

Accumulation of World Problems
History Warning from Similar Circumstances
Responsibility for Peaceful Solutions and New World Balance

The modern world finds itself at a fork in the path. Its future is less predictable than would ideally be the case. In essence, there are two possible paths that can be taken.

The first path leads to the peaceful resolution of disputes, the enhancement of dialogue and trust, the consolidation of effective mechanisms for the necessary functioning of the global market, a gradual transition to a new model of sustainable development, and a successful way out of the world's economic, political and security disparities.

The second path leads to the uncontrolled escalation of security issues, increasing mistrust and enhanced prejudice, nationalism, the abuse of religious and other sentiments for the purpose of achieving extreme political goals, a further widening of the gap between the rich and the poor and a pervasive and deepening mistrust of national and international political decision-makers.

I do not know which path we will take. Like you, I can only guess. In this context, an obvious question arises: Is my conclusion that the modern world finds itself in a rather unusual situation correct and are there, in fact, only two paths to be taken? But even if we stick with this presumption, it is nevertheless at this moment still up to us – in view of our historical experience – that we, as the leaders of nations and States attempt to fathom the course of changes in order to successfully promote or thwart them.

In my opinion, the problems of the modern world have intensified to dangerous levels. Economic, social, moral and security problems have intensified and intertwined. If we consider the history of the modern international community, then these are circumstances which have often led to the use of force of broader dimensions. The fundamental question is whether – by applying the existing instruments of international dialogue, by implementing crisis mechanisms and by making efforts to settle disputes

amicably – the modern international community is capable of overcoming this intensification without provoking serious conflict. I am of the view that we are only at the initial stage of the intensification of these problems, but that this will increase further and take on wider dimensions. Some might say that my view of the future is rather pessimistic. Well, I will risk being self-confident in my assessment and say that this view is realistic.

To be honest, my awareness of this intensification has not just developed over recent months, but over recent years and this realisation has had a substantial influence on the decisions I have taken on foreign policy matters and domestic political challenges in my role as the Slovenian Prime Minister. If I had judged things in a more simple and uncomplicated manner, I would not have tackled such a sensitive issue as the resolution of the border dispute with Croatia at the very start of my term of office. The resolution of this issue began at a time when trust between the two nations and countries was at an all time low. The entire process, which was finalised by the signing of the international arbitration agreement, was perhaps ultimately so successful precisely because we were all aware of the fact that there was no real alternative – at least there was no peaceful alternative and certainly no safe option. Thanks to God, and especially to our people, who confirmed this view in the referendum, we succeeded.

This achievement has had a very positive impact on developments throughout South-East Europe. On a joint initiative by the Croatian Prime Minister Kosor and me, the Brdo process has been launched. The aim of this process is that any political and other issues that might arise during the course of relations between nations and States in this part of Europe are resolved before they escalate into security issues. Just one month ago, the Brdo Process witnessed a turning point, when the ministers of justice from all the countries of South-East Europe – the cities of Belgrade and Pristina, too – sat down at the same table for the first time. These two capitals opened the dialogue: a very encouraging move. At that time, visa liberalisation had come into effect and some countries had made progress in moving closer to EU membership. Certain countries such as Macedonia were unable to agree on a compromise solution with their neighbours,

whereas others such as Bosnia and Herzegovina are still trapped in internal political deadlock.

By mentioning the circumstances in a particular region, I wanted to illustrate how a determined political will for the peaceful resolution of disputes and a desire for progress can – to a certain extent – alter the course of the future and how, on the other hand, a lack of political will is – to a certain extent – capable of frustrating its course.

At this point, I am faced with the question as to whether this experience – also personal experience – can be conveyed further to the international community. Hardly. Nevertheless, I am convinced that it is not possible to say that we can fully influence the course of history. But what we can do is influence the present and the future insofar as this is in our power, in the power of our political will.

If the world's policy makers and elites decide to take reasonable decisions early enough and advocate dialogue for the benefit of peace and justice, then I see a possibility that the world will take the first path, the path of peace and progress. However, regrettably maybe this will not be the case and we will, owing to tactical manoeuvres, live in a world that is less safe than we would have wanted for our children. Let me, however, finally emphasise that by adhering as much as possible to our potential political will, we must strive for the peaceful resolution of issues, for international dialogue and tolerance, and to overcome the economic and social problems in a manner which will, by evading the rocky waters of the crisis, help us to rescue the majority of the society and not just the privileged elites. Let us bear the following in mind. In 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson won the Presidential elections, with a vast majority, with his concept of a Great Society. Unfortunately, he then had to abandon the idea due to the US war in Vietnam. The most tragic aspect of this is that while sending an increasing number of American troops to Asian soil year after year, at the same time he kept asking himself, why the Vietnamese would not yield, because with the money he was diverting to the war effort, he could have built enough schools, kindergartens and hospitals to enable the idea of a "great society" to also prosper on Asian soil. However, the power's inertia

was stronger than these humble wishes. Only years later did Nixon put an end to the war.

Ladies and gentlemen,

together with you here today, I ask myself whether we have learned enough from history in order to provide for a peaceful future. Of course, peace is not everything, but little can be achieved without it. So, as much as it depends on our political will, it's our responsibility to try sincere and hard for it.