

**The Future of the European Union after Brexit,
some reflections from a wider perspective, including on Turkey**

by Laurens Jan Brinkhorst

Introduction

On 26 November 1940, 76 years ago, professor Cleveringa, dean of the Leyden Law Faculty, gave a speech which has over the years become a call to arms. For the last 70 years on that day all over the world gatherings take place of Alumni of Leyden University. In most cases they are being addressed by professors or emeritus professors commemorating that event, which took place under the motto Praesidium Libertatis – Bulwark of freedom, the motto Leyden University carries since 1875, 300 years after its creation.

I should briefly recall what happened on 26th November 1940. The courageous speech by Professor Cleveringa (and his colleagues Van Holk and Barge) was held that day as a protest against the provocative dismissal of all professors of Jewish descent at Dutch universities. It was a strong protest against the attack on academic freedom and freedom of speech and a total rejection of the underlying racial discrimination.

In the Netherlands this day is commemorated as the beginning of an open uprising against the occupying power. The Cleveringa speech has been a source of inspiration to generations of alumni, in the Netherlands, but also in the world at large. It is a privilege for me today to recall this address and its strong message of freedom in this ancient city of Istanbul

It took courage to protest against infamous measures, but also to express a message of hope, that a new democratic regime would be born after the war. There is of course no comparison with the current world, but the momentous changes we witness at present, may well have an impact on the life of new generations, also in Turkey. Today is a special day coming directly after the vote in the European Parliament to freeze the discussions with Turkey for future EU membership.

I will raise four subjects: 1. From a multilateral to a multipolar world, 2: Lessons from the past: forgotten or topical ?, 3.: What to do in Europe: An agenda for action, 4: EU-Turkey relations.

1. From a multilateral to a multipolar world.

For most of the last 70 years the US, Canada and much of Europe have been a vast zone of peace, prosperity and democracy. At the global level the IMF, World Bank and WTO were the pillars of a regulatory worldwide system. Together they have had a major impact on the rest of the world after the end of colonization. They were the mainstay of a liberal world order with common values. This American benevolent hegemony of a rule based world is ending rapidly. The Pax Americana is being replaced by a multipolar world based on bilateral relations, a world of catch-as-catch-can, dominated by the power of the strong. The disengagement from the past by President-elect Trump, together with "America first" is a new rallying cry against a background of protectionism and isolationism. TTP is gone, will TTIP be next in line?

In retrospect the West has wasted time to consolidate a new situation after the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the Soviet Union. We were lured by Fukuyama's "End of History". 1989 seems a long time ago. The G7 (8) is replaced by the G20 with leading roles for China and India.

Europe has neglected to pull together and has remained a halfway house. We cashed in the so-called "peace dividend" and made no preparations for a European readiness in times of crises – political, military or economic. As a result we were divided over the Irak invasion by the US and we had no answer after the financial crisis of 2008.

America neglected to engage Russia after 1989 and made efforts to push NATO into the old Soviet territory. Later on it wasted money and credibility during the fateful wars in Irak and Afghanistan. As a result the Russia of 2016 is no longer a potential partner. We witness the aggressive nationalism of President Putin, who fears and at the same time undermines the West (Krimia, Ukraine). Rules are replaced by power relations in which there is no common base for a world wide engagement. Are we going back to the 19th century? At the same time common worldwide challenges also need common responses: climate change, the world wide refugee crisis and the growth of terrorism all have a major impact on our lives.

Certainly in this part of the world we see turbulence, violence and in some cases even chaos in regions directly East and South of the European Union. As a result the EU and member states are on their own and even the future of old alliances is at stake (NATO). The European Union is not to prepared for this new world. Major questions are: Will we be relevant in the future world? Did we stretch our membership too far? Can we remain a positive factor as we have been in the past? Was the Nobel prize in retrospect a nostalgic present for past performance? Doubts and lack of self-confidence and leadership seem to dominate our current Europe.

2. Lessons from the past: forgotten or topical?

A vital lesson of the modern era is that internationalism has stabilized the world, while lapses into bellicose nationalism have caused havoc. This is also the message of Cleveringa's resistance to oppression. The aftermath of WWI was marked by a series of follies and failures; the revenge of the Peace of Versailles; the absence of America from the League of Nations and the great depression of 1929. The ensuing totalitarianism made WWII all but inevitable.

The victors after WWII did not repeat these mistakes. We seemed to have learned our lessons. The period from 1950-1990 was a triumph of common sense. The state socialist Soviet model with its dictatorship lost. We finally realized that nationalism had killed 30 million people in the West alone.

In Western Europe new political concepts arose: the sharing/pooling of sovereignty and the integration of policies beyond borders. Last week president Obama in Athens confirmed his earlier message: "The EU remains since WWII one of the greatest political and economical achievements". It needed an outsider to remind us that we now have 70 years of peace in our continent. We must avoid at all costs to go back to the divided Europe of the past.

The spokesmen of nationalism do not understand or rather willfully ignore the awful periods of European history and offer absolutely no solutions to our current problems. We have a moral duty to oppose this way of thinking for the benefit of our common future.

Of course we must recognize that the globalization of the last decades has had two effects: 1. The opening of markets has narrowed the inequality between rich and poor nations and has lifted millions out of poverty, but 2. At the same time, inequality within the developed world has increased. It has depressed wages and jobs at risk in industries exposed to foreign competition. All this was manageable as long as the world economy was booming, but since 2000 in America and 2008 in Europe, this is no longer the case. As a result many citizens live in fear and uncertainty for the future. Trump and Brexit are the result.

3. What to do in Europe: an agenda for action?

Commission President Juncker early in 2016 stated: The EU faces an "existential crisis". 2017 may become the year of truth for the EU: Can we make a new beginning or will we witness a victory of populism in America and Europe? The omens are not good; to begin with the events of 4 December next (referendum in Italy, election of president in Austria and next year the elections in the Netherlands, France and Germany). But can all the above also be a wake-up call for action and correction of mistakes of the past? The EU has the capacity to be a global player as was demonstrated in the past.

Paradoxically Brexit may not be the beginning of the end of Europe, but rather the end of the beginning. Five months after 23 June, Britain still has no vision of life after Brexit. Business uncertainty in the UK prevails. The slogan: “have your cake and eat it“, is a no-go! Britain now pays the price of a lack of vision of generations of its political leaders. At the end of the day, the decision to join the EU was seen in the UK as a defeat, after it had fought a successful war. For the rest of the continent on the contrary, membership was seen as a victory over the past. British half-heartedness has led to cherry picking in Europe with as a result a loss of power.

There is no sign amongst the 27 to follow the British example. The European Council of the end of June confirmed their wish to keep the integrity of the internal market with all their mutual differences. Especially the smaller countries see the EU as a protective shield.

But all of this is not enough. The *status quo* is no longer tenable and we may enter a period of differentiation in Europe. The current crises have a common ground. As I stated earlier, in the Europe as a halfway house, support by its population has above all eroded because of a lack of national implementation of decisions taken in Europe at the highest level. As a result over the years the output reputation of the EU has been miserable. It has thus affected the fundamental credibility of the EU.

The examples abound:

1. The EMU has been created only as a Monetary union, forgetting the E of the EMU. The current banking union, is an insufficient answer to the continuing challenge and need of a greater fiscal and budgetary capacity of the EU. The so-called 5 Presidents report of last year has never been implemented.
2. The decision under Schengen to abolish internal borders, has never been accompanied by the creation of common borders and a shared border and coastal control, which would also imply a common asylum and immigration policy. In the current crisis a very modest beginning is now being implemented. The same is true for the absence of common trans frontier action to combat crime or terrorism.
3. In the field of external security, for many years no progress has been possible to give effect to the relative Treaty of Lisbon's provisions to creation a common foreign and security policy.

Although very belatedly, we now see recent signs of recognition that Europe must begin to develop a larger measure of strategic autonomy. The new global security strategy, adopted in June, by the European Council, with the first more concrete measures by the European Council of Foreign Affairs and Defense taken this November, is a first recognition that the EU can no longer afford to be an economic giant but a political dwarf. The Netherlands for

its part, spends less than half of what it has committed to do on defense under its NATO membership.

With the above shortcomings, the main agenda for action by a EU keen to renovate are given: completion of economic and monetary union, creation of a common external border with related common policies and a real effort to set up a common defense and security policy.

4. *EU – Turkey relations*

Last but not least some reflections on the EU-Turkey relations. The EP resolution adopted yesterday with a large majority to freeze membership talks will have a polarizing effect both inside Turkey and amongst the Member States. It is the first time that such a resolution has been adopted concerning a candidate country. Let me first of all state where I come from. Together with my colleague of Foreign Affairs, at the time as Minister of Economic Affairs in 2004, during the Netherlands Presidency I very much pushed for opening membership talks with Turkey. Two major factors were decisive: The fact that the association agreement existed since 1964 (!) and the acceleration of the political and economic modernization reform under the AKP regime which had taken place since 2002 under PM Erdogan. In retrospect I still believe this was the best approach. Even under the present rather negative political conditions there still are three choices present for EU-Turkish relations.

1. Turkey breaks off from the EU
2. Continuation of the status quo as a “wobbly bridge”
3. Membership as an overall orientation.

Ad. 1. This first choice would create a Turkey as a neighbour which the EU has always tried to avoid: a conservative and Islamic government which has turned to Russia and China as an alternative for Europe. President Erdogan seems to flirt with this idea. It would mean a Turkey empowered with Gulf money and limited to an archaic Customs Union with the EU. But under this choice Turkey's prospects are not any better. The existing polarization within Turkey might even increase. It would constitute a break in the Republican tradition towards Europe which has existed for generations and has always considered the European societal model as by far the most attractive. Also we should not forget that Turkey and the EU as NATO members are confronted with a common threat of ISIS and other dangers in the Middle East. Finally in economic terms the EU is still by far the largest trade and investment partner (trade 50%, investment 60-70%)

Ad. 2. I was present in 1974 as State Secretary of Foreign Affairs when the first bridge over the Bosphorus was opened and can indeed testify it was a wobbly bridge indeed when 2

million people tried to cross simultaneously! A formidable disadvantage of the current existing situation is its inability to reach out to each other in difficult times. The recent migration crisis is a case in point. It is clear that the EU needs Turkey to reduce and possibly to stop the growing flow of immigrants from Syria and elsewhere. From Turkey's point of view the EU lost much credibility during the difficult negotiations earlier this year, not only over its own treatment of refugees, but also for opportunistic reasons by closing its eyes to the existing rule of law problems in Turkey which it deemed so important during the earlier Turkish EU membership talks. But there is even more at stake, if Turkey continues to be a volatile force in the region. With a rapidly changing world and fluctuations in economic and security terms, no reasonable planning for the future between Turkey and the EU is possible.

Ad. 3. A future membership of Turkey, although at present not easy to imagine, is still the best scenario both for the EU and Turkey for the political and economic reasons mentioned above.

Important topics of interest to both the EU and Turkey - even under the present very difficult circumstances – could be: 1. Energy, where the EU continues to have a major interest in the diversification of its energy imports. 2. Discussion concerning the modernization of the Customs Union, essential to keep the option of future membership alive. This would also accentuate the need for structural reform in Turkey, not to please the EU, but for its own sake. 3. Continued analysis of the conditions under which the migration deal could continue, including the visa liberalization, once the Turkish terrorism legislation has been adapted.

In strategic terms, uncertainty over America's and Russia's future internal developments should keep a political dialogue going between Europe and Turkey. Both of us increasingly run the risk of being left out on our own. A new Yalta between the US and Russia should be unacceptable for both of us. Neither can afford to be dominated by third countries. At the end of the day both Europe and Turkey have too much on our plate to overemphasize the current negative feelings on either side. A cooling off period with concentration on more technical issues could keep our dialogue going.