



## **BORDERS: EUROPE AND TURKEY**

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## INDEX

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Giulietto Chiesa</b> , Member of the European Parliament, Journalist, Italy .....   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Bernard Guetta</b> , Political columnist and Journalist of RadioFrance, France.....   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Gianni Vernetti</b> , Under-Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italy .....   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Mesut Yilmaz</b> , former Prime Minister of Turkey .....  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Feridun Zaimoglu</b> , Journalist and Writer, Turkey .....  | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Vittorio Emanuele Parsi</b> , Professor of International Relations- Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Milan, Italy ..... | <b>12</b> |

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Edited by

Andrei Grachev, Chairman of The World Political Forum's Scientific Committee

Chiara Blengino, Coordinator of the World Political Forum's Research Group

**Giulietto Chiesa**, *Member of the European Parliament, Journalist, Italy*

In my role as European MP I could follow very intense, sometimes even dramatic debates in the last two years, on the future of the relationships between Europe and Turkey. I believe few themes are as controversial as this one in the history of modern Europe.

It is a very important issue indeed, that concerns the future of Europe, its features.

The question of the admission of Turkey in the European Union is only apparently a simple “enlargement” of the EU. The Union, which was made of 15 members, became the union “of 25” in 2005 and in 2007 Bulgaria and Romania entered as well. The debate on the eventual joining of Turkey went together with the admission of these two last States, but it is still open.

Why? In this discussion, many issues overlap: the religious one, which is a problem for many. And the issue of Turkey’s dimensions: a big country entering a transforming Europe could compromise its stability, its identity or even the possibility to define it. What is Europe? How far can Europe go, geographically, politically, economically? In what measure is Europe able to integrate a country as big as Turkey?

These issues are closely linked to the European identity. The big question is: what identity?

Bernard Guetta knows very well how much this theme influenced the public debate of these last years in France, much more than here in Italy. This is because – and here I’m expressing a personal opinion – in France a Referendum took place: people decided and millions of persons were informed on things that in Italy we did not know much about.

You know that the Referendum on the Constitution was rejected by the French and then by the Dutch, and one of the issues that was discussed was in fact: how big must Europe be, how many populations must be added, how many cultures must be included into Europe?

Therefore this question is linked to the one which I believe is the most important of all: must a strong Europe be even bigger?

A Europe which is able to play its role among the big world political actors – the US, then Russia, China and the emerging countries, such as India – must be strong. And in order to be strong, it needs to be well-defined, with precise borders.

I believe that, at this point, we should define which are the borders of Europe. At least for a certain period of time. Nobody had the courage and the will to recognize that this is a very important question in this phase of our history. We just enlarged our Union and this gave us strength. But now it’s time to ask ourselves how far this process can go on, and where we want to go .

Other issues would deserve attention: i.e. the theme of human rights. Most surely the Turkish speakers will tell us something about it. And I seize the occasion to warmly welcome them, because anyway this dialogue is for us a crucial need. Whatever the outcome of the negotiation with Turkey be, we need a very close dialogue with this country, which is a big, powerful country.

Therefore today we make a little step in this direction, that I believe is very useful.

**Bernard Guetta**, *Political columnist and Journalist of RadioFrance, France*

It is true that even those who live in the province of Istanbul usually say "I'm going to Asia" or "I'm going to Europe" depending on which way they cross the Bosphorus. It is also true that General De Gaulle, for instance, spoke about Europe as of a continent stretching, or which could stretch, from the Atlantic to the Urals.

It is true that, both in the course of history and in our own times, practically everyone has their own, totally subjective definition of Europe's borders, just as it is true that in the 19th century, when the European Union did not exist and the great European Nations spent their time making war on each other, all European Governments used to speak of Turkey as "the sick man", not of Asia, but of Europe.

In the 19th century people spoke of Turkey, the sick man of Europe. May I remind you how Turkey was then (and would still be for several decades) a synonym for the Ottoman Empire, that is an Empire that stretched from Central Asia to Algeria, soon to be conquered by France, and naturally of course it included Tunisia, Egypt and the whole of the Near East region. Nevertheless, in the 19th century the chancelleries of Europe regarded the Ottoman Empire as the sick man of Europe.

With all this in mind, what conclusion can we reach with respect to the definition of Europe's borders? We all know that the debate is open, there is evidently no established truth. I wish to put forward a thesis, which is of course my personal opinion.

I believe it is quite evident that Europe - I am, of course, referring to the continent, not the European Union - has its natural borders, apart from the North Pole, of course, namely the Atlantic Ocean, no doubt about that, and the Mediterranean. But what about its Eastern borders? Certainly not the Ural mountains, but clearly the Pacific Ocean.

From East to West, Europe, the European Continent, stretches from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean or, if you wish to say it the other way round, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and why? This seems rather surprising, how do we get as far as the Pacific? Quite simply because Siberia has been Russian for quite a long time, nobody would doubt that, because Russia is a European country, and therefore anything Russian is European, and furthermore there is a second absolutely fundamental reason, namely territorial continuity.

Even so, our problem still remains unsolved because it is quite evident that, if we no longer speak of the borders of the European continent, but of the possible widening of the European Union, any attempt to integrate Armenia or Georgia would not be reasonable. That, at least, is my opinion, though I really believe that most people would find the idea unreasonable.

On the other hand, since the early 1960s, we have envisaged the future inclusion of Turkey within the European Union, and its present members have decided to start negotiations with Turkey, even though everybody knows they will take at least 10 to 15 years, because of the huge problems posed by the Turkish people and the evolution of their legislation, their society, their political system, etc. to enable them to meet the criteria we, as the present components of the Union, have established as the *sine qua non* for the admission of any new member.

To answer the question "why have we done this", "why did we decide this at the very beginning of the sixties, well before our first dealings with Turkey", we should remember, we should at all times remember, that Turkey already had its own place in the Atlantic Alliance, "Atlantic", I would ask you to think about this adjective.

From which point of view was Turkey Atlantic? We may agree, and I for one do agree, that Turkey is European, but Atlantic, I myself would not support this idea, this country is certainly not Atlantic. Why did we none the less allow Turkey to join this Atlantic Alliance? Because at that time the great divide was, of course, between the Western democracies

and their allies, and the Soviet Union and its satellite countries, as I would not call them allies, and no effort was spared to include Turkey in our world.

Turkey played a priceless role during the cold war: it defended the border or rather it camped on the southern border of the Soviet Union, it defended our borders in a far away region, or rather in a truly fundamental world region. As a consequence, for the Atlantic Alliance we thought that, more than geography, though geography was also real, the important feature was a value system, in the first place, and in the second place our own interests. We confirmed this again, all of us Europeans, the French included, at the time when France had a different President from the one just elected, and why? Well, by taking account of all the different and diverse reasons.

Nowadays, of course, the conflict is no longer between the Soviet block, which has disappeared, and the great democratic countries. The virtual conflict, which is, however, clearly perceived, opposes radical Islam mainly against the Western countries. I say mainly, because we should not forget that there also is a conflict between radical Islam and India, for example, and this is not a trifle, it is certainly not something to be disregarded.

Within this great debate, within the confrontation with the Islamists, that is people who are transforming or would wish to transform the Muslim religion into a body of political doctrines, face to face with these fanatics, the big issue is to ascertain whether there is compatibility between Western values, the values of democracy, and Islam itself.

No, the Islamists themselves reply, that is their answer. We have therefore understood - this was the first reason - that it would be a major, remarkable historical mistake, which would cause immense harm, in the eyes of the whole Muslim world, to agree with the Islamists, since it is we, the Europeans, as the defenders of universal democratic values, who are the ones who say: there is no compatibility between Islam and these values.

Yet there is compatibility and it can be clearly perceived, why? Because, since the middle of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor to Turkey, desperately yearned towards Europe, wanted to be integrated into Europe, wanted to incorporate its values, and this evolution was certainly not denied by Ataturk's revolution and the end of the Ottoman Empire, and even less by the evolution of Turkey after the war and less again after some fifteen years.

It is thus in our interest to answer Turkey's expectations, it really is in our interest. It is in our interest to deny the Islamists, to transform Turkey into a Muslim showcase for democratic values, to give a real proof in the field that no, these fanatics are not right, and that yes, democratic values are universal values and take no account of religious borders. But it is also in our interest because Turkey is an incredibly dynamic country. Its growth rate is about 7%, sometimes even more, some years ago it was higher. It currently ranks sixteenth or seventeenth among the world economies, depending on which statistics are applied. In either case, it is one of the first twenty economies. It is certainly going to grow and it also has the second army in the Atlantic Alliance. It is a country at the confluence of the most difficult areas, at least for this first half of the 21st century.

I am a great supporter of the inclusion of Turkey in the European Union, though today I am rather pessimistic about what may happen. Everything leads one to think that we are going to make the great historical mistake of shutting the door in the face of Turkey. And for what reason? Monsieur Sarkozy, my country's newly elected President, has been hammering, and during the electoral campaign continued to hammer home the idea, presented as evidence: "But Turkey is not a part of Europe, it is an Asian country". I have already explained what answer can be given to this statement, which is really not true in my opinion.

In reality, there are two things in question: it is evident that Turkey is a Muslim country and Islam frightens us - we do not want to hide behind our fingers. Islam frightens many, even most Europeans. It is evident that fear makes people blind, blind to nuances, to

differences. People forget that Turkey is not an Arab country, I do repeat it, it is not an Arab country, no more than Iran; they forget that Turkey's relations with the Arab world are marked by its century-long colonial domination of the Arabs, and that the least that can be said is that between Arabs and Turkey there is a deep resentment, a deep distrust between the Arab world and Turkey. I underscore again that we unfortunately forget that Turkey has been a lay country since the 1920s. It is lay in a very militant, sometimes even authoritarian way. We forget that just fifteen days ago one million people gathered in a manifestation, young, dynamic people, incredibly nice and with wonderful open faces. I was not there, I saw these pictures on television like all of you. These people were fighting for laity, which was not really threatened at that moment.

We are forgetting all these elements, and why? First of all because Islam, globally speaking, frightens us, and therefore makes us blind, and then because more and more European politicians are tempted to exploit this fear to make themselves popular. There is also a third, more honourable reason. If we are so frightened about new openings - opening to Turkey, of course, but also to other countries - this is, in fact, because Europe itself is undergoing a deep crisis, which is really not so much an identity crisis, because we are perfectly aware of our identity, but a crisis of our project, what we want to do, who is going to take decisions. We are uncertain who will decide. Should it be a supernational power, which is still very weak, but is none the less emerging, with its own dynamic strength, as we are undergoing a unification process, or the traditional Nation-States, which are still quite strong, and to which citizens are quite rightly still deeply attached?

Well, I would say that, maybe happily, the main reason for our hardening towards Turkey is our inherent weakness as Europeans. We fear newcomers because we ourselves do not know what we want to do, at what pace and how, and we are particularly fearful if they are Muslims, etc. etc., but yes, it is true, we fear every newcomer.

What can we do today? I am afraid that, having been elected, Mr Sarkozy will not change his mind about Turkey. I think he will maintain a very firm, or maybe an extremely firm refusal stance, especially since this is in keeping with a popular feeling, not only in France, but in many European countries, while he believes he can become even more popular - and he is really popular, not only in France, but in the whole of Europe - by continuing to adopt a firm position about Turkey.

I do therefore believe that reasonable people - I apologise for the understatement, but I am speaking about people in favour of the opening to Turkey as reasonable people - should ask themselves how we can gain time and avoid a fracture which would be final and terribly damaging.

I believe that, on the Turkish side, as well as on the side of the other European nations in favour of this opening, we should ponder together, the Turks and the others, about a way to structure a transition phase, which would cool down the discussion and prevent us from once again shutting the door in the face of the Turkish people, because - and I will end by posing this question - we should ask ourselves what our interest could be in slapping the face of the Turkish people and humiliating them when all that they are asking from us is that our values may also be made theirs.

**Gianni Vernetti**, *Under-Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italy*

Italy is extremely willing to consolidate and reinforce the process of enlargement of the European Union and of the full integration of the new countries, beginning with Turkey.

There is such a close interdependence between our economies (the amount of commercial exchange between Italy and Turkey is in the region of fifteen milliard euro), that Italy could not but be interested in a further process of integration.

Nonetheless, I believe that the theme on which we should focus in order to accelerate the process of integration with Turkey is a different one, namely the relationship between Islam and democracy. We should concretely demonstrate that they are entirely compatible with the rule of law.

There are a number of interesting factors that have arisen from within Turkish political life over the last few years. There has been great progress in the field of human rights and democracy. There has been adherence to the Copenhagen Criteria, which is a fundamental requirement in order to continue dialogue with the European Union. The Copenhagen Criteria are the European standards in the field of political, civil and market freedoms. Turkey has abolished capital punishment, initiated a stronger control of the executive power over the army and has radically modified the rights of the Kurdish minority, which is a great step forward for Turkey.

Recently the President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, and the leader of the Iraqi Kurds and the President of the Autonomous Kurdish Region in Iraq, Massoud Barzani, visited our Foreign Ministry and gave us a judgement that would not have even been possible a few years ago, on the relationship between the Kurdish nation and Turkey. There is no doubt that this is an effect of the desire of the Turkish nation to become completely integrated into Europe.

Today we talk about democracy promotion, a theme that has often been vulgarised through the use of the term "exporting democracy". Europe is the real example of democracy promotion and maybe of exporting democracy, through the means of inclusion and coexistence.

If I look at the progress that Turkey has made in recent years, with a political agenda strongly characterised by the intent of joining the European Union, I think we can only give a positive judgement, which goes beyond the *realpolitik* just cited by Mr Guetta. It is true that Turkey is a member of NATO, and for us this has great political importance. NATO is a military-political alliance of democratic countries that played a role during the Cold War and today is carrying out a very important mission of stabilising crisis regions, becoming more and more the armed wing of the United Nations, that is now able to realise its resolutions, as in the case of Afghanistan.

But let us consider the positive relationship, which is a factor of stability, between Israel and Turkey. Recently an agreement has been signed between NATO, Israel and seven Arab countries of the Mediterranean. This was possible thanks also to the role played by Turkey. I am referring in particular to the NATO-Euro Mediterranean Partnership with Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Israel, Mauritania and Jordan. In my opinion these already demonstrate positive results from the process of adherence to the values of the European Union.

On the other hand, there are some arguments that are used by the detractors – Sarkozy is one of them, but the French Socialist Party has also played a negative role – in rejecting the referendum on the European Constitution. I believe the French attitude is very complex, because on one side stands Sarkozy, who is strongly anti-Turkish, and on the other side stands an extremely conservative socialist left. One of the themes they use to denounce the risks of Turkey's entrance into the EU is the economic implication.

If we consider the economic success achieved by Turkey in these last few years, I would say that we can calm down: inflation has declined almost at the same rate as that of the

European countries, the GDP has increased at 6 to 7 per cent a year, and exports have increased at 22 per cent a year. We can therefore see encouraging economic performance. The possible inclusion of Turkey into the Union would not cost Europe more than 0.1-0.2 per cent of its GDP. I believe that there are far more reasons that push us to follow the path of integration and enlargement than do not.

I would like to make some remarks on very recent events in Turkey that are a cause for concern. Earlier I quoted the positive results achieved in asserting the principle of the proper place for an army within a democracy, but there has been a revival of the strong hyper-secularist movement opposed to Erdoğan and Gül's party, casting doubts on the juridical possibility of Gül standing for the presidency of the republic. In my opinion, this has reopened a theme that is common to the whole Islamic world.

In these recent years we have seen an Islamic world characterised by some strong secular dictatorships. Consider Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Mubarak's Egypt, which was surely a country with better standards, but in any case still has an authoritarian regime in which there is a strong Arab culture and secularist authoritarianism. On the other hand we have fundamentalist Islam.

I am quite fascinated by the Turkish attempt to impose moderate Islam. Erdoğan and Gül often quote the experience of the Italian Christian democracy, so trying to propose some values in politics seems to me an interesting experiment.

Islamic fundamentalism found its nourishment in the extreme laic and secular dictatorships, therefore I believe that the task of finding an original way to bring democratic principles through Islamic discourse is of great interest and should be observed with great attention and support. In a more and more globalised and interdependent world, where Islam enters our homes – in the banlieues riots of Paris, in the opium coming from Afghanistan – I am convinced that the entrance of Turkey into the European Union is not only a favour that we could do to Turkey, but above all a favour that we could do to ourselves.

I read an exciting poll that was made ten days ago by an authoritative institute, whose results seemed incredible to me: it said that 80 per cent of the Turkish people who were interviewed believed that entrance into the EU is of fundamental importance for their country; 75 per cent felt that the European Union is a model project of civilization; and 75 per cent felt that democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the market economy is the path which the country should follow. It seems to me that we should warmly welcome this country. It could be difficult, even complicated to do so, but I think that we must not delay the process of Turkey's accession to the European Union. On the contrary we should look forward to it, because I am convinced that by doing so we are doing something good for ourselves.

**Mesut Yilmaz**, *former Prime Minister of Turkey*

Cari Italiani,

we are divided by an invisible yet essential border: language.

Borders are also the pivot element of our discussion. They are division lines which, depending on the side from which one considers them, stand as a protection or to prevent the entrance. Borders can be of a purely ideal nature and exist only in the world of thoughts. On the other hand, from city walls and customs, they can become manifestations of political power. When we decide to compare Europe and Turkey we must acknowledge that in particular ideal, mind limits, are the ones preventing the enlargement of political borders.

I would like to illustrate today, not as a representative of my Country, but much more as a convinced European, that having enough knowledge of the similarities of Turkey and Europe, it is very easy to understand that the myth of the cultural, geographic and economic borders supposed to divide Europe and Turkey, are nothing else but the propaganda of those for whom truth has been lost.

The first argumentation, the one of cultural exclusion, had been made commonly accepted by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, according to whom: "Turkey does not correspond to the European spirit". Let's then pose ourselves questions even on the European identity. I like in particular the answer given by the philosopher Remi Brague. "Europe", he says, "is built on something that was already there".

Considering the Greek antiquity as a mother of Europe, the European character of Turkey is wholly confirmed. Democritus and Diogenes, Heraclitus and Tales appear still today as the personification of the educated spirit. They all were born in the territory of Asia Minor, which is part of the present Turkey.

If we look instead at Christianity as the bosom of Europe, we understand the real meaning of Turkey for the Christian Church and then for Europe: only through the mediation of Anatolia, in fact, could the Christian religion spread towards the West.

Even trying to search for the origin of the European spirit in the ensemble of powers of the XIX century, would be a clear proof of the European character of Turkey. In 1856, in the Paris Treaty, the Ottoman King was explicitly acknowledged as a European superpower having the task to protect his Christian subjects.

It is then easily clear that culture is not suitable to support the theory of a "Turkish difference". Let's consider now the argumentation of the geographic separateness, according to which "Turkey does not belong to the European territorial mass". Let's pose questions even on the borders of the European territory. In the popular encyclopaedia on-line "Wikipedia" it is written:

"Europe has no evident geographic, geological or tectonic border. Therefore the "European borders" are a matter of political convenience".

This political convenience has already been agreed on long time ago; among the experts of this field, it is given for granted, that all those countries which join the European Convention on Human Rights are to be considered as European. Turkey is one of the first countries which joined it.

The third category of argumentations for the exclusion of Turkey, the economic one, is not less serious; it states that "the Turkish economy is underdeveloped and incompatible with the one of the European States".

How is it possible even only to formulate such a statement? Since 1996 Turkey is member of the European customs union. The juridical and technical adaptation to the common market cost Turkey 50 milliards of euros. This astronomic amount must alone represent the Turkish state and economy, because the financial support from Brussels reduced to 1/8 of what had been promised. Moreover the foreseen deep crisis of the Turkish economy has never arrived. The Turkish firms demonstrated to be at the level of

the European competing business firms. Meantime half of the total Turkish foreign commerce developed with commercial territories of the EU. Turkish products are on the good path to become popular among European buyers. Moreover the width and power of the Turkish brand as a buyer is not to be undervalued. The purchasing power of population has growth constantly until 10% in the last years and the public purchase power has at its disposal more than 30 milliards euros per year. The medium economic growth of Turkey, which is 8% yearly, throws anyway a shadow on the countries that are already members of the EU – much to their envy.

Move again, Ladies and Gentlemen, borders at the centre of our considerations. Perfectly as the border lines running between states, in our current knowledge, borders are object of attentive controls and documented on maps. This linear and precise representation is quite modern. Even the link to a political territory, which has its expression in being citizens of a state, is a recent phenomenon.

Still in the XVII century borders were organised as areas in which specific groups of people lived. They had either the function of transit and link, or the one of defending the territory of one's own kingdom from the influence of the neighbours. In the late XVII century the meaning of a precise demarcation was actually in the introduction of a protectionist system of the merchant economy. It was most of all the decision to close in the internal market against any foreign competition, to let Great Britain and Nederland overcome step by step the other economic powers.

If we look at the European Union in its current composition, the attention is attracted by the fact that the more borders are permeable between the single member States, the more insuperable become the external borders of the EU. This exclusive character of the EU is quite evident in the Constitution Treaty, in which we can read: "Within its borders, the Union offers its citizens a space of freedom, security and rights, which do not have internal borders ...".

It seems that European politicians since the '90ies are more and more in a hurry to get to a final definition of Europe's demarcation – a process that according to me can be dangerous only for Europe itself. Europe had always kept a strong attraction force thanks to an element that the Middle Age historian Michael Borgolte describes as follows: "In a historical perspective Europe is a thought unity, but in no case a close totality".

The founding fathers of Europe have been very intelligent in not proclaiming the limitedness of the European Community neither toward the East, nor towards the West. The border lines of the member states were lines in attendance condition, Europe was a process of creation, a work in progress. It demonstrated its strength in the conviction that the division of its resources would have brought at the same time a growth of the resources themselves. Portugal, Spain and Greece had this way the chance of a way out permitting them to recover much faster from the aftermath of their dictatorships. Europe covered exactly the same function for the eastern States unchained from Communism – only this way a wide area of steady enthusiasm and peace was created between Latvia and Hungary. Anyway in 1957, with the signature of the treaties about the Economic Community and on nuclear power, it was still not possible to foresee in which direction Europe would have developed. The Preamble of the EEC says that Europe should "...ensure the harmonic development by reducing differences among the various regions and the delay of the less favourite ones". Just the aim to let masses take part in the economic growth was at the base of the very fast development of Europe.

We must anyway never forget that borders – how technicalized and controlled they can be – became permeable. Hiding behind them to enjoy alone the comfort and security from the others, is not a good mean. Europe will then have, sooner or later, to make up its mind and give part of its richness to use it for building and sustaining areas of steady peace beyond its borders. Only this way Europe will succeed in developing itself further and steadily even in the future.

**Feridun Zaimoglu, *Journalist and Writer, Turkey***

First of all, let me clarify one point. Someone has said I am Turk; I am of Turkish origin, I can draw on a great heritage, my parents came to Germany and I feel that I am a German, but not a European. I am not at all happy to be the one who spoils the game, but I must say I am really sceptical about what may happen. I do not believe Turkey will be admitted to the European Union. Nobody can say that Turkey deserves this. Every speaker has underscored the good reasons in favour of the integration of Turkey within the European Union, and there is nothing more to add. However, as a German of Turkish origin, as a writer who has been living for 37 years in the heart of Europe, I have a very hard feeling about the clash of cultures that already broke out some years ago, and that in my opinion will become even stronger in the future.

I have the clear impression that these good reasons will increasingly fade into the background, and that, as somebody has already said, the Turkish people will be seen as the historical enemy, an idea derived from the worst historical prejudices.

This is already happening even during the public debates in which I have taken part in Germany. Turkey is depicted as a huge Saracen Kingdom, whose objective is to steal Europe's innocence. I think this is a very important concept, I keep running across this idea of Europe's innocence and its historical enemy, the Turkish people. In public debates, the discussion is always focused on subjects that follow arguments based on biology: people speak about a creeping conquest, about infiltration, about subversion, about a biological invasion, and unfortunately there are also those who recommend us to beware of Muslims, who really would not know what democracy is and would not it at any price.

As a writer I always blame public debates. They are conducted like a cultural battle by ex 1968-ers, right-wingers, feminists, conservative circles, and the indication is always that of giving the people the right of decision. They underscore that the people, the majority of the people, do not really want the integration of Turkey. The Muslims are coming. Now Turks are branded in this way, before they were political refugees, then foreigners and now they are called Muslims. Muslims are presented as manipulators and in these cultural battles reference is made to a Western background. Suddenly they speak about Western countries that are rooted in the Christian values and I realise, I clearly discern that ironically these cultural battles are fought by so-called secular illuminists, who stand for democracy and civilisation and are the most bitter and most aggressive enemies of Muslim integration in the Turkish case.

Ten, twenty, thirty years ago we were already amazed to see that progressive, forward-looking people could behave in such a conservative way. Now, after those thirty years, it is all starting again. We are no longer astonished, but we are none the less confronted with the disgraceful acknowledgement that today the so-called "bearers of the light" in the Western countries, the defenders, the most vigorous defenders of the Christian culture, are those who are most aggressive towards the Muslims, but unfortunately on the basis of biological evidence, of biological characteristics.

My dear friends, I fear that nothing will be done. These cultural battles about Turkey will increase, these hot debates will gain momentum, and not because Turkey would not deserve to be included in the European Union, but because the populism of politicians in Europe is enormous. I am an optimist by nature, and I hate to say that I do not believe Turkey will be admitted in the near future. If we think about the great revival of the West, about the function of the Christian outlook, I have no hope that anything will be done.

We could say: "What a shame!". Of course I think it is a shame, but we should always remember that when the subject was the integration of other States there was a majority and the borders were elastic. Now such a huge cultural battle has been started in relationship with Turkey. I am very pessimistic, I don't believe in it.

**Vittorio Emanuele Parsi**, *Professor of International Relations- Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore- Milan, Italy*

I was amazed by the fact that our Turkish guests spoke in German, which is the less global language among the European ones. English and French are European languages which are spoken all around the world. German is a language that has got its European internationality. Turks speak German.

Who spoke before me said that it is a cultural battle as well. Being academicians and intellectuals, these are the battles we must fight, so, let's do it.

Thinking about Turkey, the first thing that occurs to my mind is a conceptual re-positioning: according to me, Turkey is a "hinge" country, with respect to what can be considered the European borders and to what Europe can become.

According to its decisions, Europe will become something different, and this will be irremediably so, for good or worse. This is not for lexical courtesy or for an homage to politically correctness, which does not fascinate me, but because it helps us in understanding what we are talking about: it is about a junction, a hinge. We can take one decision or the other. And this will have some consequences.

Decisions must be taken in the short period, consequences will last for a long time.... And the decisions we will take will most probably be irreversible.

There is a second mental re-positioning we must do: now we must build a frontier and create a border. We must decide where we do want this border to pass.

Borders are inventions, and, just like all human inventions, they are extremely real and produce many more consequences than natural things. Do we want to put a border on the past or on the future? Do we want to close to the future being satisfied with looking to the relationships between Turkey and Europe during the past centuries? Do we want to remain of the idea of what is Europe according to its past and what is Turkey according to its past?

Or instead we want to be open to the future and try to understand what is Europe according to what it can become and what is Turkey according to what it can become?

If we make this little operation, we realize that the ideas we have on what Turkey is and what Europe is are false representations.

The European Union is a civic nation. At least on a planning level, we belong to the European Union as a political body, just as much as the Romans belonged to Rome, for a political choice, non for a biological or cultural question.

Modern Turkey is exactly this, the country which was born with Ataturk's republic, that celebrates its independence after the wars with Greece and the western countries, it is a civic nation. Being Turks after Ataturk's Republic means believing in Ataturk's political project, it does not mean being born in Anatolia or being Muslims or being heirs of the Ottoman Empire.

Nonetheless, if we start from the assumption that Turkey is a political project, just like the European Union is, then the difficulties we face do not come from cultural or religious questions, but from a very precise question: how can Turkey's political project enter into the European political project? How can the new Turkey become an European civic nation, just like Portugal or Greece?

Ataturk dissolved the caliphate, giving Turkey laic institution, he broke with the past to open to the new Turkey.

Since Ataturk revolution, the Turkish system is founded on two elements: institutional laicity and the role of the armed forces, from my point of view these are the two pillars of Turkish balance, which is not a liberal-democratic balance, but is a balance anyway.

And what threats these two pillars today? They are threatened by two phenomena which are external to the Turkish internal political circuit: one is radical Islamism, that menaces institutional laicity, and I believe that every form of religious fundamentalism is an evil.

The other one is the perspective of entering Europe, which threatens the role of the army, because one of the basic law of democracy is that the civil forces control the military ones.

In this moment of difficulty, the Turkish political system sees its pillars menaced by different questions, one positive and the other negative, and we know that we can not act against radical Islamism, its success in the next twenty years does not depend on us. But we can work on the adhesion to Europe, and this can be made by supporting the laicity of Turkish institutions instead of the armed forces and against a possible radical Islamist drift.

If we consider things from this point of view, we can make the choices we want.

There is no doubt that the question of Turkey is important for the Turks as well as for us.

Which are the advantages of this decision? We would avoid to give the impression that Europe is a white Christian fortress, demonstrating that a real multi-culture exists in our Union, which is founded on common political values.

Having a Turkey that accepts these political points, which is laic but democratic, would be an advantage for us, I can't see any disadvantage.

I want to talk about just one point, which is never mentioned. The very question to answer is the following one: is the turkish islamist party on power made of real moderate Islamists? Or are they a sort of fifth column? For the Turks this answer is important, more than it is for us. Is Erdogan an useful idiot, is he the leader of this fifth column, or he is a follower of Alcide De Gasperi?

If the answer to these three questions for the process of laicization of Turkey is positive, we would have for the first time the possibility of building an international of the moderate Islamist parties in the European Union – just like the socialist or the popular ones – and it would have a positive influence on the moderate Islamic parties that step by step will probably rise in France, Germany, Italy.

I have difficulties in thinking that someone could believe that in Italy the fact of being linked to the Socialist International has not been an advantage to the parties of Marxist inspiration, in their march toward sincere democratic spirit and behaviours.

Someone will ask: will the entrance of the Turks compromise the European western cultural essence? The answer is: who cares about it? It will make the mix of European culture richer, maybe it will be a little bit less western, as a Galician, or a Breton, or an inhabitant of the Val d'Aosta would think.

But from the political point of view the rules are fixed, the ones of the European democracy, and anyone can adhere.

Think to the European Union as to an evolving body: Europe was born in order to stabilize the French-German border, to transform a bloody border into something completely different.

Today no French looks at a German like the French intellectuals used to look to Germans in the Twenties. And vice versa.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall Europe invented itself again and won a great battle, demonstrating again a great force of stabilization, because the enlargement corresponded to the strategic aim that was the need of stabilizing central Europe, therefore an internal border, not an external one. The operation was very satisfying, we can say that it represents the second case in which Europe faced a difficult challenge and resolved it very well.

The Turkish question is analogous, today the questions are concentrated around the Mediterranean, in the relationship with Islam.

Today the area to stabilize is called Middle East, or south basin of the Mediterranean. Do we want to play this card towards Turkey or not? Keeping in our minds that Turkey is the last country to which we can propose the enlargement as a stabilization strategy,

because, like Mr Guetta said, we are separated from the other countries by quite substantial natural borders, the Mediterranean is an important border.

This is what we must wonder; knowing that the only country that can still be European is Turkey, not Morocco, nor Algeria.

I believe this must make us realize that we are a political project and this has nothing to do with Christian values. Personally, I believe that Europe has Christian values in its roots, as well as many other things, but this has nothing to do with the entrance of 60-80 million Turks in the European Union.

Will we be able to do this? There are two players in this process.

Public opinion is worried about the entrance of the Turks, about a low-cost job market, about a disproportionate job flexibility. But public opinion is always afraid of new things.

And then there are the deciders: they are there because they obtained a mandate to govern, to take difficult decisions. We are citizens: so let's use our power to urge the leaders to make their duty, because they have no excuses for failure, specially if it is one of historical dimension.