



STEVEN ERLANGER

Chief Diplomatic Correspondent, Europe, for the *New York Times*

Ladies and gentlemen, those happy few – I'm sorry about you being denied half of your lunch, I think we should tell the organizers. I don't think Kevin Rudd would have minded that people eat while he was describing Xi Jinping's views of the world.

And here we have a wonderful panel to describe for us Europe's issues. I'm Steven Erlanger, with the *New York Times*. I've been to lots of places, now in Brussels as the European diplomatic correspondent. One of those interesting things I think about today is Poland is voting. That's one of those things that actually matters, and Hungary's preparing to vote and another one of those things that actually matters – because it goes right to the heart of whether Europe holds itself together on issues, principles and rule of Law, whether Europe decides to reformulate its idea of integration. Then we have all these other issues which you all know I think, we have disputes over immigration, we have issues over islamophobia, we have questioning from the *gilets jaunes* to the AfD to Brexit which is a live issue that remains and which I don't think the European Union has yet absorbed all of the consequences. But it's already creating a new coalition inside the European Union and it's creating a kind of anxiety about the power of France, especially with Germany seeming so paralyzed now by its political impasse and by a coalition that, as they used to say about empires, long ago disappeared but never went away.

So what I thought I would do with your indulgence is because we have so many wonderful panelists and so little time, I've told our panelists not to stand up and give speeches for ten minutes in a row, because that's no good for them and no good for you. I'm going to ask a few questions, we're going to try to have a conversation and then I actually want to go to you. So we have roughly eighty minutes so the first thing I want to do is just ask the panelists when they think about the problems of the European Union today, what are the one or two issues – only one or two issues, I don't want them to talk for more than two or three minutes – that seem most prominent to them.