

I want to thank initially ELIAMEP for doing consistently what it has been doing for the past 10 years which is to initiate intelligent debates, and as we can see even on not very sexy subjects like Kosovo to have such a big crowd here. Of course special thanks to Thanos Veremis and Ted Kouloumbis who have been doing this for such a period of time. Every time we discuss negotiations and somebody asked me the other day in an interview “how do you feel about the negotiations?” and I said I felt I’m going through a boring period of time. Most people think it is a very exciting period of time but it’s actually boring because you repeat the same formulas, you present your case, you have an arbiter who says “yes you are right” “no you are not right”, “listen to this” “listen to the other”, you try to establish principles, the other side establishes it’s own principles and after a period of time you read it in the book and see it as a big historical achievement of a nerve-breaking experience etc., when it is actually a very suffocating, boring experience and people should be doing other things in the meantime. But because you have a conflict you need to do this and because every day is a conflict you are basically every day going through this boring experience and negotiating many things. Let me bring to you what I feel when I get into negotiations. I try to think in terms of images, in terms of things I had lived through, and try to think about those images and how to integrate them into the negotiating process. In March of 1988 there was a demonstration in Pristina and on that day I was walking on the street and it was full of tear gas. The Kosovar Albanians were demonstrating against the Serbian imposition of a new constitution. This was the last time the Serbs and the Kosovar Serbs in Belgrade tried to settle things among their selves without the help of the international community. The Kosovo Albanians were protesting and the state authority of Serbia was shooting at them, and this was the dialogue. On that particular day when I was out on the street with plenty of tear gas, a girl named Aphrodita, she was 16, she came from a village close by Pristina, not knowing there was a demonstration, was given money by her parents to buy shoes. This is the first time she went to the city to buy shoes. She got to the city center, she knew exactly the shop where she wanted to buy the shoes. She bought the shoes and as she went out there was a full crowd of Kosovo Albanians demonstrating, wanting that the constitution to remain as it is. The police started shooting at them and they killed Aphrodita with her shoes. She fell at that part of the street. Now this was a girl who didn’t know anything about the constitution, didn’t know anything about Serb Albanian dialogue; she just wanted to get her shoes and she was just a character in this whole story. But she was a character in this whole story because she was Kosovo Albanian, and she was a character because she was a Kosovo Albanian which the state could kill indiscriminately, and it had been doing so for the next 11 years. Girls like her, or armed men, or unarmed children, had been killed over these 11 years, with a license to kill from the State. Now, after that came the period of time when we negotiated, or we tried to negotiate something in the Rambouillet, and that was with the help of the international community, and that failed and we went through bombing; or that did not fail and we went through bombing, however you want to see it. Here we are again, six years after the bombing, trying to find out how to readdress, how to repackage this whole negotiating process. From the period when Aphrodita was killed, to the point of negotiations, in Rambouillet, one form of state, one form of statehood also died, because once you kill indiscriminately your own people, your state dies, and that happened to socialist Yugoslavia. That happened afterwards to what is called Serbia and Montenegro, whatever it is called – Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. That’s why we have returned now to see what will be the new basics, what will be the new principles for building a peace agreement. There have been no

successful, no other successful formats, for state-building and for resolving the conflict in Europe than Euro-Atlantic integration. And after years and years of repetition that we want to through Euro-Atlantic integration, we have now reached a point in which this is a common thought, a common belief. It is a common thought in Europe, and it is a common thought in Southeastern Europe. Most of the elites in all of this region have been advocating the integration into Southeastern Europe and the Euro-Atlantic integration. Now, what does Euro-Atlantic integration mean in the 21st Century? If one would say what are the three things that you identify with Euro-Atlantic integration and with these states in the 21st Century, the response would probably be that A) you think of democratic functionality of the state, a functioning democracy with a reasonable economy, B) you think of a system of shared values in this community, in this Euro-American community, C) and, you think of sovereignty, but the notion of sovereignty which you enjoy and you are willing to give part of it for this community and for the benefits that this community creates for you.

What was the conflict that produced Aphrodita's death about? It was a non-democratic functioning state (it was functioning but it was not democratic), it was functioning up until the point that it began killing its own citizens. It was totally lacking in shared values, and you could see this in the disintegration of federal states, both in Yugoslavia and in the Soviet Union. And it was lack of sovereignty, lack of sovereignty in the sense that you do not have the democratic rights to make decisions, to be responsible, in order to be responsible for them.

What we have had in the last seven years with the UN administration in Kosova, has been basically an evolution from oppression to a protectorate. Now if there is one word to put this evolution into these three issues that we raised, as issues of Euro-Atlantic identity, then where we are going is from repressive functionality, a repressive Serbian state that functioned, kept Albanians suppressed, into a gradual introduction of self rule, but a gradual dysfunction as well, because the in present state of affairs, in which the UN runs one part of the job, and the Kosovar authorities runs another, simply doesn't work: it is dysfunctional.

Now, we have had a gradual build up of values, we have had an intervention of values that unfortunately did not create an automatic system of values. If you have NATO intervening militarily, that does not mean that you automatically have 2 million inhabitants of Kosova abiding by those principles. Because, in order for those values to exist, you need institutions to nurture them. You take functional democracies with a long tradition in democracy, with rule of law, with a functioning economy. Go to London. Leave London one week without electricity, without cops, without judges, and you will see what kind of civilized London you will find after a week. All you need are a hundred hooligans to exercise the right of terrorizing the majority, the law-abiding majority.

And in this evolution, we have had no right to decide, we the Kosovar people, we the citizens of Kosova, no right to decide, therefore no right to become responsible of our decisions. Because if you can not decide, you cannot be held responsible for what other people decide about/for you.

The status today is a rather simple situation. The outcome is fairly imaginable as of today. The status as portrayed in the non-negotiable principles of the Contact group, are that Kosovo will not return to its status before 1999, it will not be partitioned, and it cannot unite with other territories, either partially or totally. That basically leaves a way forward, that does not leave a way forward. The only way backward is conflict i.e. the only way backwards is coming under Serbian rule, and that is discarded as a principle within these negotiations.

The question of the status is actually the question that was presented by ELIAMEP. It is how to create conditions for Euro-Atlantic integration of the region and of the countries per-se, of the entities, if you will. The answer to the question then is not whether independence, but how independence. The question isn't independence or autonomy, the question is independence as a way into Euro-Atlantic integration. And the how is again in the three questions, the three identifications of Euro-Atlantic integration. The democratic functionality of the state means full decision making capabilities. Independence may not make Kosova automatically a democratic society, similar to Switzerland, but without independence, Kosova can never be a democratic society. You need to have a roof over your head in order to arrange the rooms.

Shared values, standards, which have in one way or another been imposed, suggested, or whatever by the international community, are actually a buying time exercise, while the real standards are the ones that have transformed Europe, the European Union. Copenhagen criterion is what the Kosovars need. Because Copenhagen criterion is what the Kosovars can understand in terms of what takes them after those Copenhagen criteria are achieved.

And sovereignty, sovereignty is not the 19th Century idea of flags, of kings, of princes. Sovereignty means "contractuality." Sovereignty means the right of Kosova to have a contract with the European Union, without that right to [enter into contracts] Kosova cannot be part of the European Union. It is very simple. And it cannot address its needs in terms of economy and in terms of neighboring countries.

Now, the negotiations on how, not on whether, mean that we will deal basically with two issues. The first one is the nature of the international presence. In the Contact Group's principles, it is said that after the status has been defined, there will be a continuous military and civilian international presence. In military terms it is rather easy. It is NATO after NATO. It is basically K-4 and how ever it is going to be called. In civilian terms it is about making a strategic decision in principle. What does the international community want and where it is at its best. The European Union has demonstrated that its greatest strength is in its soft capacity of transformation. The way to induce changes in the society, in being in these ministries and getting bored with figures, and the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Agriculture, and all the ministries, but actually trying to change the way these ministries think and what they want to achieve. The future international presence needs to have two of its strengths. The European component, which is transformation of the society, and the American component that helps in terms of rule of law and in terms of building capacity for the democratization and for the strengthening of the institutions of security.

That is one issue. The other issue is about minority communities. They are people that need special attention because of their ethnic component. And in this sense our negotiating team is preparing a series of suggestions, a series of platforms and documents. I myself have been engaged personally with the minority communities, and the results are something that is feasible, something that is doable. We have addressed as a list all the needs of minority communities, from the supplementary education in Aroma? Which I believe not many European countries have, to the issue of supplementary education for Turkish speaking teachers, so they can have additional Albanian and Serb language education. The question of forming new municipalities also on the basis of ethnicity, and not only for Serbs but also for the Bosniacs and for other peoples. But when you go through all the list, you see that you have ten communities which do not represent a position in territorial terms, and you have a community that represented by Belgrade, makes its case in territorial terms. The issue is to devise it in the simplest possible terms. And this is what we will

be dealing with in our contacts with the delegation in Belgrade. We will be dealing with the so-called platform of time. We will be dealing with the past, the present, and the future. We have open grievances with Belgrade and probably Belgrade has open grievances with us. Since 1989 we have been occupied, or institutions have been suspended, Milosevic installed an apartheid regime. He also installed war as a pattern of behavior, and that created losses, and those losses need to be present at those negotiations. The killed, the missing people, there are more than 3,000 people unaccounted for six years after the conflict. They need to be accounted for. Not because we do justice to their families, but because by burying them, we bury also part of the war we carry in our souls. These negotiations are about burying the war also. There are 120,000 houses that have been totally or partially destroyed by the Serbian authorities. There are 200 million euros that have been robbed by Milosevic from the pension fund to finance wars in Croatia, in Slovenia, in Bosnia. And there are many other grievances of this sort from the past. In the present it is about trying to find a way to solve the problems, and it is about establishing a principle. Either we discuss about land or we discuss about territory, I mean people or territory. We are not willing to discuss about territory, we are willing to discuss about people. And that means what do the Serbs need in order to feel and to be a part of a new society, of a new state.

And the third issue is the future. In the future, and maybe this should have come first, but this was the question by ELIAMEP, it is how do we see our selves as part of the European Union in ten or fifteen years time? And if we have this as a framework for our future, then maybe we can discuss in other terms where we see the solutions for the present. The Kosovar delegation, with many of its hardships and ****flip tape over**** we do not expect Serbia to actually make a determination of our status. We are not willing to talk to Belgrade, neither directly nor via Vienna, about what our status should be. We are willing to talk, very much so, about what can be done to preserve and further develop the interests of the Serb people in Kosova, the Serb cultural heritage in Kosova, its monuments; and, how to see this as part of a shared identity. Kosova is not about domination, it is about how we can share, together, a joint identity.

Thank you.