

# Book Review: Turbulent and Mighty Continent: What Future for Europe?

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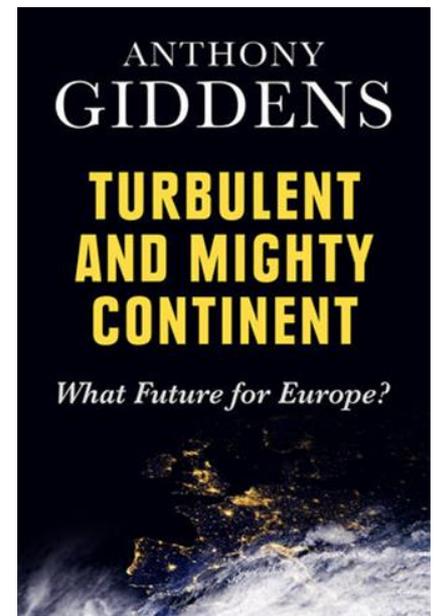
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*In **Turbulent and Mighty Continent**, Anthony Giddens makes a valuable contribution to the continued debate on the future of Europe, writes **Gerard Delanty**. Many of the arguments are not entirely new but despite this limitation the book is rich in insights on conceptualising problems and identifying solutions. For Giddens, reform in Europe must go far beyond stabilizing the euro, to cover policies on climate change, energy, and unemployment.*



**Turbulent and Mighty Continent: What Future for Europe? Anthony Giddens. Polity Press. October 2013.**

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*Turbulent and Mighty Continent* is Anthony Giddens's most recent book. The title refers to a famous speech of Winston Churchill's in Zurich in 1946 when he advocated the idea of a [United States of Europe](#). Across six chapters, Giddens has written an incisive and far-reaching analysis of the current turbulence of Europe. As a committed European he believes the post-second world project of European integration has been highly successful in transforming a war-torn continent into a peaceful and relatively prosperous part of the world. Due to its political and economic design that project is today in danger of disintegration. New conflicts and divisions have rendered fraught the framework that was designed, leading to widespread disillusionment the vision of a unified Europe. The EU has neither delivered democracy nor efficiency. In its inception, the EU did not require democratic legitimacy. It was enough that it could achieve the modest goals it was created to deliver. This was the Europe of Jean Monnet, what Giddens terms EU1. Today it is a different matter, for democracy cannot be side-lined in the European Parliament nor important decisions left to unelected organs of a growing bureaucratic edifice that is effectively summed up by the term 'Troika', referring to the heads of the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund. The reality is that today EU1 has been overtaken by a more nebulous model of Europe, which Giddens calls EU2, where a lot of decision-making is done on a selective and informal basis. But there is also a third Europe, 'Paper Europe' which is characterised by a more normative vision of future plans that is a contrast to the caution of Monnet's EU1 and the bureaucratic EU2.

For Giddens, European integration operates in a space created by all three models of Europe; it cannot be reduced to any one level. There are two major processes going on: increased division and conflict and, on the other side, de facto integration. Giddens does not make the mistake of reading into the present the signs of irreversible decline. The current crisis of the Eurozone must be seen in the larger context of a process of integration that has been broadly successful. Indeed, there is no going back to a previous era. The Euro currency has its design faults but it

has brought about greater interdependence, which he sees positively in making Europe today a community of fate. Giddens dismisses the populist critique – both of the right and of the left – that European integration simply is unelected rule from Brussels. While this is indeed a major problem, so too is rule by the bond markets and the reality is that today national sovereignty has been sundered and cannot be recovered in its entirety by states. Sovereignty is important but it must be meaningful, which for Giddens can only be achieved in Europe today through more integration and not less. What he calls 'sovereignty+' will confer more benefits rather than less. If the EU disappeared the alternative would be a world dominated by the US and China, and in Europe there would be potentially more dangerous national conflicts.

On the basis of this very strong defence of potential of the EU, Giddens offers a comprehensive analysis of the salient aspects of European integration. He does not think the EU should delude itself that it cannot be a state: it needs to be more powerful to achieve its aims. A weak state controlled by national governments will not work. Europe must become more federal, but it will require strong government to make it work. Giddens' book covers some of the most important challenges facing Europe today. The EU must begin by addressing two problems that have haunted it from the beginning: the lack of democratic legitimacy and effective leadership. However, it cannot solve these problems by going backwards or remaining within the scope of its traditional incremental approach. Neither EU1 nor EU2 offers a way forward. Giddens is clear that federalism is the only way forward. The current crisis is in fact the opportunity to correct the faults of the past. In his view, economic federalism is now inevitable and should be accompanied by political federalism. He notes that with the exception of China all the major economies of the world are federal. This is perhaps not quite far from what the leaders of the EU want. The problem is that it is not desired by the national governments, especially Germany. Giddens' analysis is that it is in the interests ultimately of Germany to initiate a major shift in the direction of greater federalism. But federalism does not mean the creation of a super-power, for the real meaning of federalism is devolution of powers. Giddens is correct in seeing the problem of leadership and legitimacy as connected. The problem of the lack of democratic legitimacy is connected with lack of effective leadership. The solution then is to create a federal system in which power is given to nations, regions and localities. Creating a democratic Europe is not something to be postponed until the end; it must be built into the very process. Obviously the way forward is unclear, but Giddens is mindful of the strengths as well as the weaknesses. Despite widespread disillusionment, there is now a much more Europeanised younger generation.



The European Union recently opened a new round of talks with Turkey on the country's 26-year-old application to become a member.  
Credit: [Evgeni Zotov](#) CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

One of the many insights of the book is the argument that Europe needs to re-industrialise. While the service economy has dominated, there are new opportunities for digital technology, which is transforming both manufacturing

and services and will have far-reaching consequences. Technological innovation offers the most promising future for Europe to reverse its descent into slow growth economies. Giddens has valuable and interesting ideas on the potential of new digital technologies such as 3D printing for small and medium sized firms, as well as for the individual citizen. In this domain a new revolution is occurring in materialising data as a new productive force. This may have major positive repercussions in reducing carbon emissions, which is also one of the challenges for the future. A considerable part of the book is on the problem of energy and climate change, topics on which Giddens commands great knowledge and a capacity to connect these areas, so often neglected, with issues relating to economic and political integration. Energy policy, he argues, is crucial to the future of the EU and straddles its key concerns: emissions, economic prosperity and resource security. Since he believes cutting emissions is the overriding priority, he declares himself a reluctant supporter of nuclear energy. One of the major opportunities for the EU is to be a pioneer in climate change policy. A major mistake is to see the current crisis of the Euro currency as the only problem. The resolution of this problem is linked to the solution of other problems. This crisis has forced the EU to come to terms with its problems.

The book offers a welcome chapter on Social Europe. On the one side, it might be said that the idea of a social vision of Europe has been buried with rising youth unemployment, increasing poverty, especially child poverty, and the dire package of austerity measures that are in place in many countries. Yet the social model of Europe is also an aspiration as a social investment state. Giddens argues for a pan-European welfare system as a long-term goal. In a chapter on migration he defends the vision of a cosmopolitan Europe by which he means the positive embracing of diversity. Multiculturalism, so often declared as unsuccessful, has hardly been tried. However, Giddens prefers the notion of inter-culturalism to capture the dynamic and intersecting nature of cultures today, rather than the idea of culture as cohesive and distinct. A cosmopolitan Europe is not just a product of Paper Europe, but a reality. Giddens defends the inclusion of Turkey in the creation of a yet larger and more powerful Europe.

The book makes a valuable contribution to the continued debate on the future of Europe. Many of the arguments are not entirely new and Giddens does not engage with much of the recent literature on the topic. Despite this limitation it is rich in insights on conceptualising problems and identifying solutions.

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**Gerard Delanty** is Professor of Sociology, Sussex University. His most recent book is *Formations of European Modernity: a Historical and Political Sociology of Europe*, Palgrave 2013. He is also the author of *The Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Cambridge University Press, 2009. [Read more reviews by Gerard.](#)