

Europe's Responsibility in the World of Today

Debate of the Reflection Group on "The Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe" held in the German Foreign Office, Berlin

On 3 March 2004 the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer, hosted a debate on **Europe's Responsibility in the World of Today** organised under the auspices of the **Reflection Group on the Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe**. The Group was set up at the initiative of Romano Prodi and is part of a project run by the Institute for Human Sciences. Its main task has been to reflect on the conditions of European cohesion: what could, and what will, keep the new, enlarged, and redefined Europe together? After Warsaw, Vienna and Paris, the Berlin meeting was the concluding event in a series of working sessions and debates held in European capital cities. At previous meetings the group discussed, among other topics, conditions of European solidarity, consequences of EU enlargement, and the role of religion in the process of European integration. More information: www.iwm.at/r-reflec.htm and http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/prodi/group/michalski_en.htm

The Berlin conference was organized by the *Institute for Human Sciences* (Vienna) in collaboration with the *European Commission* and the *German Foreign Office* and took place in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany. The event brought together 27 politicians and intellectuals from Europe and the US. The discussion, in which Joschka Fischer participated and to which he contributed a speech, addressed three topics: partnership and competition with the USA, the role of international institutions, and the strategic dimension of the enlarged European Union.

After the welcome address by **Klaus Scharioth**, State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office, **Bronislaw Geremek**, Former Polish Foreign Minister and Member of the Reflection Group, presented some introductory reflections on *Europe and Its Values*.^{*} The first session on *Partnership and Competition with the USA* was chaired by the former Prime Minister of France **Michel Rocard**, Chairman of the Committee for Cultural Affairs in the European Parliament and Member of the Reflection Group, and introduced by **Pierre Hassner**, Emeritus Research Director at the National Foundation for Political Science FNPS, Paris.

Robert Cooper, Director-General at the Council of the European Union, Brussels, gave the introduction to the second session on *The Role of International Institutions*, chaired by **Krzysztof Michalski**, Rector of Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna.

In his speech, **Joschka Fischer**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Germany, Berlin, discussed the strategic dimension of Europe's responsibility.

The closing remarks by **Kurt Biedenkopf**, former Prime Minister of Saxony and Member of the Reflection Group, summarized the debate and re-connected it to the broader agenda of the Group.

The conference ended with a working dinner at the invitation of the European Commission.

In the following we'll concentrate on the debate about the strategic dimension of the new Europe. Main participants in this exchange were Maarten Brands, Joschka Fischer, Bronislaw Geremek, Michel Rocard and Aleksander Smolar.

The collapse of the Wall and the end of the Soviet Union mark a dramatic change for the EU. The end of the Cold War did not only pave the way for uniting the two parts of Europe but also opened a **new strategic dimension of the European project**.

From its outset, the EU has had a *historical* dimension: It was designed as a project which should help overcome the old German-French confrontation; later, the accession of the Mediterranean countries in the 70s and 80s was meant to support democratic transition in societies formerly under authoritarian rule; the most recent chapter in this development is EU enlargement which brought back to Europe those countries which happened to be on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. The second dimension of the EU has been *pragmatic*: economic integration.

The third dimension of the EU is the *strategic* one. It started with a painful experience - the Balkan Wars when Europe once more had to rely on the assistance of the USA. But it was the moment when it became aware that there was only one answer to the revival of bloody nationalism in the Balkans - and this answer was strategic: to open the road to Europe for those countries which were ready to

refrain from the temptation of nationalism.

The second crucial experience was September 11. It revealed that the Union was not yet able to find a consensus how to respond to the new threat of globalized terrorism, neither within its own nor within the transatlantic framework. Instead, European countries displayed their old national reflexes. In the end, the dissent over the engagement in the Iraq war led to a deep split within Europe and to a transatlantic rift. This crisis made clear that if the EU wants to master the new challenges which have emerged after 11/9 1989 and 9/11 2001 it must become an actor in the field of security policy.

An important step was to develop a **strategic perspective for the Middle East**. The result was the so called Solana strategy which in the end was adopted by the European Council. It is a vital question for Europe whether the Middle East, the Mediterranean will be a region of peace or of confrontation and war. In this picture, **Turkey** is a crucial player. There are some new arguments to be added to the long controversy about its accession to the EU. The only perspective for Turkey to continue its modernization path is to leave the door to Europe open. True, there are legitimate historical and pragmatic arguments for and against. But if we look at the strategic dimension of this issue we must be aware that the prize to say no to Turkey would be much higher today, after September 11. That Turkey could become a bridge for the EU to the Islamic world should be evident. And it would be a wrong signal to the wider Middle East to make Islam a criterion for exclusion, a message which would also have a disastrous impact on the Muslim minorities within the EU. It would just follow the logic of Jihad terrorism which tries to split along the line of culture and religion.

But would letting Turkey in not mean a major shift in the structure of voting power in the EU? A development which might lead to a dramatic tension between democratic principles and strategic necessities? A Turkey, one might respond to this question, which meets European standards should not only be digestible for the enlarged EU, it could be an asset in the long run – as the Turkish minority in Germany is a cultural and economic asset already today.

The strategic dimension of the new European Union has to be built on the **Constitution**. A core Europe, an avant-garde Europe is no longer an option; the same holds true for the opposite - the British preference for the model of a loose political framework with a common market. Neither model is able to respond adequately to the strategic challenge the EU is confronted with today.

One might object that one of the preconditions of successfully implementing a European strategic perspective is that it is not only written into the European Constitution but will also be supported by the national parliaments and on the level of public opinion. A common European foreign policy and security strategy as well as the expenditures connected to them require a strong commitment from below. The question is if the members of the Union are really prepared for **overcoming their national interests**, especially countries like Germany and France which try to set the agenda in security policy.

The initiatives taken by these countries should, however, not be taken as efforts to save the EU as a single-family home with some appendix - EU-West and the rest. One should learn from the German experience with unification. The Constitution will help that all members have a say, all of them will have rights of initiative, also in foreign and security policy.

But how can the EU's strategic ambitions be convincing if the Union will not make an effort to change its image? It still is introspective: concerned about its own well-being, speaking rather about growth, agriculture, trade etc., than about painful problems outside its borders. In the same sense, it should finally bury the dream of becoming a big player balancing the power of the United States. Instead it should concentrate on **creating a space of peaceful vicinity** – a project which would give it a new face and would help to make the accession of Turkey better understandable and more acceptable.

The main factor of today' security challenge is **the new totalitarian threat of Islamism** which tries to undermine or block modernisation. The answer should be a visionary and long-term **transition policy for the Middle East**. There are two countries which would have a key role in this strategy: Turkey (as already mentioned) and Iran with its democratic mass movement and strong civil society. If they succeed in combining modern society with Islamic culture and religion they would powerfully demonstrate a way out of the false dilemma on which fundamentalism thrives. A third target of a strategic transition policy would be the Middle East conflict for which Israel is not the only source. Here, the idea of Robert Cooper is helpful that the universal time line enforced by the Cold War has decomposed into three time lines after its end: pre-modern, modern and post-modern. What we witness today is conflicts along different time lines. Modern and post-modern, i.e. open societies are

vulnerable against pre-modern attacks. That is why modernisation is such an important precondition for security.

But could a strategic transition policy in the Middle East not also have a strong destabilizing effect? Democratic procedures can easily be abused, and bringing freedom to the area can also result in raising fanaticism. The answer is, first of all, that modernisation is the priority, with democratisation being only a part of it, often requiring a long-term perspective. Moreover, one has to differentiate: countries like Iran have a strong democratic potential which should be supported, all the more that Iran has also a nuclear potential which could develop a destabilizing effect in the whole region. In any case there is no choice: The problems emerging from the situation in the Middle East are a challenge to the West it cannot avoid. It has to react.

But neither Europe nor the US is alone able to respond to this challenge. Therefore, it is important to underline that the new strategic dimension of the EU is **not directed against the US**. In fact, a common effort to shape the process of globalization and to fight the threat of terrorism represent a real chance for a restoration of the West based on a new transatlanticism. Transatlantic relations have to be reinvented, with EU being the European pillar, the US and Canada being the North-American pillar, and the new NATO the link between both pillars.

* Bronislaw Geremek's reflections about *Europe in the World* can be downloaded from *Tr@nsit online* (<http://www.iwm.at/t-forum.htm>). A German translation is published in *Transit – Europäische Revue*, nr. 27 which is, as nr. 26, devoted to the results of the Reflection Group