

## ‘Europe: after Turkey, is Ukraine next?’ from Le Monde (30 October 2004)

**Caption:** On 30 October 2004, the French daily newspaper Le Monde speculates on the implications of the future enlargements of the European Union, focusing, in particular, on the case of Ukraine.

**Source:** Le Monde. 30.10.2004. Paris. "Europe: après la Turquie, l'Ukraine?", auteur: de Montbrial, Thierry , p. 1.

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## Europe: after Turkey, is Ukraine next?

Thierry de Montbrial

THE MATTER of Turkey's accession marks a turning point in the brief history of the European Union. No other prospective enlargement has roused such passionate feelings.

With negotiations between Brussels and Ankara seeming ever more likely, a new stage is beginning, moving on from the earlier stage that was dominated by the consequences of the fall of the Soviet Empire. Our Community has grown from 12 to 25 members, and this will soon be 27 with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, not including the eventual accession of Croatia. Our Community has changed both in name and in nature.

This earlier stage in our history also saw the realisation of the extraordinary project to create a single European currency. The project was driven by the belief that only by succeeding in such an enormous undertaking would we be able to meet the challenges of the constantly changing world system.

Taking stock of the considerable transformations that have taken place over the past 15 years will be the pre-eminent task of this most recent stage in our history. For the most part, the coming months will be spent discussing the constitution and what the future holds for the treaty which resulted from the Convention presided over by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

As things stand, the chances that the treaty will be ratified by all 25 Member States are slim. Before Laurent Fabius announced his position, experts had begun to speculate about judicial methods which would allow for a 'No' vote in the United Kingdom or another country, such as Denmark, to be sidestepped if there were a resounding 'Yes' from the founding States. Henceforth, the alliance of opposing political groups, which is all too frequent in politics, means that the possibility of a 'No' vote in the French referendum in 2005 must at least be considered.

Such a result would not necessarily be fatal. Exactly 50 years ago, the National Assembly voted against the European Defence Community (EDC) proposed by France. Three years later, the Treaty of Rome was signed. However, it is true that this event left its mark on European integration for years to come, as it resulted in security matters being excluded from the outset in favour of the Atlantic Alliance. In any case, it seems that a miracle will be needed for the text, which was signed in Rome on 29 October, to be ratified in the next two years by all Member States, thus enabling it to be implemented by 2007.

It is not that I don't believe in miracles. Indeed, we witnessed one with the Single Market. However, the most likely outcome is that the constitutional debate will continue for some years to come; that we will have to live under the Nice Treaty for longer than we would have wanted; that, at the same time, the economic and social governance within the euro zone must be improved, but the nations which have already acceded must be integrated, whilst we shall still have to negotiate with Croatia and particularly with Turkey. This promises to be an interesting time.

A glance at a world map shows the very obvious gaps in the European Union: Norway, whose citizens have already twice rejected the possibility of accession; Switzerland, which is still not inclined to join; and the thorniest issue, that of the chronically sick area of the former Yugoslavia (Serbia, with the nagging issue of Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia) — not to mention Albania, which remains firmly stuck in the past. We are undoubtedly correct in thinking that events in the Balkans will be a major concern over the next 10 or 20 years.

### SERIOUS DOUBTS

In such conditions, are more enlargements possible within this time frame? The answer would certainly be yes for a country such as Norway if it were to change its mind. For other countries, however, it seems extremely unlikely. This is what prompted Jacques Chirac to announce an amendment to the French

Constitution which would mean that, after the accession of Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia, a referendum would be necessary for every subsequent enlargement; this would, for example, be the case for Serbia. The time of hasty ratifications made by obedient governments now seems to be over.

In order to complicate matters further, requests for future enlargement are not coming from the countries mentioned above. Nor are they coming from our Arab neighbours in the Middle East or the Mediterranean Basin, regardless of what is claimed by those who oppose Turkey's candidature. The future, it seems, is Ukraine.

Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians and, of course, Poles, or even Romanians in the south, are not at all comfortable with the idea of a partial reconstruction of the Soviet area. For the time being, they can do nothing other than resign themselves to the fact that Belarus remains firmly under the iron rule of the autocrat Alexander Lukashenko, who is doing everything in his power to extend his Presidency indefinitely with at least tacit support from Moscow. At the same time, these nations are criticising the European Union, to varying degrees, for not using its powers to limit the most devastating consequences in Belarus, while the US Administration has taken steps to openly support those who oppose the dictator.

Above all, however, in the light of the seemingly mutable situation in Ukraine, some Member States would now like to send a clear signal to the country indicating that there is potentially a place for it in our club. Poland, now a major player in Europe, is taking a hard line on this matter. And, as with Turkey, we can expect increasing pressure from the United States, which believes that Russia must be continually weakened. To this end, separating Ukraine and Belarus from Russia, and incorporating these countries into Euro-Atlantic institutions, would be a master-stroke.

So, Ukraine is the next geopolitical challenge. The debate on this matter has not yet really begun and it is highly probable that it will be difficult and ideologically highly charged.

When we consider the current situation, three main points spring to mind. The first of these is that it is misleading to make any comparisons between the Ukrainian candidature and that of Turkey. From a purely geographical point of view, Ukraine is clearly in Europe. However, no Ukrainian government has so far explicitly declared a wish to accede to the Union, nor made even the slightest reform that would suggest such a wish. Will the election of Viktor Yushchenko — the challenger to the '*Russians' candidate*', Viktor Yanukovich — really remove the ambiguity which surrounds this issue?

The relationship between the political parties in Ukraine and the large Russian population within the country (30 %) suggest otherwise, at least in the short term. As a result — and this is the second point — any unilateral initiative launched by the European Union would be particularly lacking in substance seeing that, for the aforementioned reasons, the current trend is towards a dramatic slow-down in enlargement. In short, no stance on Ukraine can be determined without taking into account Russia and the sensibilities of its population, particularly when there is no credible official line coming from Kiev.

## **AN AMBITIOUS POLICY**

The forthcoming debate will consider how the European continent as a whole should be organised. It would be dangerous to begin this debate aggressively where Russia is concerned and to risk getting involved in a struggle for power and influence.

As is the case with Russia, Ukraine's future also depends initially on its capacity to implement reforms and to move towards real economic and social development. The European Union can and should offer the nation significant help through a relatively ambitious neighbourhood policy. As far as Russia is concerned, it needs to demonstrate that a common economic area with Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan would not constitute a kind of Soviet-style grouping on a smaller scale.

In the long term, only economic development and the democratisation of the entire continent would enable us to overcome the divisions which still exist and the fears that they create. It is this future which all parties

should build together, whilst exercising the greatest prudence.