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OUR ROOTS IN ÇANAKKALE, FROM HOMER TO ATATURK, FROM SUN TZU TO OBAMA

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1. Roots and fathers

In the four billion years of our past, we have had many relatives. Human roots lie deeply below history's surface, sunken in the entire geological life of the Earth, in symbiosis with organisms and plants. From the Darwinian "little warm pond" to genetic engineering, suddenly and confidently today we have become audacious creators of ourselves, thanks to artificial biology and modified food. Some scientists play God, so it might be worthwhile to rewind our ancestry back to Çanakkale, a pre-eminent location with unforgettable clues about the beginning, when we were molded into what we are now.

In a traditional society, everything is rooted in the hierarchies and customs of that which went before. It has been said that current modernity means, above all, uncertainty about our roots and about our identity: we are detached from time and space, orphans restlessly travelling in search of our fathers. But, even in hyper-modern thinking, Ch. Taylor says that, in order to know "Who I am", we must know where we are: "I define my identify by indicating where I am". If I want to know my founding fathers, I must at least understand where I am now.

Today we are in Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi. Çanakkale is the city governing the territory of Troy, legendary land where, according to one interpretation, Europe's first identity was born, with Homer and Virgil. It then became canonical in Shakespeare and Milton. In those places where terrifying battles were fought, Homer and Ataturk wrote monumental lines about war and peace. The battles were terrifying, but Homer and Ataturk were not merciless. I will try to argue that they had similar feelings, in the same geographical places, over three thousand years of history, beyond the times and languages and beliefs that separated them. I will also assert that president Obama spoke in a similar manner, about war and peace, right here, in Turkey, in 2008, including his presidency in the enduring tradition which shines not only in an unsurpassed poet like Homer and in an invincible commander like Ataturk, but also in the greatest theorist on war and peace: Sun Tzu.

2. Homer and the world that he made

Power needs trust. There is probably no time and place without some invention of a legitimating tradition. The Western vision of antiquity is largely a product of that mixture of militarism and academic philology, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, which followed the majestic rise of the Hohenzollern. It

was Winckelmann in 1755 who made the crucial statement: "the one way for us to become great, perhaps inimitable, is by imitating the ancients". Antiquity was gradually understood as a mixture of beauty and war, or, as the beauty of war; in a journey which was to lead to Leni Riefenstahl's 1938 masterwork, Olympia 2. Teil — Fest der Schönheit.

The same journey was resumed by one of the foremost current interpreters of antiquity, C. Meier: Von Athen bis Auschwitz (from Athens to Auschwitz). For many years, Homer and the Iliad were read in this light. In 1947, in Dialektik der Aufklärung, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno labelled this vision as proto-fascist. In the Prussian "garrison state" even civilian life was militarized. The slogan Primate der Aussenpolitik (primacy of foreign politics) was the building-block and fountainhead of national unification. In our dissertation, imperial Germany is just an example: at that time, many European powers were militarist, colonialist, racist, and so on.

The military ethos is obviously clear in Homer, but it is not the whole story. In the Iliad there is a lot of fighting, but there are also foundational moments of humanity, for instance the Last Parting of Hector and Andromache (in the Sixth Book of the Iliad), or the dialogue between Priam and Achilles.

The last lines of the Iliad were about the victims of the war and about the mourning for lives lost on the battleground. In this crucial moment of the poem, alone and unarmed, Priam meets Achilles, and asks for Hector's body. In the fight under the walls of Troy, Achilles had cruelly killed Priam’s beloved son. Before killing him, Achilles had said to Hector: "my rage, my fury would drive me now to hack your flesh away and eat you raw – such agonies you have caused me". But, speaking with Priam, suddenly, Achilles remembers the recent death of Patroclus and sees his own impending death. He thinks his father will mourn his death, as Priam is mourning the death of Hector. He thinks about his father, who he will never see again, and his close friends, who he will never see again. Beleaguered, he weeps. Urged by pity, Priam understands the overwhelming despair of Achilles and embraces him, weeping, in a sensational shift of perspective. Profoundly divided by land and blood, these two men recognize their common humanity, their common insurmountable pain, and embrace each other in tears, besieged by lost affections and the vanity of life. There are many passages like this in the Iliad. Within the verses, paternity, friendship, patriotism, family, humility, duties, are depicted in patterns which have dominated the collective imagination of millions of students and professors.

In conversations and in teaching, in the streets and squares of the Meditteranean, Anatolia, the Aegean, the Ionian, then in all those schools which claim to be modern, Homer’s 27.793 verses have taught us how to live, offering behavioral models which we find today in the recesses of a dense, complex saga, ranging from the chivalry of medieval knights to the fairness of English gentlemen. For centuries, every man of letters has recited Homer - and then applied his idea of a superior humanity.

Almost immediately Homeric perspectives became the fountainhead of behavioral patterns. A pivotal figure in Homeric mitopoiesis, Xenophon (430-354 BC) states correctly that Homer covered all issues concerning humanity. Xenophon's legacy is well-known. Alexander the Great used the Anabasis as a field guide during his expedition into Persia. But Xenophon's compelling bestseller is the Education of Cyrus, also known as the Cyropaedia (because it is based on the life of Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire). In this magnum opus, reputed as such over the centuries, Xenophon offers an astonishing representation of humanity:

wisdom, love, honor, pity, are better than greed, hate, revenge, fury. Xenophon makes deconstructions and adaptations of Homer (and Herodotus) in order to showcase his leadership theory - which founded a multi-centennial and ultra-edifying tradition of books on the specula principum (the mirror of princes). In this tradition, later challenged by Machiavelli, but renewed by Frederick the Great, a true leader must show pity and honor.

Mediterranean culture has plenty of inclusive ideas. The same observation here made about Homer, could be made about other giants of human knowledge. Herodotus was criticized as Philobarbaros (barbarian-lover), for not being patriotic enough. Herodotus was an open-minded and dubious observer, moved by curiosity and empathy, especially toward the "Asiatics" of Persia and Lydia. He sympathetically focused on the origins, customs, and cultures of the barbarian "other".

Herodotus was not a staunch jingoist supporter of Greek-speaking supremacy and for that reason he was severely disapproved of (for instance, by Plutarch). While, for the same reasons, he is today the hero of Ryszard Kapuściński in his supreme Podróżez Herodote.

Herodotus was an open-minded and dubious traveler, respectful of rivalries and differences. The same comment could be made about Homer. In the Iliad there are many battles, but there are also founding moments of humanity.

Aristotle is even more complex than Herodotus and Homer. In the days of Alexander's education, Achilles was an iconic referential hero; during his mature period, on the contrary, in the teaching courses on ethics at the Lyceum, the true virtues occupy a middle ground between two extremes. So, the virtue of courage is in the middle, between foolhardiness and cowardice. Aristotle condemns intemperance and incontinence. Virtue takes the middle ground, between excess and defect. Moral virtues are abiding states, which celebrate themselves in mastering and commanding Homeric passions such as anger. Thus Achilles in Homer’s Iliad reminds us that there are risks with fury and that there is sweetness in pity.

Homer, Herodotus, Aristotle were not "Greek" as we currently understand the term. They were people living on the frontiers and at the borders of the Mediterranean. They spoke similar languages, but they were linguistically, geographically, culturally (we could even say ethnically) very different. Frequently, Mediterranean people were not ready to acknowledge the same dignity in people who spoke a similar language, but who lived a few kilometers one from the other and who frequently enslaved each other. Aristotle, for instance, had not the dignity of being considered an Athenian, but he was labeled as a kind of mestizo and for this reason he preferred to leave Athens. Discrimination was frequent; Demosthenes referred to Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great in the same manner: "He is not only no Greek, nor related to the Greeks, but not even a barbarian from any place that can be named with honor, but a pestilent knave from Macedonia, whence it was never yet possible to buy a decent slave". In Greeks' intramural debates about distinctiveness, many identities have been left to posterity, which used different self-perceptions in different epochs. In the Mediterranean waters, Minoan civilization and Mycenaean civilization, Etruscans and Aegeans, Hittites and Lydians mixed frequently and fruitfully, but tribes, sailors, farmers did not share a common language, a common religion, a common tradition.

For instance, the Romans were completely different from the Greeks. The most famous Greek word,

democracy, does not exist in Latin: it is almost impossible to translate it taking into account a Roman mentality. Culturally, it has been said: Graecia capta ferum victorem coepit (captive Greece captured her rude conqueror), but not from a political or practical point of view. The meaning of democracy fell into disuse for centuries and was abruptly reborn in America; to tell the truth, before the Jacksonians, the word was unusual also for Americans: in the twelve collected volumes of Thomas Jefferson, the word democracy appears once and, even then, only in a quotation. In the American rebirth, a new creature appeared: the notion of a democracy in continuous implementation, rich in opportunities and poor in population, was inexistent in ancient times, known for their brutal slavery and multifaceted inequalities, cherished by kings and landlords of both the European and Asiatic past.

3. From Homer to Montesquieu

According to Eric Havelock, the first apparition of the Homeric text was "a thunder-clap in human history, which the bias of familiarity has converted into the rustle of papers on a desk". Pre-Homeric humanity had sought many graphical forms of communication, from pictographic to cuneiform languages. Borrowing from Sumerians and Phoenicians, Homeric transcriptions embedded a decisive informative invention: the first alphabet in which vowels were equal in value with consonants. The best invention in the history of writing. Homeric alphabetization was alphabetization tout-court. The human voice was broken down into its constituent atoms and then it was rearranged, it multiplied, and finally exploded in the Homeric verses: a colossal bomb, a thunder-clap in human history. From Gilgamesh to Hammurabi, the whole stormy river of previous knowledge flowed into the same basin.

The human mind had its technology, with specificities (as the verbal copulative form and the definite article), giving better opportunities to abstract thinking. The Homeric poems in themselves were an origin, basis and channel of public rationality. For instance, the concept of proof (so important for the rise of mathematics, science, philosophy, democracy, trial, testing, scrutiny, and accountability) was possible only thanks to literacy: this itinerary has been labeled a domestication of the savage mind, following anthropologists like Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Jack Goody. A domestication - it was added - never, of course to be concluded, and clearly, not in Greece. But, even if the human mind was not domesticated, maybe savage in one sense and domesticated in another, the generalized practice of an efficient writing system, based on a complete alphabet, provided a technology for a headlong rush toward theoretical and applied mastership over nature.

With its alphabetization, the West came to dominate the rest of the world. Because, without this literacy, scientific and technological improvement would not have been possible; therefore, above all, the Western conduct of war would not have been as devastating and successful as it was. Homer has his responsibilities. Many protagonists in the core traditions of Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism admire human and nonhuman life. "Emperor of Emperors", Ashoka the Great (304–232 BC) is the quintessential philanthropic gubernator. From Homer onwards, war has been essential and has raged in the western tradition, in a way that has been unmatched in the rainbow of human cultures.

In the II century BC, Alexandrian exegetes discussed Homer angrily: was he one person or many persons? We have previously seen two Homers: the one celebrates bellicose values and the other, peaceful values. The last one relives in Virgil (70-19 BC), who is the towering interpreter of the Roman empire, as an

empire obviously armed, but devoted to peace and law. The Pax Augustea was the central ideology of the Roman empire. Virgil was the bard of this expression, which was revived as the Pax Americana, explicitly used by John F. Kennedy in the 1960s and frequently used also to define the "indirect rule" of Pax Britannica (from the end of the Napoleonic Wars until World War I, from 1815 to 1914). After 1945, the Pax Americana was not enforced by arms and not merely by Americans alone, but within a context including crucial allies, like Turkey. It was peace in the shadow of the atom bomb; a new kind of peace and a new kind of war, with a distinctive term: the cold war. In some form, the new art of war created the possibility of an inexperienced mutual extermination. For pessimistic observers, with the nuclear threat, a gap has developed between the human capacity to destroy, and the human ability to assess that destruction. A nuclear showdown seems unimaginable. We can be scrupulous creators and also lax destroyers of ourselves.

Why is Virgil so important? Because of his idea of a hegemony without war and because he says that Rome was founded by the Trojans! In order to invent a tradition and an ideology for the Roman rulers, he might have chosen different ancestors: the Greeks, the Persians, the Macedonians, and so on. But he selected the Trojans, connecting Rome to a specific part of the Homeric tradition. In Homer the Trojans were losers, but Virgil preferred the Trojan losers, sending a message about imperial inclusiveness. In an imperial Pax there is room for everyone. In an imperial Pax there are no losers. In Virgil’s epics, the Trojans are featured as brave and hardworking patriots who are ready to die for their country, in a picture which was adopted by eminent codifiers of classics, such as Samuel Butler, who wrote (Hudibras, 1663): “There they say right, and like true Trojans”. Reference to Trojan ancestors is frequent in Roman propaganda, sculpted in the Ara Pacis, the altar reliefs consecrated on 30 January, 9 BC, in celebration of the peace brought by Augustus' military victories.

This is at the heart of the Virgilian Aeneid and is well-known and understood in its fundamental sense: Virgil selected, enriched and transmitted a tradition of inclusiveness. He connected a culture which has come down to us today, cutting through social and class differences and those of his official followers and arrived at Obama and in the speech he delivered right here in Turkey, in 2008.

In his monumental essay of 1944, What is a Classic?, Eliot says that Virgil is the classic par excellence. His preference for the Latin poet is evident in many parts of his production, as in The Waste Land. In Eliot argumentation, the two pre-eminent Virgilian qualities are maturity and inclusiveness ("comprehensiveness").

Even paradise and hell in Milton and in Shakespeare owe much to Virgil, which was a must-read, a privileged training in grammar schools and universities at that time. In Shakespeare there are many loci, references, and Virgilian allusions, particularly in Macbeth, where the descent into hell is a replication of Book VI of the Aeneid; in Milton, we find meaningful references not only in Paradise Lost, but in many of his writings (he recommends pupils to read the Bucolics and the Georgics, because the Aeneid was compulsory reading). The link between Homer, Virgil, Dante, Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Milton has been minutely described by specialists.

Why was Virgil so important for English-speaking people? In the human canon (clearly different from the so-called western canon), Virgil is the first bridge of transmission and selective inclusion of the ancient world, as was perfectly clear to Eliot. He begins his reasoning by insisting on maturity and ends his essay by

insisting on civilization.

Before Virgil, antiquity had never seen anything similar, even considering the many programs about koinē eirēnē (general peace), above all with the League of Corinth, established in 337 BC, after Chaeronea, in an attempt to unify Greece under a Macedonian hegemony. The peace was never lasting, because it lacked a single strong power or a real mutual trust. Wars and battles were common and almost inevitable.

Together with authors like Livy and Horace, Virgil is the interpreter of a new kind of empire, founded upon universal citizenship, inclusiveness, restraint, law, and peace. That vision, especially through Montesquieu, arrives at the Founding Fathers of the American Constitution: the Virgilian motto E pluribus unum (one from many) is on the Great Seal of the United States. L'Esprit de lois was the most widely read volume in the colonies, after the Bible, and without the Polybian, Ciceronian, Virgilian vision of a government moderatum et permixtum (moderate and mixed), we would not have L'Esprit de lois. In countless places, at least from Th. Roosevelt, the so-called American Empire sought continuity in the past and legitimacy in principles. An empire without slaves, defended by arms, but founded on law, consensus, and abundance: a legitimate system at the international level, because founded on a coalition of democracies (redefined by countervailing power, polyarchies, judicial review: a moderate and mixed government).

4. From Homer to Ataturk

Among the memories of the siege of Troy and of the massacres of Gallipoli, from many point of views, in Çanakkale we can understand what kind of roots we have and what kind of future we might choose. Çanakkale today is a very welcoming and livable city. Reminiscences of war are in full evidence, but as impressive warnings, not as compelling urgencies.

The territory of Çanakkale coincides with that of ancient Troy and I'm certainly not the first one to say that "our roots are here". For instance, in 2010 a significant book was published by Simon Price and Peter Thonemann. The title was The Birth of Classical Europe. A History from Troy to Augustine. The place of birth was Troy. But one contradiction was not underlined: the place of the birth of Europe is today outside EU borders. The exclusion of Turkey is a disgrace, motivated by ignorance of the extraordinary vitality of her democracy and by an underestimation of the crucial geopolitical importance of Turkey. Ignorance about the greatness of the Ottoman Empire and of its heritage of tolerance and integration is part of an old Eurocentrism, antiquated and no longer appropriate.

Together with Xenophon and Virgil, many authors have underlined one point: human roots are found in Troy. Some people have seen these roots as signs of western moral and military supremacy. In our lecture, on the contrary, the roots belong to humanity, not to westerners; they are linked to science and respect, commerce and cooperation. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk is a great example of controversial distinction about the meanings of progress and adaptive evolution: his vision has been interpreted as a kind of psychological inferiority to Westernism or, on the contrary, as a genuine and selective appreciation of differences in structures, organizations, and institutions. The same alternative was effective during the Meiji Restoration, when European ideas flowed into Japan like a tidal flow. Following the problems indicated by Ziya Gökalp and by Ahmed Hilmi, and loving his country, Ataturk sought a specific path to modernization; in this perspective, he partially reinvented the meaning of the past and partially reinterpreted history. Anyway, as has been said, he

too offered a tribute to the rhetoric of revenge for the fall of Troy. As his aid-de-champ recounts, on August 30, 1922, when the Greek army was halted and pushed back to the Aegean sea, the great general jumped up and shouted: "Now I have taken Hector's revenge".

At that point of his life, Ataturk was following a tendency which still exists today: the idea that in Troy some sort of clash of civilizations has taken place. Mehmet the Conqueror in 1462 visited the ruins of Troy, accompanied by the royal historian Critobulus, a Byzantine Greek who entered the service of the Ottomans, but imitated the examples of historiographers like Thucydides and Flavius Josephus. In his narrative (the original manuscript is still in the Library of the the Serail in Istanbul), Critobulus reports Mehmed II words, during a visit to the ruins of Troy : "God willed that I take revenge for this city and its people". A rare handwritten copy of the Iliad was in his library in the Topkapi palace.

Sultan Mehmed II, like Ataturk, had a high appreciation of western civilization. His famous portrait is painted by the greatest Venetian painter of the age. Expressing astonishment over the hostility of the Italians, he wrote to Pope Pius II. Indicating the Virgilian vision about the foundation of Rome, he asserted that Italians and Turks had in Troy common roots. He was European in many ways and acknowledged the Homeric legend as a legacy good for the Ottomans too. At that point, Sultan Mehmet joins Virgil and Eliot (I'm almost sure that T. S. Eliot would not feel surprised by this hypothesis, which is not the result of academic covetousness). If an enlightened Sultan Mehmet was right (and I think he was), we have in Troy a true common root: there are more things in humans and in books than are dreamt of in an obsolete Eurocentrism.

It is a well-known fact that the ancient heritage was largely saved by Islamic thinkers, in the dark centuries of Mediaeval times, characterized by the vertical collapse of Western civilization. During the eleventh century, Cordoba was the capital and intellectual center of Europe; in Granada the Alhambra was the most delightful place in the world. In the five centuries of the Abbasid dynasty, Baghdad was the heartland of preservation and translation of ancient thought.

In his way, Ataturk is linked to the most luminous portion of the Ottoman empire. For him, Homer was not a poet of Greek supremacy. Turkish intellectuals understood that Ataturk was right; he is a sympathetic observer of Trojan greatness; he empathizes with Hector and the Trojans, who are celebrated as heroes not less important than Achaean heroes. This fairness is the first connection we find between Homer and Ataturk, who wrote in a similar way of Homer, in the same places, three thousand years later.

In our perspective, there is a golden link between Homer’s heroes and the famous words of Ataturk, referring to the soldiers from Australia and New Zealand who lost their lives during the Gallipoli Campaign. His words are inscribed at Anzac Cove, in the most impressive scenario, largely designed by Sir John Burnett. With moving tones, Ataturk speaks to the mothers of foreign soldiers who went to die in Gallipoli: “These heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives … you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side in this country of ours. You, the mothers, who sent your sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are at peace. After losing their lives in this land they have become our sons as well”. Under the silent moon, above the kilometers of cemeteries and graves, there is splendor on the grass of Gallipoli and intimations of immortality in Ataturk’s words. Praise of humanity is the connection

linking Homer to Ataturk, and arriving at Obama, as far as concerns what our academic search has shown us.

Ataturk knew how many lives in Gallipoli were broken by stalemate under the sun, extreme heat, unsanitary conditions, ineffective hand-to-hand fighting. In this knowledge he connects with Homer; and I dare say that he arrives at our days, at Obama and us, at all the people who value life and feel that they are citizens of the world, including the duty of being patriotic in the right way, as human beings sharing a common destiny. The beginning of this idea is in Homer, in the bitter tears of Achilles and Priam.

The awareness of World War atrocities is the soul of the EU: it is at the origin of the European Dream. A bitter lesson in humility and shame was the mark of the European Founding Fathers: Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet. The bloody bond of peace, harmony, dialogue, compromise, consensus, inclusion has not had enough recognition; or rather, it is almost unknown. Obviously, most people in Europe have been nurtured in a pacific culture, but their roots, the warnings, the motivations are unfamiliar to ordinary people: they do not know where all the soldiers have gone. Affluent and leisured youth are reluctant to give over their life to mass conscription, but the Erasmus generation thinks that Erasmus is only the acronym of a program, but when Erasmus comments the old words Dulce bellum inexpertis (war is good for those who do not know it), he is the crossroads of a long series of philosophical reflections about nihilistic warmaking. When Ataturk speaks about those who survived and died in Gallipoli, he is part of a long human tradition of commanders who know what war really is. First of all: Sun Tzu.

5. From Homer to Sun Tzu

According to the Washington Post, participants in an off-the-record meeting with two dozen Jewish leaders at the White House, on March 7, 2013, described US President Barack Obama quoting Sun Tzu's The Art of War. Jewish leaders urged President Obama to make it clear how he would prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. In this context he quoted Sun Tzu, about the necessity to build a “golden bridge” to allow a face-saving retreat to the antagonist, labeled by Obama as "a proud people".

In Obama's words, in their appreciation of the antagonist and of a favored retreat, in their appreciation of bridge-building and face-saving, there is an astonishing vintage Sun Tzu, three thousand years later. Notoriously, in all theories concerning war, only Carl von Clausewitz could be compared to Sun Tzu (544–496 BC). In von Clasuewitz, war is something like an adventurous card game, not a chess game, with fixed movements and rules. In a poker game, nerves and audacity, risk and ambiguity achieve the objective. Says von Clausewitz: "War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale … War is the province of chance. In no other sphere of human activity must such a margin be left for this intruder".

Though highly readable and brilliant, von Clausewitz's romanticism seems misleading, in contrast to Sun Tzu's harsh rationalism. While von Clausewitz describes war through a fog of uncertainty and consequent exaltation of military genius, Sun Tzu is an incendiary bookkeeper of human deficiencies. While Clausewitz was very skeptical of the importance of intelligence, Sun Tzu in his assessment greatly exalted spies. In Western thought, only Hobbes (De Cive, XIII, 7) dared to write a similarly explicit appreciation, indignantly rejected by Kant and the idealist tradition.

Sun Tzu is explicit, clear, convincing. In Sun Tzu, the exaltation of spies goes together with a kind of

debunking of war: “Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win”. Sun Tzu says: “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting”. He wanted to win, but without bloodthirsty battles: “Supreme excellence consists of breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting”.

While western thinking has exhausted libraries on the subtleties of knowing oneself, at the dawn of our species, emerging from the mist of our birth, Sun Tzu says: “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle”.

In Anthropology and Politics, Ernest Gellner wrote that Machiavelli and Ibn Khaldun understood the essence of political supremacy; Ibn Khaldun especially is, as a world political scientist, "perhaps the greatest". Even now, his Muqaddimah can teach us a lot about the reasons why nations fail. Something similar can be said about Sun Tzu. In The Art of War, there are famous maxims and theorizations about deception: “All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near”. But these famous pages are nothing if not read together with other pages about paternity, friendship, and so on: “Treat your men as you would your own beloved sons. And they will follow you into the deepest valley”.

If there is a kind of human canon, larger and deeper than the western canon, Sun Tzu is towering in that canon, not only as a theorist about war, but as a theorist about humanity. In this perspective he is quoted today by presidents, managers, and scholars. Homer cannot be remembered and summarized by mentioning the trickery of the Trojan horse; in the same way, Sun Tzu cannot be remembered by mentioning the trickery of deception. Homer and Sun Tzu are larger than their words about trickery and deception.

As for Homer, some academics have expressed doubt about Sun Tzu's personal historicity and about the exact dating of his masterpiece. His lines could contain not only the ideas of a single author, but also a commentary and clarifications from many military Chinese theorists. Like Euclid’s Elements (nothing whatever is known of the author), Homeric verses are perhaps the consequence of a collective creation and a specific selection; the same can be said about Sun Tzu's The Art of War, revised and expanded by generations of disciples and followers. As the Iliad and Odyssey arise from the collapse of the European Bronze Age, so The Art of War, arises from the collapse of the Chinese Bronze Age, after the Erlitou culture and Erligang culture. As far as we know, in very different places Homer and Sun Tzu belong to the same cradle of a selective perception of human specificity. From the Axial age, through them, former generations speak aloud, providing us with a collective wisdom. The foundations of humanity were laid simultaneously and independently, from the Mediterranean to China, from India to Persia.

Sun Tzu communicated his The Art of War using ideograms, pictographs, and semantic compounds. He did not know Homer and his alphabet. He was not the only one to get on just fine without European help. Babylonian mathematicians after the end of the Uruk period (1830-1531 BC) and Arab mathematicians in the Islamic golden age (Thābit ibn Qurra, 841-901) developed, rewrote, generalized metrology and theorems to

steps never taken before: arithmetic rests on universal logographic symbols, not on restricted phonetic ones. As Babylonians and Arabs made astonishing discoveries without the Homeric alphabet, so the Chinese rationality advanced magnificently without the more typical cogent western device. European rationality has been up to now the victor, but it is not the only one. Max Weber rightly emphasized that Confucian wisdom, considered in the strict technical sense of accurate adaptation of means to ends, is more rational than the Western one. Many specialists have argued that the emphasis on rationality, benevolence, harmony, meritocracy, literacy and scholarship (elements highly detectable in the legacies of Sun Tzu and Confucius) lies beyond the economic growth of many Asiatic countries.

6. From Homer to Obama

I began my speech with the some four million millennia of our past. This was a hubris rhetoric. Italians say brevi cenni sull'universo (few words about universe) to deride such a hubris. But Italians also have a tradition of global travelling, from Marco Polo to Amerigo Vespucci. In front of Çanakkale's stunning heritage, we are forced to be willing travellers within history and geography.

Leaving from Troy, Homer made the portrait of the first archetypical global traveller. In his time, the total amount of human knowledge was equivalent to the data which are now contained in a single copy of the New York Times. Today, in each of the greatest world libraries, the books represent few terabytes (a terabyte is one trillion bytes); while one terabyte disc drive fits inside a laptop computer and can be bought for less than hundred dollars. The capacity to accumulate and distribute information increases geometrically. Gleick quotes this description of the information flood: “It’s as if you kneel to plant the seed of a tree and it grows so fast that it swallows your whole town before you can even rise to your feet”. It is possible to not sink in this deluge of information, if we stand on the shoulders of giants.

We must be humble and understand our limited place on Earth. But, humility acquired, it is inevitable that wherever our eye goes, we always see things from a point of view, even if limited and modest as it can be. Standing on the shoulders of contemporary sociological thinkers, from Ulrich Beck to Antony Giddens, we have been taught that we live in a risk society and that this is an ultimate turning point in human history, with infinite opportunities and threats. If this perspective is true, the best current symbol of our days is president Obama, more as a globalist leader than as a US president.

In his presidency, the logic of Obama has been in stark contrast with his predecessor George Bush, who in the first term office had carried out a foreign policy characterized by the document The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, published in September 2002. In the perspective of that international outlook, the United States was the only super-military power, with the historic mission to build global security, through a primary tool: the export of democracy, everywhere and anywhere, including through unilateral actions. Consequently, with Bush administration, after September 11, 2001, there had been a break-through in the traditional realism of American foreign policy and the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, followed by the war in Iraq. The clash of civilizations seemed inevitable, the terrorists were promoted to the rank of eminent actors of international politics.

In the speech given at National Defense University, Washington, May 23, 2013, president Obama gave the consequential conclusion of his reset. Speaking in Fort McNair, where Americans served in uniform since

1791, president Obama noted that US citizens are deeply ambivalent about war: they have fought many war, but every war came to an end. He gave a line to a full-time war footing against terrorism. President Obama spoke about a "victory against terrorism", measured by ordinary freedom and democratic realities, such as refutation of fear. He underlined the impossibility to promise the total defeat of terror, but he underlined also the dismantling of the networks that posed the most worrying danger.

War on terrorism was very expensive. In a decade, the US has spent well over a trillion dollars on war, using up for instance $150 million each year for the custody of 166 terrorists -- almost $1 million per prisoner.

Having spent such a large amount of money in the war against terrorism, while other internal fights on unemployment and education were becoming urgent, it seemed ineffective to continue the war against terrorism the way it was being fought. In that perspective, president Obama rallied to classical liberalism: in 1849, English statesman Richard Cobden stated that too much of Britain's wealth was devoted to armaments. Manchester liberalism was a vision where commerce and capitalism were intended to create peace, while militarism and colonialism were dangerous bellicosities. President Obama recognized that, in 2013, the scale of threats closely resembled the types of attacks US faced before 9/11. Serious and deadly threats (such as the attacks against the US embassy in Beirut or against the Pan Am flight 103), but not comparable to 9/11. It was time to close the formal war on terrorism, because that kind of terrorism was no more existing in the same way.

Many Obama opponents accused him of capitulation and of emboldening US enemies. Effectively, he rendered significant apologies from the beginning of his first months of office, relating to US foreign policy and US national security issues: apologies toward France and Europe, apologies toward other peoples living in southern American hemisphere, and so on. The motivation of apologies was a redefinition of military, economic, diplomatic matters. Even the drone operations had to be turned in a smart total strategy, not in a military action one.

Supremacy over information and intelligence has always been the key of every armed confrontation. Clearly, Western intelligence has been a decisive victory tool, from Alain Turing to Arne Beurling, but it has been decisive when it has been analytical and scientific. Technically speaking, that kind of intelligence relevance is unnoticed in pompous and arrogant overconfidence. Intelligence and spying are frequently confused.

Max Weber noted rightly that, confronted to Western reflection, writings such as Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra (350–283 BC) are more consequential, disruptive and upsetting about torture, assassination, and so on. For Western triumphs, science and logic, applied to war and intelligence, made the difference. Rationality has been lethal when applied to warfare. Following Max Weber, the European tradition is characterized by the scientific outlook and application of rationality in all the spheres of life, including warfare (but also including measured perspective in luminous painting and rhythmic mathematics in celestial music).

According to Hanson, "the Western way of war" is unequalled in its devastation, by a combination of several ingredients, where Homeric military ethos is the first to listen in. But just the Homer who old fighters like, is now outdated by the greatest technological changes in war practice after the invention of gunpowder. Cannons and muskets made feudalism obsolete. The war in Stahlgewittern (in a storm of steel) was a training ground for life, an inquiry into the personal identity, a vocation and a choice, a set of heroism and horror. After

nuclear proliferation, the old war went even more antiquate and rare. "The baby is born", the famous sentence given to president Truman about the definitive accomplishment of the Manhattan project, has been reinterpreted. With the birth of nuclear bomb, the nuclear baby killed the war, previously defined as "mother of everything". Clearly, even today many people continue to die in the battlefield: nearly 7,000 US soldiers in the last decade. But those losses are only a segment in a struggle where mercenaries, drones, intelligence, smart power do the difference.

There is a passage in Marx's A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, the so-called Grundrisse, 1858. Marx suggests that the poetic art of Homer and of the ancients is still meaningful to us even though everything has changed, because remainds us of the childhood of mankind. Sometimes even Marx was right: Homeric ethos is the childhood of mankind. After which, the war itself changed dramatically.

Antony Giddens says that we face a runaway world. It is also in this regard that Giddens uses the image of a juggernaut: modernity is said to be like a huge truck running without control (the term is derived by an image of the Krishna devotees, drawn from a wagon in procession in which they were allowed to be crushed under its wheels in sacrifice). From Fukushima nuclear disaster to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, we see a new global context, where we have problems that mankind never experienced before. J. F. Kennedy was one of the first to understand and explain this absolutely new situation in human history. He said in 1961: we face a new war, not so much a struggle against particular men as against "the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself".

7. From Obama to Çanakkale

Before ending my speech, I cannot avoid to say few word which connect microcosm and macrocosm. The reason of my presence here and of my feelings toward Homer's Turkish heirs, is a research born in Çanakkale, thanks to a project financially supported by the European Union.

During our research, on 6 April 2009, in Ankara, president Obama made relevant remarks to the Turkish Grand National Assembly Complex. This was his first trip overseas as president of the US. The relevance of his speech was evident for our research. President Obama said that Turkey was not where East and West divide but where they come together.

Obama admitted that he was there in order "to send a message to the world. … Turkey is a critical ally. Turkey is an important part of Europe. And Turkey and the United States must stand together -- and work together -- to overcome the challenges of our time".

To tell the whole world that the United States wanted a new policy toward Islam and the Middle East, Obama had chosen the Ankara parliament. After, in Cairo, speech delivered on June 4, 2009, he made other relevant remarks on the same subject. But the first proposal of his strategic reversal was in Ankara.

In the little room of our research, we discussed and gradually deepened this fundamental geopolitical change. In Obama's speech, the 2003 disagreements were filed, when the Turkish parliament denied the use of military bases in Turkey to attack Iraq of Saddam Hussein. Turkey had always been important for NATO and for the West, in an anti-Soviet extent. Then Turkey became even more important: a "partnership model" with a solemn sentence of the White House. Turkey remained more than one of the strategic allies of the US.

Obama's speech seemed similar to the innovative thought of Davutoğlu's on Turkish foreign policy: Turkey no longer had to be a bridge between East and West, but a problem solver in the Mediterranean and Middle East. In that light Davutoğlu underlined the relevance of Turkish contribute to the establishment of a permanent peace in a large region and he recognized that the allusions to a Pax Ottomana, was not wrong. The Pax Ottomana is an expression used to remember the positive impact of Ottoman rule on many lands, at the peak of the Ottoman golden age during the 16th and 17th centuries, when large part of Africa, Balkans, Middle East, experienced political and social stability, very different from the high instability they experienced later suffered. Obviously, no one wanted to return to those distant times, but some complementarity was speculated between a new kind of Pax Americana and a new kind of Pax Ottomana. Davutoğlu said that if Pax had the meaning of order, then "we are trying to establish a order".

In Ankara President Obama spoke about how America and Turkey were working with the G20 on an unprecedented response to an unprecedented economic crisis. President Obama said that cooperation only reinforces the common security that Europe and the United States share with Turkey as a NATO ally, and the common values that they share as democracies. Above all, he underlined in a different matter the challenges of the 21st century: "This much is certain: No one nation can confront these challenges alone, and all nations have a stake in overcoming them. That is why we must listen to one another, and seek common ground. That is why we must build on our mutual interests, and rise above our differences. We are stronger when we act together". The transition from unilateralism to multilateralism was evident. Obama said that leadership depends on ability to create partnerships, which are obliged, "because we can't solve these problems alone". Consequently, he underlined that in Afghanistan, US were partnering with a coalition of forty-six countries. Not a Pax Americana, but a peace enforced by forty-six countries. In Obama's words, the super-power acknowledged his limits.

Some observers have commented President Obama election as a kind of obliged path in US politics, since the failure of president Bush's agenda. In that perspective it was quoted the ironical Winston's Churchill dictum on America doing the right thing only after exhausting all other options.

With the stalemate of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with the economic and financial turmoil, a change in US politics was necessary. The election of Barack Obama sanctioned a reversal in the picture. An old bibliography about the American decline was replaced by incisive arguments of opposite sign. The US have huge advantage in technological creativity and military annihilation, with abundant natural resources. In its DNA, the US have uninterrupted intellectual innovation and surprising pragmatic adaptability. It is a system founded on a huge animal and intellectual force, which could be devastating and which can not be faced by anyone. There are US visible incidental defeats, but longer-term trends are on the US side. Declinism was the classic self-fulfilling prophecy, while, actually, however, continue to exist reasons of US strength and pre-eminence, which can be maximized rather than minimized (for those who care about the stability of the international system).

President Obama needs to be taken seriously. This politics has a moral and electoral majority in the country, but there are also US citizens who still favour the Bush-Cheney tough-guy-ism. Many Americans suppose that ordinary foreigners only respect force. Many believe that a clash of civilizations must be

categorically fought. In some sense, we could say that he was coming in Turkey in order to search alliances ant only to support the Turkey's leadership in the "Alliance of Civilizations".

Opposition to multilateralism remains a powerful tendency in Washington. Every setback in Obama's strategy, loud voices are quick to denounce his "systematic failure". But the alternative, a clash of civilizations, would be destructive for all. So (in my personal and humble opinion) we have a duty to support the vision of a necessary and urgent peace. A new kind of peace, fought in the hearts and minds of concerned citizens, patriots of a global world. Nye stated it correctly: in twenty-first century the future of power, will be very different from the past. Even a powerful country cannot achieve the outcomes it wants without the help of others. From Iraq to Turkey, soft power has produced more results than the hard power: it is a typical profile of knowledge society, which is different from the traditional militarism and violence of past societies

Now we can come back to us. A global outlook is the obliged point of view for our reflections on the long way after the birth of Homeric verses. Homer was not a parochial observer. Then, leaving Troy, he forced his listener to travel in the known world and in the unknown one; he narrated geographical and mental borders of his time, discovering humanity between cannibals and addicts, sirens and pirates, gods and monsters. Vergil and Dante remade and bolstered his journey. In that way, they were classics (this is Eliot's interpretation). From Cervantes to Tolstoy, every classic is a global author, speaking not for itself or for his country, but for humanity at a whole. In humility, we too must be global.

At the beginning of our symposium, I asked the same question which is usual in many Americans and Europeans polls: who are we? I discovered who I am, in my cultural and human identity, so different from my physical and registered individuality, late in my life, thanks to Çanakkale, during my participation to a project financially supported by the European Union. After the first phase of the project, we went in Thessaloniki, Fez, Warsaw, Belgrade. Forced to explain students what Europe, knowledge, civility, laws, inclusiveness are, as scholars and professors we took to ourselves the fundamental question and so we discovered a mysterious backyard. A long exploring journey in the past. And at the end of all our exploring, we arrived where we started, in Çanakkale. And we knew the place for the first time.

I will spend the final lines in advocating aristocratic populism. Following Homeric lesson, I tried to speak to all the literate impaired of the global listening capabilities. Yesterday, the listeners were assisted by wisdom gathered in the heavens and in the legends. Today's listeners may be assisted by the wisdom gathered in Google and Wikipedia. In the four million millennia of our past, we had so many ancestors, meanings, details and roots. Dear Çanakkale friends, dear Homeric heirs, I hope you and me are not lost in terabytes and millennia, in traditions and in translations.