

Published in:
Turkey and the European Union: From Association to Accession?
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands, January 2004

Turkey is European ... for Europe's sake
by Kalypso Nicolaidis¹

Who has the right to ask whether Turkey is European? Jean Paul Sartre famously argued that collective identities are dictated by “others.” But today, we like to believe that, as groups or individuals, we can each choose who we are on the basis of our own feelings and beliefs, our own *affinités électives*. It should be up to the Turkish people to tell the rest of the world which of their several and overlapping regional identities they consider dominant. But the European Union has arrogated itself the right to bestow the label “European” for more prosaic reasons: this label is a prerequisite for eligibility to its club as stated in the original Treaty of Rome.² In the case of Turkey, such eligibility for candidate status acquired mythical proportions on the road that led to the 1999 decision at the Helsinki Summit. The official line has been that Helsinki shifted the question from *essentialist* considerations of Turkey’s ““Europeanness”” to *functionalist* considerations of Turkey’s preparedness; the only issue that remains is not whether but when to start accession negotiations. For this, Turkey needs to fulfil the so-called Copenhagen political criteria on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. To be or not to be European is no longer the question. This is, at least, what many pro-EU advocates in Turkey and their supporters in Europe like to believe and argue.

But such a stance does not only consist in choosing hope over experience, wishful thinking over truth. It is ultimately self defeating. Identity politics is alive and well at the dawn of our XXIst century. This is true not only on the far shores of Bali, Bombay or Baghdad but also in Brussels. To ignore the profound appeal of arguments about being and belonging and their nagging capacity to trump the best arguments over economic or political costs and benefits is to condemn oneself to irrelevance. The issue of its so-called “Europeanness” will remain with us until Turkey’s EU membership itself can no longer be questioned. In fact, even then, there will always be many, too many in Europe who will raise it, again and again.

These voices cannot be ignored if they are to be marginalised. The debate must be held on their turf if not on their terms. As we approach the deadline of December 2004, when EU heads of states and governments are to decide whether the political

¹ Kalypso Nicolaidis is University Lecturer in International Relations at Oxford University. She is also advisor to George Papandreou on European Affairs and Chair of the Programme on Southeastern Europe at St Antony’s College. I would like to thank Gilles Bertrand for his precious input as well as Ioannis Grigoriadis, Dimitri Nicolaidis, Kerem Oktem, Basak Kale and the participants in the high-level roundtable conference for their comments on a previous version. Comments can be posted on my webpage (<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ssf0041>) or sent directly to kalypso.nicolaidis@sant.ox.ac.uk.

² In the same way, Article 1 of the Treaty establishing European Constitution, drafted by the European Convention and the 2003 Intergovernmental Conference states: “The Union shall be open to all *European* States which respect its values and are committed to promoting them together.” Therefore membership is a matter of establishing what this adjective means exactly rather than simply a matter of common values (on the latter view, see for instance contribution by Ambassador Tacan Ildem in this volume).

Copenhagen criteria have been fulfilled and therefore whether accession negotiations are to start at last with Turkey, governments and politicians across the EU need to consider and reconsider their stance on “the Turkish question” in light of the challenges that we all face at the dawn of the XXIst century - not as if the world had not changed since thirty, twenty or even ten years ago. Turkish as well as European Union citizens deserve it.

*

Current developments in Europe and in the world have converged in lending new urgency to EU membership for Turkey, or at least to a commitment to start accession negotiations. December 2004 is not just one more deadline which can simply be missed until the next one. On it rests the survival of Prime Minister’s Erdogan’s government and therefore the best chance the EU will have for a long time to play a decisive role in the reconciliation of Islam, democracy and the West. The terrible bombings in Istanbul in November 2003 are a stark and terrible reminder that such a prospect terrifies global terrorists and all those who wish to see the Muslim world stuck in a pre-modern era. Moreover, the triangular relationship between Turkey, NATO and the European Union in the context of the Iraq war and the EU’s role in post-war Iraq, should have functioned once again as a reminder that a future European foreign and defence policy would be crippled without the southeastern flank of Europe.

At the same time, the enlargement of the EU with ten new members on May 1st 2004 puts the issue in sharper relief still: will the EU succumb to enlargement fatigue or continue to ride on the current momentum? More immediately, although the entry of Cyprus in the EU on that date is to be applauded, there is something absurd in the EU’s import of a border conflict within its own borders while a settlement on the island seems so close at hand. But a settlement in Cyprus is unlikely without a green light from Ankara which itself depends on Turkey’s confidence about its European future. This calendar calls for positive signs on the part of the EU before the December deadline.

But these geo-political considerations cannot overshadow the perennial issue of the European identity of Turkey reignited by the infamous intervention by Giscard d’Estaing a year ago.³ If Turkey were to join the European Union, she would become European, and if she were European, the Union would no longer be European: QED.⁴ As a number of commentators have pointed out, the form taken by Valéry Giscard

³ Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, Pour ou Contre l’Adhésion de la Turquie à l’Union Européenne, *Le Monde*, 08/11/2002

⁴ This argument is shared by ultra-nationalists as well as traditional Islamists (pre-AKP) in Turkey who believe that Turkey’s participation in the EU would make it lose its distinct Islamic identity. But the Turkish population seems impervious to it. See the polling data presented by Ali Carkoglu in this volume which shows the co 80% of the population supports EU. Characteristic of this anti-EU rhetoric have been the writings of Necmettin Erbakan, the historic leader of Turkish political Islam. See: Necmettin Erbakan, *Turkiye ve Ortak Pazar (Turkey and the Common Market)* (Izmir: Furkan Yayınları, _stiklal Matbaası, 1971) and Esra Cayhan, *Dunden Bugune Turkiye Avrupa Birligi Iliskileri ve Siyasal Partilerin Konuya Bakisi (From Yesterday to Today Turkey-European Union Relations and Views of Political Parties)* (Istanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1997), pp. 86-90, 407. But even Erbakan’s EU policy when he became Prime Minister in 1995 was much more balanced than his writings would have led us expect.

D'Estaing's argument against Turkish membership had the merit of opening a debate that has for too long remained unspoken. But if indeed there should be a debate, let us be clear about the question. It should not only be "What is Turkey?" - albeit Mr Erdo_an's Turkey – but also "What is Europe?" If anything, this debate shows that Turkey mirrors the EU in a shadowed glass, distorted or even distorting for some people, but still a reflection of what we are or would like to become as a united Europe. In his appraisal of "who we are" Giscard D'Estaing certainly showed greater subtlety than his Christian Democrat allies and their Christian club. But when the apparently neutral geographical argument is used as evidence that Turkey is not in Europe the civilisational argument can be read between the lines.

Today, the question of Turkish membership elicits four types of response:

1. *No to Turkish membership, because Turkey is not European.* Turkey has a different culture, is Asian (the explicit argument), or is Moslem (the more or less implicit argument). Therefore, such membership would cause great problems for the Union, hinging on Turkey's size, demography and level of development. In recognition of her strategic importance, let us offer her a real "partnership". This is the Christian Democrat position and also that of numerous Social Democrats and European federalists, a position also claimed to be that of the silent majority in Europe;
2. *Yes to Turkish membership, in spite of the fact that Turkey is non-European.* There are sound geo-strategic, economic and political arguments to counterbalance doubts about Turkey's European identity. The clarion call should be, 'do not offend the Turkish democrats'⁵ We should work towards stronger co-operation in the short term whilst promising membership in the long term – within a generation at least. This is the position of liberals and social democrats (such as former French European Affairs Minister Pierre Moscovici) as well as certain adherents of the idea of a "Europe of Nations".
3. *No to Turkey's membership, even if Turkey can be considered as European.* Turkey may be considered European, but such "Europeanness" is not the issue that matters. Instead, the problems for the EU that would be created by Turkish membership overweight the advantages. Above all, the EU would cease to be a political project and instead would have to rest content with remaining a free-trade zone. The only way the original spirit would survive with Turkey in the EU (in addition to the current enlargement which is stretching it to its limits) would be through the creation of a core Europe based on the original founding members. A number of European federalists argue this way, especially in France.
4. *Yes to Turkey's membership, for Turkey is also European, despite very real obstacles to her membership.* This is the position which I espouse, together with all those who believe in a Europe that draws strength from its diversity and where the aim is not to reproduce a national model at the level of the continent but to shape another way for people to live together and share a common project – without basing this ambition on an exclusive and arrogant

⁵ Even Giscard d'Estaing praised the Turkish elite in his interview.

common identity.⁶ Membership of the European community is neither pre-drawn nor predestined but is the result of a process of social, cultural, economic and political convergence between countries and citizens, who for many different reasons are capable of thinking of themselves as Europeans.

This typology is obviously cruder than the real world. But it is meant to provide a basis for a clearer reading of the debate over Turkish accession in the lead up to December 2004. In particular, are opponents speaking because of or in spite of their belief regarding Turkey's "“Europeanness”" (1 and 3)? Conversely, what shall we make of the support for Turkish membership in spite of a belief that Turkey "is not really European" (2). Is it not important to engage with them as much as with the straightforward opponents of membership?

There are three categories of arguments against Turkish "“Europeanness”" –geographic, historical and religious- all to be taken seriously if only because all pervasive in European discourse.

Geography has been the mother of all proxy arguments in this debate! Much has already been written on the hardened geographical as well as cultural attitudes that under the guise of rationality cloak deep-rooted prejudice about the difference between 'them and us'. We know very well that there are no sharp boundaries to delineate Europe to the East, that Eurasia contains what geographers call thick boundaries, and that in the grey area between the two continents, membership of Europe and by extension the European Union, is on both sides a matter of choice. But the myth of natural frontiers endures, even within Turkey where traffic signs on the western side of the Bosphorus bridges welcome drivers to Europe (Avrupa'ya ho_geldiniz). Giscard d'Estaing locates Turkey in the Middle East, like Armenia, Israel or ... Cyprus. To be sure, Turkey entertains multifaceted relations with its neighbours around the Black Sea, Central Asia as well as the Middle East. However, if processes of regional integration are desirable there too, why include Turkey which is according to its self-image and political culture very far from the Arabic-speaking states in the region?⁷ The question of Turkish identity should not be worked out on a geo-political basis but above all according to social and anthropological benchmarks. And if this is so, one could say that the Turks, especially around the coastal areas, have more in common with the Italians, or the Greeks for that matter, than with their neighbours the Syrians, and this in spite of Islam.⁸ Whether we consider the relationship between cities and country-side, birth statistics or modes of living, Turks are sociologically European, poorer, less urbanised and more religious, but European.

⁶ For a forceful exposition of this viewpoint in response to Giscard, see Daniel Cohn-Bendit, "Objection, Monsieur le Président Giscard D'Estaing", *Liberation*, 19 November 2002

⁷ That is especially true for the late Ottoman and Kemalist elites, which undertook the Ottoman and Turkish Westernisation programmes. Arabs had –and still have- a very low profile in Kemalist public opinion. Orientalist views of Arabs and Islam are widespread in secular parts of Turkish society.

⁸ A significant part of the population around the coastal areas originates from the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire, thus perceive themselves as having European roots. Many took refuge in this region, replacing the pre-existing mainly Greek populations. Syria, on the other hand, is usually viewed by both Turkish strategic analysts and public opinion as an enemy state. It has been the cradle of Arab nationalism, which had explicit anti-Ottoman leanings. The emergence of secular regimes in both Turkey and Syria led to the weakening of existing Islamic links and the increasing clash of competing nationalisms. Turkish-Syrian relations have historically been disrupted by the territorial dispute on the Alexandretta (Iskenderun) province, Turkish claims on Syria's support of PKK and the dispute over the Euphrates waters.

Would there have been a ‘European history’ excluding Turkey? Some argue that Turkey has been *in* Europe not *of* Europe. Yet, modern Turkey is the inheritor of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, which have shaped Europe, notwithstanding nationalist denials, including in Turkey itself.⁹ Moreover, if Turkey is not European then the Balkan states are not European either, given their Muslim or Slavic-Orthodox characters and their history “at the margin of Europe”. Most importantly, it was at its inception, with Atatürk modernist agenda in the 1920s, that Turkey chose Europe, its political institutions and the idea of a secular state.¹⁰ That Kemalism should be a European project par excellence is demonstrated by its great resemblance with all European nationalist projects and their mix of progressive and exclusionary ideology.¹¹ For the most part, the political dynamic of the country throughout the 20th century, has been based on an affirmation, at times consensual, at times contested, of this European project.

Of course there remains the vexed argument over “Islam and the West” : is the Turkish brand of Islam soluble in EUism? Alas, this argument is so deeply felt in many European quarters that it cannot be dismissed off hand as a remnant of good old European xenophobic fears about “the Orient” – even if it is! One could simply say that as far as the question of Islam in Europe is concerned, why bring up the subject at all when European Muslims are a reality (with over 10 million residents or nationals in the European Union country)? Perhaps because, for those who use the argument of religious identity, sotto voce or not so sotto voce, numbers matter. It is not the same thing to manage the integration of Muslim minorities with member states and to accept the integration of a new state with a huge Muslim majority. The battles within the Convention on the Future of Europe to include a reference to Europe’s Christian heritage in the Constitutional preamble testify to the strength of this constituency and the identification for many of the EU with a Christian club where non Christians may only form non-threatening minorities. Germany’s conversion to a more inclusive version of its own self-identity through the change in its naturalisation laws, which led to its support of Turkey at Helsinki, was underpinned by debates over the size and the likely assimilation of the Turkish immigrant population.¹² And in most member-

⁹ A classical book on the continuity between the Byzantine and the Ottoman Empires is that of Nikolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance* (Bucharest, 1935, new ed., 1971). At the same time, one of the foundations of Kemalist nationalism is modern Turkey’s disengagement from its Ottoman past. The Ottoman Empire was viewed as a synthesis of Arabic, Persian and Byzantine cultural elements where genuine Turkish heritage was shunned and treated as inferior. Kemalism aimed at liquidating foreign influences on Ottoman Turks (e.g. the Caliphate, Oriental legislation, manners and lifestyle) and reintroducing original Turkish culture, which was compatible with the Western cultural paradigm. More generally, Kemalist nation-building process and the ideology of Kemalism –if we might call it an ideology- deeply rooted in late-Ottoman modernisation efforts, is a deeply contradictory project, which aimed at a revolution from above, despite its people, and the Westernisation or Europeanisation, to some extent despite Europe. This led to a contradiction or at least a tension between the goal of ‘reaching the contemporary civilisation (and by inference Europe)’ (Cagdas uygarlik Düzeyine ulasmak) and the distinctly nationalist and isolationist aspect of historical Kemalism. I would argue that this contradictory nature of the project cum process is at the core of ‘fundamentalist Kemalism’ and its combination of distrust and attraction towards Europe.

¹⁰ This choice, however, was selective. While pillars of Republicanism were introduced (role of the state, secularism, education) were introduced, the tenants of political liberalism did not enter the political ethos until much later.

¹¹ See contribution by Jean-Francois Bayart in this volume.

¹² Obviously, this conversion itself is not a straightforward affair. It has been highly contested, including by the opposition, and much more half-hearted than a true reconsideration of German ideas

states today, the issue of Turkish accession is viewed through these lenses by a sizeable part of both public opinion and political elites. For better or worse, whether Turkish elites like it or not, its emigrants are its primary ambassadors in the EU, the benchmark for prevailing attitudes of support or rejection.

Nevertheless, the visible religious landscape in Turkey itself over the next few years will also matter a great deal. Two separate evolutions are bound to count in European eyes, one is political the other sociological. The first has to do with the sustained separation between state and church, the formal element of secularism. Here there are reasons for optimism, notwithstanding conspiracy theories which abound in and out of Turkey. Until recently it was possible to draw a strong correlation between secularists in Turkey and support for EU membership. But, in spite of its Muslim basis, the current government is proving this equation wrong by becoming the custodian of a moderate brand of Kemalism which, as it turns out, is the best guarantee for its stay in power and the curbing of military control over public life. Surely, in a Europe where governments everywhere are rethinking the exact contours and implications of secularism, the same kind of debate in Turkey allows for shades of grey – military rule does not. Is it not by overcoming their obsession with the Iran-inspired brand of Islamic fundamentalism and giving their Muslim colleagues the benefit of the doubt (perhaps even when it comes to their diligent application of the spoil system for public jobs) that the traditional political elite in Turkey can best protect the spirit of secularism in Turkey today?

There is nevertheless a second realm that is perhaps the most watched from abroad, that is the presence of religion in *public space*, or sociological secularism. Few images do a greater disservice to the idea of Turkey as European than the widespread encounter by tourists in Istanbul of Turkish women with a full veil (*kara carsaf*). Here of course it is important to stress that this practice concerns a fraction of one percent of the population and is unfortunately concentrated in the big mosques of big cities where western tourists and veiled women shall meet... Nevertheless, this fact alone, combined with the widespread wearing of the headscarf (*Basortusu*) - and other “worse” practices such as crimes of honour - explains the unease of many women in EU member states when considering Turkey’s entry in the EU: “they are not us, are they?” Of course, the very debates prevalent today in France and elsewhere over the modernisation of the century old *loi laïque* demonstrate the complexity of the issue. Sociological studies show how signs of religious belonging such as the scarf are linked with transitional phases of urban migration or can be transitional instruments of emancipation rather than necessarily subjugation. Nevertheless, it would be wishful thinking to believe that Turkey can move too far in one direction without reinforcing the “not European” camp. Shall we interpret the increased caution of Prime Minister Erdogan and his colleagues over this question – both over the display of their private practices and over public issues - as a sign that this reality is sincerely taken into account? Or is Erdogan practicing the *takiyye*, the art of dissimulating one’s real aims? Is it true that the AKP now understands mainstream Turkey as refusing the manipulation of religion by politicians, in other words to be true to the spirit of

on nationality would have arguably called for. Thus for instance, the shunning of double citizenship has meant that, after an initial surge, less Turks are applying for German citizenship than before. For a discussion of the initial turn and its link with the Helsinki decision, see for instance Kalypso Nicolaidis “Europe’s tainted mirror: Reflections on Turkey’s candidacy status after Helsinki” in Dimitri Keridis, ed, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, Basseys, 2001.

secularism? There are good reasons to believe that we are now witnessing the last stage of domestication of political Islam in Turkey as part and parcel of Turkey's modern political trajectory.¹³

In the end, we need to recognise that being European implies “feeling at home abroad” throughout the rest of Europe, an eminently subjective feeling. This test is not spelled out in any EU Commission pre-accession paper. Moreover, I suspect that those who do not “feel” in Europe in Turkey do not do so either in Greece, Portugal or Malta. And there is a slim chance that diehard “Christian European nationalists” will ever be persuaded to see Turkey as European. Nevertheless, development and modernisation are the key factors that will bring Turkey closer to the EU “home-base” and Turkish women closer in their life style to their counterparts in the rest of Europe.

Of course even if Turkey's “Europeanness” were no longer questioned, there remain considerable hurdles to her entry into the European Union as explored in great length in this volume as well as in the successive progress reports presented by the European Commission.¹⁴ But here, time, political will and the dynamism of Turkish society will no doubt do their part. And the duration of the negotiation and transition periods before full membership can be adapted accordingly.

Given economic and demographic differences, we have to conceive of how much the country can change and converge within the next fifteen years, the likely time-scale for membership. As far as the consolidation of democracy and the necessary withdrawal of the military from political life are concerned, the EU must recognize most emphatically the truly revolutionary nature of the packages of reforms adopted in Ankara since the Helsinki Summit, above all the swan song of the pre-Erdogan parliament in the summer of 2002 (where deputies laboured in drafting committees instead of being on the campaign trail) as well as Erdogan's own radical brand of reform on minority rights and the political role of the military during his first year as Prime Minister.

If the question lingers as to whether these ambitious reforms will truly be implemented in Turkey and carried through to their ultimate logic, we must remember that Kemal Atatürk himself only spearheaded the revolt against the Sultan after resigning from the army and after he had called for the resignation of all the officers who wanted to be involved in politics.¹⁵ To be sure, he raised his own army and was a soldier before he became a politician. Nevertheless, one could argue that the so-called “deep state” (*derin devlet*) in Turkey is a betrayal of this early spirit of transition from the rule of the sword to the rule of the word – this in the name of secularism.¹⁶ To be

¹³ Murat Belge quoted in Jean Michel Demetz and Nukte Ortacq « La conversion des islamistes turcs » in *L'express*, 30 October 2003. For a recent discussion, see also for instance Daniel Vernet « Turquie: de la difficulté d'être européen », *Le Monde*, 1 November 2003.

¹⁴ See also for instance Murat Belge, *Yaklastikca Uzaklasiyor mu? Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye (Does it Recede as we Approach: The EU and Turkey?)* (Istanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 2003), pp. 13-14.

¹⁵ See for instance, Murat Yetkin, *Avrupa Birliği'nin Bekleme Odasında Türkiye (Yetkin's 'Turkey in the Antichamber of the European Union') Istanbul: _mge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2002), pp. 138-141. See also Kalypso Nicolaidis “Europe's tainted mirror” *op.cit.* 2001.*

¹⁶ The deep state has traditionally reflected the distrust of the military and even civil bureaucracy toward civilian governments, as well as the self-proclaimed role of the Turkish military as guardian of Kemalism, secularism and republicanism. Yet, this role was only given constitutional backing after the

truly European, the Turkish army must reconsider what Kemalism ought to mean in the XXIst century, critically appraise its role as a perennial guardian of the Republic and invest more trust in politicians in their efforts to establish a state founded on the rule of law and in a thriving civil society.¹⁷ One hears from the Turkish left that Erdogan's drive towards the EU is instrumental, a means in his fundamental struggle with the military. If this is the case, so be it. Whatever the intent, the result is what matters. But there are reasons to doubt that is indeed the case, if only because elite socialisation is a powerful force in international politics.

As far as human and minority rights are concerned, prime minister Erdogan has not needed much prodding. As a Greek diplomat quipped after his post-electoral tour of European capitals in the fall of 2002: 'we are asking him for A, B and C and he will give us the whole alphabet.' His challenge –the EU Commission knows it and he knows it- will be to reassure his European partners that he can have the upper hand when it comes to implementation. The Sevres syndrome is alive and well in Turkey. Europeans need to understand and be sensitive to its historic roots. Turks need to overcome it.

The final argument against the membership of Turkey is her size. It is clear that this argument has a symbolic resonance above all for France and the United Kingdom, who continue to pretend that where matters of European leadership are concerned there are always in the EU the major states, and the others. But we know that practically speaking, decision making in the EU is shaped by coalitions and moreover that votes in Council and the European Parliament are to an increasing extent determined by political and ideological rather than national differences. Concerning the number of Turkish citizens who are 'at risk of invading our countries', as discussed elsewhere in this volume, it is precisely economic modernisation and demographic slowdown - triggered by the accession process - that will provide the greatest disincentive to emigration.

In short, on the one hand neither geography, history nor religion constitute a firm intellectual basis for maintaining that Turkey is essentially non-European; on the other, the real arguments against membership are ultimately inconclusive and likely to be tackled successfully in the next decade. If they were not, the EU would always have the option of pushing back accession and lengthening the transition period until they were.

But looking beyond these negative arguments, we must ask ourselves once more what the nature of our European project is– a project wherein Turkey could find her place. Some maintain that the most enthusiastic advocates of Turkish membership are Euro-sceptics who extol the virtues of a minimalist Europe without a political project. Is that a wise calculation on their part? Is the alternative between a spineless EU including Turkey and a powerful, homogeneous Europe without it? I believe that those who view the alternative that way, in defence of one vision or the other, lack in both political realism and political imagination.

1961 and 1983 military takeovers, and is slowly but firmly being challenged by Erdogan's reforms, including that of National Security Council.

¹⁷ To be fair, Atatürk did not allow for a free opposition during his tenure. The Turkish army intervened in 1960 in part because the introduction of multi-party politics in 1946-1950 was perceived as threats for Kemalism.

We need to reconsider extensively what it will take to create a European Union that will eventually play a role in international affairs commensurate with its economic weight. Such a Europe will not suffer from but draw strength from its diversity as each member states deepens its relations with its geographical and cultural neighbours in the name of the EU rather than as part of its own separate diplomacy. Turkey as a crucial role to play as Europe's gate to the Middle East. More deeply, drawing strength from our diversity implies that we view the unprecedented political experiment that is the EU not as a model to impose arrogantly upon the rest of the world but as a microcosm that can inspire and provide lessons to the rest of the world. A Union which is capable of including Turkey, will not only send a powerful message to the rest of the world about the compatibility of Islam and democracy, but even more importantly that ours is such a powerfully integrative political project that we can accept that our "biggest" member state be one where Islam is the dominant religion. By becoming one of the most powerful voices of Europe in the Muslim world, Turkey will contribute to a highly political project for the EU indeed. An EU power which stands as an alternative rather than either a rival or a vassal to the United States. Will such a Europe not thus become the most credible and headed voice in the world when it comes to peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution and global solidarity?

In short, I believe that the Europe we should all wish for is not only inclusive and tolerant, not only multiethnic and multicultural but also a Europe that will carry a universal and revolutionary message in the great cultural debate of the twenty-first century that has just begun. For what is our Union in the end if not a formidable machine for managing difference? It is in the name of this Europe that we must say yes to Turkey.