

VISIONS OF EUROPE

The author argues that the “Turkey in the EU” debate is a part of a much broader debate about the future of Europe itself, and calls upon the citizens of the EU as well as the citizens of the candidate countries to engage in this debate. He stresses that the Europe of the 21st century should be built together on solid, lasting and democratic foundations. The author identifies three alternative visions within the intellectual and political discussions regarding Europe’s future: the “minimalist” or “sovereignist” vision; the “super-state” or “super-nation” vision with overtones of old style nationalism some want to reincarnate at the European level and finally the vision of the “21st century Europeans.” It is such a 21st century Europe that Turkey wants to help build and that Turkey wants to be part of. Within the framework of the third vision, Turkey can make Europe stronger and more attractive. The Europe of the 21st century will be dynamic, evolving and oriented to the future. It will be a Europe that is not built “against” anyone, but will be part of a more democratic global order.

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Engaging in the Debate

The debate on the nature of Turkey's relationship with the European Union has intensified as the December 2004 meeting of the European Council, which will decide on the beginning of membership negotiations, approaches. There are practical, legal, economic and political arguments used by the various protagonists. The fact that previous European Councils have repeatedly confirmed Turkey's status as a candidate country on the road to full membership should always be kept in mind. These high level and unanimous decisions have created a moral and political framework which is binding on all participants. It is not in the interest of Turkey or of her European partners, however, to try to contain the debate to a narrowly legalistic or even purely political terrain on the road towards Turkey's membership. The "Turkey in the EU" debate is in fact a part of a much broader debate about the future of Europe itself, and we should all engage in this debate. We want to build the Europe of the 21st century together, on solid and lasting foundations. Moreover, these foundations should be democratic foundations. It is high time for Europe to build a stronger, more "grass-roots" democracy on a European scale. The European project must again mobilize a greater amount of emotional dynamism; it must generate renewed enthusiasm, particularly among the new generation. Such enthusiasm needs a long-term vision, a "European ideology" appropriate to the new century. For our joint project to succeed, all of us, citizens of the EU-15 and citizens of the new accession countries, as well as citizens of Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania, must engage in the debate about Europe's future and try to outline a vision that can rally young people from Istanbul to London, from Warsaw to Lisbon, to the cause of a successful Europe which could play a global leadership role in the world of the 21st century.

Alternative Visions of Europe's Future

It is possible to identify three alternative visions within the intellectual and political discussions regarding Europe's future. The first of these visions is what could be called a "minimalist" or "sovereignist" vision. In this vision of the future, the European Union would consist of a family of quite traditional nation-states. European integration would not go much further than it already has. On the contrary, the sovereignists believe that some competencies that have been given to the Brussels institutions could and should be reclaimed by the nation-states. In this minimalist vision, Europe would essentially be a large common economic market, with nation states cooperating in the implementation of a common trade policy and facilitating the functioning of the common market by establishing some common economic and product standards, which would include appropriate competition policies. Outside of trade and some other related areas, however, nation states would retain their prerogatives and the drive for an "ever closer union" would no longer be desirable or operative. This minimalist and sovereignist vision of the future may not often be articulated in its "pure" form. Nonetheless, it is a view of the world that shapes the behavior of a significant number of political actors and it has a substantial popular following, particularly in the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries.

A second, very different vision of Europe is that of the European Union as a "super-state" or "super-nation". Those who have this vision of the future, instinctively relate the Europe of tomorrow to yesterday's nation-states. Just as Bismarck assembled the German regional states and princedoms into the German nation-state during the 19th century, the European Union should unite Europe by integrating the existing nation-states into a new European super-state of a more or less federal nature. Because of fairly strong nationalist feelings that survive at the

level of the “old” nation-states, and because of the strong antipathy that exists towards what is perceived as a centralized bureaucracy in Brussels, the “super-state” Europeans generally do not articulate their vision in such explicit terms. Their arguments and actions, however, can only be adequately explained when one understands that their inspiration, their “point de repere” comes from the 19th and 20th century traditional nation-state. For them, the desire for “an ever closer union” is analogous to a desire to build a new nation state on a larger, European scale. If a European super-state is the goal, it is relatively easy to describe the institutions it should have and the way it should operate, simply by analogy to what exists at the level of the traditional nation-states. For those who see the European project as one that creates a new European nation, the question of defining a “European Identity” becomes crucial. But on what can such an identity be based? It cannot be based on language, since there is not and will not be a European language. European identity also cannot be based on ethnicity; there is way too much ethnic diversity. Even culture poses problems for those who would like it to be a foundation for European “nationhood”. It is not easy to argue that Swedes, Spaniards and Greeks have the same culture.¹ So the super-state Europeans have tended to emphasize religion, Christianity, as the defining characteristic of what should become a European nation. Because the sense of belonging in the nation states of the past was often derived from fear of and conflict with the “Other”, they tend to bring up old memories of religious wars, hoping that it will help cement a sense of belonging to Europe. In a historical context that “Other” is often the “Muslim” or the “Ottoman Turk”. In a more contemporary setting, the “Other” sometimes becomes the United States or even China.

The super-state Europeans are right with regard to their sense that the European project is in need of renewed emotional energy. Bureaucratic institution building alone is not sufficient to generate the enthusiasm and the adhesion Europe needs. The problem is that they are essentially searching for answers and models in the distant past and in a way that could lead to new conflicts and exacerbate tensions in the world, without really succeeding in the impossible task of creating a new European nation.

Given that both the minimalist vision of the sovereignists and the maximalist vision of the superstate Europeans seems deficient, is there an alternative vision that would constitute a better response to the challenges of the new century? With many others I believe that such a vision exists. I have called it the vision of the “21st century Europeans”.² As argued above, there is no European “nation”, and the phase of history we are in, very different from the 19th and 20th century, is not and will not be conducive to the formation, at regional levels, in Europe or elsewhere, of new “nations”. On the one hand, globalization driven by technology, trade, economics and intensified communication between all parts of the world is breaking down traditional “national” barriers, and, on the other hand, local and sub-regional reflexes have gathered strength, as an affirmation of identity and a reaction to what is often perceived as an undesirable degree of global uniformity. Somewhat paradoxically, the new regionalism has gathered strength in Europe, partly because of the framework of security and peace provided by the European Union. Spain, for example, can feel fairly relaxed about the degree of autonomy in Catalonia, because it is assured that no outsider is interested in exploiting that autonomy in an aggressive manner. Catalans today, can be Catalans, Spanish citizens, Europeans and full participants in the global economy, all at the same time. While such harmonious development of regional identity has not always been possible, even in a Europe

¹ In this context it could be pointed out that Turks and Greeks seem culturally closer to one another in terms of food, music and lifestyle than they are to Northern Europeans.

² Kemal Derviş, *A Better Globalization Perspectives on Legitimacy, Reform and Global Governance* (Washington D.C.: Center for Global Development, forthcoming).

characterized by an “ideology of peace”, witness the Basque region in Spain or Northern Ireland, there is little doubt that the European framework has greatly helped in diminishing ethnic or regional tensions and has, on the whole, facilitated decentralization and local autonomy.

It is not possible, given the economic and social forces at work, to foresee the development of a European nation, in its traditional sense. At the same time, Europe, in whole or in part, has moved beyond the point of no return in terms of closer integration in several important areas. Twelve countries already share a common currency, something that seemed a dream only a decade ago. A very substantial part of the legislative framework within which EU member countries operate is already prepared at the European level in Brussels. 15 countries already cooperate in the Schengen agreement, creating an area of free circulation of people. Both internal and external challenges require further steps in creating supra-national forms of governance. Some degree of fiscal harmonization is required to avoid a degree of tax competition that would become socially and politically unacceptable. Europe may also benefit from greater coordination of macroeconomic policies, particularly in the Eurozone. The free circulation of people requires more advanced forms of integration in the areas of health care and education. Finally, Europeans may have mixed feelings about global politics and the degree to which they see a need to “balance” the power of others, particularly of the United States, but a majority of Europeans would welcome a more active and influential role of the European Union on the world stage. At the grass-roots there is support for a more integrated conduct of foreign and defense policies. The challenge of the 21st century for Europe is to invent forms of supra-national governance that address the real problems of today, often driven by globalization, rather than try to copy what happened one or two hundred years ago in a very different context. In particular, this is not the time to define Europe in contrast to “the Other”, whether this other is the US, the Muslim, or China.

The Europe of the 21st century will have to be a more complex Europe than what underlies the vision of those who see it as a kind of new nation-state. It will have to be based on a multi-level and variable system of supra-national governance. Even if European enlargement were to stop with the current 25 members, it is very likely that some of these members will want to and be able to go further and faster in the degree of coordination and integration than others. The Europe of the 21st century will have to be built and negotiated continuously. Within a common framework there will be areas of enhanced cooperation, which will overlap depending on the type of cooperation concerned. The new proposed European Constitution may not be perfect; but its adoption would be a great step forward with regard to having a workable common framework which would also allow flexibility and diversity. Moreover the very essence of the European project has been the desire to overcome the antagonisms of the past which led to so many catastrophic wars. Europe has been a project of peace and a project oriented towards building a future of peace. Europe should be a global power, but a power that stands for peace. Such a Europe should not, therefore, have to rely on the definition of “the Other” or on the maintenance of old antagonisms, to develop the required sense of purpose. The new Europe of the 21st century cannot be built on old ways of thinking or *against* old and new enemies. The only way Europe can move forward is by developing a kind of supra-national governance that is a positive contribution to better globalization, better global governance and more advanced forms of international cooperation. For example, while building its own institutions and moving ahead in defining a more common foreign and defense policy, Europe should offer strong support for a renewed, stronger and more effective United Nations Security Council. The enthusiasm of the younger generation cannot come from old fears but from the belief that Europe can be a powerful and influential example of

how to conduct public policy in the age of globalization, how to build flexible yet effective institutions at the supra-national level while respecting national traditions, and how to spread and strengthen the ideology of peace.

It is such a 21st century Europe that Turkey wants to help build and that Turkey wants to be part of. Within the framework of this third vision, Turkey can make Europe stronger and more attractive : an example of union in diversity, a demonstration for all to see that differences in religious faith do not need to lead to new conflicts, an architecture of governance that goes beyond the experience of the past and invents new democratic institutions. The European Union has to move in this post-modern direction with or without Turkey. The debate about Turkey is really a debate about Europe's own future. The beginning of negotiations with Turkey will be a very important step forward for 21st century Europe, but it will not signify the end of this crucial debate. It will go on with the referenda and parliamentary votes on the European constitution. Nonetheless, it is more difficult to invent something new than to try to replicate what existed in the past. Europe has to meet contemporary challenges. It is precisely by reaching into the future and leading the way for the rest of the world that the European project will be able to generate again the enthusiastic support it deserves.