

**TEXT OF THE SPEECH DELIVERED BY
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY H.E.
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AT THE NATOLIN CAMPUS OF THE
COLLEGE OF EUROPE ON
*“TURKEY’S VISION WITH REGARD TO THE
FUTURE OF EUROPE”***

(WARSAW, 6 JUNE 2011, MONDAY)

Dear Madame Vice Rector,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be visiting Natolin College once again. It is a great pleasure for me to address all distinguished guests who are with us today. I would like to thank the College of Europe for giving me the opportunity to share my views on Turkey’s vision for the future of Europe.

I would like to first emphasize how pleased I am by visiting Poland. As the linchpin of Europe, Poland has always been a leading source for European thought. It is therefore not a mere coincidence that the sister of “College of Brugges” is located in this country. Neither is it a coincidence that Poland occupies a distinct place in our understanding of Europe.

Throughout history, Turkish-Polish relations have based on strong bonds of friendship, mutual respect and a common vision of solidarity in difficult times.

In the darkest ages of European history, Polish people have always counted on the friendship of Turkey. Polish men and women, escaping the ruthless occupation of their land, found refuge on Turkish soil. They, in return, made valuable contributions to the political, military, cultural and scientific life in their new home.

Furthermore, Turks have never recognized the division or occupation of Poland. At this point, let me share a brief historical note from the period when Poland did not exist as a sovereign state, that was from the end of the 18th century until the end of the First World War.

At the Ottoman Sultan’s receptions for “corps diplomatique”, the Chief of Protocol would always announce the Ambassador of Poland, although he was absent, as “on his way!”. This was a clear demonstration of the Ottoman policy not to accept the extermination of the Polish state.

Our friendly relations do not only stem from this historical heritage, but also from being a member of the same security alliance and sharing a common vision on many regional and global issues.

In this context, I have the honor to announce that in 2014 we are going to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Poland.

Distinguished Guests,
Dear Students,

So many words can be said about the past. It is certainly true that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. But my intention today is not lecturing on European history.

I will rather dwell upon the future; the future of Europe that you, the students of College of Europe, will shape and ultimately run.

Today, discussing the future of Europe, here in NATOLIN, renders this event even more meaningful, because this institution is a nest of strategic thinking rather than a school of ordinary training.

Being a College of Europe student is a privilege. Yet, this privilege entails a responsibility: The responsibility to work for a better future for Europe. Upon your graduation, many of you will work in European institutions, in your national administrations, in academia or civil society.

No matter where you work, you will be the future defenders of the European project; a project we firmly believe that Turkey is a part and parcel of.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Students,

Time has come to rethink Europe as we witness three important dynamics concerning our continent: namely, shift of global balance of power to Asia; spread of democratic revolutions over the Middle East and North Africa and shift of the focus of Europe.

While the center of gravity of global power shifts from the West to the East, European continent turns its focus more and more introvert.

Let me further elaborate on this:

The well-known power shift from the West to the East is a result of the rapid economic growth of Asian countries. The economic rise of the emerging countries bolsters their political bearing as well.

The EU's share of world trade will soon drop below 20%. While over 25% of world GDP in mid-1990s was generated by the EU, this share is expected to decrease to less than 10% by 2030.

On the other hand, Asian countries' share in world output has doubled in the last four decades to reach over 30% today.

This global trend is so influential that the "EU's Reflection Group" alarmingly pointed at the risk for Europe becoming an "irrelevant Western peninsula of the Asian continent".

There are fears that 21st century will not be a "European century". The relative decline of the European power has, for example, led German sociologist Lepenies to argue that the "Europeanisation of the world" is over and Europe is no longer the continent that sets the pace and direction of the world.

By the same token, Bengali historian Chakrabarty has referred to the "provencialisation of Europe".

Although I have personal reservations about these ambitious remarks, I still believe that Europe should absolutely draw the necessary lessons from this global shift of balance, if it aspires to remain a decisive player.

While the global order is still being re-structured, Europe is also trying to find ways to consolidate its place. In this search for a new global order and political and economic governance, a huge responsibility falls on Europe for ensuring better security and more freedom for the people. This search should be backed by a solid "European geostrategy"; a concept I believe our continent has yet to develop.

The history of European integration has confirmed that Europe has always managed to find solutions to arising difficulties and continue to move ahead. Therefore, I am optimistic about the future of Europe. Built on the accumulated knowledge and wisdom, Europe has been a beacon for the whole world in politics, economy, science, arts and technology.

Today, Europe is our common house built on common norms and values. It represents a way of thought and living, based on universal values and high standards. It has been a center of attraction with its unique political, economic and social model.

Despite the economic difficulties Europe is confronting today, we should not leave any room for pessimism. After all, we are talking about the largest single market and trading partner in the world.

European integration is an unprecedented and the most successful project in European history. It has become a recipe for peace and prosperity. The Polish miracle, alone, testifies to the success of this endeavor.

If the necessary political will and strategic and visionary leadership are displayed, I see no reason why Europe's future -namely our future- should not be bright.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Students,

As regards the second shift, namely the introversion of Europe, this leads to an "emotional distancing" with the rest of the world, which is something we should certainly avoid at this era of globalization.

In the emerging new world order, Europe has no choice but to deepen, strengthen and widen its web of relations.

European project cannot be sustainable by remaining indifferent to its neighborhood or even beyond. Europe should refrain from self-isolation. Europe cannot increase prosperity of its citizens without appropriate interaction with the others. It cannot properly project its values on the others if it is not tolerant enough. An introvert Europe will eventually lose its soft power and fail to maximize its power of attraction.

This inward looking mood is surely triggered by the global financial and economic crisis. This has led Europe to exclusively focus on its internal affairs and to relatively lose its self-confidence.

I am observing the decline in the atmosphere of tolerance in Europe. This is very alarming. It leads to the questioning of even the founding values of Europe. "European identity" can never be designed on exclusivist terms.

In fact, Europe has never had a homogenous identity. It is built upon different ethnicities, cultures, faiths and traditions.

Just look at yourself. You are making Europe by belonging to different countries from Portugal to Bulgaria, from Poland to Estonia, from Sweden to Turkey. Each of you brings his or her own cultural reflection to craft the cultural wealth of Europe.

Cultural diversity is a source of strength and richness to be cherished. We cannot build a common future based on ignorance, fear and isolationism. The rise of intolerance in many European societies is a common and complex challenge that we must be dealing with all together.

Europe is our common house cemented by our common norms and values such as democracy, human rights, tolerance and respect for differences. Being "European" means internalizing these norms and values. If we do not uphold these norms and values, we cannot live in our common house in peace. Therefore, we should not only enjoy but also safeguard them.

The Europe that Monnet, Schuman or Adenauer had envisioned was built upon the courage to leave the past behind. They sought peace and stability through common values and perspectives. Because they had experienced the real cost of divisions and fanaticism.

After the bitter experiences of its recent past, there should be no place for racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic and discriminatory tendencies in today's Europe. They not only harm social cohesion but also undermine Europe's image and soft power.

The signs of time urge us to live not only "side-by-side" but also "together" in a cohesive and harmonious sense.

I am well aware of the economic and social challenges Europe is facing today. However, neither physical nor invisible social and mental barriers can ensure remedies to these challenges. In democratic societies, there can be no exclusion to "inclusiveness".

Distinguished Guests,
Dear Students,

The third dynamics which would be a decisive factor in shaping the future of our continent is the expansion of democratic revolutions towards the Middle East and North Africa.

Indeed, we are witnessing a historical transformation in Middle East and North Africa which is reminiscent of 1848 and 1989 revolutions in Europe.

I am following the developments very closely. I personally urged OIC Member States back in the 2003 Foreign Ministerial Meeting in Teheran for reforms at home. I told that we should first put our own house in order. We have to ensure that the transformation process will result in the peace, stability and welfare of the people.

Expanding the space of democracy, peace, stability and prosperity will be in the interest of Europe and the international community.

Europe cannot remain indifferent to the drastic developments in North Africa and the Middle East. So we should not miss this historic opportunity.

Dear Students,

Europe has two choices for the coming decades: To become a global player by being strategically visionary, economically competitive and culturally inclusive or to remain as a continental power.

The first option is attainable if a strategic farsightedness is employed.

To this end, European integration should be given a new impetus. It is certain that the completion of European integration process will open new windows of opportunity for Europe and enhance its profile.

Thanks to its historical role and contribution to the formation of Europe, Turkish case is the best example to these windows of opportunities.

Turkey and Europe have always interacted. They have been mutually influenced by the respective political, economic and socio-cultural developments. It is almost impossible to write European history without Turkey. As a result, the future of Turkey and Europe cannot be considered as two distinct and separate factors.

We share the same history. We share the same geography. We share the same vision and we share the same values. Therefore, we share a common future and a common destiny

How will the EU have a stronger global vision? With or without Turkey? Could you overlook Turkey's influence over and close ties with the Eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East?

Which should be the underlining characteristic of the future "Europe": A superficial geographical definition, or a set of common values?

Everyone is entitled to have his or her own answers to these questions. Yet, our stance is well defined and our vision for the future of Europe in the time span of 20,50,70 years is very clear:

Turkey wants an ever stronger Europe without artificial fault lines. As such, our vision is to see Europe as an example of internal and external solidarity, cooperation and integration at the highest level possible.

We are wishing for a Europe which is not an "absent player" but an engaged actor on the global scale.

We would like to see a Europe that shoulders its global responsibilities.

We desire Europe to project its smart and soft power effectively.

We expect Europe to show leadership on global issues of concern, which we are all facing today.

We want Europe to work for a better international order based on the principles of justice, equality and freedom.

In this respect, Turkey's accession to the EU is a strategic imperative for European integration project. It will no doubt increase EU's efficiency, relevance and credibility.

A Union with Turkey will be much more influential in the Balkan, Mediterranean, Black Sea, Caucasus and Middle East regions. European values and policies will certainly have a far greater global reach and impact with Turkey on board. Turkey's accession to the EU will only help Europe to find the role it deserves in this newly emerging global order.

Turkey has much to contribute to the EU so that it would not turn into an inward-looking organization with its global influence and strategic outreach ending at the borders of its members.

With its young and dynamic population, economic growth rates, deep-rooted culture and democracy and multi-dimensional foreign policy, Turkey aspires to take its rightful place in the newly-emerging global order.

It is the 16th largest economy in the world and the 6th largest in Europe. As one of the top 10 emerging markets, it is also a member of G-20. Turkey's GDP growth rate in 2010 averaged 8,9% ranking it in first place in Europe.

According to the OECD, Turkey will sustain the third highest growth rate after China and India by 2017. Turkey's accession will increase the size of the European internal market, as well as the relative competitiveness of the EU in the global economy.

The added value that Turkey would bring does not only culminate from its unique geography but also the policies it pursues. Turkey aspires to be a "virtuous power" for democracy, peace, stability and prosperity in its region and beyond.

With the second largest army in NATO, Turkey has a crucial role in the success of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU. Turkey has proved its key position in this area by providing security assets to EU and international operations in many regions.

An EU including Turkey will be more successful in dealing with both external and internal threats to Europe's security. Europe has significant security challenges to meet. And whatever the challenge may be, Turkey is the partner, whose contribution can make a difference. We remain the biggest non-EU contributor to Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations.

Turkey seeks to establish peace, stability and security in the Middle East and North Africa and assist these countries in their transition to democracy;

- to further integrate the Balkans with the Euro-Atlantic community;
- to bolster democracy and peaceful resolution of conflicts in the Caucasus and Central Asia;
- to contribute to enhanced energy supply and security of Europe;
- and to strengthen security and stability in Afghanistan and South Asia.

So does the EU.

The proactive diplomacy pursued by Turkey to attain these objectives in fact complements the EU's policies to the same ends.

A very pertinent example of the difference that Turkey can make is about the ongoing wind of change in Middle East and North Africa. The recent developments in our southern neighborhood have revealed once again the difference that Europe can make together with Turkey.

Turkey's modernization process reflects the ability of a predominantly Muslim society in embracing democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance.

Therefore, in addition to its credibility, Turkey is also becoming a source of inspiration of a vibrant democracy and free market economy in the region.

All in all, EU's eventual decision to admit or deny Turkey to join, will have significant implications on the future of Europe, and how it will be perceived by the international community. We believe that Europe will never reach its full potential unless integration with Turkey is materialized.

Dear Students,

Bearing in mind the three key dynamics that I mentioned, one can easily argue that Turkey is at the intersection of these powerful currents.

Turkey's accession to the EU will help Europe to balance rising economic power of Asia, to expand democratization eastwards and to revitalize its internal cohesion.

Ignoring this strategic imperative and trying to keep Turkey out of European integration process means missing the broader geostrategic picture.

Yet, fifty years on since the beginning of the contractual relationship between Turkey and the EU, the debate on Turkey's European vocation has not waned.

These views, also nourished by the politics of identity, disregard Turkey's well established place in European history. For those who think Turkey's integration to Europe is misplaced, I simply reply that the very name of Europe originates from the Phoenician princess "Europa", meaning "where the sun sets" and referring to the lands of today's Turkey.

I regret to see that some of our European friends are still attached to the past and related prejudices, rather than looking to the future.

European leaders are obliged to focus on the long term strategic interests of our continent.

They have to think and act with a strong sense of duty towards you, the future of Europe.

History is on the move faster than ever. Europe must not lag behind it.

I am confident that Europe will have a brighter future if its current leaders act now, with wisdom and strategic vision.

Thank you.