feel a lot better knowing that this committee is going to be in good hands. So congratulations.

And, of course, as in the past, whatever I can do to help you or help the committee, all you have to do is call on me. We have traveled together to many different places and our philosophies are very, very similar, if not the same. So I look forward to seeing you flourish, Mr. Chairman. And whatever I can do to help, as you know, all you have to do is call.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you.

Chairman ENGEL. So I call on you now to—if you have any questions you would like to ask, please go ahead and do so.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me first say that, you know, as far as foreign policy is concerned, one of the things that I think is important for us to understand is that if we do America First, that means we can get mistrust in our allies, and in this case, our European allies. If we do America alone, then we are not at the table and you have no one to lead.

Leadership means bringing people along with you. Leadership means getting buy-in from others. You are not a leader if you are just doing it for yourself. And so, as I look at this issue, I think it is important for us to realize that we need the EU to do more, and we have got to make sure that we are leading them in that direction.

So my question will be to you, Madam Secretary. You know, the European Union was not as large of an actor 25 years ago when you helped usher in peace in the region. In fact, my very first hard vote, the tough vote that I had was the year after I was elected to Congress. I got elected in 1998, and this was a very controversial vote, because when you decide that you are going to bomb a region, it is important. But I know and learned then early on that to stop atrocities is important. And I voted for what you led and directed and helped with President Clinton, because it was very important humanitarian causes and I think it was the right thing to do.

But now, regardless of what one feels about the EU, we need them, I believe, if we want to get some progress here economically and politically. So my question is—and I think that everyone is talking about it—how can we and the Biden Administration better cooperate and work with Brussels, but, most importantly, where and how should we push them? Where are the right buttons to push them to be a part and how should we do that?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Well, I will soon be calling you Mr. Chairman officially. I am delighted that you are going to have the role, and I look forward to working closely with you.

Let me just say, I think that we need to recognize that one of the leverage aspects in terms of behavior change among these countries is that they are eager to get into the European Union. Therefore, I think it is important for us to cooperate with the European Union.

And some of the criticisms that I have had of the recent activities, including what just happened in the talks that were held in Washington, they had not been coordinated with the European Union. And I think that we need to work with them and try to figure out what the various leverage points are in terms of democratic behavior, the partnerships you are talking about, and the fact that



we, in fact, our strength, is operating with others. That is what the force multiplier is.

And I have to say, I always love to talk about what we did in Bosnia and Kosovo, because it is a combination of diplomacy and the use of force and the economic tools. It is really using every kind of leverage that we have, and I think in doing it in partnership with the Europeans is a very important point. And the more that we partner with the European Union, that will be a strength in other parts of the world.

We were talking about China and Russia. I think if we are concerned about their behavior, by doing it, making our points in combination with the European Union is a sign of similar values, operating together, understanding how to use the tools that are available to policymakers. So I think it is a very important part of the next stage here.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you. And let me just ask real quick, I know I am about to run out of time, because in similar matters, EU member Bulgaria is blocking North Macedonia over ethnicity and language issues after they assuaged Greek concerns over name issues. Bulgaria questions Macedonia's identity and language.

So how can the Biden-Harris Administration work with our allies in Brussels to ensure that the EU hopefuls of the Western Balkans are not being held in the waiting room by its neighbors?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I think we have to make that very clear, that that is part of it. And, by the way, I find this, having spent so much time in terms of the name issue for what is now Northern Macedonia—when I was at the United Nations, we called it the FYROM, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Nobody ever knew what we were talking about.

And the fact that the Greeks were able to come to an agreement and this has been worked on so hard, I think it is a tragedy in so many ways that the Bulgarians, for their domestic reasons, have taken this up. And they need to be—that needs to be raised, if they really are—how they fulfill their membership duties.

So I think it is a very important issue that undermines what we are trying to do generally in the Balkans is to get cooperation in terms of economic and political issues.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Madam Secretary. I believe my time has expired.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I look forward to working with you.

Mr. PERRY.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We are going to miss your service here. Not to say that we will not enjoy our friend Greg Meeks, which we have a lot of spirited conversations in the locker room and otherwise.

But that having been said, Mr. Bugajski, I am wondering, it has been 25 years since the Dayton Accords, which were supposed to be a transitional arrangement to allow Bosnia to work out its differences without war, without the violence and the conflict, and come up with some better form of government that served them all well, but it has turned into the de facto government over time. And even after 2 years now, it is my understanding that they have yet

to form—2 years since their most recent election, they have yet to form a government.

Their parliament has not met I do not think one time, one single session. The people of Bosnia are required to fund 13 different governments and parliaments and this rotating trio presidency and a total of 149 ministries. To the extent that 40 percent of employed workers over the—or there is a brain drain where 40 percent of employed workers are over the age of 50, and 20 percent of the inhabitants of the country are on a pension.

What do you surmise is the legitimate—you know, and that does not even mention what China is doing, what Russia is doing inside the country with a vacuum of governance, so to speak. What do you predict will be the long-term outcome of what seems to be a country that is stuck in time at the moment?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Thank you very much for that question. I do not think any status quo lasts indefinitely, particularly when the country has been so battered by economic distress as a result of the pandemic. As you said, it is stuck in a sort of vortex of bureaucracyfiefdoms, corruption, favoritism, and nationalism, that sooner or later, that something is going to give, something is going to explode.

And I think it is very important for us to engage in a major reform process, working together with the European Union, to construct a proper constitution. Remember, Dayton was meant to end the war and to give everybody a stake in the country. It was not intended to lay the groundwork for entry into international institutions through a fully functional authoritative State.

So I think we need to work—and I mention this in the testimony—on constitutional reform, administrative reform. Dan has mentioned this, which I think is a good idea, it is a long-term process of actually curtailing the entities which combat unity, which oppose unity, as well as some of the internal arrangements, some of these layers of bureaucracy in government that simply Bosnia cannot afford and nobody can afford at this point.

Without that, what I fear is that at some point the nationalists in the Republika Srpska are basically waiting for the moment that this is no longer viable and they then break away from Bosnia and declare an independent State, and Russia will back them. And it puts, of course, Serbia in a very difficult position. We need to avoid that scenario, because that will be bloody. This time I think we need to prevent a war by acting early rather than coming in after the war already begins.

Dr. SERWER. If I may followup on that, I agree entirely with Janusz. I think we have to be aware, though, that the Europeans have some very important cards to play in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One is a lot of money, and they can use that money to influence things there.

The second is troops. We do not have a significant—we may have a few soldiers, but we do not have a significant troop presence. Even the European troop presence is very small. The problem is it is spread out all over the country. It needs to be where the war might occur, where secession by Republika Srpska can be prevented. And that happens to be this northeastern town of Brcko, which was the site of some of the most fierce fighting during the

1990's war. And so all of them should be put there. They should have clear backing by NATO as well.

We can influence events in Bosnia and Herzegovina also by being very clear that if there is a popular movement for constitutional reform, that it will be protected, that it will not be repressed, as several popular movements that arose in recent years have been repressed. We cannot be permitting that to happen. And Europe has strong influence, due to the money and the troops. We have strong influence because of our history with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Together, I think we can help to promote the idea of constitutional reform, which is fundamental.

I really do not think that any change in the electoral system or any administrative changes will suffice to fix Bosnia at this point. The Dayton agreements are based in the constitution and it is the constitution that needs to be changed.

Mr. PERRY. I thank the witnesses. Having spent a year in uniform in Brcko, I agree with your assessment, at least broadly speaking.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Mr. CONNOLLY.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And let me join with my colleagues in wishing you the very best and thanking you for your long service to the Congress and certainly to our committee. You have set a standard of decency and civility that I wish governed all committees in Congress. And I know Mr. McCaul helped abide by that spirit and that ethos, and I appreciate both of you doing that. And thank you, and I wish you all the best as you branch out on new endeavors. And I know you can look back on your career here in Congress with great pride, and you should.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Bugajski, I was really almost—I was really struck by your observation that long term in the Balkans, particularly in Serbia, the Russians are going to continue to be influential, but the longer term influence to watch is that of China.

And when I look at sort of history, right, that is an extraordinary thing to say. I mean, who would ever have thought the Chinese would be a dominant influence in the Balkans, say, 20 years ago or certainly 100 years ago? I mean, it was Czarist Russia that helped determine the beginning of World War I, in coming to the aid of Serbia against the Austro-Hungarian and German response to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand.

So I am not questioning that, but I wanted to give you an opportunity to expand. What did you mean by that? Why do you think longer term in the Balkans it is Chinese influence we need to be focused on?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Thank you very much for that question. Let me begin with why Russia is not a longer term danger. Russia is a country in serious decline, economic decline. Its economy is the size of a medium-size European State. China has the second largest economy in the world. Russia has internal problems with its nationalities, with its regions, with increasing public unrest, with increasing opposition to Putin. There may even be power struggles

during the secession period over the next 4 years. Russia faces major internal problems.

China, on the other hand, unless, of course, there is opposition to the Chinese Communist Party from within, is in a different stage. It continues to be a very dynamic country in terms of its economic growth. It does not face the sort of internal contradictions and conflicts that Russia does, and it is increasingly—and China has always looked at the longer term. In other words, it is not—they do not even have to look at secession cycles, because of the dominance of the Communist Party.

But they are looking eventually to replace Russia as the major rival of the United States. And the best way to do that is to increase their influence, not only militarily in East Asia, South Asia, and other parts of the world, but economically, politically, diplomatically, culturally, and through the media.

And it is precisely what they are doing, not only in Europe, but in other continents. But because Europe is our concern here, and the Balkans in particular, this needs to be watched very, very carefully over the coming years.

One other thing I would add, how Russia and China cooperate in terms of undermining U.S. influence and the European Union and NATO and so forth, that is something that needs to be very carefully watched, scrutinized. And I hope our intelligence services are also looking at the connections between Chinese and Russian intelligence services and how they work to undermine the West.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Two points about that. One is you can add—in terms of Russia's diminishment as a power, you should also add the demographic imperative. I mean, the shrinkage of Russia's population over the next 40 or 50 years is unbelievably dramatic, and that is going to create a whole set of issues on top of everything else you listed.

And I really appreciate your perspective on China. I would just point out that I just did a white paper for NATO, NATO Parliamentary Assembly on China. And what is so striking is that, frankly, NATO documents do not even acknowledge China exists, let alone that there is a challenge or a threat until the last few years. I mean, if you go back 10, 20 years, no NATO document even acknowledges China as an entity, let alone a clearly emerging world power. So I think you are quite right to be focused on China and its growing influence in theaters we are not used to their playing in.

And building on that, Madam Secretary, you talked about maybe China is reevaluating whether it can afford the BRI, the Belt and Road Initiative. Let me try out, from a foreign policy point of view, sort of a contrarian view that may have some validity, and that is that putting aside whether they can afford it or want to continue with it, that in many ways it is a double-edged sword for them; that when they, you know, sort of entrap nations into their fiscal web, there is a lot of resentment. There are a lot of debt management issues. Look at Sri Lanka and Hambantota. And, you know, you get shoddy workmanship. You get only Chinese labor often, and you get a debt overhang that really cripples a country.

And over time, could that create a backlash? So instead of building goodwill, actually, China loses ground with a lot of these coun-

tries. I do not mean by that that we should not compete or we should not be concerned, but isn't there another aspect that is potentially negative for China that maybe we have an opportunity to examine and to work with? Your views.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Well, thank you. I have to say I was very surprised in reading about what—can you hear me?

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. ALBRIGHT [continuing]. Reading that this morning, because I have been saying that the Chinese must be getting very fat, because the belt keeps getting larger and larger. They are everywhere. They have been in Venezuela and a number of places.

I do think, however, that we may be overestimating their economic prowess in terms of what is happening to them at home. And so I believe it is going to be very important for all of you and the executive branch to keep very close track of what China is doing in its own region. The most recent regional trade agreement with southeast Asia that went through, we were not a part of it. They are not giving up on having an extended influence.

The other point that you raised, from the things that I have seen, they have run into problems in countries where they have gone. They initially in some of the countries, in Africa, for instance, when they wanted to build a road, we had environmental problems and they said, where do you want it? And the countries were eager to accept it. And then they found that they were part of a debt trap or that the workers on it were Chinese that were imported, so it did not increase their labor productivity. And they are beginning to see the problems.

And so I think that what is going to have to happen, we are going to be very astute in looking at what the threat is from the Chinese, more nuanced, frankly. I mean, they will be adversaries, competitors, and cooperators in some things. And I think it is going to be major, and it is something that we need to have agreements with and cooperation with the Europeans, which had not been happening.

So I do think—but they are trying to—it has been fascinating to follow some of the things they have been doing in Europe, because they have been connecting. They have been buying ports or investing in major industries that are basic to the existence of X countries.

So I am not willing to say this has all changed, but what I find interesting is a questioning. And there is generally a questioning by the Chinese of how the United States is going to operate in the Biden Administration.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. YOHO.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I would like to get one of those stamps with your face on them before you leave. It has been a pleasure working with you.

I find this a very interesting hearing. And I think Mr. Connolly, the last speaker, talking about China, I think where we have seen China really step up is after the 19th Chinese Communist Party in 2017, when Xi Jinping very bluntly and boldly said, it is time for China to take the world's center stage. And I think we have

seen that escalate, and I think we are seeing the materialization of that.

Secretary Albright, you were talking about the ability to go in and do these infrastructure projects and partnering up with the EU. And we can look what happened in the past, I mean, we have got to remember that. Where can we make a significant change or difference in this region, partnering with the countries that want to, that recognize Kosovo, and those countries in the EU that also recognize those?

Actually, that is for everybody out there, the three witnesses. We will start with you, Secretary Albright.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Well, I do think that we need to recognize that we have common aims here. It is to make the Balkans a stable place where ethnic fighting is not the major aspect and then as it is coupled with corruption. That is really what has happened in Bosnia is that there has been a capturing of the State by those that do not have an incentive to have a democratic system, but in order to make the most money that they can off the divisions that are there. And the Europeans have the same goal. And so I think we need to figure out how we can operate through a variety of diplomatic means.

And then I do believe in the role of the private sector in many ways in developing civil society, helping with education, working in order to improve the living standards of people there so that they have a stake in what is going on.

The real issue—and I meant to bring this up in probably every answer—is we think that—it was not easy to get the U.S. involved in trying to do something in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Europeans were not interested. It took a while for the United States to get interested. Once we were, we did manage to end ethnic cleansing, but we did not really manage to stay involved enough in terms of looking at the evolution of these countries that have had a complex historical background.

And I think that that is how we have to look at things, in partnership with the Europeans, to make them all normal countries that will want to function to help their own people and not just themselves as corrupt officials.

Mr. YOHO. Okay. Dr. Serwer?

Dr. SERWER. Yes. I wonder if I could focus a little bit on Serbia, because I think Serbia is vital in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. So if Serbia were more cooperative, all the issues in the Balkans would be easier to resolve.

There is leverage that the Europeans have on Serbia, frankly, more than the Americans. I think the Americans are relatively marginal. I do think we should be very clear with Serbia about its destabilizing efforts in Bosnia with Kosovo and in Montenegro now as well. But it is the Europeans who have the purse strings with respect to Serbia, and they have shown some willingness to begin to use them. The Europeans have decided that there will be no further opening of chapters of the accession negotiations this year due to Serbia's turn in the Russian and Chinese direction. Though they do not actually say that, that is the tacit understanding.

Mr. YOHO. Let me add something else here. The border disputes—and I know this went against the grain when President

Trump said that he would be willing to look at those two countries, looking at their border disputes. How much does the border disputes come into the conflict that they have now? And if you would answer quickly on that, we will let Mr. Bugajski answer too.

Dr. SERWER. There is no border dispute. The border boundary is well understood where it is. It was a question of whether they wanted to exchange territory——

Mr. YOHO. Right.

Mr. SERWER [continuing]. And human beings. And that proposition has been unpopular in Serbia, in Kosovo, throughout the region, and in the United States. It is a very bad idea that risks reigniting violence.

Mr. YOHO. Okay. Mr. Bugajski, do you have any thoughts on either one of those questions, development and the borders?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Yes. Thanks very much. Regarding borders, I fully agree with Dan. I think any attempt to change borders to exchange territory is going to have a very negative ripple effect throughout the region. You are going to encourage nationalists and irredentists to claim territory in neighboring States. You are going to have a lot of uncertainty about what the final arrangements will be. No investors are going to come in when borders seem to be unsettled. So you are going to create the sort of mess that only Russia will benefit from.

Mr. YOHO. Okay.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Well, maybe some nationalists also. So I do not think it is a good idea at all.

A very quick point. I think we tend to forget that when we talk about European Union, European Union is also NATO. These are our European allies. We have to work together in NATO as well as working at the institutional and financial level in European Union.

One of the things I think is extremely important, we cannot withdraw the limited number of troops we have in Germany. We need to strengthen our contingency. We need to remain in Kosovo until Kosovo is a member of NATO, which eventually it should be. And we should wean Serbia away from too much dependence on Russia. I mean, if we follow those guidelines, I think we are going to strengthen the region.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you. I am out of time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Yoho.

Mr. DEUTCH.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Mr. Chairman, let me start by joining in my colleagues in expressing my deep appreciation to you for your decades of service to your constituents in the House, but especially to your leadership of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Whether those in Kosovo, those of us who so strongly support the U.S.-Israel relationship and the pursuit of a two-State solution and those who care about human rights all around the globe, your leadership is something that has left its imprint on this committee and on countries all throughout the world. We are really grateful for it and better for it as well.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Deutch. Thank you.

Mr. DEUTCH. You are welcome, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, a longstanding cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy both here and in Congress and in the executive branch where you worked is promoting democratic institutions and values. And since the early seventies, every Administration, Democrat and Republican, has leveraged U.S. resources to bolster the international community's newest democracies. And over the last decade, more than \$2 billion in U.S. foreign assistance has been allocated each year for democracy promotion activities.

So turning to the Balkans and the issue of China, I want just to get your opinion broadly. As we are coming out of the Trump Administration and preparing for the Biden Administration, I would like to give you the opportunity to talk about the importance of democracy promotion, particularly as countries in the region face the efforts of the Chinese Government to reach out to vulnerable economies with soft loans. Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina have all been prime targets.

If you could speak to those efforts, what it means for us to push back by promoting democracy and whether we have learned anything from the Trump Administration that should dictate the direction that the incoming Administration should go.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Thank you very much, Congressman, for that question. And I do think that it is essential. America has been proud of our democracy and we have, in fact, talked about how to promote democracy. You cannot impose democracy. That is an oxymoron.

And I am chairman of the board of the National Democratic Institute, an organization that was actually started by President Reagan, understanding that democracy had to explain itself well.

We do have offices in Pristina. I was just there, not this last summer, the summer before, with President Clinton. And to followup on something that the chairman said, I have never been to a country that has been so grateful to the United States in my entire life as when we were in Pristina, with the flags and the people cheering.

But I think that the importance of democracy is that it establishes a rule of law. It does, in fact, allow for corrections if there are mistakes. It does develop a civil society that wants to participate, and it does, in fact, create a way for problem-solving that the people are involved in. And so I think it is very important. There are those who wonder why is it good for the United States.

By the way, you and I did just spend some time dealing with the Truman scholars, the Truman Foundation, and talking about President Truman and what he had done, especially in this part of the world, with the Truman Doctrine and caring about what was happening with Greece and Turkey and a fight for democracy against the spreading of communism.

So this is not something new. It is in our DNA in many ways to do something. And I do think the following thing, just to put two things together: I think that democracy and economic development go together also, because, as I put it, people want to vote and eat. And democracy has to deliver.

And I think understanding the complexity of the building of civil society, the rule of law, education, and the possibilities for people to participate is in America's—it is good for America and it is good



for the people, and it is especially good if we can do it in partnership with others.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

I only have a few seconds left, so, Mr. Chairman, let me thank Secretary Albright and also our other witnesses, Dr. Serwer, Dr. Bugajski. This has been an exceptional panel and discussion, and I hope before we finish we will get to hear a little bit more about the ways that the U.S. Government can counter Russian propaganda and disinformation in the Balkans, since we have two great experts who will be able to speak to that as well.

But for now I will yield back. Thank you so much.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Deutch.

Mr. KINZINGER.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And again, I have said it before, but I want to say again, working with you has been an absolute pleasure. I appreciate your leadership on the committee, your attempts to reach bipartisan solutions when we can. And I think your legacy will certainly live on in this committee, I hope. So thank you for the great work.

And I appreciate you holding this hearing, because I think it is an area that we have sometimes forgotten about that is extremely important. And I think Europe has forgotten about it sometimes until we have to, it confronts us. And I want to thank all the panelists for being here as well.

My first question I will direct to Secretary Albright. Thank you for doing this. Thank you for your many years of service. We have been talking a lot about, you know, China increasing their footprint in the Western Balkans, but I want to ask you specifically why. I think it is important. What is their strategic goal here in the end state, if you would not mind?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Thank you very much, Congressman. And I have to say, in bipartisanship, it has been a pleasure working with you. Thank you very much for everything that you have been doing.

I do think that the Chinese are trying to show that they do have a world grasp, that they do have interests. They are trying, in fact, to expand their reach. But I also do think that they are looking for very specific aspects in terms of working on energy issues, because they have an energy problem themselves.

They are trying to sort out how to strengthen their own capabilities abroad, one in partnerships, but also what they can do to extricate whether they are valuable minerals or special materials. They are not doing it just in terms of being altruistic. They are reaching into other countries to link them to the Chinese system and also to get things that they need for their own economy.

I do think that they are experiencing problems. I think we need to understand that. And we need to develop policies that make it clear to them that they cannot do the kinds of things that they are doing and that we have also an awful lot of influence and that it is a different kind of polar system that we are involved in.

We are not going back to the status quo ante, no matter what. We are living in a different era where there are different tools. They know they are very good at some of the—obviously, on new technology, on cyber, what they are doing in terms of propaganda

with Huawei, a whole host of other tools that they are using that we need to be more conscious of.

Mr. KINZINGER. Well, thank you. And I think, you know, Western Balkan countries joining CCC's Initiative as an alternative to investment from China and Russia would be important. I will come back to that if I have time, but I do want to ask Mr. Bugajski, how can the U.S.—I am going to go off what Mr. Deutch kind of teed up here a little bit. How can the U.S. help push back on Russian and Chinese malign influence in the Western Balkans, particularly in Serbia, through the influence of Sputnik and Russia Today, RT? How can we help to push back against that? And if you have any comments on the other stuff too, that would be great.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Sure. Thanks very much for the question. Disinformation, there are tools to counter disinformation in the region. I think we need to look at the example of the Baltic States who very adroitly, let's say, pushed back on Russian disinformation, located the sources, tried to correct particularly the most damaging kind of disinformation.

And in Serbia, it is a little bit more difficult, because of the degree of Russian penetration in the media, both in the local media but also what they broadcast into the country and what is believed by people. We cannot, obviously, fight all disinformation, but there needs to be a narrative of truth that the West, I think I want to say the West European Union, working together with the United States, can help promote. And I do not mean at governmental level necessarily, but working with local organizations, working with local media, news outlets, social networks and so forth.

There are certain things that are simply not true, particularly the propaganda that is pursued by Russian and Chinese sources against NATO and the U.S. that can be corrected, that can be, let's say, the record straightened. So, I mean, there is a lot of work to be done there, and there are countries we can learn from.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you.

Dr. SERWER. May I have a word?

Mr. KINZINGER. Sure, sure.

Dr. SERWER. You know, Russian propaganda would not be nearly as successful in Serbia if the Serbian Government did not want it to be successful. Frankly, the media there is heavily under the thumb of President Vucic. And that is where we should direct some of our efforts, to President Vucic and making sure that he understands that opening up the media space is a vital component of qualifying for membership in the European Union.

I should also add that we are going to need a major revival of Voice of America and the other international broadcasting agencies after this Administration. They are doing tremendous damage, I think, to Voice of America in particular and I would like to see it restored. And the idea of getting rid of the Balkan Services there has persisted for decades, and that idea should be dropped.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you.

And I will just finish up by saying, you know, not only is it providing the structure for that, but also we have to have people be responsible for determining what is true and what is not. And we see this even in our own country on both sides of the aisle, quite honestly, where, you know, people accept the news that comports

with what makes them feel good and rejects the stuff that does not. And you can put facts out there all day long, and a fact is always questioned by the person putting it out or does not want to agree. But, anyway, that is going to be a longer term discussion for many hearings in the future.

With that, again, Mr. Chairman, thank you so much. Thank you to the panel. I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you very much, Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. KEATING.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your service. I think this hearing demonstrates more than any words just your commitment and your legacy and the involvement, how you have made a difference, not just internationally but here at home. I look forward to continuing to work with you on these issues and others, which I am sure you will be very active in whatever capacity in pursuing. So thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. You know, we have talked repeatedly about the importance of working with the EU, the multiplier effect, how important, how they actually are better leveraged than we are in many capacities.

However, as a prerequisite to being as effective as we can be, we have got a lot of work to do with the EU first. We are involved in tariff disagreements under the guise of security concerns. We are not pursuing our own free trade agreement there, which in the wake of that kind of agreement will have enormous influence on these countries in the Balkans as well as countries like Turkey who want to get involved.

So how important is it that we cleanup some of the areas with the EU directly if we are going to be successful in working with them in the Balkans? I would ask Secretary Albright first.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Well, I think it is a very important question, because we have spent more time actually criticizing the EU and seeing it as a bunch of faceless bureaucrats, and they have their own problems. I mean, it is interesting, in the last few days, again, in terms of the way they are operating about Brexit and the end of the German presidency, the shifting of the EU presidency.

I do think that we still see them as our major allies in a number of different ways. I can tell you personally—because I was born in Europe, I seem to get a lot of calls from Europeans. And when there was a rebalancing to Asia, a lot of the leaders would call me up and they would say, you have abandoned us. And I said, no, you used to be the problem, now you are part of the solution, and we need to work together on other parts of the world. And I think that does need, in fact, to be enlarged in a number of ways.

We and the EU have more in common even when we are not operating very well. I do think this has come up a couple of times, the relationship between the EU and NATO and whether the Europeans have their own defense identity. And the problem always is Turkey, because Turkey is in NATO but not in the EU.

And so there are any number of issues, but I do think more time needs to be devoted to figuring out how the EU works and what we can do with them, because our major directions are very similar, but we cannot just kind of think that we think exactly the

same on everything. That requires diplomacy. And all we have done so far in the last few years is just insult them. So I think instead, we might want to figure out what we have in common and working together.

Mr. KEATING. I think trade and economic development are helpful. But the coronavirus has really, awful as it has been, it has laid bare some of the weaknesses we have in common, not just with Balkans, with our European allies and ourselves. We have weaknesses in the production chain, and we are working in the U.S. to have our own independent production chain of bare minerals, and many of the other medicines and other things we need, but it provides an opportunity.

Besides just having our own independent chain, having European Union allies have their chain, I think there should be a secondary ring of security on having production chain, valuable medicines, agreements, byproducts and it provides an opportunity for us to work together again.

And this is something that came up, I believe, in your testimony, Madam Secretary, or one of the one of the witnesses today, that that is an issue here. People are recognizing that, and the dependence on China, in particular, and how this would be an opportunity to work together.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I do believe that we need to see this as an opportunity, and I think that the pandemic has, in fact, proven the importance of having more cooperative activity. And, as I said, we are in a new era. There are new tools we need to figure out how to operate in the third decade of the 21st century. That what is we are doing and developing, trying to figure out which institutional structures work, which require some refurbishing and fixing. And I hope that that is something that the Biden Administration, with your help, is going to take up as an activity to really be ready for this part of the time.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you.

And I would say to all our witnesses that we are—we will pursue, as I am sure a full committee, but also as a subcommittee, which hopefully I will chair again, dealing with the Turkish issue in greater detail.

Thank you all for your testimony on this important issue.

And I yield back.

Dr. SERWER. Congressman, could I possibly add a word here?

Chairman ENGEL. Certainly.

Dr. SERWER. It seems to me the Biden Administration will view the EU as a force multiplier, and that is what it is for many, many issues. But in the Balkans there is a particular problem, and that is that there are five non-recognizing countries in the EU that do not recognize Kosovo's independence, and it has not been the kind of cohesion that is really required.

The right American approach to that is to do its best to cooperate with the EU as a whole, but to make sure that Germany and the United States are on the same wavelength, along with the U.K., because that combination, U.K., Germany, and the United States, has 85 percent of the influence.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

Chairman ENGEL. I thank you, Mr. Sewer.

And, Mr. Keating, thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER.

Mrs. WAGNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for organizing this very important hearing.

And I thank our witnesses for their time, and certainly for their expertise.

I represent the greater St. Louis region which is home to the largest Bosnian community outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Our Bosnian neighbors fled to St. Louis after war criminal, Ratko Mladic, initiated that horrific genocide against majority Muslim Bosniaks. I am proud that the United States has been a force for good in the Western Balkans, and especially in Bosnia, where it has promoted strong democratic institutions, peace, and prosperity, and the rule of law after years of ethnic strife and tragic wars.

The U.S.-brokered Dayton Accords ended the Bosnia War 25 years ago, but I am deeply concerned that malign powers—and we have discussed it a little bit here, like Russia—fearing closer cooperation between the United States, the European Union, and Balkan partners, are endangering the progress that we have made.

Russia maintains strong political security and economic ties to Bosnian-Serb majority Republika Srpska, and support Serb President Dodik in his efforts to resist reform.

Mr. Bugajski, how does Russian influence in Bosnia undermine the Dayton system? And how can the U.S. increase Bosnia's resilience to Russian influence?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Thank you very much for that question.

Just I would say this: Just as the separatists in Bosnia used the entity system to threaten with separation, Russia uses the entity system to undermine Bosnia integrity and its progress toward European Union and NATO. Remember, one of Russia's main policies is to prevent Bosnia and other countries from entering the European Union, from entering NATO. We saw this even in the case of Montenegro, where the GRU, the Russian military intelligence, promoted a coup d'etat against the duly elected government.

What I fear is in Bosnia, they could also State some kind of provocation using, as you said, people like the Republika Srpska president on the Bosnia presidency, and other separatist voices, maybe even amongst Croats, some of who the nationalists is pushing for a third entity, which would also undermine Bosnian integrity.

I would say we need to be very extremely careful of those links, those linkages Russia has with the Serbian side, but also the Croatian side, and also with some of the Muslim side in terms of energy linkages, economic linkages, corruption, the supply of weapons, for instance, the Republika Srpska energy. I mean, all these areas in which Russia uses, all these tentacles that Russia uses to squeeze the country and to keep it unstable. I think those need to be cut.

Mrs. WAGNER. Dr. Serwer, I understand Bosnia's progress toward NATO membership, and European integration has slowed in recent years. But what domestic and international factors are preventing Bosnia from making the reforms necessary to join the European Union? And how can the United States best support Bosnia's reform process?

Dr. SERWER. It is the Dayton agreements themselves, which include the current Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, that create the problems that Bosnia is facing, the dysfunctional governments, in particular, and its inability to move forward with the kinds of reforms that EU membership and NATO membership demand.

I do not really see a way out of this. I see ways of improving this situation at the margins, but no real way out of it, without what would basically be a new Constitution for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

We came very, very close in 2006 to amending the Bosnian Constitution in some very important ways. I supervised the people who worked on that when I was at U.S. Institute of Peace. But the essential reform in that proposition in 2006 is still needed today, and that reform is to give the Sarajevo Government all of the authority it needs to negotiate and implement EU requirements—

Mrs. WAGNER. And—and—

Mr. SERWER [continuing]. And empower the municipalities to deliver services to the citizens.

Mrs. WAGNER. Uh-huh.

Dr. SERWER. The entities and cantons are the relics of the war, and they are just going to have to fade, and eventually, I think, disappear in order for Bosnia-Herzegovina to truly qualify for EU membership.

Mrs. WAGNER. Secretary Albright, I worry that Russia and China are working to drive a wedge between the United States and the European Union and the Western Balkans.

And how should the U.S. and EU deepen engagement with Balkan countries in order to most effectively promote rule of law, anticorruption measures, and democratic governance?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. They definitely try to drive a wedge between us, or among us all, and I think partially—this may sound too simplistic—we have to pay attention. We have not paid the kind of attention that is necessary to this area, feeling kind of, Oh, well, we did everything that we could. We—obviously, this is a complex evolution and, as been said, Dayton ended the war, but it created a fairly crazy system that is very hard to follow and the corruption is something that is the problem.

But we have to pay attention, and we have to understand that it is in U.S. national interests to understand what is going on, and to use whatever influence we have in terms of economic development, in terms of and some conditionality on it.

It is interesting, because as I travel around the United States—and I have been to your district—and Bosnians, you know, people are very grateful for what we did, and then they want to know, now what? So I understand why you are asking the questions, because we have not paid the kind of attention that is necessary.

Mrs. WAGNER. Thank you.

And I could not agree more and, yes, we—I get these questions all the time from the Bosnian community in St. Louis, which we value so very much.

So I thank you all. I am over my time.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman ENGEL. I thank you, Mrs. Wagner.

Mr. CASTRO.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairman. And thank you, Chairman, for all your years of work on Kosovo and the Balkans.

And thank you to our witnesses, also, for your testimony today.

I have a question about corruption in the Balkans. While the Balkan States have made significant progress in certain areas since the Yugoslav wars nearly 20 years ago, corruption remains a critical challenge. Persistent corruption fuels organized crime, enriches narrow interests, and undermines democracy. While powerful criminal networks have an international reach, and use these countries as important smuggling routes, prosecution and final convictions still remain weak.

How can the United States make sure that loans and other funds are not used to empower and entrench nationalist leaders, and how can we use our financial leverage to ensure anticorruption measures are upheld by government authorities?

And I pose that question to whoever on the panel would like to address it.

Dr. SERWER. Maybe I can say a word about this.

Congressman, the opposite of corruption is not anti-corruption. The opposite of corruption is good governments, and good governments depends on having a good system, and the system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is opaque and politicians are unaccountable, and that is what needs to be changed.

And I agree with the Secretary completely that America has not been paying the kind of attention that it needs to be paying in order to improve the situation, nor has the European Union, which has much more money at stake in the Balkans than we do.

So we need to pay a whole lot more attention, but we also need to change the basic structures that make politicians unaccountable to constituencies, and, instead, accountable to party bosses who run their political parties in a very opaque way.

And, you know, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the need to be a member of a political party in order to get a job, that is just the way things are. The same thing happens in Kosovo. So we need to break that stranglehold that political parties, especially ethnically defined ones, have on the job situation that requires economic development, requires reform of the government system. It requires in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I think, constitutional reform as well.

So it is not that you are going to have some sort of reform—some sort of anticorruption agency. They all have anticorruption agencies. That is not what works. What works is having a system that is transparent and accountable.

Mr. CASTRO. Well, thank you for that.

And I have got one more question with just under 2 minutes left. The NATO mission in Kosovo, KFOR, a NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo since 1999, was authorized through a U.N. resolution. This arrangement is a successful way to provide the kind of international peacekeeping or peace enforcing work that can be helpful. What are the criteria that should be used to determine whether the job of KFOR is done and the force can be withdrawn, and do you think this peacekeeping arrangement can be used elsewhere?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I do think one of the hardest parts is trying to figure out when to end the peacekeeping operation, but I do think that the very presence of people there shows an interest, that, oth-

erwise, if they—if it were ended at the moment, that it would be something that would continue to make the people in the region think, Well, the rest of the world does not care.

They are there, they have been very important, and I do think that they provide a sense of the outside world seeing what the difficulties are and being concerned about any outbreak of violence.

Dr. SERWER. If—

Mr. BUGAJSKI. If I could just jump in to add one thing. Remember the NATO force, including the American contingent, has been gradually drawn down since the NATO force came in, in 1999. So, we are talking about maybe 700 or so U.S. troops in a slightly larger, much still multinational contingent. I think they have to remain, because they are a strong symbol of our commitment to Kosovo's security, to regional security, and to the country's independence.

And I would say this, and followup to what the chairman, Chairman Engel, was saying at the beginning. We need to pay more attention to building up a security force and defense ministry, security force, a security army in Kosovo itself. Every country in the region does have a fully functioning army that can defend its borders, defend its force.

Montenegro, for instance, the country, a third of the population has its own force. Not large. It has to be professional. It has to be small, mobile. In that way, Kosovo will be in NATO rather than NATO being in Kosovo eventually. I mean, it is going to take time. But that should be an objective.

Dr. SERWER. Exactly. I agree with Janusz.

I would add, though, that mutual recognition between Serbia and Kosovo, and establishment of diplomatic relations I think would be an adequate signal to draw down the NATO—the KFOR forces even more, and I agree with Janusz also that Kosovo in NATO is the ultimate solution to NATO in Kosovo.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

I yield back, Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. I thank you very much.

Mr. GREEN.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hopefully, you guys can hear me okay, and I just want to thank Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul for holding this hearing.

And I want to thank our witnesses for testifying before us today. I especially want to thank the Secretary for her service. I was a young infantry officer, ma'am, when you were at the United Nations, beginning to tackle these issues, and I appreciate your deep experience.

As a physician and former military officer, I am alarmed at the impact of the Belt and Road Initiative in the Balkans and we transition from a unipolar world to a bipolar one. The quest for alignment with other nations is critical. We need our allies, probably more now than ever, and the Belt and Road Initiative is China's understanding of that strategic imperative.

As for the Belt and Road Initiative, nearly all of the Balkans nations are participating with significant road projects in countries like Montenegro. We have seen this initiative used to exploit na-



tions in the past in China's acquisition of allies through debt diplomacy. It is especially concerning in places like the Balkans where the region's history seems to too easily spill into global conflict.

I am especially concerned in the wake of COVID. COVID-19 is devastating these countries right now with the daily case rates skyrocketing, and from what I can see, they were at a relatively stable number and now they are—their curves look like vertical lines, much worse than their peers to the West. This impact should have been avoided, had China simply alerted the world sooner and not chosen to use its cozy relationship with the World Health Organization to hide human-to-human transmission. Twenty-five Tennessee National Guardsmen just returned from NATO peacekeeping in Kosovo, and reported additional difficulties because of the pandemic.

Countries like this are struggling with hospital capacity, and, in fact, Serbia is seeing a massive increase in death of elderly leaders, church leaders. Northern Macedonia, or North Macedonia has an outdated infrastructure, really bad pollution that is severe at this time of the year, and the virus is hitting them especially hard when folks are struggling with respiratory problems.

A few quick questions, and Secretary Albright, I have two for you. You mentioned earlier, I think, when chairman or Ranking Member McCaul was talking about the Belt and Road Initiative, that you thought China was abandoning that. I would love to get some clarity on that, or a little more detail. And then I would love to hear what your thoughts are on how the Balkan people are seeing, viewing China in light of the COVID-19 virus, and then also get some other folks' opinion on that from the panels.

So thank you, ma'am.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Thank you very much.

And thank you for your service and having been over there.

I do think, let me just say the only thing I know about what I said is that I just read it in terms of the fact that the Chinese are now concerned about the amount that they are spending abroad, and the fact that they are blamed for this so-called debt trap, and not getting the kind of recognition of doing good works, that is, it does look as the selfish thing which it really is.

I do not know if this is something that is really happening, or whether it is part of some new propaganda scheme of theirs to say, Don't worry about us. We are not really doing anything. And so, I do think we need to look into what their motivations are. There is no question in the number of discussions—and I am sure you have been a part of them—that we talk about China, and what is the China threat and how are we going to deal with the China threat?

It is, as interested as I personally am in the Balkans, I do think that we need to—we are all going to have to focus on the China spread in a number of different ways, because I do not think that their activities are benign. They are trying to—they are major competitors. They have created this pandemic, or have not told us enough about it to be able to deal with it. I do think there are some areas where we want to cooperate with them, which is on climate change, that it does not take a stable genius to figure out that you need more than one country to deal with climate change.

But I do think it is the most difficult issue we have, and I personally am going to try to figure out whether they are trying to cut down, or whether it is just a propaganda trick.

Mr. GREEN. Yes, anyone who has read Sun Tzu would understand what you are saying. There is a very high possibility, I would imagine, that says just propaganda or some ruse.

Your thoughts, though, on how the Balkan people are perceiving China in light of the virus?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I think that that is hard to tell, because I am not sure that they are getting the kind of information in terms of the fact that it was—the Chinese had not talked about it early enough for us to be able to deal with it. I do also think that the Balkans are in an even more threatened place, because of what we know in terms of the immigration that is kind of going through the Balkans in order to get other parts of Europe. And so, they are on the front line of dealing with a lot of people coming from X place and not knowing. And I am not sure that the capabilities that they have to deal with the pandemic, whether they are really getting that kind of help from the outside.

So, I think they are in a very difficult way, and they are not being regarded as seriously by some of the countries that could be helping them including us, frankly.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you.

I think my time is up, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ENGEL. Yes. I thank you, Mr. Green.

Ms. TITUS.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing and for your leadership in this area. You may be gone, but your legacy will certainly continue in this committee.

As I said, we have heard several things mentioned that I hope we can get more information and I must say it is not often that we have a panel as distinguished and as knowledgeable and as respected as the one we have today. So thank you to all of you.

What is the increasing role of Turkey? I hope we learn more about that, because we know Bosnia is a top recipient of Turkish aid. Erdogan has cozied up to the leading Bosnia party, the purchase of the Russian weapons, and also the stirring of more controversy and being more aggressive in Greece and Cyprus. So I think we do need to keep an eye on Turkey.

Then what was mentioned by Ted Deutch about misinformation being used by the Russians, kind of infiltrating the media in this part of the world, we certainly saw that in the case of the Macedonia referendum. So it is happening, and I think we need to watch that.

But the question I would ask you today—and if it has been covered, I am sorry I missed it, I do not think so though—is about the Mini Schengen agreement that had Serbia, Albania, and North Macedonia, whether it is free crossing of borders where you do not need a passport or work permits, allows them to kind of promote tourism, and also cooperation of not dealing with the virus. Do you think that will expand? Do you think that is a good thing? Do you think Kosovo will be included? And how can the U.S. promote that sort of thing and use it to our advantage to shore up democratic institutions?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I personally think that it behooves us to try to get the countries and the Balkans to work together in some ways. That is not an easy thing to accomplish, given the things that we have been talking about. But I do think some kind of regional economic activities are a way of working together that, in fact, would help in the pursuit of other relationships.

One of the issues, believe it or not, it seems kind of naive initially, but that if one could get various ethnic groups to actually work on a real problem to try to solve it, that they would then learn to work together and respect each other. So I do think that some activities that would show the regional aspect.

And then the population, this is not a large area and I do think that, in fact, some kind of a Mini Schengen is not a bad idea if it is done with respect and does not—and this is a big underline—is help to make even more corruption. That is the thing that one has to be careful of is that if it is, that there are some lines that would make clear that that cannot happen. Otherwise, there would be no support for it.

Ms. TITUS. In the role of

[inaudible], can civil societies be part of that?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I think very much so, because I think that the issue of civil societies and the rule of law and kind of saying that that is the power of democracy are civil societies, and the question is how to empower them and have them see that they do have a right and a duty to really talk about the things they do not like.

The hard part here is that there have been now decades of this anger among various ethnic groups, and what needs to be done is to try—by the way, the truth is that many of the people in this area actually used to be part of a country where they intermarried, and that they really—there was a—there are many faults to the former Yugoslavia, but some it really that there was this interaction among the various groups. And so, I think civil society, outside groups, can help on that.

Dr. SERWER. If I may add—

Ms. TITUS. I would say—

[inaudible] India.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Yes.

Ms. TITUS. [inaudible] With very little resources have a great deal of impact some of the—

[inaudible] Development of those civil societies—

[inaudible]. They are our partners—

[inaudible] Democracy.

Ms. ALBRIGHT. No question. Very glad to hear you say that, since I am chairman of board and I so believe in what NDI and IRI are doing and, frankly, when NDI and IRI do things together, it proves the theory of the case that you do not have to always be the same in order to agree on working together on things.

Dr. SERWER. If I may add—

Ms. TITUS. Anybody else?

Dr. SERWER. May I add a word?

Chairman ENGEL. Certainly. Go ahead.

Dr. SERWER. I would point in two directions: One is that Mini Schengen has been greeted with some skepticism, especially in Kosovo, mainly because there are already so many agreements that

are unimplemented, and that, to me, is a big problem, and I think the Americans need to work with the Europeans to monitor implementation of all of these agreements, and not allow signatures to go unimplemented.

The second thing I would point to is a regional effort, which I think is very important that has not really taken off, which is the Regional Reconciliation Commission. This is a civil society project that has been proposed to the governments, and the governments have not yet accepted. But RECOM, the Regional Reconciliation Commission, I think, would be a very important addition to regional activities that would reduce the hard feelings that persist after the wars of the 1990's.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Titus.

Ms. WILD.

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Chairman, can I just briefly?

Chairman ENGEL. Yes.

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman ENGEL. Yes.

Ms. TITUS. Can I say just say briefly—

Chairman ENGEL. Yes.

Ms. TITUS. I bring you greetings from Betty Ann Sarver. I bring you greetings from Betty Ann Sarver in Tucson. I met with her this weekend, and she sends her love and respect.

Chairman ENGEL. Well, thank you. Thank you. She is a good friend. Thank you.

Ms. WILD.

Ms. WILD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to these wonderful panelists for being here.

I would like to direct my question to Secretary Albright. And it is my honor to be asking you this question, Secretary.

In the aftermath of the cold war, and particularly in recent years, we have seen Russia attempt to consolidate its influence in the region. We have been at odds with Russia over many issues during this time. But as you demonstrated in your own government service, it is possible to compartmentalize and achieve progress in some areas, despite tensions. Given that the United States and Russia together own more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, the world depends on some degree of cooperation between our countries.

In 1999, under your leadership and the leadership of then-Defense Secretary William Cohen, the United States negotiated an agreement to allow for Russia's participation in a peacekeeping force in Kosovo, not only diffusing the conflict between NATO and Russian forces, but actually creating an unprecedented level of cooperation between those two forces.

So my first question—I guess my first question is: As President-elect Biden prepares to take office in a much different era for the region, do you see opportunities for regional deescalation between the United States and Russia?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Well, I would hope we could. But I think the thing we need to work on has to do with the nuclear issues. We have had agreements, nuclear agreements, and the New START Treaty is about to expire. I think that is very dangerous. I think

we need to look a little bit at where the other agreements that have to do with Europe. The INF needs to be dealt with, and that we need to look at those things where we have had established relationships in terms of behavior with them.

The issue with the Russians and the Balkans is beyond-belief complicated, as we have talked about a bit, a part of it is that one of the reasons that we had a NATO operation in the Balkans, in Kosovo and Bosnia, was that the Russians were going to veto anything that we were going to do to the United Nations. And so, they have been anything but helpful in terms of the Balkans. That is one area.

I do think, though, that we need to spend time on the nuclear issues with them, and the ones where we can come to some agreement. I am not sure I ever liked the term "reset," but I do think that a new Administration does have a chance to really examine the relationship, and not be kind of, you know, rose-colored glasses about it, but understand that there are areas that we need to try to get some agreement on, and the nuclear issue is one of them.

Ms. WILD. And are there initial steps that you believe the incoming Administration should take to test those waters, and attempt to establish some degree of trust between the U.S. and Russia?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. Well, I do think—I do not know, but I do hope that there is something done about the New START Treaty pretty quickly, because it is about to expire, and once it expires, it makes it more complicated, and there certainly are people that are coming into the Administration that are very knowledgeable about how that all works.

Ms. WILD. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you, Ms. Wild.

Mr. LEVIN.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

It is great to see you there, and I will have much more to say about you and your incredible service in the days ahead.

In this period, I want to focus on the rights of the Balkans, and I want to start with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Human Rights Watch reports that it has been a decade since Europe's top human rights court determined that pieces of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitution were discriminatory.

For instance, and I think Dr. Serwer referred to this, it is my understanding that members of minority communities, such as the Jewish community, are not eligible to run for the country's three-member presidency. Bosnia has not changed the provisions that have been ruled discriminatory.

So why has not the Constitution been amended, and is it within the realm of possibility that it might be?

And any, you know, I defer that to any of you that is interested in answering.

Dr. SERWER. It is always in the realm of possibility that it might be. It requires a decision by the parliament. It requires two-thirds majority in the parliament. It has been impossible to get. Why? Because the current system maintains the monopoly on power of the three major ethnic groups and the political parties that are dominant within those ethnic groups.

The only thing that is going to change that is a popular movement for constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The day you see people in the streets, demanding constitutional reform, and people at the polls voting for it, that is when you will get it. And that has not happened yet; and, frankly, whenever there is a popular protest in the streets, the dominant ethnic political parties find ways of regressing it, and that is where we have to be active in ensuring that that does not happen in the future.

Mr. LEVIN. So we can provide a lot more leadership here in a better direction then, and hope that the people see their way to change.

Let me ask about Kosovo. Again, Human Rights Watch reporting here. Last year, inter-ethnic tensions were an issue in the north of Kosovo, and I see that Roma and Ashkali and Balkan Egyptians have faced issues getting personal documents, which make it harder for them to get healthcare, education, so on. In Serbia, Roma have also faced discrimination, as have ethnic Albanians, according to the State Department's human rights report.

So let me start with you, Secretary Albright. Are the examples that I have mentioned here instances where the discriminatory practices are enshrined in law, like the case of the Constitution in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or is it really a matter of the law being sound, but it is not being followed?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I think—I do not know the answer in terms of whether they are enshrined in law, but I do think that there are certain customs and prejudices in a number of places that make it easier for those who do not believe in integration, or an ethnic way of operating together that allows them to carry on what are really outrageous kinds of policies.

And I know that the issues with the Roma in a number of places, wherever, in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans has been something that has been on the minds of the Human Rights Committee for a very long time, as well as various groupings that are discriminated against. There is no question.

And I think the really hard part—and I have had very meaningful, I think, and some private, some public discussions when I have been in the region, saying, you know, you used to—you need to remember what people did to you, and you cannot do this to the others now. But it has been pretty crazy, you know, in terms of trying to persuade them not to have revenge.

Mr. LEVIN. Well, though—let me just ask any of you. What can the incoming Biden Administration do to foster greater respect for human rights for all in the Balkans? In particular, how can Congress play a helpful role here?

I mean, you have been a big champion of the role of Congress, Madam Secretary.

But any of you, you know, what are our marching orders from you here to make progress on human rights in the Balkans?

Dr. SERWER. I would say pay attention. They will listen to you, while you are codels, when you go out there. If you raise Roma issues, they will be conscious of Roma issues. They pay a lot of attention to what the Americans think. I think the Secretary is entirely correct that in Kosovo, the minority issues are questions of discrimination and prejudice rather than law, because the Con-

stitution we wrote for Kosovo is much better than the Constitution we wrote for Bosnia and Herzegovina. But discrimination exists, and if you raise it when you are visiting there, if you insist that the U.S. Government raise it, that is going to make a big difference in the region.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I see my time has expired. So I appreciate it.

And I yield back.

Chairman ENGEL. Thank you very much, Mr. Levin.

And now last but certainly not least, Ms. Spanberger.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you very, very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your leadership in this committee. Thank you for all that you have done for this region of the world, and thank you for your continued commitment to the role of U.S. foreign policy in the world, and certainly our engagement with it through this committee. So I appreciate this hearing today, and I certainly appreciate your leadership.

To our witnesses, thank you so much for being with us. I have appreciated the conversation, and I am glad to have the opportunity to followup with a couple of final questions.

Others have mentioned today the implications—and I am concerned with the implications of recent Russian arms transfers. Rep. Kinzinger and I led an NDAA amendment, calling for sanctions on Turkey, given its purchase of the Russian made S-400 air and missile defense systems, and authorized by CAATSA. And this language is included in the NDAA conference report that the House is voting on later today.

And there is reason for similar concern as it relates to Serbia. And although it is not a NATO member like Turkey, President Vucic's term as President of Serbia has been defined by deepening ties with Moscow, including Serb participation in Russian military exercises and purchases of Russian military equipment. So—and yet, at the same time, the United States has sought greater military cooperation with Serbia.

I am curious—and I will start with you, Secretary Albright, and thank you for being here. Beyond considering CAATSA sanctions, what are some approaches or recommendations that you would have for the Administration for them to consider as potential approaches to the U.S.-Serbia relationship, recognizing some of the challenges we see that might be posed by the Serbian-Russian relationship?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I think that we have to have some real talks in terms of Serbia of dealing with the opposition that has not really been able to participate in anything that is going on there, that not everybody agrees with the way Vucic is doing things. And so, I think we need to develop some kind of more functional relationship with Serbia.

I think that the hard part is that the question is whether we can make clearer to them that they cannot be a part, and will not be a part of the EU, or in terms of the way that they want to be seen, if they continue to do the kinds of things that they are doing.

But we do not have—I do not think that we really have very stable kinds of talks that we can have with them in an honest way, frankly, and that they have gotten away with kinds of the things

by being, quote, admired for the relationships that they have and the kind of governments they have.

And that is definitely also true in terms of Turkey. If one really thinks that Erdogan is somebody that should be, quote, "in some kind of a club," I think that it makes it very hard to stop them in terms of the kinds of things that they are doing. They are playing us out, and I think that we need to be clearer about what we believe in.

Ms. SPANBERGER. And with the incoming Administration, I am curious in ways that we could be clearer, in ways that we could, you know, recognizing some of the statements made by the current Administration, certainly the current President, that may have given a pass or may have turned a blind eye to some of what we have seen, given the Turkey example, or Serbia.

I am wondering what are some of the things that we could do so that we are hitting that, to some degree, hitting a bit of a reset, but then to put real strong parameters in place so that we can be able to further define clearly, once we have established the parameters of what we deem to be acceptable, what our expectations of the U.S.-Serbia relationship and what demands or, kind of request, requirements we could put in place?

Ms. ALBRIGHT. I think part of the thing we have this tendency to say, and I do it, "the Serbs," when the bottom line is, that they are not all the same, that we need to recognize that there are people within Serbia that would like to have a different kind of a relationship, and trying to operate to some of the civil societies or a variety of ways to make that kind of contact.

I regret the fact that I am probably the most unpopular person in Belgrade when I actually, believe it or not, my father was the Czechoslovakian ambassador in Yugoslavia and I speak Serbian.

And so, the bottom line is that we lump them together in a way where everything is negative, and I think we need to try to sort out with whom we can deal under what auspices, and then, have some conditionality in terms of the way that we deal, not kind of give in to some of their threats that they keep making.

If they want to be a part of Europe, they have to behave in a different way, and we do have a variety of tools. Some are diplomatic and some are economic, both positive and negative in terms of the trade and aid. I do think it is interesting that the new development operation that we have in the U.S. now has just started to open offices in Belgrade, and I think there are questions about how it can be used in terms of whether one puts some conditions on the disbursement of whatever we do in terms of helping economically.

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Could I just jump in with the NATO-Serbia question, Russia question as well, very briefly? NATO does have a lot of cooperative activities with the Serbian military. They do engage in all sorts of programs. I think that can be developed. We do need to focus on that confidence building. This is not NATO 1999. This is NATO 2020. We are not going to bomb Serbia. We want Serbia eventually to be part of the alliance.



Also, very sternly, I would say the S-400's and any other systems that potentially threaten neighbors simply will not be allowed. That will automatically trigger sanctions.

Third, I would say Serbian participation in Russian exercises, Slavic Shield or Zapad, whatever it is, have to be ended. Participating with a country is that actually practicing attacks on NATO does not look good if you want good relations with NATO.

And last, I think Bosnia. Bosnia has, in effect, received an annual national program. If Bosnia can move forward toward a membership action plan, which they have already been offered, and then eventually toward NATO membership, as the Secretary said, this will send a very powerful signal to Serbs. As part of the Serbian nation, it would then be within NATO. Why not the rest?

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you.

Thank you very much for your comments, sir, as well.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you for allowing us to go over.

Chairman ENGEL. Okay. Thank you very much.

This is the conclusion of our hearing.

But before we go, I would certainly want to thank our panelists who were just excellent. I know I have been on this committee for over 30 years, and this is one of the best panels we have had. I think that everyone who listened and participated learned something, and I think that this was very important.

One of the things that it shows me, again, is how important American involvement is around the world, that if we do not involve ourselves, then we can only blame ourselves if things do not go right. I think it is very important.

We have not mentioned today Albania. I just want to mention it at the end. You know, Albania, when I first got there shortly after the old Communist government failed, Enver Hoxha was the leader at the time, and I remember going there and people were just so happy to see an American Member of Congress. It was just unbelievable.

And if you think about the cold war, and you think about the most devastating, or the most heavy-handed regime, you could argue that it was the regime in Albania where it was just impossible to have any kind of freedom. They were fed, you know, the Albanians people were fed a diet of anti-Americanism for 49 or 50 years. And the wonderful thing is that they did not believe any of it. Like most Albanians, they wanted to be close to the United States and work with us.

I always think that is a miracle that for 49 years they were only fed a bunch of lies about us, and did not believe it. And when I said that people of Kosovo love Americans, I think the people of Albania do, too, and I think it is a real success story. And, again, it was the United States getting involved.

So we need get involved. If we are not there, someone else will move in. It could be China, it could be Russia, but we need to be there.

So I want to thank all my colleagues. This is probably the last words I am going to say officially in the committee.

Oh, tomorrow we have something. Okay.

Well, it has been an honor and a pleasure to be a member of this committee for so many years, and it has been an honor and a pleasure to chair this committee and as our panelists, who were excellent, can see that we have a lot of participation and a lot of people who are very interested in the Balkans around the world, of course.

And I want to say, finally, what I said many times with Mr. McCaul and before. I said it with Chairman Royce. I consider this committee the most bipartisan committee in Congress. And I think it is very important, because we think that partisanship should stop at the river's edge, the water's edge, that we need to always be united because the things that affect us are much more common for both of us. Our differences are not as common as the things with which we agree, and we agree that the United States needs to get involved.

So I want to thank our witnesses. I want to thank my good friend, Madeleine Albright, whom I just marvel every time I hear her talk. She is just so smart and knows so much about the region and other things as well.

And our other witnesses, thank you so much to you. Also, I learned a great deal from you as well.

So I want to thank everybody, and the hearing is now adjourned.  
[Whereupon, at 1:11 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

**FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

**Eliot L. Engel (D-NY), Chairman**

December 8, 2020

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. Pursuant to H. Res. 965, Members who wish to participate remotely may do so via Cisco WebEx. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>:

**DATE:** Tuesday, December 8, 2020

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m., EST

**LOCATION:** 2172 Rayburn House Office Building

**SUBJECT:** The Balkans: Policy Recommendations for the Next Administration

**WITNESS:** The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright  
*(Former Secretary of State)*

Daniel Serwer, Ph.D.  
Director, American Foreign Policy  
Director, Conflict Management  
School of Advanced International Studies  
Johns Hopkins University

Mr. Janusz Bugajski  
Senior Fellow  
The Jamestown Foundation

**By Direction of the Chairman**

*The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.*

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Tuesday Date 12/08/2020 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 10:20 a.m. Ending Time 1:12 p.m.

Recesses 0 ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to )

Presiding Member(s)

*Chairman Eliot L. Engel*

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

*"The Balkans: Policy Recommendations for the Next Administration"*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*See attached.*

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

*SFR - Engel, Connolly*

*QFR - Omar*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or

TIME ADJOURNED 1:12 p.m.

  
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## FULL COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Eliot L. Engel, NY
X	Brad Sherman, CA
X	Gregory W. Meeks, NY
	Albio Sires, NJ
X	Gerald E. Connolly, VA
X	Theodore E. Deutch, FL
	Karen Bass, CA
X	William Keating, MA
	David Cicilline, RI
X	Ami Bera, CA
X	Joaquin Castro, TX
X	Dina Titus, NV
	Adriano Espaillat, NY
	Ted Lieu, CA
X	Susan Wild, PA
X	Dean Phillips, MN
	Ilhan Omar, MN
	Colin Allred, TX
X	Andy Levin, MI
X	Abigail Spanberger, VA
	Chrissy Houlahan, PA
	Tom Malinowski, NJ
	David Trone, MD
X	Jim Costa, CA
X	Juan Vargas, CA
X	Vicente Gonzalez, TX

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Michael T. McCaul, TX
X	Christopher H. Smith, NJ
X	Steve Chabot, OH
	Joe Wilson, SC
X	Scott Perry, PA
X	Ted Yoho, FL
X	Adam Kinzinger, IL
X	Lee Zeldin, NY
	James Sensenbrenner, Jr., WI
X	Ann Wagner, MO
	Brian J. Mast, FL
	Francis Rooney, FL
X	Brian K. Fitzpatrick, PA
	John Curtis, UT
X	Ken Buck, CO
	Ron Wright, TX
	Guy Reschenthaler, PA
	Tim Burchett, TN
X	Greg Pence, IN
	Michael Guest, MS
X	Mark Green, TN

## STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Statement for the Record from Representative Connolly**  
**“The Balkans: Policy Recommendations for the Next Administration”**  
**December 8, 2020**

As we mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement next week and undergo a presidential transition in the United States, it is an apt time to reflect on the state of the Western Balkan region, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. While important progress has been made regarding regional stability, cooperation, and political and economic freedoms, significant challenges continue to plague the region related to democratic governance, Russian and Chinese influence, and European and transatlantic integration. Enhanced U.S. engagement in the Western Balkans could have an outsized impact on these fronts and serve critical U.S. national security interests such as combatting terrorism and transnational crime.

Diminished American and European Union (EU) engagement in the Western Balkan region has created a vacuum that Russia and China have been all too eager to fill. While Serbia has long been one of Russia’s closest allies in the region, President Aleksandar Vučić has courted even closer ties to Russia including through the purchase of Russian weapons and cultivated expanding cooperation with China, particularly on infrastructure projects. Both Russia and China have also increased their footprint in Bosnia, with Russia backing Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik’s efforts to resist reforms, and China increasing its investment in Bosnian energy and transportation projects.

Several Western Balkan countries have struggled with corruption, weak rule of law, and democratic backsliding in recent years. The postwar Bosnian state institutions, established by the Dayton Accords, are prone to gridlock and ripe with corruption from Bosniak, Croat, and Serb nationalist parties. In Kosovo, three different prime ministers have governed the country in 2020 alone, and a caretaker government is currently awaiting a new election or governing coalition. Under President Aleksandar Vučić’s watch, Serbia has undergone steady democratic decline in its governance, media freedom, and the rule of law. Not only does such democratic backsliding harm each country’s internal affairs, but it also complicates their aspirations for European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership.

The prospect of EU and NATO membership and the governance reforms associated with accession have been critical drivers of peace and stability in the Western Balkans. NATO’s peace support operation in Kosovo—KFOR—was deployed in 1999 to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis and continues to help provide safety and security in Kosovo and prevent renewed conflict. Over the past decade-and-a-half, five countries in the Western Balkans have become NATO members – Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. However, challenges to democratic governance can and have undermined Alliance cohesion. That is why, as the newly elected President of NATO’s Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), one of my top priorities is to reaffirm our commitment to democratic values, in part by considering support for democratic institutions as a condition for membership. The common values underpinning NATO are the strongest weapon we possess to effectively counter authoritarianism.

Notable democratic backsliding and creeping authoritarian influence from adversaries like Russia and China have stalled several of the Western Balkan countries' integration into European and transatlantic institutions. The incoming U.S. administration should be mindful of these trends and seek opportunities to enhance engagement with our partners in the region, aligned with EU efforts.

## RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Questions for the Record from Representative Omar**  
**“The Balkans: Policy Recommendations for the Next Administration”**  
**December 8, 2020**

**Question:**

“I was hoping to get some of your reflections on lessons learned from the experiences with military intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo. These are, of course, held up as the pure examples of the success of Responsibility to Protect and as correctives to the failure to act in Rwanda. But I wonder now, looking back after more than two decades, how distinct they were. When we look at other interventions in Libya, in Syria, maybe even in Iraq, there aren’t any success stories.

- When you look back at your experience with Bosnia and Kosovo, how much do you think the decisions you made then have carried into other situations, especially as it relates to military intervention?
- Obviously, we can’t intervene to stop every human rights abuse. So even if there is an ongoing atrocity, what kinds of factors and long-term consequences need to be considered before we make the decision to commit armed forces?”

**Answer:**

*Secretary Albright did not submit a response in time for printing.*

**Dr. Serwer:** Bosnia and Kosovo were military interventions, but in the context of serious diplomatic efforts, including not only negotiations on how Bosnia and Kosovo would be governed after the intervention but also commitments to long-term peacekeeping and development assistance. No such commitments existed in Libya or Syria. In Iraq, the assistance got started far too slowly and was poorly planned and executed. The U.S. has mostly ignored the lessons of relative success in the Balkans.

Whenever deciding on military intervention, we need to be clear about the long-term implications and prepared to take on the concomitant responsibilities, diplomatic and military as well as development assistance. “Stabilization and reconstruction,” as it is often termed, will likely last decades and add significantly to the total cost. But of course doing nothing (as in Syria) has costs as well, which need to be weighed in the balance.



**Question:**

"I also wanted to ask about the legacy of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. It is, of course, one of the milestones in the development of international criminal justice that starts with Nuremberg. Our commitment to international justice is something I believe the United States should be profoundly proud of.

- Could you both weigh in on the Trump Administration's decision to put sanctions on International Criminal Court personnel?
- What do you see as a constructive future engagement for the United States in the realm of international and transitional justice?"

**Answer:**

*Secretary Albright did not submit a response in time for printing.*

**Dr. Serwer:** The Trump Administration was trying to prevent investigation and eventual indictment of Americans for potential crimes in Afghanistan as well as Israelis for potential crimes in Gaza. Neither the U.S. nor Israel has convinced the rest of the world that they have been assiduous about investigating and prosecuting such crimes.

I doubt the sanctions will have much effect, aside from illustrating American resistance to the ICC. The Biden Administration should drop the sanctions. The US has engaged constructively with the ICC in cases involving other countries, a practice that should be continued.

For domestic political reasons, it is hard to see any future Administration prepared to cooperate in ICC investigations of US or allied troops. The most important thing the US can do for transitional justice is ensure that its own troops are held accountable in its own judicial systems, both civilian and military. That has not always been the case. President Trump's pardons for troops convicted of murder were precisely the wrong thing to do.