

Chapter 1

Limits and Frontiers of the New Europe

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This volume covers a wide, complex and vitally important issue—Europe’s new frontiers.

The very notion of “frontier” immediately evokes images ranging beyond geographical boundaries to encompass limits in various fields of knowledge, from physics and metaphysics to mathematics.

A tale by the Italian writer Dino Buzzati entitled “The Seven Messengers” is relevant in this regard. The plot is quite simple, or so it seems. A relatively young prince decides to set off to discover the outmost boundaries of his father’s extensive kingdom. He is accompanied by seven knights of the court, who act as messengers to and from the palace as the expedition advances southwards. On the second day of the trip the first of the seven messengers is sent off. The ritual is repeated every day until all the available messengers have been used from A to G, as their names follow each other in alphabetical order. On the tenth day, the messengers start returning, one messenger arriving every five days. But after this first series the intervals between the returns become increasingly spaced apart and grow exponentially. They increase to 25 days, then to 125, 625 and so on to the point where the prince is left without news for years on end. On noticing that he will have to wait 34 years for the next messenger (or, as he figures it, until he is 72, if he lives that long) the prince starts some reckoning. Turning his back on the past, he orders the movements to be inverted and sends the messengers off ahead of him, anticipating the future, bringing news of the unknown.

This story, which combines fantasy and metaphysics, is fascinating not only because of the moral precepts one might extract but because of the opportunity it offers one to reflect on the theme of frontiers and limits—paradoxical issues that cut across all existence,

whether individual or collective, often challenging rationality and imagination.

The tale is also exemplary because it illustrates how all of European cultural tradition is marked by the problem of limits, which in turn is linked to the very concept of freedom as a foundation of the human condition in its multiple expressions. One should not forget that it is this common cultural foundation shared by us all that gives full meaning to the political project of European integration.

My approach to this vast and exacting theme is interrogative rather than affirmative. I would like to question certain clichés and propose some thoughts for reflection.

I see two possible routes for an analysis on the subject of the new frontiers of Europe. One route travels across space as a geographical extension, prompting wonder about the past, present and future geographical boundaries of Europe. But there is another route that pierces through space and penetrates to Europe's core, prompting wonder about the *nature* of Europe. This route prompts us to reflect more deeply about substantive limits of the European integration process.

In both cases the critical question seems to be "How far?" In the first case we seek an answer in terms of geographical limits, of external borders. In the second case we seek an answer less in terms of form and more in terms of substance. In the first case we are discussing demarcations of territory and in the second case we are discussing demarcations of content.

Issues of frontiers become infinitely more complex when they also concern problems of boundaries. I wish to underline this conceptual distinction because it helps to clarify the problems. Where boundaries are in question, purposes are also in question. It follows that in the case of European construction, we cannot answer the question "How far?" before previously defining "What Europe?" The latter is a political issue *par excellence*.

I will illustrate these conceptions with two examples. The first has to do with Turkey. The second has to do with the EU's future financial perspectives.

First Example: Enlargement of the European Union to Turkey

Why does the issue of enlarging the European Union to Turkey raise so many problems with public opinion, not to mention the already familiar objections concerning principles and above all ideological, cultural, religious and even moral prejudices?

The answer is that by making the European Union coincide with the hypothetical borders of the European continent we are reaching the geographical boundaries of the European project. But as we reach that borderline we stand as if on a razor's edge, with all the hesitations and doubts that a borderline situation naturally encompasses. On the one hand, we are tempted towards increasing inclusiveness; on the other, there is the danger of dilution or even disintegration because, as in thermodynamics, the force of entropy tends to grow as the size, diversity and complexity of a system increases.

It therefore seems to me that the question of Turkey joining the EU is not only naturally complex (as I will consider below), it is to a certain extent also hostage to this borderline situation, and thus raises fears of various kinds. First, it confronts Europeans with the issue of the borders of the European Union. Second, it brings them to the end of a cycle that has been a powerful catalyzing agent for European integration ever since the beginning of the European Communities. Third, as in any controversy involving the layout of boundaries, we are experiencing a paradoxical situation in which the same arguments serve to justify both exclusion and inclusion.

When defining Europe there is no question that the eastern boundaries are the most controversial. In the case of Turkey this is so for at least two reasons. First, Turkey is on the cusp between Europe and Asia; although mainly on the Asian continent its land is profoundly linked to Europe by a common, centuries-old history. Second, although Turkey is of great strategic interest, its vastness and specificities cause some apprehension.

Consequently, mere geographical considerations are not enough when discussing whether to include or exclude this type of state located at the furthest end of the European continent. On the contrary, it is important to consider political and strategic issues.

Hence the endless controversies that the Turkish issue has raised, controversies that are doubly topical with the publication of the European Commission's recommendation to start accession negotiations, now that Turkey has fulfilled the political criteria for accession.

I personally welcome European Council's decision to start accession negotiations with Turkey. The reasons for my position (one that I have defended on various occasions) are many: first of all, because such are the terms of the commitment assumed and the promises made a long time ago; secondly, because the candidacy process for Turkey's accession goes back to the 1960s, its status as a candidate having been reiterated in 1999, and any deviation from this purpose is unacceptable; thirdly, because the accession criteria were clearly identified a long time ago and are the same for all candidates, so that preferential or discriminatory treatment is inadmissible; fourthly, because difficulties must be overcome by solving problems and not avoiding them.

In other words, it is obvious that Turkey's accession poses unprecedented difficulties, will be an enormous challenge and a tremendous effort. To deny this would be irresponsible and totally unrealistic. But first of all, the accession negotiations will take as long as required so that we can all do our respective homework. Moreover, opening the negotiations will enable us to reach a cruising speed in this process of adapting and preparing both parties.

I would also like to underline that we cannot skirt around the fact that some of the fears concerning this accession are connected to the erroneous idea that the Judeo-Christian matrix of European civilization should irremediably exclude a predominantly Islamic country such as Turkey from the European project. This, in my view, is a serious prejudice that must be overcome.

While reaffirming the importance of Christianity as a paradigm of Western European civilization, it seems to me that our Greco-Latin legacy, root of Western political thinking, is equally decisive, with its notions of freedom, right, justice and democracy. Consequently, it should be underlined that the critical point of the issue of Turkey's integration in the European project does not lie in the fact that most of its population is Muslim.

On the contrary, the issue is to verify whether Turkey is *de jure* and *de facto* a secular and democratic state, respecting the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms—requirements that are at the basis of the association of states that make up the European Union.

This is verified by the political criteria fixed in 1993 in Copenhagen, according to which, together with other parameters, we can gauge a state's capacity to join the European Union. This is what the Commission did in its published report, which leaves no room for doubts. There is therefore no question of formulating additional demands.

In my view, and I would like to stress this point, Turkey's accession represents a wonderful opportunity for peace, democracy and prosperity. The prospect of enlarging the European Union to Turkey—even if it only happens in 20 years' time—is an auspicious commitment of mutual interest: on the one hand, it will strengthen national consensus around the secularity of the Turkish state; on the other, it will certainly help, in the troubled post-September 11 world, to give Muslim countries a better idea of Europe, invalidating the false and dangerous notion of the often mentioned “war of civilizations.”

At the junction of two worlds, and as a member of the Council of Europe, OECD and NATO, Turkey's integration in the European Union will anchor it definitely to Europe, consolidating the space of freedom, democracy, justice and security that we aspire for mankind. These are the values that all people, regardless of their creeds, consider theirs, values for which the European Union is the spokesman.

Second Example: the EU's Financial Perspectives

As I mentioned above, I decided to discuss this subject because in addition to its great importance for the future of European integration and for each European country, it is a good example of the European Union's new frontiers in their broadest, most substantive sense.

The European Union, having now enlarged to 25 member states, poised to receive Romania and Bulgaria and to start negotiations with Croatia and I hope, with Turkey, and with a new constitutional treaty that enshrines new targets and priorities, has a new road map for the next few years. This is in addition to the commitments it assumed in earlier years, which must be executed in full.

One of these commitments, of course, is the Lisbon Strategy to create the world's most competitive knowledge economy by 2010. This must be given priority, particularly as the accumulated delays in fulfilling its ambitious objectives are quite worrying, including the successive postponement of the structural reforms that are vital to guarantee a framework of sustainable and equitable development in Europe.

As we all know, there is no magical solution to this problem, which is made worse by the poor performance of the European economy. It is not merely a question of promoting growth and economic competitiveness but also of strengthening stability, solidarity and economic and social cohesion among 25 European countries. We should not forget that as a result of the last enlargement the EU's population increased by 20% but its GDP per capita dropped 12.5% and socio-economic disparities doubled.

It is in this complex context that the negotiations for the EU's "financial perspectives" are taking place, leading to approval of the Community budget for the period between 2007 and 2013.

In this discussion, what is at stake is a question of means—the resources that we wish to allocate to achieve the European project—but we should not lose sight of the fact that in addition to the figures there is a prior question concerning finalities and objectives. At stake is the level of ambition and the political design we have for Europe. When discussing the European budget we are discussing the political issue of Europe on the two fronts mentioned earlier: "How far?" and "What Europe?"

If we wish the European Union to develop suitable policies of solidarity to strengthen its action in fields for which it is not entirely responsible—such as various aspects of general economic policy, employment or social inclusion—but which are nevertheless essential for promoting growth, competitiveness, stability and cohesion, and if we wish the European Union to commit to new areas of intervention—such as defense and security, justice and internal affairs or its external affirmation in the world—we will have to give it the essential and necessary financial means for this to be achieved.

Consequently, before starting the technical discussions on budget procedures concerning, for instance, financial burden sharing or

Community budget allocations, we would profit greatly if we launched a serious debate on some of the essential issues and explored some bolder maneuvers, although in this field the guidelines do not favor innovation.

Personally, I am sorry that the constitutional treaty is so conservative in budget matters that it falls far short of the political ambition it proposes for 21st century Europe. We would do well to face the fact that despite the positive reforms made over the years—namely in the 1970s when the system of “own resources” was introduced—we still work within what is essentially an intergovernmental framework. On the one hand, the term “own resources” is ambiguous—in fact national contributions have a decisive weight on the budget. On the other hand, the Community as such does not have the financial autonomy it needs because in fact the member states have the last word.

In short, the problems raised by discussion of the EU’s “financial perspectives” are extremely complex. We are faced, in the first place, with a pernicious logic that harms solidarity and makes transfers from and to the Union budget a sort of bank account in which the Member States increasingly consider the balance between deposits and withdrawals as nil. Then there are numerous “blocking” factors, such as quarrels about “return rates,” compensation mechanisms, or the problems of the Common Agricultural Policy. Third, there is the problem of an unfavourable European economic environment that places weighty constraints on the financial decisions of member states already forced to cope with the added difficulties arising from the Stability and Growth Pact. Finally, we have the pressing need to develop new common policies that will more adequately respond to the challenge of competitiveness and solidarity in a Europe of 25, not to even mention the question of creating new European political assets, such as the implementation of a Defense Fund or a fund to fight terrorism.

I have no doubts whatsoever that these negotiations will require all member states to have ambitions for Europe, a view of the future, the will to compromise, a spirit of solidarity and a feeling of justice. There is no magical solution that will accommodate the claims of all the member states which, as we know from the point of view of main net contributors, are not reconcilable with the proposals that the Commission has put forward.

In any case, we must ensure that the options chosen do not compromise the integrating function of the Community budget. In my view, a good compromise would be to articulate a scenario of “competitiveness-solidarity” together with the idea of the “European public assets.”

I also believe that while the proposals already submitted by the Commission are on the right track, we would gain at the same time in exploring other innovative paths. For example, there might be a way of reinterpreting the application of the Stability Pact to net contributors to allow a higher level of contributions to the Community budget. Another innovation might be to create new European public assets—as I have already mentioned, for instance, a Defense Fund, a fund to fight terrorism, or an Innovation Fund—which would not only lead to savings at the level of national budgets but also present the controversy of the “British cheque” in other terms.

I will conclude by briefly mentioning a last aspect that seems important and that I think merits greater care and attention. Budgetary power and tax issues are fundamental parts of our democracies, identified as instruments of sovereignty, such as the monetary issue prior to the formation of the Eurozone. Nationally, the discussion and approval of the budget are a fundamental moment in democratic life and play an important role in a balanced development of the economy and society. Throughout Europe, shared sovereignty has been a lever for Community integration, development and cohesion. If we wish to deepen democracy and reinforce citizenship at European level, we should promote an enlightened, educational public debate on the Union’s budgetary and financial issues. Moreover, this would probably be the most direct route to one day achieving a Community budget that met citizens’ expectations, as well as getting citizens to become increasingly involved and to participate in the discussion of their future as Europeans.