

Situation in Turkey (debate)

European Parliament, Strasbourg - 12 June 2013

Geoffrey Van Orden, on behalf of the ECR Group – Mr President, I would say we need to step back and be a little cautious in our analysis. Of course we all condemn the heavy-handed police response to the demonstrations in Taksim Square. Indeed, these actions have already been condemned by President Gül and Deputy Prime Minister Arinc. What is still not clear is whether the demonstrations are a reliable indication of widespread and simmering popular discontent that will continue to fester. It clearly needs to be addressed.

Many of us want the best for Turkey. It would be a shame if the good legacy of Atatürk were to be diluted, in particular his modernisation, tolerance, democratisation and his removal of religious influence from political life while remaining a strong devotee of Islam. More recently we have seen adherence to NATO and great progress towards western liberal democracy – and of course market capitalism, which has delivered enormous economic progress.

I have always said that if we appeared to close the door in Turkey's face, we should not be surprised if she turned another way. We are not yet at that stage. In any case I hope that the great changes in the shape and direction of the European Union that will have to take place in the next few years, with an end to ever-closer Union and a looser, more flexible European Union focused on the single market rather than political integration, will mean that this sort of European Union will more easily accommodate a country such as Turkey.

[Video of the speech can be accessed here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getVod.do?mode=chapter&language=EN&vodDateId=20130612-15:01:57-900>]

[Full minutes of the debate can be found here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20130612+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>]