

# **Understanding Joschka Fischer's Conceptions of Europe**

## An Analytic Policy Brief

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## Understanding Joschka Fischer's Conceptions of Europe

In late February and early March of 2004 German Foreign Minister Joseph (Joschka) Fischer gave two interviews, one to *Berliner Zeitung* (BZ: February 28, 2004)<sup>1</sup> and a more extensive and specific one to *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ: March 6, 2004)<sup>2</sup> in which he pronounced the need of Europe to develop a 'strategic dimension' and is quoted as saying that he believes 'small-scale European solutions (*kleineuropäische Lösungen*)<sup>3</sup> just don't work anymore'.

Commentators have looked at these two interviews for hints at the German European Policy strategy after the failed December 2003 Intergovernmental Conference. The interviews have been interpreted to signify a turn-around from the preference for 'core Europe' as a catalyst of further political integration which was regarded as (semi-) official German policy since Fischer himself had put his hopes on it in a noted speech at Berlin's Humboldt University in 2000.<sup>4</sup> The importance of the declarations seemed even greater since the interviews had been granted in official function, whereas the speech had been held explicitly as the 'thoughts of a private citizen'.

Here we will set these interviews in a larger context to distill the conception of political Europe that the Fischer espouses and the changes it has undergone over time, and of course also look at the repercussions these may have on the progress of the project of an 'ever closer' European Union.

Reviewing press and politicians' reactions to Fischer's two interviews, it is impressive to see the confusion caused by it and the many diverging opinions on what he meant to say. It is purported that from Chancellor Schröder to opposition foreign policy expert Schäuble, the entire German political class puzzles about the content and purpose of Fischer's intellectual exercises.<sup>5</sup>

First of all, there is a striking continuity in the way Fischer in 2000 desired the future institutional constitution of a political union of Europe, and sees it achieved in the 2003 constitutional draft in the

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<sup>1</sup> Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Klein-europäische Vorstellungen funktionieren einfach nicht mehr" - Interview von Bundesaußenminister Fischer mit der *Berliner Zeitung* vom 28.02.2004", URL: [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe\\_archiv?archiv\\_id=5555](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe_archiv?archiv_id=5555)

<sup>2</sup> Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Die Rekonstruktion des Westens" - Interview von Bundesaußenminister Fischer zu Europa, Amerika und den gemeinsamen strategischen Aufgaben mit der *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung* am 06.03.2004", URL: [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe\\_archiv?archiv\\_id=5473](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe_archiv?archiv_id=5473)

<sup>3</sup> In German, *kleineuropäisch* calls up the historic reference of the quarreling preferences for national unification that were characteristic of the time from the Napoleonic Wars until Austria-Hungary's 1866 defeat at the hands of Prussia: *großdeutsch* called for the unification of all German-speaking people (with the exception of those in the Swiss Confederation) while *kleindeutsch* was finally realized by the forced exclusion of Austria from the project.

<sup>4</sup> Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation – Gedanken über die Finalität der europäischen Integration". Rede am 12. Mai 2000 in der Humboldt-Universität in Berlin", URL: <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/infoservice/download/pdf/reden/2000/r000512a.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ralf Beste. "Der Nebenaußenminister", *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 16, April 10, 2004, p.32

design of which he took part as a German delegate to the European Constitutional Convent. Fischer always comes back to characterizing the Europe he envisages and sees emerging from the draft as a union that is both a 'union of states' and 'union of citizens'. He assuages fears of Germany desiring a European superstate and claims that any intent to do away with nation-states by forming a politically integrated Union will be doomed in the face of historic-cultural experiences and would be a 'synthetic construct out of touch with the organic European realities'.<sup>6</sup> Any federative form of organization will have to reflect the principle of subsidiarity,<sup>7</sup> and the proposed constitution finds Fischer's praise for having understood this and reflecting the hybrid legitimacy Europe needs by way of the double majority of votes needed for adopting common policies.<sup>8</sup>

But there is also conceptual change. The intra-European divisions over Iraq and the Brussels Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) of December 12 and 13, 2003 appear to have held a lesson each, which form the ideational basis for Fischer's rewriting his visions for Europe:

- a) bitter divisions on strategic issue can still arise among European nations and significantly reduce the effectiveness of Europe (as sum of its parts) in major crises;
- b) the interest of member states in early participation in further integration steps is greater by far than assumed in the old concepts of *Kerneuropa*. This interest does not necessarily grow out of a 'true European spirit' of enthusiastic embrace of integration for its own sake (which most promoters of *Kerneuropa* had put at the base of their search for promising participants) but more Realpolitik-like fears of losing influence by non-participation.<sup>9</sup>

The conclusion Fischer drew from these lessons is that all arrangements at faster integration should proceed at the level of each individual issue-area (as the Schengen Agreement or European Monetary Union do) and avoid portraying themselves as exclusive clubs that are closed to others suspected of a structural lack of fitness for a politically integrated Europe. Any explicit institutionalization of a Europe of multiple speeds would carry the grave threat of deepening divisions, aggravating conflict potential and outweighing any added effectiveness that small-scale integration might bring about. The fallback into old Balance of Power politics would be made more likely in such a Europe.<sup>10</sup> Some

<sup>6</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation", p. 6, and cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Regierungserklärung von Bundesaußenminister Fischer zum Europäischen Rat vor dem Deutschen Bundestag am 11 Dezember 2003", URL: [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe\\_archiv?archiv\\_id=5197](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe_archiv?archiv_id=5197)

<sup>7</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation", p. 7. "Subsidiarity" is as non-partisan and sacrosanct a political concept as there can be in a Germany marked by strong federalism.

<sup>8</sup> I.e. majority of country for the 'union of nations', 'majority of population' representative of the 'union of citizens'. cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Die Rekonstruktion des Westens", and cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Regierungserklärung"

<sup>9</sup> Peter Ludlow's presentation at the SAIS Bologna Center mentioned this reaction of many old and new EU member states fearing to be left behind on the project of European policy integration and thus voicing their interest to be in any avantgarde group from the beginning.

<sup>10</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Die Rekonstruktion des Westens": "Wenn wir uns für einen Moment ein Klein-Europa - Deutschland, Frankreich und ein paar andere Länder - vorstellen, in dem die Entscheidungen einfacher sind, wie würde sich dann der Rest Europas organisieren? Als Hinterhof? Oder würden nicht sofort Antihegemonialreflexe wirksam? Dann wären wir unter erweiterten Bedingungen wieder im alten europäischen Staatensystem -- mit all seinen

commentators have seen Fischer's move away from 'core Europe' as an attempt to assuage the fears of Eastern Europeans of being shut out of the future dynamics of European integration.<sup>11</sup> At the same time the interest of a large number of member states in additional steps towards common policy gave hope that the stark choices of either *Kerneuropa* or stagnation had been exaggerated to begin with. Consequently, the constitutional project and the room it left for ad-hoc policy coordination among states, which Fischer continues to consider useful as temporary solutions, would be the most adequate and fully sufficient framework,<sup>12</sup> and the principal task for Europe would consist in a process of forming a common vision of strategic challenges and the fitting policy responses.

One might interpret the logic that Fischer apparently applies as akin to that of the *Bauhaus* school of modern design: 'form follows function'. Fischer envisages a Europe that finally transcends the two dimensions that were dominant until present: a 'historic dimension' of securing peace in Europe by cooperation that would foster reconciliation, and a 'pragmatic dimension' of cooperation on economic issues to advance reconstruction and growth. Both dimensions imbued Europe with a structural tendency towards navel-gazing. Symbolically, EU enlargement and the introduction of the Euro mark critical achievements in each respective dimension that now call on the European Union to stop being entirely bound up in itself and look beyond its borders for the urgent policy tasks that demand its attention. This is the 'strategic dimension' that Europe must develop: an actual *foreign* policy of Europe.<sup>13</sup> Hence, so the conclusion Fischer draws, Europe needs to be a wide Europe – both in its geographical extent, from the Azores to Mount Ararat, and in the number of members it takes along the path of common policy-making in those areas most important to a 'strategic dimension' of Europe. For the *function* of stability exporter to troubled world regions, the *form* 'core Europe' is not fit. And it is this shift that most markedly differentiates the 2000 speech from the interviews this year: the former was designed as a 'personal vision of the solution of European problems',<sup>14</sup> the latter a call on Europe to develop a vision of solving problems in its neighborhood. The new perspective is outward-looking.

Viewed this way, the change of mind reflects an inversion of the instrumental logic while retaining the objective of a politically more integrated Europe: just like EMU was finally adopted to serve as a

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Reibungsverlust. Die erhöhte Entscheidungsfähigkeit eines kleinen Europas würde sich also als Schein erweisen.”

<sup>11</sup> cf. Brigitte Kols. “Fischers neue Koordinaten”, *Frankfurter Rundschau* (web edition), March 10, 2004; as reported in: BBC Monitoring (ed.). “German Foreign Minister aims to persuade East Europeans to follow EU path”, *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, March 11, 2004

<sup>12</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). “Klein-europäische Vorstellungen funktionieren einfach nicht mehr”: “Das Konzept einer europäischen Avantgarde (...) kann unter Umständen zeitweise nützlich sein. Aber nur innerhalb des fest verankerten Rahmens der europäischen Verfassung.” Irish President Bertie Ahern also pointed to the flexibility of existing rules and the need to guard against cementing a Europe of different speeds; cf. Derek Scally. “Schroeder talks of inevitability of 'core' Europe”, *The Irish Times*, March 25, 2004, page 11

<sup>13</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). “Klein-europäische Vorstellungen funktionieren einfach nicht mehr”

<sup>14</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). “Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation”, p.5

catalyst for political integration after it had become evident that this integration could not be achieved directly, a greater role of the European Union in foreign policy – accompanied by the continued enlargement in Southeast Europe and across the Bosphorus – is to serve an analogous task. Increased common activity in the field of foreign policy projects is believed to bring about, as beneficial side-effect, the realization that the current intergovernmental management in this field is inefficient, and result in a increased institutionalization of European policies for the world stage.<sup>15</sup> But for this dynamic to work, Fischer deems necessary a participation of all or as many member states as possible in Common Foreign and Security Policy on the basis of the constitution and the Solana Paper<sup>16</sup>: it is the function that he wishes the EU to see perform which demands this form. Following such a conception, future steps towards integration would be headed the right way.

The exclusive character of a *Carolingian* 'core Europe' often envisaged by conservatives on both banks of the Rhine would be particularly dangerous to a strategic role of the Union if – as happened in 2003 – Franco-German cooperation alienates a wide number of member countries, most of all the United Kingdom without which any “strategic dimension” of the old continent appears merely utopian. Joschka Fischer has compared the Franco-German duo in the larger EU to the situation of Bismarck's Germany after 1871: too small for hegemony, too large to be digestible for intra-EU balance-of-power mechanisms.<sup>17</sup> Therefore participation of the United Kingdom is crucial for decision-making and implementation. An illustration of Berlin's appreciation of this fact was for instance the summit between President Chirac, Prime Minister Blair and Chancellor Schröder that took place just on February 18, 2004 – ten days before Fischer's 'strategic dimension'-interview. For both the chancellor and his foreign minister, the substitute for 'core Europe' guaranteeing political effectiveness in a wider Europe is what Fischer defended in the face of Italian fears as “select consultation”<sup>18</sup>

Yet, this can by no means be understood as a declaration of satisfaction with Europe's status quo, as Fischer made clear that “[t]he question facing Europe was 'whether we can grow close enough together to bring our weight to bear'. ”<sup>19</sup> It is in this sense that the German foreign minister declared in a speech in January that all states need to appreciate that legitimate national interests can only be

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<sup>15</sup> Andreas Rinke. “Fischer entdeckt die Welt”, *Handelsblatt*, Nr. 44, March 3, 2004, page 9

<sup>16</sup> The European Council in Brussels, on 12 December 2003 accepted the proposal of a group led by Javier Solana as the “European Security Strategy: A secure Europe in a better world”, URL: <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Jan Roos. “Kerneuropa, ein Wintermärchen”, *Die Zeit*, Nr. 8/2004, March 4, 2004

<sup>18</sup> cf. Emanuele Novazio. “Germania ed Italia – migliori amici”, *La Stampa*, February 21, 2004, as reported in: BBC Monitoring (ed.). “Germany's Fischer reassures Italy: Berlin Summit mere 'Select Consultation'”, *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, February 23, 2004

<sup>19</sup> Judy Dempsey. “Fischer shifts away from support for two-speed EU European Integration”, *The Financial Times* (London Edition), March 1, 2004, page 6

realized in European dimensions.<sup>20</sup> Already immediately before the IGC he had warned that either the EU transforms into a political subject on the international stage or the world will evolve without any significant European influence.<sup>21</sup> These declarations stand squarely in the tradition of Fischer's Humboldt speech. There he departed from the assumption that problems and challenges facing Europe<sup>22</sup> are not resolvable in the existing political structures of the EU – hence a continued advance towards ever closer political union is the only sensible response. The purpose of this project is to assure Europe's ability to act in the world (*Handlungsfähigkeit*) during and despite the huge task of enlargement.<sup>23</sup> The renunciation of a formal 'core Europe', therefore, is by no means a tuning down of ambitions of achieving common policies on vital foreign and security issues by Fischer, quite to the contrary.

In this context, it becomes also clear why Fischer shifted away from some of his suggestions in the Humboldt University speech of May 2000: the conditions for scenarios of achieving these ambitions have changed. In 2000 it appeared highly unlikely that any added political integration could be brought about by a cooperative initiative encompassing all existing member states, not to mention those aspiring to accede. An institutionalized *Kerneuropa* as a group of countries homogeneous enough to agree on enshrining a set of fundamental principles for integrating their policies in core areas, was conceived by Fischer as a pragmatic instrument that should transform into a 'gravitational center', attracting other members to join into the endeavor to 're-found' Europe on the basis of a federative constitution.<sup>24</sup> Given this mission, an avantgarde European core of this kind had to avoid being exclusionary at all cost, and rather have an active interest in promoting its enlargement to spread the area of a more integrated European polity to other EU member states.<sup>25</sup>

Since *Kerneuropa* had grown out of an instrumental logic aimed at achieving a common constitution to bring about a broad range of common, institutionalized policies and in the longer run a true European polity, the successful conclusion of the European Constitutional Convent abolished the instrumental merits of a fixed *Kerneuropa*. Given the new situation, it had in fact become a threat to the objective that Fischer cared and continues to care about: a Europe of common, effective institutions. At most, it was a far-off second-best but unsatisfactory solution should the constitution fail.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Europa auf der Suche nach politischer Ordnung" - Rede von Bundesaußenminister Fischer anlässlich der Eröffnung des "International Bertelsmann Forum" in Berlin, 09.01.2004", URL: [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe\\_archiv?archiv\\_id=5243](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe_archiv?archiv_id=5243)

<sup>21</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Regierungserklärung "

<sup>22</sup> Fischer for instance refers to the Balkan conflicts, the introduction of the Euro, the failed SanTERS-Commission, etc.

<sup>23</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation", p.2

<sup>24</sup> Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation ", p. 9f

<sup>25</sup> Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation ", p. 10

<sup>26</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Europa auf der Suche nach politischer Ordnung": at the end of the speech, Fischer explicitly states that he had not believed it possible for a Covent of 28 (old and new members plus the candidates Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey) states to agree on a draft constitution, even less within just three years of his speech. It had been this doubt that had inspired his idea of a 'gravitational center' as alternative solution.

Despite the emphasis on the need for a constitutional basis to achieve effective cooperation in those policy areas most important for the Europe's 'strategic dimension', Germany is not interested in adopting just any constitution whatever the cost. As Fischer, himself has expressed in his parliamentary declaration on the IGC and reiterated in the now famous interviews, Germany deems no compromise better than a bad one on something as fundamental as a constitutional treaty for Europe. And yes, in this context, Fischer also believed in December and continued to do so in March that a multi-speed Europe then will again become a probable, although potentially damaging prospective. *Kerneuropa* has not vanished entirely from the foreign minister's mind. What it did, though, is change conceptual character from enabling to endangering. In Fischer's personal vision, the constitutional draft as presented to the 2003 IGC, is of special importance for a Europe that has a common and active foreign and security policy as it moves from the Nice Treaty's implied "blocking majorities" to that of majority thresholds allowing to bring about a consensus on policies among those interested in active policies and with an according willingness to provide necessary means (*Gestaltungsmehrheit*).<sup>27</sup> Compromising on these 'enabling majorities' would consequentially imperil the chance of Europe growing into a strategic role.

As a recent illustration of the urgent need for this role, the foreign minister believes the transatlantic quarrel over Iraq to have stemmed to some degree from an European incapacity to engage in a 'strategic dialogue' with the US. Fischer himself attempts – although in an apparently isolated fashion - to spur such a capacity of strategic dialogue. An example is his presentation of a masterplan for reordering the entire Arab region at the 2004 Munich Security Conference; a plan that tried to strike a balance between addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without permitting it to hold the entire agenda hostage.<sup>28</sup> Yet, Fischer faces harsh criticism from German experts on foreign and security such as Horst Teltschik or Christoph Bertram, that those are uncoordinated, solitary initiatives that lack what they claim to work towards: integrated strategic thought. Even more, Fischer is seen as a having not only a clear predilection for the 'hot' topics of Europe, transatlantic division of labor in the world, and the Middle East but be more dramatically lacking interest for other key regions such as Russia, China or Latin America.<sup>29</sup> The question then would be: do these preferences reflect his ideas of priorities for Europe's 'strategic dimension' or just personal predilection? At least in the case of the 'Greater Middle East' it appears save to guess: a combination of both. On other issues his conceptual statements have not been clear enough to say for sure.

A significant side-effect of the renunciation of 'core Europe' as an instrument of European integration

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<sup>27</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Die Rekonstruktion des Westens", and Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). "Regierungserklärung"

<sup>28</sup> cf. Beste. "Der Nebenaußenminister", p. 33

<sup>29</sup> cf. Beste. "Der Nebenaußenminister", p. 35

is an easier rapprochement with Washington. The preference for a wider Europe that goes it together is an implicit rejection of French pretensions of using a core around the Franco-German alliance to advance their *contrepoise*-efforts against the United States to bring about a multipolar world order. With Berlin's transatlantic credentials somewhat damaged, a declared favor of wider European solutions should help mitigate some of the damage done to US trust in Germany.<sup>30</sup> This should also be true of another component of Fischer's vision of the 'strategic dimension' which is at the same time a catalyst to achieve this objective: Turkey's EU accession, a long-standing wish of Washington. In this sense, the all-inclusive Europe with a 'strategic dimension' is instrumental for the 'reconstruction of the West' that Fischer called for in the FAZ interview.<sup>31</sup>

The “form follows function”-logic is also present in Fischer's embrace of Turkey's candidature for EU accession. As the strategic function of Europe beyond its borders is the export of stability<sup>32</sup> – with particular urgency to the troubled 'Greater Middle East' - in the wider framework of “shaping globalization politically”,<sup>33</sup> this requires the integration of Turkey into the European Union as a 'bridgehead' to that region. The objective would be the transformation of Turkey into a “European country” as defined by the Copenhagen criteria, as attractive demonstration of the feasibility of a modern, democratic and liberal state for a society rooted in Islam.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly enough, Fischer who cried out “I am not convinced” to Donald Rumsfeld at the 2003 Munich Security Conference applies the domino-theoretic logic of a model country that may instigate a positive chain reaction, which neoconservative thinkers believed Iraq would fulfill.<sup>35</sup> The instrumental causality behind both perspectives has not yet been presented thoroughly enough to explain how this effect would come about in a region where neither Turkey's radical laicism nor Iran's theocracy have touched off other dominoes over the decades.

Another issue that remains opaque, is Joschka Fischer's conviction that in order to cope with asymmetric conflicts the EU needs to be able to act in 'continental dimensions'.<sup>36</sup> Whereas supposedly

<sup>30</sup> cf. Jan Roos. “Mehr Welt, weniger Kern. Kerneuropa ist tot, glaubt Joschka Fischer, es lebe das 'strategische Europa’”, *Die Zeit* (web edition), March 4, 2004; as reported in: BBC Monitoring (ed.). “German paper views Fischer's move away from 'core Europe’”, *BBC Monitoring Europe – Political*, March 6, 2004

<sup>31</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). “Die Rekonstruktion des Westens”; Fischer wants this 'reconstruction' to be understood as a 'new transatlanticism that is in line with the changes in Europe as well as the new strategic threats'.

<sup>32</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). “NATO & ESVP: Gestaltung des europäischen Pfeilers einer transformierten Allianz' - Rede von Dr. Michael Schaefer, Auswärtiges Amt, 15.03.2004”, URL: [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe\\_archiv?archiv\\_id=5499](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe_archiv?archiv_id=5499) Michael Schäfer, director of the Political Department (i.e. conceptual tasks) of Fischer's ministry also emphasized in a March speech that EU enlargement implies an obligation to continue the export of stability beyond the old continent: “Sie ist zugleich auch Verpflichtung zu gemeinsamen Anstrengungen Europas zum Stabilitätsexport und zum internationalen Krisenmanagement.”

<sup>33</sup> Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). “Klein-europäische Vorstellungen funktionieren einfach nicht mehr”: “Wir haben eine neue Aufgabe, die dieses Jahrhundert bestimmen wird: Wir müssen die Globalisierung politisch gestalten.”

<sup>34</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). “Europa auf der Suche nach politischer Ordnung”

<sup>35</sup> In all fairness it needs to be conceded, of course, that the former tries to create this model state via peaceful incentive-setting while the latter believed in an activist concept of “bringing” democracy by use of force.

<sup>36</sup> cf. Auswärtiges Amt (ed.). “Klein-europäische Vorstellungen funktionieren einfach nicht mehr”: “Die asymmetrischen Konflikte zu beherrschen und nach Möglichkeit zu lösen, das geht nur, wenn man in kontinentalen Größenordnungen

Russia, China, India and the United States possess this quality, the EU still lacks it, and can only hope to acquire it via continued expansion in the Balkans and by inclusion of Turkey. Unfortunately it does not transpire from his explanations, what these 'continental magnitudes' consist of and what their causal relation to successfully exporting stability is. Neither Russia, India nor China appear to make for good examples of stability exporters and look a lot less like shapers of globalization than the EU does. One might of course suppose that it may imply that larger political units tend to be more outward-looking due the fact that they have longer borders with potential trouble spots. Thus, further enlargement up to the point where Europe gets into touch with a troublesome neighborhood would serve as a stimulus for a common, more problem-conscious foreign and security policy. Or one might follow the interpretation of SPD foreign policy expert Hans-Ulrich Klose that it is just a rhetorical substitute for the need to continue with *großeuropäischen Lösungen* to avoid divisions and pool resources in order to become a partner at a par with the great powers.<sup>37</sup>

On the issue of Turkey, at any rate, Fischer speaks entirely for official Berlin as after the Copenhagen Summit and more so the electoral victory of Prime Minister Erdogan in Turkey, Gerhard Schröder has been explicit about Germany's full support for Turkey's accession, conditional on further progress along the lines of the conditions set out by the European Union.

Recently, though, many commentators have seen renewed divisions arise between the chancellor and his foreign minister on the usefulness of 'core Europe'. One may suspect that Fischer's revision was partly driven by the hope of passing the constitution that seemed realistic at the date of the interviews and even improved with the change of government in Madrid and increased flexibility in Warsaw, but seems shattered after Tony Blair's announcement of a British referendum. In this context, Schröder restated his interest in pursuing integration via a multiple-speed EU if the constitution fails,<sup>38</sup> and already before had called it an 'inevitable consequence' of EU enlargement rather than a 'strategic concept'.<sup>39</sup> Opposition politicians also repeated their conviction that in the field of foreign and security policy it will only be via a core group of determined states forging ahead that greater policy cohesion in Europe will come about.<sup>40</sup> And only in May it was the new French foreign minister Michel Barnier who let the world know that he and Fischer were totally *d'accord* that in case of a failure of the constitution, 'institutional creativity' would be needed to think about 'alternative scenarios' of

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handeln kann.”

<sup>37</sup> Hans-Ulrich Klose. “Europa: Die dritte und die vierte Dimension”, *Hamburger Abendblatt*, March 20, 2004; URL: <http://www.abendblatt.de/daten/2004/03/20/275493.html>

<sup>38</sup> N.A. “Schröder rechnet mit Europa der zwei Geschwindigkeiten. Der Bundeskanzler im Handelsblatt-Gespräch: Die EU-Erweiterung ist eine historische Chance”, *Handelsblatt*, Nr. 84, April 30, 2004, page 1

<sup>39</sup> N.A. “Kerneuropa - Schröder widerspricht Fischer”, *Handelsblatt*, Nr. 60, March 25, 2004, p. 6

<sup>40</sup> Andreas Rinke. “CDU-Politiker lassen 'Kerneuropa' aufleben. Rüttgers und Lamers kritisieren Außenminister Fischer”, *Handelsblatt*, Nr. 55, March 18, 2004, page 5

advancing towards a more politically integrated Europe.<sup>41</sup>

Fischer's interviews, then seem to have staked the claim of a *good weather strategy* but it is not yet certain what strategy Germany will adopt should it get not the constitution so dear to Fischer, and how it will cope with the risks he correctly sees lurking in a Europe divided into core and periphery.

Addressing the necessity of a 'strategic dimension' of Europe, Joschka Fischer has certainly raised renewed interest in a chief gap between reality and ambition of the European project. It illustrates a change in nuance rather than category towards the conceptions of Europe Fischer espoused publicly before. The envisaged 'end state' of Europe was and is one sufficiently integrated in its political institutions to be able to jointly act on key policy challenges. What Fischer considers the most pressing areas for common action has shifted more decidedly to the region beyond Europe where the most menacing threats lurk – a change that should not surprise given that with the common currency and enlargement two principal tasks of a self-centered Europe have progressed to a more administrative stage. The drastic change that most observers perceive between Fischer's declarations in 2000 and 2004 is essentially one of procedural preference: the constitutional draft offers the prospect of proceeding towards the desired form of Europe with a larger number of member states making the detour of 'core Europe' less attractive. The latter would actually be dysfunctional for the 'strategic dimension', as Fischer has come to realize.

The repercussions of its foreign minister's reflections on Germany's *Europapolitik* will mainly depend on progress towards a compromise on the constitution and the likelihood of its ratification. In light of the announced British referendum, it is probable that Schröder's pragmatic acceptance of multiple speeds will prevail. Yet, with Fischer by his side it can be expected that Berlin will show great effort pushing forward to a constitutional project as encompassing as possible while trying to abate the conflict potential of a Europe at diverse speeds. The recent preference for Anglo-Franco-German trilateralism may prove an apt innovation for taking an Euro-hesitant United Kingdom along as a crucial partner for the 'strategic dimension' of Europe, with or without a constitution.

As long as mind-reading is not yet technologically feasible, the world depends on Fischer to make his vision more explicit and clear. The publication of a book, years in the making, in which he sums up his interpretation of the challenges facing Europe and the West in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is promised to be just around the corner.<sup>42</sup> Maybe then we will be able to better grasp what kind of Europe he sees as strategically fit for that world and no longer need to engage in *Kremlinology* of the announcements out of Fischer's office at Berlin's Werderscher Markt.

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<sup>41</sup> N.A. "Neue Zweifel an geplanter EU-Verfassung", *Handelsblatt*, Nr. 91, May 11, 2004, p. 5

<sup>42</sup> cf. Beste. "Der Nebenaußenminister", p.35