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THE BALKANS: A NEW CRISIS?

AN ADDRESS BY DAVID CAMERON

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Introduction:

CARLOS PASCUAL
Vice President, Foreign Policy, Brookings

Moderator:

DANIEL BENJAMIN
Director, Center on the U.S. and Europe, Brookings

Featured Speaker:

THE RT HON DAVID CAMERON, MP
Leader, British Conservative Party

Discussant:
William Hague
Shadow Foreign Secretary, Senior Member of the Shadow Cabinet

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ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PASCUAL: Good morning. My name is Carlos Pascual, Vice President and Director of the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. And it's a great pleasure to welcome you here today for this discussion with David Cameron and William Hague on the Balkans, and specifically on Kosovo.

It's amazing to think of how much attention Kosovo's drawn over time. It's such a tiny little place. It isn't even a country. But it's been a focus of NATO attention and action. It's been a focus of European attention. It's a small entity, but it's attracted the participation of the United States in a phenomenally intensive way. And it's been a central factor in relations with Russia that could even bleed into even questions of relations factoring into Iran and missile defense and gas questions because of the complexity of the Russian issues.

And so today what we'll have an opportunity to do is look at the way ahead and hear, from David Cameron in particular, a discussion of where the Balkans are, how we got to this point, and ho to potentially move forward.

He has very kindly agreed in the question and answer period to allow you to take him anywhere that you would like to on the

wider set of foreign policy issues as well, so that we have that to look forward to.

All of you are here because I think you know that David Cameron was elected leader of the Conservative Party and Leader of the Opposition in December of 2005. I'm not going to go into extensively his background. And I will just say that William Hague, also here with him, in December of 2005 was appointed the Shadow Foreign Secretary and Senior Member of the Shadow Cabinet.

So it's a tremendous opportunity here for all of us in this community to have a discussion with these two political and policy leaders from the United Kingdom.

And with that, David, I offer you the podium. Thank you for joining us.

(Applause.)

MR. CAMERON: Thank you very much for that introduction. And this is my first visit to Washington as Britain's Leader of the Opposition.

And I wanted to mark it this morning by paying my respects at the Arlington National Cemetery, where so many of your country's hero's are buried; men and women who've served not just the United States, but the cause of freedom the world over. In Europe we

will never forget the sacrifices that Americans have made for our liberty. I and my colleagues, including William, represent a new generation of leadership in the Conservative Party. But the party I lead today in opposition, and which I hope to lead in government, is proudly Atlanticist, is proud of the ties of history, of culture, of language and of family that bind our two nations together.

Britain and America have stood alongside each other in so many of the battles for liberty over the last century -- in two world wars. My own grandfather landed with the Allied Forces on the Normandy beaches and fought alongside American allies before he was wounded and evacuated to Britain.

We stood together in the battle against Soviet expansionism. And today, we must stand together against global terrorism fueled by a perversion of the Islamic faith.

I've seen for myself our soldiers serving in the deserts of Afghanistan and the dust of Iraq. And I pay tribute to their professionalism, to their courage and to their comradeship.

The relationship between our two countries is, I believe, indeed special. And it will remain special for any British government I lead, grounded in the long history we share together and the ability to talk to each other freely as only old friends can.

My view is very clear: that the cause of peace and progress is best served by an America that is engaged in the world. And the values that we hold dear together are best defended when Britain and the United States, and the United States and Europe, stand together.

Today, you'll be relieved to hear, is not the occasion for a grand sort of tour de raison of the global situation. Instead, I plan to focus on a specific issue of considerable and immediate concern, and that is the developments in the Balkans and their impact on our security.

My argument today is very straightforward: there is a crisis developing in the Balkans, and we must act now to prevent it in the interests of national security, not just in that region but around the world.

Just before I address those issues in detail, I'd like to try and place my arguments in the context of two key principles of foreign policy that drive my thinking.

First, I believe that in today's complex and interconnected world the protection of international security requires that any state must put its own national security first. Now, this may sound perverse.

Surely the reality of globally-linked security threats means that it's more important than ever that w we put international security first.

I don't agree. Every good military commander understands that no campaign will succeed unless you secure your home base first. Only from a position of security at home can states confidently promote security abroad.

And in the modern world, I believe there are four types of security that any successful state needs to provide.

First, institutional security -- the rule of law, a strong civil society to serve as the platform for stability.

Cultural security -- a clear and confident national identify to close down the space for ethnic conflict and extremism.

Economic security -- to provide the jobs, the wealth and opportunity that are essential for social progress.

And, of course, the essential physical security, strong defenses, secure borders to deter aggression and to stop terrorists and those who inspire them.

States that provide these four types of security will be in a stronger position, both to provide an example to others and assistance to others. And I believe that if all states put their national security first, in the terms that I've outlined, our world would be a safer place.

But the principle of national security first should not be misinterpreted as a disengagement or a refusal to intervene where necessary. Rather, it is the principle which, if applied effectively, will ensure that any necessary intervention is itself effective.

And that brings me to the second key principle of my foreign policy, a principle which I know will need particularly careful and clear explanation for an American audience, because it's a principle that I call "liberal conservatism." When I talk about liberal conservatism I'm not talking about the narrow partisan political meaning of those terms.

Let me try and explain. "Liberal," because I believe that civil rights, democracy, pluralism, and the rule of law are the source of progress and a key component of a lasting security. But "conservative" too, because I recognize the complexities of human nature, I'm skeptical of grand utopian schemes to remake the world, and understand that you have to be hard-headed and practical in the pursuit of your values.

We will proudly accept our responsibility to play a part in upholding international security. We will recognize that Britain can only play that part effectively if we put national security first and ensure we are strong at home. And we'll approach every security challenge, and assess every potential intervention, on the basis of hard-headed

practicality -- liberal conservatism, not liberal interventionist utopias about remaking the whole world.

I believe that this represents the right combination of realism and idealism that we need to deal with the serious dangers of the modern world.

And, as I said, today I want to try and apply those principles and the foreign policy approach I've outlined to a part of Europe where I feel we may once be heading again into crisis. I want to speak about the situation in the Balkans.

Twelve years ago this month, decisive American intervention brought an end to the only war on European soil since 1945. That Balkan conflict, all three-and-a-half years of it, is a dark and blood-stained chapter in European history. Television footage night after night carried images that looked much more like the early 1940s than the 1990s. Columns of refugees, emaciated figures clinging to the barbed wire of concentration camps, mass graves. The cosmopolitan melting pot of Sarajevo, the sort of Jerusalem of Europe, if you like, was imprisoned for 1,426 days under a sort of medieval siege.

All of it culminated in the massacre in the hills above Srebrenica, in which some 8,000 men and boys were executed in cold blood. In a country of just four million people, up to 200,000 are

estimated to have lost their lives, and nearly two million were driven from their homes.

And to those who say, you know, Europe is better off without the U.S., I would say: don't just look at the history of the 1930s, look at the history of the 1990s and what happened in the Balkans when we grew apart.

Your leadership at Dayton persuaded the parties to lay down their arms and effectively ended the war. As American-led NATO troops deployed into Bosnia on Christmas Eve 1995, the people of that small and devastated country dared to hope that their nightmare was over -- and among them, Bosnia's two million Muslims who see your country as their savior -- a fact that Al Qaeda propaganda chooses not to mention.

Now, in Europe and America the response to this Balkan tragedy was "Never again." So in 1999, when Slobodan Milosevic began orchestrating a renewed round of ethnic cleansing, this time in Kosovo, we acted promptly and decisively to stop it in its tracks.

Tony Blair was absolutely right to take the lead in galvanizing NATO and in pressing for military action. Britain and the United States stood firmly together and acted without delay. So, too, did our NATO allies.

The campaign wasn't easy. But it succeeded, and it prevented another round of bloodletting in the Balkans.

In the intervening eight years since then, long after the TV crews had packed their bags and left, the United States stayed actively engaged on the ground, working with Britain and the rest of the international community, patiently and persistently, to keep the peace, to repair the devastation of the war, to nurture democracy and the rule of law, and to give protection for minority rights right across the region.

It's been slow, it's been expensive, but I believe it's been very effective. Compare the situation in the region today with the situation a decade ago, and you can really see the progress.

Slovenia is a prosperous, stable democracy and NATO ally. Croatia has bounced back, its Adriatic beaches more popular than ever. Newly independent Montenegro was the world's fastest-growing tourist destination in 2007. When you think back to those pictures of homes being shelled, and families being pushed out, you could never believe this would happen so quickly.

Macedonia is now a candidate for entry to the European Union and to NATO. Albania, once the poorest country in the world, is slowly reforming its institutions and making gradual progress. Bosnia and Herzegovina has repaired, with international aid on a vast scale,

the bulk of the physical damage inflicted by the war. 250,000 homes have been rebuilt, and a million refugees have returned.

And the whole world rejoiced when the people of Serbia rose up, overthrew the architect of so much of their misery and mayhem, Slobodan Milosevic. In an act of great bravery, they embraced democracy and appeared determined to join their neighbors on the long road to membership in the EU and of NATO.

But the progress is very fragile. Formidable problems remain, and tackling them has a direct bearing on the security, not just of the Balkans but of Britain, of Europe and the wider world.

Eighty percent of the heroin that reaches the streets of Britain comes through the Balkans. The bulk of weaponry smuggled into the EU comes through the former Yugoslavia. Balkan criminal networks are responsible from some 200,000 of the women victims of the sex trade. And we know from past Balkan instability that it leads to significant migration, including to the U.K.

And then, in the post 9/11 world, there is the constant threat of terrorism. A lawless space in the Balkans would be idea ground for Al Qaeda and for others.

So preserving and enhancing stability in the Balkans is not just a moral imperative, it is fundamental to our national security. And it

also matters for wider reasons, too: for the reputation of NATO, for our reputation in the Muslim world, and for the credibility of the Alliance's mission in Afghanistan.

That is why recent developments in the Balkans should be setting off alarm bells. Since the summer the situation has been steadily deteriorating, to a point where many worry now that the region teeters on the edge of its worst crisis since the early 1990s. Only 10 days ago the Financial Times carried a story headlined, "Bosnians Start to Stockpile Food as Fear Mounts."

How have things come to this? The main cause is the unresolved status of Kosovo, which U.N. Resolution 1244, at the conclusion of the conflict in 1999, stipulated would be settled by a political process. The former Finnish President, Martti Ahtisaari, has worked heroically to try and negotiate a settlement between Pristina and Belgrade based on the concept of supervised independence.

Now, that approach has been backed by the U.S., by the U.K., and by the bulk of the European Union. But in March it was rejected by Belgrade, and then blocked by Moscow. Since then, a troika comprising the U.S., Russia and the EU has shuttled to and fro in a bid to broker a way forward before the deadline of the 10th of

December set by the U.N. Secretary General set for a resolution -- but thus far to no avail.

In the interim, the behavior of Belgrade, encouraged by Moscow, has made a difficult situation considerably more serious. Belgrade has sought to exert leverage over Kosovo by linking its status to that of the entity Republika Srpska in Bosnia. The Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica has threatened that independence for Kosovo could mean a referendum in Republika Srpska, followed by secession for that small part of Bosnia, and an end to the settlement negotiated at Dayton.

Belgrade has orchestrated a ratcheting up of the rhetoric on a scale not seen since Milosevic. Moscow has, in turn, encouraged Belgrade. And Belgrade, in turn, has encourage Republika Srpska to confront the international community. As the former U.S. Ambassador to Belgrade Bill Montgomery wrote last week, “A number of factors are coming together to create a potentially serious crisis in Bosnia.”

So what should be done?

We need to respond with speed, with unity and with decisiveness. Things could move very fast in the coming weeks. And if our engagement in the Balkans over the last 15 years has taught us anything, it is that hesitancy, division, prevarication, equivocation -- all

of these things will be interpreted as weakness, and will cause us huge problems in the future.

Our policy has got to be clear, it's got to be consistent, and it's got to be firm.

There have been other periods of difficulty in recent years. The conflict in Macedonia in the year 2000 could easily have tipped the whole region back into war. But rapid preventative action, again led by the U.S., NATO and the EU together, nipped that conflict in the bud, brokered the Ohrid Agreement, and put Macedonia and the region back on the right path. We face a similar challenge today.

So now is the time for some very simple messages. There is one overriding message that needs to be understood right across the Balkans and beyond: the resolution of Kosovo's final status cannot and will not involve the reopening of borders anywhere else in the region.

There can be no question of reopening the Dayton settlement or acquiescing, as some have speculated, in the sort of carving off of Republika Srpska. Kosovo and Republika Srpska are not open to exchange as if they were sort of pawns on the board of a chess game. The status of Republika Srpska is enshrined in Dayton, an international treaty to which Belgrade itself is a signatory. It's all an integral part of the multi-ethnic state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a state that

survived -- only just, but survived -- Milosevic's attempts to cut it in pieces.

Now, I know there are still some people who believe that with a bit of sort of imaginative map-mapping, a slight reordering of the geographical and ethnic patchwork, some neat solution to the age-old Balkan question will emerge. But today with all the blood that has already flowed down the River Drina, it would lead only to further disaster, with new waves of refugees and new bloodshed.

In Kosovo where would such a solution leave the remaining Serb residents who don't live in parts contiguous to Serbia, but in enclaves elsewhere in Kosovo? In Bosnia, where would it leave the tens of thousands of Muslim or Croat refugees who've returned to the Republika Srpska? What future, above all, would it offer to the two million Muslims in Bosnia who would find themselves sandwiched on a sort of European Gaza Strip between Croatia and Serbia? -- as Noel Malcolm has put it, a modern Bantustan on the continent of Europe.

Demoralized and let down by the West, I can think of no better way to radicalize Bosnia's Muslim community who, up to now, have been superbly and stubbornly moderate. If we went down this path we would achieve the very goals that the Mujahedeen sells, and

other Islamic militants have tried and so far failed, to achieve in Bosnia during the war and after it.

But nor is it reasonable to expect Kosovo to wait forever for its status to be resolved. Kosovo has been in a sort of suspended constitutional limbo for almost a decade. This is deterring investment, and it's helping to fuel a climate of resentment and anger within the Kosovo Albanian community.

The Ahtisaari plan represents a fair and sensible way forward, the result of careful and exhaustive negotiation. The Kosovo representatives accepted it, even though it offered much less than the outright sovereignty they wanted. But Belgrade rejected it out of hand.

Now, I fully understand how painful and difficult the future of Kosovo is for Serbia. But the people of Serbia are entitled to some leadership from their government on this issue. They deserve a bit of straight talking, not the sort of rabble-rousing that has led Serbia into calamity after calamity since 1989.

The plain fact is -- and it needs saying often -- that the population of Kosovo is over 90 percent Kosovo Albanian. The harsh truth is that after the events of 1999, there was never any prospect that Kosovo could remain under the sovereignty, or the administrative umbrella, of Serbia.

Serbia needs to face up to the unpalatable consequences of the acts that were committed in her name. Kosovo is entitled to have its status resolved. And if the Ahtisaari plan is not acceptable, and if no agreement can be found in the troika, then I support the views of the U.S. and the U.K. that this issue will have to be resolved. But it must be done in a way that is managed, and a way that avoids damaging repercussions in Bosnia, or for Serbia or Macedonia, or elsewhere in the region.

So we need to take the steps to pave the way for Kosovo's independence, and to ensure the threats to stability are contained.

First, we need to be very clear with Serbia, with the Kosovo authorities, and with the Republika Srpska, as well as with Moscow where we stand. Serbia needs to be clear what it can and cannot expect.

It is certainly entitled to expect the full protection of rights for the Serb minority in Kosovo. Pristina will need to ensure that its minorities share full rights with the Albanian majority. And the international mission that succeeds the U.N. authority in Kosovo must hold Pristina to that pledge.

But Belgrade, Serbia, will also face a clear choice. If it responds with restraint, then there's every reason why Serbia's

progress towards EU membership should continue. Indeed, if it meets the conditions, including cooperation with the Tribunal in the Hague, there is every prospect that it could become a formal candidate to start EU accession talks in early 2009.

But if Belgrade chooses another path, it needs to be absolutely clear about the attitude of NATO and the European Union in those circumstances. We need to make clear that in the event of Kosovo's supervised independence, we will not tolerate any disruption in the traffic between Kosovo and Serbia. We must make clear that any hint of paramilitary activity in Northern Kosovo would bring harsh consequences and firm actions from the NATO force. And we must make clear that any interference in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or encouragement of Republika Srpska in moving towards secession would halt Serbia's progress towards EU membership in its tracks. And it would effectively usher in another period of isolation and estrangement for Serbia and her people.

I mean, is that what the young people of Serbia really want?

NATO and the EU also need to make some prudent preparations for a possible new crisis in the Balkans. In Bosnia, the High Representative needs to have the rock-solid backing of the EU and

of NATO. The planned closure of his office in mid-2008, I believe that should be deferred. And the 16,000-strong NATO military force in Kosovo, and its EU-led equivalent in Bosnia, must be ready to act robustly to ensure that a safe and secure environment is maintained.

In the case of Bosnia, the military force there is now actually only 2,500 strong, of which only 580 are actually front-line troops. They're backed up by an over-the-horizon NATO operational reserve of some 3,000 troops. And as we enter this period of tension, I think there is a very strong case for reinforcing the troop presence in Bosnia as a precautionary measure, to reassure the local population, to deter trouble, and to send a clear signal of our commitment to the implementation of the Dayton agreement that that remains absolute.

There are two further factors which will make an important different to the prospect to the Balkans in the near and the longer term. One is the behavior of Russia, and the other is the degree to which the EU and NATO remain committed to a process of their own enlargement that encompasses the Western Balkans.

First, Russia. For most of the last 10 years, the role of Russia in the Balkans has actually been a positive one. Russia contributed to the implementation of the Dayton accords and to the settlement of the Kosovo conflict. But more recently, in keeping with a

hardened Russian attitude right across the board, Moscow has been playing a less than helpful role -- by encouraging interference by Belgrade in the affairs of Bosnia, and by encouraging expectations which Russia must know to be unrealistic in respect to Kosovo.

The way in which Moscow has encouraged Belgrade to up the rhetorical ante in the last six months has contributed, frankly, to the rise in tension. Here, as in other matters, Russia needs to decide what sort of power it wants to be, and where its interests really lie. As the rise in oil prices increases Russia's self confidence, it has chosen to make its presence felt, rather than to promote stability. This is true around its borders, and it's been true in the Balkans, where previously Russia used its links to Slav brethren in the region to help broker solution in the Balkans. Now it seems to be using those links to frustrate them.

President Putin's approach seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the West. We have no wish to sort of keep Russia enfeebled, or to shut her out from sharing global leadership. We want to be able to welcome Russia as a major player, not just in the Security Council, but in the G-8 and elsewhere. But for that to happen, we need a Russia that is a responsible player as possible on the world stage.

As I said, the other key factor will be the prospects, or the lack of them, for continued EU enlargement.

Now it's no secret that I and my party have our criticisms to make of the European Union. But there can be no doubt that the prospect of membership one day of NATO and the European Union has until recently acted as a really powerful driver for progress right across the Balkans, as it did for the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

But in the last year, however, that beacon has dimmed. There has been a cooling, especially in France, towards further EU enlargement -- and with it, the enthusiasm of the Balkan countries to make the tough political and economic reforms has actually waned.

At the same time, EU member states have actually been sending contradictory signals about the importance that they attach to the conditions for membership. Having for years insisted to Belgrade that the handover of the indicted war criminals, Ratko Mladic, the chief architect of the massacre at Srebrenica, and Radovan Karadzic was a sort of prerequisite to move to the next stage in the EU accession process, last month the EU relented and let Serbia move forward anyway, with both still at large. The hope is that by giving Serbia

something in exchange, it will adopt a more emollient attitude towards the independence of Kosovo.

I believe that is the wrong sort of linkage. It undermines reformers across the region, and it undermines moderates within Serbia itself.

The most important question, however, is whether the nations of the European Union are serious about honoring the promise that they've consistently made to the war-ravaged Balkan countries: if you make the necessary reforms, you will be eligible to join the EU. We've got to make that clear. Because if we let that hope die in the Balkans, what are the implications for the much bigger strategic partner, Turkey?

So let me make it clear. There could be a new crisis in the Balkans by Christmas. There is a direct threat to our national security, and we must take decisive action now to prevent it.

We need to reinforce the military presence in the region now, by drawing on some of NATO's dedicated operational reserve, to prevent trouble to prevent trouble later. We need diplomatic action, sending a clear message to President Putin now that we expect Russia to play a responsible role, and sending a clear message to the political leaders in the Balkans that they, too, have a choice to make.

And the choice is straightforward. You can choose a stable and peaceful future, with the full backing of the international community. Or you can choose belligerence and conflict, with the full condemnation and united action of the international community.

There are big issues at stake again in the Balkans, and a real danger that one area that had been showing promising progress could, if we let it, come off the rails once more.

European politicians like to describe the Balkans as a European problem. And, in a strict geographical sense, I suppose that's true. But I don't see them as a "European problem," any more than I see Afghanistan as an "Asian problem."

The truth of the matter is that in this interconnected world we are all in this together. Instability in the Balkans, with all the dangers that would bring, would be a threat to us all.

No country has done more in the last decade to bring peace and stability to that reason than the United States. No country has the clout, from Sarejevo to Skopje, from Belgrade to Tirana that you do. And as we cope with a new period of turbulence in the Balkans, you are entitled to look to the Europeans to carry their fair share of the burden, especially on the military front.

But as we enter this final chapter, your continued engaged will be crucial in seeing this endeavor through to success, and ensuring that the gains of recent years are made permanent. After the catastrophe of the war we achieved a huge amount together in the Balkans in the last decade.

In 2014, it will be one hundred years since that shot was fired in Sarajevo that rang out around the world. A century later, our task, together, is to do all we can to ensure that this corner of Europe is finally liberated from its demons of the past -- for its own sake, but also for ours.

Thank you very much for listening.

(Applause.)

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, Mr. Cameron, thank you very much for a comprehensive and, I would say, unambiguous and thoughtful presentation on the problems facing us in the Balkans.

Without further ado, I'd like to open it up to the audience. I should say I'm Daniel Benjamin, by the way, Director of the Center on the U.S. and Europe.

And I would ask just that you make your questions very brief. We don't have a lot of time for Q&A, and please ensure that there's a question mark at the end.

Mike Haltzel.

MR. HALTZEL: Thank you. I'm Mike Haltzel from the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University, SAIS -- School of Advanced International Studies.

Thank you for a truly spectacular talk.

Very briefly, you mentioned that a referendum on Republika Srpska would violate Dayton, and hence is off the table. Let me just, in two sentences, say that that's absolutely true. There's a second and, to me, more important reason.

In the spring of 1992, on what's now the territory of the Republika Srpska, there was a Muslim plurality. The only reason that a referendum today would yield, in all likelihood a majority -- strong majority -- for changing the borders is because of genocide and ethnic cleansing. I would certainly hope that my government and your government and your party to object to that in the strongest terms, and bring that argument into play.

My question is the following.

Russian President Putin, on several occasions, has made -- has tried to make a parallel between Kosovo and Apasia, South Acetia, and Transmystria(?). I found this argument, these parallels totally unconvincing. I wonder if you could comment on how you see it.

MR. CAMERON: Okay. Thank you.

You're absolutely right about Bosnia. I think people who want to sort of give up on Bosnia need to actually take a look at Macedonia, which is a state with a complex ethnic mix, with a large number of Kosovo Albanians but, you know, has actually been able to -- I'm sorry, Albanians -- has actually been able to work as a country. And I think Bosnia can work, and the Dayton Peace Accords are there, and we should defend them.

You're absolutely right, there should be no parallel between what is happening in Kosovo -- where, clearly, the Kosovo people are not going to accept being part of Serbia. There's no parallel between that, which is a special situation, and anything that might be happening in parts of the Russian Federation. And we should reassure the Russians about that. There should be no linkage between those things.

But, likewise, they shouldn't try to link what happens in Kosovo with what happens in Bosnia.

MR. BENJAMIN: Reg Dale.

MR. DALE: Hello, I'm Reginald Dale of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

You spoke several times -- emphasized -- the need for EU solidarity on this point. And I was wondering more generally what you think about the current mechanisms for the formulation of the EU common foreign policy, whether you think they're the right ones, and whether the former Prime Minister Blair actually achieved a satisfactory result for Britain in the agreement on the new reform treaty which you want to have put to a referendum?

MR. CAMERON: No, I don't think that the Reform Treaty is right for Europe. I think it passes too much power from the nation states to the European Union. I think Europe should spend less time on -- much less time -- on the sort of institutional-driven changes of frankly staring at its own navel and having endless rounds of greater institutional changes and greater power to the center, which is one of the reasons why my party and I want to have the referendum that we promised at the last election, that the Labor government promised at the last election. And we would oppose that Reform Treaty. We think it's the European Constitution in all but name. And we think it's the wrong direction for Europe.

And I think, actually, what this issue shows is it's not a problem of not having more institutional ways to reach common positions that is the problem in Europe, it is actually political will, and

the necessary political will for us to work with the Americans and to learn the lessons of history.

To me the lessons -- you know, this is very recent history, the history that even people my age are old enough to have lived through and have learned -- which is that when in the 1990s the Europeans and Americans got separated from each other, and we didn't take firm, swift, decisive, united action in the Balkans, it led to incredible bloodshed.

Now, we should learn that lesson and get on and have that unity of purpose between Europe and America. And I don't think it helps particularly for Europe to spend another period of time navel-gazing rather than getting on with the important jobs it has in front of it.

(Pause.)

Sorry -- William, do you want to add to that, as our —

MR. HAGUE: There's no need to add much. David, you've stated the reasons why we were opposed to the EU Treaty. It's not wholly clear what that treaty means in foreign policy, but there was a protocol attached to it which was meant to protect the independence of the United Kingdom's foreign policy, although one of the advisors to the House of Commons European Affairs Committee has said that may be

meaningless legally. So, really, that is to be seen in the future, what the impact of that will be on foreign policy.

But we do not think that the current European need change. As David has just said, it doesn't need institutional change, it needs the will to do certain things across Europe. And that is true on the subject that David has been talking about now, and it is true on other subject, such as on Iran, where we really need a more determined approach from European nations as a whole to apply financial sanctions, for instance, to Iran in a peaceful, multilateral, legitimate way alongside the United States.

And that can only come from those nations' mustering the will and deciding to do so, not from changing the institutional arrangement.

MS. DRUKOWSKI: Hi. Rachel Drukowski, from American University.

I wanted to know what your thoughts were on how sustainable it is for Bosnia's government to remain as it is. I mean, it has a couple different parliaments, different presidents. There are so many different committees they don't get a lot done, they don't compromise much between the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnians and Croats.

So do you think that can remain like that and that Bosnia can move forward into the EU with that situation?

MR. CAMERON: Well, it's a very, very good question. I mean, as was famously said, "Jaw-jaw is better than war-war." And Bosnia is a good summary of that.

It's extraordinarily complicated, making sure that parties that were previously fighting and killing each other are now working together and trying to make that country work. It is very complicated.

But far better that than to try and, as I said in my speech, dismember that country and try and redraw some lines on a map -- which can't be done anyway -- in order to try and produce sort of ethnically pure countries.

You know, Bosnia is a country that can work. As I said, I think Macedonia and other countries with different ethnic makeups show that it can work. But it's patient, painstaking, incredibly difficult work.

I think Bosnia really shows the difficulty of nation-building. It's essential we do it, but it shows how difficult and how long it takes when you have those ethnic divisions. But far better that than any of the alternatives.

And, as I hope I explained in my speech, the investment we put in over the years of time, and of people, and of expertise and of the military, as well, has actually meant real success for the other countries in the Balkans, as well -- for Slovenia, for Croatia and for Montenegro.

MR. HAGUE: May I just add to that that one of the reasons we're advocating what we're advocating today is to make sure that people realize there is nothing to be gained from not working together; that incentives not to work together are removed; and that they can see the will of the international community that what was agreed at Dayton will be implemented, and will be built on that.

So it's a very important reason.

MR. CAMERON: If we don't send that clear signal, then actually they'll grow apart rather than work together. That's absolutely a vital point.

MR. BENJAMIN: I want to intervene here and ask one question.

You talked about Russia as having two choices, before. And Russia's obviously a clear part of the equation here. Your own country has had a particularly rough ride lately with Moscow.

Should Russia make the choice, that is from our perspective, the not preferred one, what would your recommendation be? What are our options then?

MR. CAMERON: Well, I think with the issue in front of us here, in the Balkans we just have to go ahead with the right answer for Kosovo. The Kosovan people can't forever have their future put off. And they are on a road towards some form of independence. And if we can't have agreement through the troika process, then we will have to deliver it in another way.

I don't think backing down, or in any way appeasing a Russia that wants to behave badly would be the right answer. But I think all the time -- as I tried to in my speech -- we need to set out the very clear choice. Because there is no sort of sinister plot here by the West to sort of make Russia weak. Quite the reverse of it. We want a Russia that's fully engaged in the world, that's working with us on the big problems in front of us, such as Iran. And they should understand our motives and motivations, which I think I've set out very clearly.

AMBASSADOR POLT: My name is Mike Polt. I was Bill Montgomery's successor as U.S. Ambassador in Serbia the last three years. And I certainly would associate the United States government's views very strongly with what you just said in terms of the resolve we

need to show to put this issue through its next phase. And it's a phase that's achievable.

You called on the United States to remain engaged and to come in together and go out together, as we used to say, and continue to say.

My question to you would be is how much European resolve, in your view, can be counted on to make sure that we are together in actually seeing these things through at this very difficult phase after December 10, when we know what the outcome is going to be from the current troika process. What's your assessment of that?

MR. CAMERON: Well, my assessment would be: quite good. I think this is not an area of disagreement between, particularly, between the Conservative Party and the British government. I think you'll find, you know, the British government will want to work very strongly with the Americans to get the sort of outcomes we've been talking about.

I think within Europe we have a special responsibility to try and persuade any European partners that are -- if I can put it this way -- sort of heading in a different direction, who think that actually we should soft-pedal on Dayton, and send softer signals to Serbia. We need to,

you know, remind them of the lessons of history, as I've put in my speech.

But I think generally there is an understanding in Europe of how badly wrong things went in the '90s. It is a very dark chapter for European countries, what happened at Srebrenica and elsewhere.

So I think there is a -- you know, there's an understanding of how this can go wrong. And I think the British, with our links to, very strong links to the U.S. and through NATO have a real responsibility for trying to marshal opinion in the right direction, which is part of what the speech was about today.

AMBASSADOR POLT: Let me follow up with one thing.

If you can't get European Union consensus, which is generally something that is assumed, there will not be full consensus. Are you willing to go with the dirty words of "coalition of the willing" as far as the Europeans are concerned?

MR. CAMERON: In a short answer -- yes. I think we can get, you know, consensus amongst the leading players in Europe for what I'm talking about.

But one of the reasons, going back to the European question, for our skepticism about endlessly trying to fashion mechanisms for delivering some common policy is that actually what

matters is that, in the end, the leading European powers like Britain, working with the U.S., work together to make sure we make the right decisions.

And I think our skepticism is sometimes well founded, if I can put it that way.

MR. BENJAMIN: You, sir. Don't turn around.

MR. ALIFERIS: Alex Aliferis, with the American Hellenic Institute.

It seems like you a bit contradicted yourself. Let me give an example.

We talk about how Skopje negotiated with the Albanians to create the Ohrid Agreement. But we're not doing the same thing with Serbia and Kosovo. It's a similar situation. The Albanians in each of those countries rebelled against the capitals, the authorities, to create sort of an independent structure. But in Skopje, we -- you know, the European and the British and the Americans -- they agreed to the Ohrid Agreement.

To Kosovo, independence is the only option, since in Kosovo, let me remind you, the Albanians rebelled. There were a couple of extremists that rebelled against Belgrade.

Serbia was acting in its national interest, as you say in your first principle, that a state must secure itself. The same thing was going on with Serbia.

Now, why are you promoting independence for Kosovo, instead of creating a similar agreement from the Ohrid Agreement to implement with Kosovo and Serbia? Why can't that be a solution? Why are we redrawing the borders in the Balkans?

In World War I, Austria-Hungary intervened in the Balkans. All these other external European countries intervened in the Balkans and created a mess.

Why aren't you -- what are your views? Can't -- can the U.K. and the U.S. agree to a similar Ohrid Agreement with Serbia and Kosovo?

MR. CAMERON: I mean, it's an extremely good question. It almost needs another speech to answer it entirely.

But I would say is this. I mean, in the case of Kosovo you cannot put the genie back in the bottle. Serbia did to Kosovo what Serbia did to Kosovo. And it is unthinkable that Kosovo -- over 90 percent ethnic Kosovo Albanians -- are going to want to be part of Serbia. That is a reality and a fact.

And so it's only right that negotiations have taken place, and did under Martti Ahtisaari, to try and get an agreement, which the Kosovo Albanians were prepared to accept. Something way less than full independence.

So I think that is a fact.

And in terms of, you know, have we tried to negotiate with Serbia, I would say yes. And, of course, you know Serbia itself was a signature to the Dayton Accords.

So I don't think you're actually being quite fair in trying to draw an equivalence there. But I think in the case -- and that's why we shouldn't link Kosovo with what's happening in Bosnia. Because what's happened in Bosnia is, you know, signed up to at the Dayton Accords. And I think that's very clear.

MS. SINCLAIR: Thank you. Melissa Sinclair with the National Defense University. And I just have two quick things.

One is a plug for a paper that we published last month on the issue of Kosovo, is its independence a precedent for Russia's (inaudible). And also gets a bit to the answer to this question, as well. Just how does the Kosovo case differ from other -- can we make links to other places.

And, basically, just to give you the big headliner, is that it's not -- it's beyond comparing apples to oranges, it's really trying to compare apples to Oreos to say that Kosovo is similar to these other places, for various reasons. And it goes into about 30 to 40 pages of analysis on that.

So that's number one.

But my question to you, sir, is: I always find it interesting that the carrot that you talk about for this region is EU membership. And, really, with all due respect, it rings a bit hollow. Because, you know, is that going to happen any time soon? Not only is it the carrot, but it's the threat, too. "If you don't do what we want, we won't give you EU membership."

Are there any other things that you can say, any other carrots that you can give, for why these countries should do what we want them to do?

MR. CAMERON: It's a very good -- thank you for telling me about your paper. I think I need some reading on the way home.

(Laughter.)

And it sounds like a very good thing for me to read.

In terms of carrots, EU membership really is a carrot. And my party has always for the widening of the European Union -- you

know, for many, many years we've said, you know, don't concentrate on trying to make this Union more and more of an inward looking, tighter political union. Let's open it, let's widen it. Let's make it about trade and cooperation, and not just a narrow clique of prosperous Western European countries. Let's get others in.

And widening the European Union has happened. And it's been an enormous success story. And, you know, when you go and -- I was in Prague last weekend -- you go and look at these countries that, you know, managed to get out of communism and break down the Berlin Wall, and break free from Soviet expansionism and join the European Union -- it's been a great success story.

And in terms of a development policy, there's no doubt that the sort of impetus of the economic reforms needed to join the European Union has done countries like Rumania and Hungary, Slovenia and others, has done them an enormous amount of good. So it is a meaningful carrot, and a carrot that countries want to get hold of. And so we shouldn't under emphasize that.

And also the recent round of enlargement was -- we were told by those who wanted a deeper European Union, this can't happen until we have the constitution. Well, actually, that was wrong. It did happen. It has happened. And we still haven't got the constitution.

So, you know, it is a realistic carrot.

Other carrots? NATO membership is also important to these countries. If you go to Macedonia, for instance, you know, they'd almost mention NATO membership before membership of the European Union. This is something they feel very passionately about. So those carrots.

But with EU membership comes all sorts of benefits in terms of trade and development. And that's why I think it is so meaningful.

I think a lot of it is also about engagement. You know, one of the things Britain still has as a power is we are, you know, effective at diplomacy in Europe and elsewhere, and a lot of it is actually about engagement and contacts, and it's very important that we have that level of contact.

So I think the carrots are meaningful. I think there's NATO as well as the EU. And I think actually we can, as I said in my speech, use that to make a meaningful difference.

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, I'm afraid that I'm being informed from the back of the room that we have time for just one more question.

So -- the gentleman here.

MR. CHASTAIN: Yes, sir -- I'm Ken Chastain, from the Army Staff.

I have a question about Northern Kosovo. We tend to speak of Kosovo as an entity. However, although Kosovo may be 90 percent Albanian, the 10 percent -- or a little less than 10 percent -- that is still Serbian, half of them are concentrated in the north, especially the districts north of the Ibar.

And of those Serbs in the north, they are so anti -- so much against the government that in the recent elections this month, there were only five Serbians that voted in Northern Kosovo in the elections.

So the question is: they have threatened to formally partition at the Ibar and rejoin Serbia, if Kosovo declares independence. What is the appropriate response?

MR. CAMERON: Well, I think two points. One is, as you say, only five percent. I mean, as I said in my speech, there are a large number of ethnic Serbians, if you like, living in Kosovo, but not in areas contiguous to Serbia, so an attempt to redraw the boundary doesn't solve that problem.

I would also draw on experience from Northern Ireland. You know, this has been a huge issue in British politics for centuries --

but certainly since (inaudible), since the creation of Northern in the 1920s. And every few years somebody comes along and says why don't we just try and draw a line around Londonderry and, you know, through Thurmanor and this -- it doesn't work. You have to actually make, encourage people in Northern Ireland, to share power and work together, and create a better future for themselves. And actually that is what's now happening in Northern Ireland. And that's to the great credit of all sides who've come together to deliver that.

And I think the same applies with the situation in Kosovo, that endless border redrawing is not going to solve the problem for us. We do need, as I said in my speech, proper guarantees for Serbian minority rights in Kosovo. That has to be an important part of the piece.

MR. BENJAMIN: Okay. Well, David Cameron has an important appointment a few blocks to the south of here, at 1600 Pennsylvania. So we dare not keep him long.

But I do want to thank him, and William Hague, for coming for a wide-ranging, terrifically informative and very thoughtful discussion today.

And I hope you all will join me in giving him a strong round of applause.

(Applause.)

MR. CAMERON: Thank you. Thank you very much.

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