

‘Negotiation results with Turkey entirely open-ended’ from the Europe Daily Bulletin
(5 January 2005)

Caption: On 5 January 2005, Ferdinando Riccardi, Editor-in-Chief of Agence Europe in Brussels, identifies the difficulties which, in his eyes, are in danger of affecting the negotiation procedures for Turkey’s accession to the European Union.

Source: Bulletin Quotidien Europe. 05.01.2005, n° 8859. Brussels: Agence Europe.

Copyright: (c) Agence Europe S.A.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/negotiation_results_with_turkey_entirely_open_ended_from_the_europe_daily_bulletin_5_january_2005-en-9348deb1-adc1-4052-b20d-086f3beba6ce.html

Publication date: 18/09/2012

Negotiation results with Turkey entirely open-ended

I don't think that the EU summit decision to open negotiations with Turkey has triggered a mechanism that will automatically lead to the country's accession to the Union. Ambiguities that still exist are too significant for the decision on this issue to be taken on Europe's future (see this section yesterday). I know that this is not how everyone sees the issue. Some pundits believe that if negotiations begin, then there is only one outcome, accession.

Two observations. My analysis is more cautious. It is partly based on two observations. The first refers to the debate at the European Parliament. All observers have been able to point out that the fracture in the vote, between the majority of the EPP and the majority of the Socialist group does not in any way involve a different vision of Europe's future. The two groups confirmed the objective of a more compact Union, more integrated on the world scene as an autonomous player. The problem is that for some quarters, Turkish accession destroys this objective but for others it contributes to the goal. But the essential goal is shared. The support that the main political groups have given to European integration is still there and the Liberal and the "Greens" share this vision (see this section on 17 December).

The second observation is that the media, which on the contrary to the fear expressed by several observers (including myself), has not let up in its attempts at excessive simplification. They have not only highlighted the decision to open negotiations but also the conditions. Rather than the spectacular "Green light for Turkey" formula, they have emphasised the "amber light" and in some cases the "flashing light". The message the public gets, therefore, is that a significant section of the political class does not want anything to be decided beforehand and the conditions are just as important as the decision to begin negotiations. It is important, as the president of the European Parliament said, *"if the Turkish question is perceived to be a new battle of Lepante or a new Siege of Vienna, we'll get nowhere.* The weight of public opinion and that of the EP which represents it, will play a significant role. That's why by simplifying the extremes, I see two possible scenarios.

First hypothesis: the Constitution fails (in the sense that a significant number vote no to the ratification process and prevents its entry into force). In this case, the enlarged Europe will become progressively less solid. The proof will be the fact that Europe as a power will not be what all Member States want and the machine will subsequently grind to a halt. Economic cohesion will weaken, the will to collectively fund a genuine regional policy and an authentic agricultural policy will fray, monetary union will not extend further, the breadth of common foreign policy and a common defence policy will fracture and the common area for freedom, security and justice will not be installed. In such a Europe, Turkey will find its place, together, with countries such as Ukraine and why not with other non-European countries. This will help build very significantly, world stability and perhaps avoid the shock of civilisations by weakening the influence of Islamic extremism but it will not be an integrated Europe capable of playing an autonomous role in the world. That's why the most ambitious Member States will relaunch the Europe as a power initiative in forms that will need inventing and negotiating when the time comes. As Etienne Davignon said, *"the European integration project will not stop"*, and the possible rejection of the Constitution will no lead to *"stalemate in which nothing happens"* (see this section 13 October last).

Second hypothesis: the Constitution will enter into force (even if some countries possibly remain on its margins) and European will develop in the desired direction, with its minister for foreign affairs, its strengthened defence policy until it becomes operational, its freedom, security and justice area completed and its cohesion policy confirmed and improved. In this case, I consider that negotiations with Turkey will not result in accession but in a form of strengthened association that has to be worked out between the two parties. In my opinion, it will be Turkey that understands the scale of the transfer of sovereignty implicit in participation in a Europe that is undergoing increasing integration and will choose to stick with its autonomy in foreign policy and even more so in other areas related to justice and home affairs.

I understand that such a prediction is a long way from the official position of the Turkish authorities which sharply reject any hypothesis of "privileged partnership". This needs to have a tangible basis and which I will return to tomorrow.

(Ferdinando Riccardi)