



**Joschka Fischer**

## Not an island

*Europe and the Middle East*

An arms race in the Middle East would affect European security to an unimaginable degree, says Joschka Fischer. By drawing on its positive experience in conflict resolution, Europe can play a major role in averting such a development. But does it have the instruments and institutions to do so? Given the urgency of the situation in Middle East, can Europeans afford the luxury of being against Europe?

### Europe after 1989 — a success story denied



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Permit me to begin with a few thoughts about Europe, before we come to the Middle East. It is strange, but when you look at Europe today you get the impression that the better off Europeans are, and the more we succeed in rising to the challenges of the time and overcoming the demons of our history, the less popular this Europe becomes — especially among the younger generation. In the French referendum the majority of young people voted "no", even though it is their future that is at stake, and even though it is precisely for them that this Europe should hold a strong attraction.

Of course, there are populist arguments against Europe. However much we may criticize it — and nothing in a democracy, whether it be an institution or a person, is beyond criticism — a glance at the history books (and we're not only talking about the remote past but recent history as well) really ought to teach us what the alternatives to Europe are. Despite that, we find euroscepticism everywhere — today Europe meets with rejection in both the old and the new member states. That is why I would like to begin with this Europe of ours.

How important European enlargement is — and how unpopular! We only have to think back to 1989. Or let us go even further back: my generation should not forget that the world into which we were born after the War or towards the end of the War was a divided world. Europe was divided, Berlin was divided. The Austrians were fortunate enough to have a wise political leadership that was able to avert a lasting division of Austria in the 1950s by means of the state treaty.

But the world ended not far from Vienna, in the direction of Bratislava or to the north. At that time I was living in Frankfurt. A hundred kilometres to the east of Frankfurt my world ended and a completely new one began. The people on the other side of the Wall and the barbed wire lived under a communist dictatorship. Austria was neutral, but if this cold war had turned into a hot war, Austria would not have been able to keep out of it; geographical constraints

would have seen to that. That was the period of the greatest accumulation of military personnel, and of both nuclear and conventional weapons, in East and West. Military budgets increased year after year. We lived on a continent bristling with weapons and with the risk of an escalation into a hot war.

In 1989 this reality disappeared, overnight so to speak. This presented Europe with an unbelievable opportunity, the opportunity of becoming a continent of peace — if it could only succeed in bringing together the interests of all its nations. Which is no easy task. Believe me, sitting through never-ending negotiations in Brussels I said to myself more than once: "I can't stand this any longer!" But then when I saw neighbours sitting down together who in the past had gone to war over the questions they were now negotiating, I understood what great progress was represented by this peaceful way of settling conflicts of interest. And our own history as central Europeans has been far from happy. This may not be true of Great Britain or Scandinavia. But here in central Europe the question of peace means a great, great deal, not to say almost everything.

The idea of no longer relying on a system of "balance of power" in Europe, but on integration, does not in any way mean doing away with nations and nationalities! Anyone who wanted this would fail in Europe, and deservedly so. We have our different languages, histories, and cultures — this is all part of Europe, and as long as this variety does not lead to nationalism it is a very constructive, very important, and very positive part. When you look at Europe in this way, you can see a great opportunity to continue the process of integration by pursuing the resolution of conflicts of interest by means of common institutions, without creating a European superstate.

If you look at post-Cold War Europe from the outside, and at the same time if you analyse international developments, you cannot fail to be amazed that in present-day Europe it is so popular to be against Europe. Is it not surprising that it is possible in the respective domestic policies of the countries of Europe — and here I make no exceptions — to win votes with anti-European sentiments and so to block progress on Europe? As if one were doing something good, as if one were not damaging one's own interests!

A glance at our neighbouring countries immediately makes this clear, and not only with regard to the first half of the twentieth century. Everyone in this room will remember the break-up of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s. All of us sitting here now have been through this and felt the pain of it — it is part of our common experience. Once the Wall and the barbed wire had gone, issues that had long been suppressed during the Cold War flared up again. They had already existed in Tito's Yugoslavia and what followed was hardly a surprise. The national, or nationalistic, conflicts had all existed before, but during the Cold War they could not be fought out because any change in the position of Yugoslavia at that time would, or could, have given an advantage to one of the two great blocs and was therefore not permitted.

After the Cold War had ended and the Soviet Union had disappeared from the map, the war in the Balkans returned. It has taught us once again to understand that nationalism is not foreign to the European character. We can find it everywhere. It is, if you like, the dark side of the European identity, expressing itself differently in each individual nation. After the collapse of Yugoslavia, we saw how in Europe borders were suddenly once again being drawn in blood, and that mass expulsions, mass rape, and mass murder were again the order of the day. At that time, Austria received a great many refugees from the

former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia; Germany accepted two hundred and fifty thousand.

I myself, as German foreign minister, learnt how important it was to put a stop to this violent nationalism. It was a tremendous struggle for me to arrive at a view on this matter, since, like most Greens, I was committed to non-violence in the light of the history of our nation. But after Srebrenica, the greatest mass murder since the end of the Second World War, it was clear to me that the principle of non-violence cannot justify simply looking on when such a great wrong is being committed. It was a painful process for me — I make no bones about it — but we had to intervene. Intervention alone, however, was not enough. Rather, a European perspective had to be opened up to the nations concerned. Today, the importance of offering this incentive is not to be underestimated.

Many countries that are applying or have applied for membership of the European Union have been told time and time again: "Yes, you are Europe, but you don't really belong. Stay outside." There are strong reservations against the entry of Romania or Bulgaria, Albania or Macedonia. I want to stress this once again here in Vienna, where there are such close historical links with this region. We shall have to learn again the lesson that was first learnt in the 1990s: there can be no Europe of integration when alongside it is an "in-between Europe", which swings backwards and forwards between, on the one hand, the frustrations and disappointments over Brussels and the broken promises of the Europeans, and, on the other hand, the siren song of nationalism.

So the lesson we have to learn from the 1990s is that if we want to live in peace we cannot live according to two different principles. In our own interest, we must therefore tread this important but wearisome path of integration in this region too — however long it takes. Anyone who thinks this would be too costly does not really seem to appreciate what the break-up of Yugoslavia has actually meant morally, in terms of human life, and also in terms of the destruction of property and the costs arising from that. The moral price alone would be reason enough to take this lesson to heart.

We Europeans must learn — and evidently this is very difficult — that as nationals of Germany, Austria, Poland or France, alongside our respective traditions and interests, we increasingly have interests in common. And these common interests must be articulated. They must be brought together through a process of compromise and then find expression in a common European policy.



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## Europe's difficulties with its neighbours

We know from experience that we have always had problems with our neighbours. During the Cold War it was the Soviet Union that we were all afraid of, and rightly so. In the period following the end of the Cold War we had problems with the Balkans, with all its conflicts, which had been frozen and then broke out again, and where Europe reacted too late and, at first, in the wrong way — I take my share of the blame for this. Relations with our neighbours will continue to be our problem. Europe is not an island. And now, together with you, as citizens of Europe, I propose to analyse the challenges that arise from this situation and that we have to face, whether we like it or not. The decisions we take will decide the costs and the consequences that will ensue. But decide we must.

To what extent do our neighbours represent a challenge? In the north, Europe's border is relatively easy to define: it is the North Atlantic. In the west it is the Atlantic, in the south the Mediterranean, which scarcely divides us at all from our great neighbour that goes by the name of Africa. In the name of the historical and moral responsibility of the Europeans, but especially in the name of our common interests, we must not forget this continent. Others may forget it, but we cannot permit ourselves to do so, for our geopolitical situation will not change. When the great continent of Africa begins to export its conflicts — and we are already seeing examples of this on a regular basis on our television screens — the Mediterranean will not be deep and wide enough and no walls high enough to solve these problems.

In the east, this term "Europe", which dates from ancient times, has never been defined. Here, Europeanness has always been determined by political or cultural decisions. We are still feeling the effects of the Cold War and of the importance of Russia for European security — in both good and bad ways. Russia is a European neighbour. Russia has European roots, but Russia is too big, it does not have European dimensions, it represents a dimension of its own.

But between Russia and ourselves lie Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. The Orange Revolution in Kiev has shown what is at stake: first and foremost democracy, the question of whether the right of self-determination in free elections by secret ballot can be secured or whether the principle of spheres of influence will again become dominant in Europe. Important though it is for us to have a good relationship with Russia, the new Europe, the Europe of integration, must not allow us to fall back into spheres of influence.

Herein also lies the secret of enlargement to the east: we must not only be clear about this ourselves, but also make it clear to our great neighbour Russia, that the Balts, the Poles, the Slovaks, the Hungarians, and all the rest, are part of Europe. We must say to the Russians: you have to accept this; you will have to get used to it! Drawing clear lines of demarcation in this way is, in my view, of crucial importance. But to be consistent — and I am aware that this is not very popular: we must not close the door on the Ukraine, nor on Belarus and Moldova. Not that I take the view that we should make an offer. But what is at issue is that these countries should be able freely to exercise the right of self-determination and to make a decision.

It is now clear what significance the policy of enlargement in Europe has always had in the area of foreign policy and politics in general. Today, enlargement is perhaps the most unpopular topic in the European Union —

and at the same time the most important. Moreover, if what I have presented in my analysis is correct, enlargement will continue to be the most important topic for quite a while. We must define our relationship with Russia on the clear basis that we need firm strategic relationships, but on the other hand that we cannot and must not return to a policy of spheres of influence and imperial thinking. You may think this sounds far-fetched, but if this kind of thinking does become widespread along our European borders again, our security situation would change quite fundamentally. And a prudent policy ought to avoid this.

### **The Middle East and the modernization blockade**

Now I come to our neighbours beyond the Balkans and beyond the Mediterranean, and especially to the Middle East. I will speak plainly: this is the region whose development gives me the greatest concern from the European perspective. Looking at the development in this region, there is a temptation to feel despondent at Europe's lack of progress in helping it to achieve integration. When you consider the history of Europe you recognize the importance that the Middle East has for European security. We can bury our heads in the sand and say: "I don't want this, I don't want that, Turkey doesn't belong with us", and so on, and we can decide accordingly. But we shall not be able to escape the consequences.

Let us first remind ourselves that we have had large-scale immigration from the Middle East. In Germany in the 1960s it was Christian Democrat governments that opened the borders, a policy continued in the 1970s by the Social Democrat and Liberal Coalitions for reasons were connected with the labour market. This is just a statement of fact, not a criticism.

Today, in an era of globalization, as immediate geopolitical neighbours we can no longer separate ourselves from the Middle East — a region that is characterized by long-standing regional conflicts. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is only one of them. What else characterizes this region? Low growth, low investment activity, poorly developed trade, a high rate of population growth, an almost complete lack of structures of collective security, a high degree of susceptibility to radicalism and terrorism, and, most importantly, states that — with the exception of Iran and Egypt — are all young, most of their borders having been drawn since 1918. A further feature is the presence of different religious tendencies with their potential for conflict — we are currently experiencing this between Shiites and Sunnis in Iraq. (We Europeans are, of course, no strangers to such differences and the political charge they carry. We need only look back at our own history, the history of the Christian West, to see how much violence was generated in the struggles between the different churches.) In addition, the Middle East is characterized by ethnic confrontation. Here too Iraq is an issue: the Kurds are Sunnis but they are not Arabs. And all this is embedded in a situation with low growth and a very young population — half are under eighteen years old.

Since 9/11 we have become acutely aware that there are two sides to globalization. When I came to office in 1998, Afghanistan was something for the experts to deal with — the humanitarian aid organizations and offices in the foreign ministries, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations. Every winter, death reaped a terrible harvest, especially among the weakest groups such as infants and the elderly. But nothing could be done about it. The Taliban government was not interested in how many were dying; economic pressure had no effect on it; no one was prepared to intervene

militarily. The tragedy in Afghanistan has its origin in the Cold War era. In the late 1970s, the Communist Party seized power and the Soviet Union intervened; with military occupation the balance of power between East and West underwent a shift. A war of liberation then started, inspired by Islam and supported by the West, in particular the USA. When the Soviet Union withdrew and the Cold War came to an end, the great powers — including Europe, which had never been directly involved — lost interest. A terrible civil war began. For many years this civil war seemed to be a matter for the Afghans and the regional powers.

This brings me to globalization. Goethe once said: "when far away in Turkey the nations fight against each other...", but "far away" no longer exists in our globalized world. We came to realize that Afghanistan was becoming a base for Islamist terrorism, which on 11 September 2001 struck against the United States with all its brutality and utter contempt for human life. This is the new challenge facing us. I should also like to remind you of 11 March 2004, when the bombs exploded in Madrid and the first question to be asked was whether it was Eta or the Islamists? And it was clear that, if it was the Islamists, then as Europeans we were all potential targets. We ought not to forget that.

So we have had to learn that globalization brings new security risks, and that security also means that we have to be prepared to help our neighbours. This should preferably not be done by military means, but by providing opportunities for development. I cannot accept the equation: poverty equals terror. The 9/11 terrorists were middle class or upper class, they were not poor people; they knew the West very well and lived among us. The problem goes much deeper. As I see it, security in the twenty-first century, in a world of globalization, means understanding that we have to invest, and not so much economically (although we should not neglect economic investment where this is necessary) but in development, in a willingness to provide development aid so that conflicts are not allowed to escalate in the first place. This applies especially to our immediate neighbourhood, where we risk being among those most strongly affected.

This, then, is how I would analyse the situation in the Middle East from the European point of view. My thesis is that the cause of the developments outlined here — which are very varied, terrorism being only one element — is ultimately a blockade against modernization. Not only an economic blockade, but also a cultural blockade, a blockade of social development and of the development of civil society. A modernization blockade that also means that people have no share in the processes of development, but that they perceive them — rightly or wrongly — as something imposed from the outside. A blockade, moreover, that prevents common interests from developing in a way that would enable conflicts to be overcome. But if the modernization blockade is the crucial challenge, it will not be enough simply to bide our time or to employ military means. Rather, we need to step in at an early stage and try to disentangle the complex problems so that military action can be avoided altogether if at all possible.

## **Iraq and Iran**

So far, I have described what I have learned from the example of the Balkans, namely that military measures cannot be excluded as a last resort. My biography is well known, I am rightly described as a '68er. At that time the belief of the radical Left was that good could be achieved by the use of violence. A great mistake! I would never have believed that the most important

power after the end of the Cold War, the United States of America, would implement such a policy in the Middle East, in Iraq. For the idea behind the Iraq war was the belief that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein would start a positive chain reaction in the Middle East that would lead to democratization and to the breakdown of the blockade against modernization.

We opposed this policy from the start — but not because we were looking for an election campaign issue, although this is what it later became. The decisive reason was something else. At the time, we discussed with our American friends whether the American public really knew what this policy was all about and whether it was prepared to pay the price for it — the lengthy duration and arduous nature of the intervention. We were of the opinion that the majority of Americans would not be prepared for this. We asked our friends how, despite their best intentions, they would avoid the creation of a vacuum in the centre of the Middle East. Such a vacuum would inevitably draw in the regional powers with their competing interests and so trigger conflict and violence. We asked them how they would ensure that the existence of this vacuum would not cause a regional power by the name of Iran to be massively strengthened and indeed to emerge as the true winner in this conflict. We did not receive a satisfactory answer to any of these questions.

I am not trying to prove that I was right. Believe me, I wish we had been wrong. Nor is it about diplomatic manoeuvring; whatever the reasons for waging war in Iraq, we will all have to suffer the consequences, especially the Europeans, since we are, after all, in the immediate geopolitical proximity.

Thinking about the Middle East today and the security risks facing us, for me Iraq is one of the really big challenges. What will become of Iraq? Is it certain to slide into civil war? Will it fall apart? Will the USA depart and leave a vacuum for others to fill? These are all questions that have so far not been decided. But when I consider the developments of recent years — and I say again: I have never at any time had such a great desire to be proved wrong — there is reason to be extremely concerned.

We will not be able to part company with this region, our neighbouring region. It will remain our neighbouring region. One of the immediate effects of the Iraq war — and, as German foreign minister, I experienced this myself — is, of course, that Iran feels itself massively strengthened. Here a new challenge arises, for Iran today sees itself in a role that allows it to press ahead with its nuclear programme. At this point you may ask: why shouldn't Iran have nuclear weapons like other nations?

You may remember the terrorist attack on the Parliament of India in December 2001. Quite apart from the deaths and injuries suffered, this was a shocking attack on the country, a deliberate humiliation. It was clear to us at the time — by "us" I mean the foreign ministers of the most important western powers — how close we had suddenly come to a military escalation, and how rapidly religious hatred, national rivalry and hostility, when linked with terror and the possession of nuclear weapons, can lower the nuclear threshold in the minds of the protagonists.

Now that another power in the Middle East is striving to possess nuclear weapons, this has to be seen in the light of the fact that not a single conflict has been solved in the entire region. The logic of the superpowers does not prevail here; there is nothing comparable to the lines of demarcation dating back to 1945, no distinct territories of dominance. Even when the rebels were being

slaughtered in Budapest in 1956 it was quite clear that the Western powers would not intervene. That was the law of the Cold War. You will not find this rationality of deterrence — which, by the way, I do not accept, but which was indeed rational — in the Middle East, our neighbouring region. What you will find there are all the unsolved problems. If Iran became a nuclear power this would spark off a nuclear arms race. What would the Turks do, as Iran's immediate neighbours? What about Saudi Arabia? Or Egypt? You may now ask: "What has this got to do with us?" To that I can only say that a nuclear arms race in the Middle East would directly affect our security quite and challenge us to a degree that most people today simply cannot imagine.

Iran's nuclear ambitions and the situation in Iraq — and there is a close connection between them — are the greatest challenges currently facing the international community. Will the USA see it through? I don't know. The USA has now got itself into a position in which it is difficult for it to do anything right. Both alternatives, to stay or to go, will have negative consequences. They know that in Tehran, and that is why the stakes are now so high.

### **Europe's weakness**

Permit me to come back to Europe. This ought to be the time for Europe to bring all its "soft power" into play. This ought to be the time when we stop talking about Polish, Austrian, German or any other special interests, because we are all affected together and to the same degree. It is a European challenge that we are facing.

But what exactly is the state of Europe at the moment? First the French and then the Dutch "no" to the constitutional draft, the opinion polls in the member states that indicate a turning away from Brussels, the fear of many politicians in the national governments that an unduly positive attitude towards the EU might endanger their election prospects — all this leads to a Europe of weakness. We are talking here about the essential interests of all European citizens. And don't think I'm showing you the frightening spectre of the Middle East in order to scare you into behaving like good Europeans. My worry is rather that by the time the people in Europe finally understand the nature of the present challenge it will already be too late.

This is even more true in view of the fact that it is largely an open question as to how much longer the USA will continue its engagement in the region. What alternatives will be opened up by the presidential elections of 2008? The Americans have the option of withdrawal, and the option of considerably reducing their engagement, short of complete withdrawal. If you think this ought to set our minds at rest I would like to warn against such an illusion. While all this is going on, the USA simultaneously finds itself facing a second great international challenge: that of the rise of mega-economies like India and China — an order of magnitude that the global economy has never known before. This development will draw the USA deeper and deeper into the Pacific region. If it pulls out of Iraq as a result of its negative experiences there, Europe will suddenly be left to take responsibility for its own security.

But is Europe prepared for this? Europe can call on a number of positive experiences and abilities: we know how to build nations, how to resolve conflicts, how to create institutions that can reconcile interests, and how to found security on cooperation. But are we also capable of using this rich repertoire for the creation of a common foreign policy? Do we have the instruments and institutions for it? And are we strong enough to deter all those

who harbour malicious intentions from even attempting to carry them out? These are the crucial questions that will concern you as citizens — of whatever member state.

When Putin started playing games with gas supplies, all of us — throughout Europe — were immediately alarmed; loud calls were heard for a common European energy policy. It was winter, and we all know that our gas comes from Russia. Yet despite being faced with the mix of regional conflicts, states sliding out of control, Iran's nuclear policy and terrorism, there are still many who think we can afford the luxury of being against Europe, of having a weak Europe.

## Turkey

I have said that what is at the heart of the problems of the Middle East is a crisis of modernization. In March 2006 I was at a conference in Washington with Europeans, Americans and experts from the Middle East, the Arab countries and Iran. All of them agreed how important it was that Turkey should succeed in combining modernization with a democratic Islamic politics. Here too I cannot help saying something that will perhaps be even more unpopular than some of my previous remarks. Imagine we had closed the door on negotiations with Turkey — which I assume are more likely to go on for twenty years rather than ten — in October 2005. Whether Turkey will finally make it I do not know; nobody can know that today. As an advocate of this process, I tell you that in the end there will have to be a genuine decision, not only in Europe but also in Turkey.

Under Walter Hallstein, who was the first to lead the EU Commission, Greece and Turkey signed association treaties within a few months of each other. Hallstein was no Green but was a member of the CDU. He was state secretary in the German foreign ministry under Adenauer in Bonn, a convinced European, and the first president of the Commission. In 1963 Hallstein made a speech in Ankara in which he promised full membership; he did so for reasons connected with the Cold War, there is no disguising the fact. Why, then, was Turkey brought into Nato? And into the Council of Europe? Because we needed it. Because Turkey secured the southern flank of Nato against the Soviet Union. At that time Turkey was at the margins. If my analysis is correct, however, in the first decades of the twenty-first century it will be central to European security.

Let us consider the present situation: a radical president has been elected in Iran; in Iraq the elections have, if anything, strengthened ethnic and religious differences; in Palestine Hamas has won a landslide victory; in Egypt — after elections that were unfree, or at least "regulated" — the candidates of the Muslim Brotherhood have done astonishingly well — or perhaps I should say very well, as no one was actually astonished. Also, the free elections conducted by secret ballot in various other Arab countries show that the trend towards the radicals, including the religious radicals, is spreading through the whole region.

In the light of this situation, if we had said to Turkey: "we will not negotiate with you", after 42 years of promises and after this internal development (which, admittedly, has not yet been completed); if, in other words, we had closed the door on the Turks, where would we be today? We would have a profoundly disappointed Turkey that does not know where it belongs; and we would have a Russia and an Iran that were carefully analysing the situation.

Of course, we politicians can say: "We can't get this across to our citizens!" At present, this attitude is commonly found among all the governments in the EU, without exception, and it has nothing to do with party politics. And of course you, the people, can say: "We don't want Turkish membership!" But then you have to be clear about the consequences. It will do no good to bury your heads in the sand. You have to be aware of what this "no" would mean for our security. If my analysis is correct and the crucial problem in the Middle East is modernization, it is a central question for Europe's security — even more important than any military contribution — that a great Moslem country like Turkey is successful in establishing a free market economy, an independent judiciary and freedom of expression, respect for human rights, and respect for minorities and the rights of minorities.

I say, "If my analysis is correct". Permit me to make a small digression into German domestic politics. My analysis is not in fact questioned by the Christian Democrats, they merely think that after 42 years the time has come to say: "We have not been quite honest with you." I would seriously warn against doing this, however, and I am happy that the European Union and the Council of Europe have decided differently — knowing full well how unpopular their decision is.

### **Cooperation or confrontation?**

When I see the challenges of our time: the Balkans, Russia, and the nations that lie between Russia and ourselves (first of all Ukraine), the proximity of the great continent of Africa, and finally the Middle East, which will define our security in the coming decades in a decisive way, I believe we would be well advised to grasp the fact that our security must be understood on a European level.

And there should be no difference between large and small member states. Naturally, the contributions of individual states vary, but the political responsibility, the political strategy and the decision process must all be based on the assumption that all in the Union are equal. The principle must be: all member states are equal, and we must therefore jointly shoulder the responsibility. So I believe we should not let things get to the point where the crisis in the Middle East finally forces the majority of Europeans to realize where their duty lies. We need to understand now that we can shape history!

This applies to the economic dimension too. We live off our competitive advantage, our technological lead, our high productivity, and we live very well off it — Austria, for example, is well ahead here. This should remain true in the future, despite all the problems we have. All the same, new challenges are taking shape, a new global economy is coming into being. Consider the question of the supply of energy and raw materials. In the last three years that I was German foreign minister, wherever I went — in South America, in the furthest corner of Africa, in the remotest parts of Asia — I came across Chinese and Indian delegations. That would have been a rare occurrence previously. The demand for raw materials from these mega-economies is tremendous, and their emissions are on a similar scale. This will present us with huge challenges. Will the environment, which we all share, be able to withstand this? Will there be fighting over resources? The idea of a conflict over energy or other resources strikes me as absurd. Are we saying that some parts of the world would have access to them while the others would not? In an integrated global economy that would benefit nobody.

These are the questions that are on the horizon. In view of their magnitude, even the largest and most powerful member states of the EU — the two permanent Security Council members France and Great Britain, together with Germany, the biggest member state in terms of population and economic strength — would have no chance on their own. We are far too small unless we join together. And I must say to you again: if we wait until everyone has understood this it will be too late.

The regional and global challenges that face us today demand that we use the strength of Europe. For this we need institutions that are efficient and capable of action. We need a common European security policy and foreign policy. We need a Europe that is capable of bringing its aforementioned strengths into play: the power to transform conflicts into structures for peace, the strength that comes from common institutions and the reconciliation of interests, making growth possible, and the strength that comes from the ability to cooperate with one another. If we do not succeed in utilizing these strengths together there will be a high price to pay. And it is you, the citizens, who will have to make the decision.

In the Cold War era the central question was: "What will become of Berlin?" Berlin was, so to speak, the barometer of international politics. In the West, life was good; those living in the East paid the bill for the divided world, for what was called stability. In our globalized world, however, with seven or eight billion people, the old formula that we Greens took over from the Club of Rome and liked to use in our election campaigns will no longer apply, namely that 20 per cent enjoy the benefits and 80 per cent do not, and that 20 per cent cause 80 per cent of the emissions. Soon it will be 30, 40, perhaps 50 or more per cent that have a share in the economy. And that is only possible on a basis of cooperation.

This is where Europe has a great advantage, for we are the most experienced when it comes to cooperation. This is where we can bring our strengths into play. At the same time we must not forget to marshal our forces in such a way that those with evil intent do not misinterpret our willingness to cooperate — which means that we must ensure that they have a healthy respect for us.

Cooperation or confrontation — this is what the question of security comes down to today. The question of whether the Mediterranean region will be a region of cooperation or of confrontation is as important in the twenty-first century as the freedom of West Berlin was in its day. To achieve cooperation we need a Europe that is capable of action, and we shall not have this unless you, as Europeans, show real commitment.

*This article is based on the Jan Patočka Memorial Lecture, given by the author in 2006 at the invitation of the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna.*

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