

Distinguished Faculty,
Dear Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be invited to address the John F. Kennedy Forum at the Kennedy School, and a privilege to be back at Harvard. I thank Harvard's President, Larry Summers, as well as the Kennedy School's Dean David Ellwood, and Elaine Papoulias, the Director of the Kokkalis Program. I had the pleasure to meet them all earlier today. Harvard University is well served by such brilliant individuals. Thank you all for the invitation. I am honoured to be standing on the same stage on which my dear friend Zoran Djindjic—the assassinated Prime Minister of Serbia—once stood. Zoran and I shared a vision for Serbia, and for South-East Europe.

Today, as we approach the fifth anniversary of the October 5th democratic revolution in Serbia, I want to talk to you about that vision—a vision that my friends in Georgia and Ukraine took up during the Rose Revolution, and the Orange Revolution. So today, I want to discuss with you the future of democracy in South-East Europe.

Ensuring the growth of democracy is the most important legacy this generation's regional leaders can give to their children. Only together can we fully consolidate democracy in the most volatile corner of Europe. And the way to do it is through full Euro-Atlantic and European integration. This is our goal.

South-East Europe can become a new Euro-Atlantic strategic anchor. My region can build another bridge across the Atlantic in a troubled time for an Alliance that serves both a political and a military function.

Already, the various governments of South-East Europe have contributed to fighting the war on terror, by apprehending suspected terrorists and shutting down terror cells. But our work is not done, the war on terror rages on, and challenges remain. The Euro-Atlantic integration of South-East Europe contributes to regional security and stability. It contributes to consolidating the region's democracy. It will strengthen and unify the region. And it will accelerate the pace at which South-East Europe will move toward European integration.

The European Union accession process will also secure the region's prosperity. This is in Europe's strategic interest. This is why the EU remains committed to integrating South-East Europe. And as we move toward EU accession, we must use the financial mechanisms provided to the region's countries to contribute toward reducing poverty. Because it is morally unacceptable for poverty and democracy to coexist in a 21st-century Europe. And in South-East Europe, substantially reducing poverty can hardly take place without an increase in FDI. Foreign direct investment contributes to stability, without which there can be no prosperity.

Further, this double movement to Brussels—PfP and NATO, on the one hand, the EU on the other—will contribute to fighting organized crime at a regional level as well. Organized criminal activity has become a real threat to stability and prosperity—not only in Kosovo, my country's southern province under UN administration since June 1999, but throughout the region. Fighting cross-border organized crime is a vital regional issue, and increased cross-border cooperation is essential. With the help of Brussels, we must establish transparent mechanisms to effectively manage our borders, while facilitating the efficient flow of people and goods. Crime must not increase as trade increases. We must act forcefully to combat the gangs that traffic in drugs, women and children. Regrettably, much of this trafficking passes through Kosovo. This must stop.

Serbia is the keystone, the pillar, in the cause of advancing democracy in South-East Europe. For as we all know, my country has traditionally played an important, critical, role in leading the region. While seeking a more hopeful future, we must never forget our most recent past. This is why I am working hard to solidify democratic change in Serbia. This is the best way to draw our neighbours toward us.

This cannot be done—democracy cannot flourish—without a full and open account of the past. We must take down the walls of mythology and tear down the heroic labels of men who committed atrocities in our name. Full reconciliation is in our national interest. That is why I have consistently called for full and immediate cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. All those who committed crimes must be held accountable.

We have a responsibility to our children not only to confront the past but also plan for the future. And in South-East Europe, the greatest challenge to a democratic future remains Kosovo. Resolving the future

status of Kosovo must be done in a way that does not violate the UN Charter. And it must contribute to regional security, and to the security of Europe.

The principles of the security of Europe are codified in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and reaffirmed in the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe—the first statement of security principles of post-communist Europe.

The gist of Helsinki, for our purposes, is this: Peaceful settlements of disputes; protection of human rights and especially minority rights; and border changes *only by consent*.

Helsinki reaffirms the distinction the UN Charter makes between self-determination and independence. It does so in the context of preserving the territorial integrity of states. This gives even more weight to the constitutional duty I have as President to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia.

The solution to Kosovo must be the product of consent, not coercion. Of course, the legitimate interests of Kosovo's Albanians must be taken into account. We must work together to find a unique solution to a unique challenge.

If we are not careful, an awful precedent could be created. This would lead to instability in the region, in Europe, and in other parts of the world. And it could mean the end of democracy in Serbia: Because the future status of Kosovo and Metohija is inseparable from the future status of Serbia's democracy. And it is inseparable from the future status of the region.

In diplomacy, as you know, it is often necessary to speak delicately. When giving a speech on the future of one's country, it is sometimes necessary to speak simply. Simply said, we can succeed or fail. If we succeed, we will cement the region's democratic revolutions. If we fail, we could plunge South-Eastern Europe back to the violence and instability of the recent past.

How should we define success? How can we cement the region's democratic revolutions? Together, we must embark on a journey that leads to a strategic solution. This solution cannot be an expedient one, based on abstract promises. Rather, it must be based on concrete results achieved on the ground. On deeds, not words. In this light, I see Serbia's proactive role in Kosovo's future status talks as an

opportunity, not a liability. It is an opportunity precisely because the stakes are so high: The future of our democracy, and the future of the region as a whole.

For our part, Belgrade has already acknowledged that the future status of Kosovo will not resemble that of the 1990s. And in the near future, we intend to put forward concrete proposals on several issues. These include: First, moving the process of decentralization forward and demilitarizing Kosovo; Second, the sustainable return of the more than 200,000 cleansed Serbs, Roma, Turks and others to Kosovo; Third, genuine promotion of democracy, protection of human rights standards and safeguarding of religious freedom.

A vital issue in the multiethnic future status of Kosovo is decentralization. For the Serbs and other non-Albanians of Kosovo, a comprehensive decentralization plan is not simply an issue of better governance. It is an issue of security that will enable expelled Serbs to return to Kosovo.

And just a few days ago, a delegation of Serbs and Albanians met in Vienna to discuss moving forward on a comprehensive decentralization plan. So after years of stalling, it seems that we may finally be moving in a positive direction on this vital issue.

While this positive movement is long overdue, we must not neglect the fact that the situation in Kosovo is much worse than any of us would like it to be. What I saw when I travelled to Kosovo in February shocked me profoundly. The worst sort of tyranny of the majority reigns over Kosovo. The province's Serbs, Roma, Turks and other non-Albanians live in the worst conditions in Europe. We cannot gloss over the tragic reality of everyday life for Serbs as we approach Kosovo's future status talks. To do so would blind us to the historic opportunity before us. An opportunity to bring prosperous, democratic stability to the entire region.

Double standards may work in dictatorships but have no place in democratic diplomacy. Choosing the right path for this region may not be the most obvious or the easiest. But I say to you, let us take up the challenge and do what needs to be done to conquer the past and build a better future for South-East Europe: A future of cooperation and integration, a future free of fear, suspicion and mistrust.

By bringing together compromise and principle, we can move faster toward total regional security and stability. A unified Western Balkans, moving strongly toward European integration.

Together, by working toward a mutually-acceptable solution, we can reconcile our interests with our values. And we can show the world what we can do when we choose reason over passion, dialogue over destruction, reconciliation over revenge.

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Yesterday, I walked along the river. On the way, in JFK Memorial Park, I saw a quote by President Kennedy.

He addressed the Massachusetts legislature in January 1961, before his inauguration in Washington. And this is what he said.

“When at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each of us, recording whether in our brief span of service we fulfilled our responsibilities to the state, our success or failure [...] will be measured by the answers to four questions: First, were we truly men of courage? Second, were we truly men of judgment? Third, were we truly men of integrity? Finally were we truly men of dedication?”

And I thought hard about what President Kennedy had said. And how true his words remain today. Are we up to the challenge? Can we create a region where children can be proud of their parents, and parents can be proud of their children? I believe we can.

With some imagination, a little good will, and a strategic vision of where the future lies, we can be such men.

I thank you for your attention.