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EU. Which Turkish Candidature ?

The Geopolitics of the European Frontiers ? Where Should Expansion Stop ?

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What can economics and demography tell us about Turkey, today and going forward ?

The advantage of approaching Turkey from the economic and demographic angles is that it enables us to circumnavigate the hypersensitive terrain of cultural not to mention confessional differences. We should, moreover, remember that France is one of the countries that rejected – much to the disappointment, notably, of Poland – any reference to Christianity in the draught constitutional treaty from which the Treaty of Lisbon is largely inspired. It can be counter-productive on more than one score to dwell unduly on Turkey's belonging to the Muslim zone of influence : firstly out of respect to the majority of the Turkish population, and to the millions of Muslims who are citizens of the European Union or have immigrated to a member country ; and secondly to other candidates for accession, such as Bosnia, which have significant Muslim communities.

Let us therefore look at Turkey in turn from the economic (I), and demographic (II) vantage points.

As part of its interdisciplinary approach to geopolitical analysis, Diploweb.com is delighted to bring you an extract from the new work by Pierre Verluise, *Géopolitique des frontières européennes. Elargir, jusqu'où ?* (*The Geopolitics of the European Union Borders, Where should expansion stop ?*, Eska, 2014), illustrated by 20 color maps, published in France by Argos, 2013, and distributed by Puf. The selected extract is in fact the second chapter, published under the title : *Quelle candidature turque ?* The maps used to illustrate the chapter in the book are not reproduced here.

THE ECONOMY : HOW FAST IS TURKEY CATCHING UP ?

COVERING 784,000 km² (302,700 sq. miles) [1], Turkey is 1.42 times bigger than France, currently the biggest of the EU-27 members.

Geography
"If we compare Turkey in its sub-continental geographical zone, as defined in the UN databases, i.e. western Asia, the size of its territory is advantageous. Of the 18 countries of western Asia, it is second only in area to Saudi Arabia […]. All the other Mediterranean countries, including France, are smaller than Turkey." Gérard-Francois Dumont, *Géostratégiques,* n°30, 2011 (our translation)

The production of wealth is distributed unequally across the Turkish territory. Put simply, the western half is richer than the eastern half.

Let us first see what the Turkish economy is made of and then consider some perspectives in the form of different scenarios.

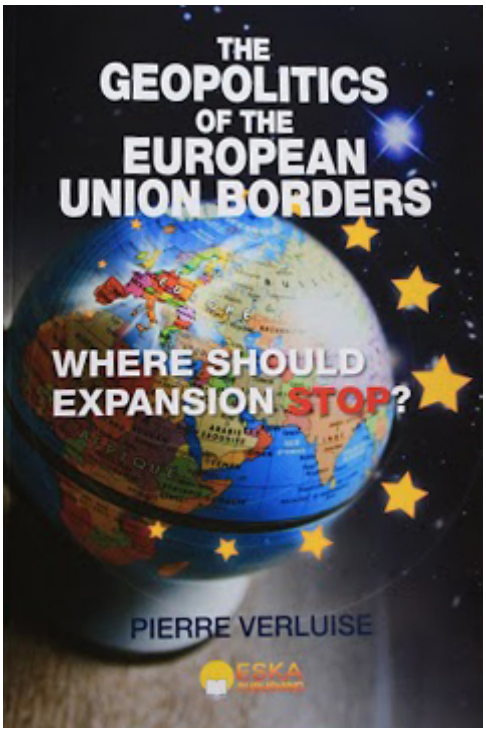
A. 52% of GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (EU-27 = 100)

In its autumn 2011 edition, Eurostat's *Europe in figures — Eurostat yearbook [2]* presents consolidated data for 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009. In other words the most recent consolidated data go back to 2009, a year overshadowed by economic recession in the EU as much as in Turkey [3].

How does the Turkish economy stand in relation to European Union averages ? It is instructive to examine three metrics : workforce productivity, GDP and GDP per capita.

Pierre Verluise, "The Geopolitics of the European Union Borders, Where should expansion stop ?" Eska, 2014.

Pierre Verluise delivers a master stroke with this work that operates on two levels : as a manual of geopolitics and an essay on the Eastern and Southern borders of the European Union. Thorough and informative, it steps outside the box of back-slapping political correction.



P. Verluise, The Geopolitics of the European Union Borders.
Where should the expansion stop ? éd. Eska, 2014

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This work offers clear, precise answers to the following questions :

. How far does the European Union still plan to expand ?

. What relations does the EU now entertain with the Eastern countries that were so recently perceived as enemies ?

. How is the EU organizing its relations with the South ?

In Turkey in 2009, workforce productivity per person in employment reached 63% of the EU-27 levels from the available sets of national data expressed in purchasing power standard (PPS) [4]. This is a national average that, however, conceals regional disparities, with productivity being higher in the west than in the east. Notwithstanding, the figure does place Turkey well above Bulgaria (39%) and Romania (47), slightly above Lithuania (56) but just below Estonia (65) and the Czech Republic (72). Close to the average (100) is Denmark (101). At 121, the productivity of the French workforce is nearly twice that of its Turkish counterpart.

In 2009, the GDP of the EU-27 at current market prices attained €11,791 bn while that of Turkey amounted to €440 bn [5]. This gives Turkey more economic clout than Belgium (339) and Poland (310) but less than the Netherlands (572) and of course France (1,907) and Germany (2,397).

Timeline of Turkey-EU relations
July 2009 : Opening of a chapter on taxation, raising the number of negotiation chapters opened to 11 out of 35. Only one has been closed.
November 2008 : The European Commission declares that Turkey has a viable market economy, marking a crucial stage for accession.
November 2007 : In its annual report on Turkish progress, the Commission estimates that negotiations should take at least 10 to 15 years.
December 2006 : Closure of 8 negotiation chapters, Turkey refusing to apply the so-called Ankara protocol to Cyprus.
October 3 2005 : Accession negotiations with the EU effectively start.
Source : *Touteleurope.eu*, 2012.

It is, of course, important to take into account the human factor via the GDP per capita purchasing power standard [6] (UE-27 = 100 [7]. The on-line database offers a figure for 2011 that is not presented as a forecast but that should be treated with caution as Turkey's GDP for the year in question is presented as "not available". Caveats apart, **in 2011, this would give Turkey a score of 52% of GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (UE-27 = 100)**, ranking it above Bulgaria (45) and Romania (49) but below Latvia (58), Poland (65) and a long way behind France (107) and Germany (120), let alone Luxembourg (274).

So Turkey has already travelled some way. In 2005, GDP per capita in purchasing power standards

(UE-27 = 100) was 10 percentage points below its 2011 level [8]. In other words, between 2005 and 2011 Turkey has been catching up very fast : its tempo of 1.6 percentage points per year outstrips even the Czech Republic's 1998-2007 performance.

B. What economic prospects ?

We are still short of data offering a clear view of how Turkey is going to emerge from the ongoing crisis affecting the country and more importantly the EU. However, proceeding cautiously, we can put forward several hypotheses, based on the available forecasts for 2011.

With 52% of GDP per capita purchasing power standards (UE-27 = 100) in 2011, how many years will it take Turkey to get past the 75% mark ? Any region in the European community remaining below this threshold is entitled to substantial structural funding. This is currently the EU's n°2 expense item.

Several factors complicate the prediction. Here is a non-exhaustive list. For starters, the possible accession of other EU candidates would probably – with the exception of Iceland – have the effect of bringing down the EU's GDP per capita purchasing power standards in a proportion that is hard to forecast with certainty but that would have the statistical impact of reducing the duration of funding allowed to regions approaching the threshold. [9] Let us bear in mind here that, in 2011, the GDP per capita purchasing power standards of the former EU-15 was still 10 percentage points above that of the EU-27. This is an eloquent reminder of the wealth gap between the old members and the newcomers. [10] Moreover, while we inevitably tend to think in terms of data on the national scale, these funds are handed out on the basis of regional results. In other words, there are very poor regions in eastern Turkey that would be entitled to funding for a long time. Finally, much will depend on demographic outcomes.

In 2011, Turkey apparently scored 52% of GDP per capita purchasing power standards (EU-27 = 100), i.e. 23 percentage points below the 75% cutoff. If we take this reference point, how many years will it be before the majority of Turkish regions get past this milestone ?

Scenario 1 : if Turkey catches up at an average speed [11] of 1.3% per year – slightly faster than the Czech Republic between 1998 and 2007 – it would take 18 years, i.e. till 2029.

Scenario 2 : at an average speed of 1.1% per year, it would take 21 years, extending the time frame to 2032.

Scenario 3 : at an average speed of 0.8% per year, we are looking at 29 years ; i.e. till 2040.

Scenario 4 : at an average speed of 0.5% per year – just below Poland's performance between 1998 and 2007 – it would take 46 years, i.e. till 2057.

The crisis helps Turkey to close the gap

The economic crisis shakes up the status quo. In 2009, variations in GDP were reduced by 4.4% in the EU compared with 4.8% in Turkey [12]. The dynamics diverged as from 2010.
The EU is turning in unimpressive, not to say poor performance : 2.1% GDP growth in 2010 ; 1.5% in 2011 ; with zero growth forecast for 2012.
Conversely, Turkey has reported significant improvement : 9% of GDP growth in 2010 ; 8.5% in 2011 ; with 3.3% forecast in 2012.
With the EU slowing down and Turkey gaining momentum, the gap is being cut back faster than could have been envisaged prior to the crises.

So what is the most likely scenario ? None of the above perhaps, such is reality's propensity to surprise ! The slowdown in the economic growth of the European Union is making it easier for Turkey to catch up. **Given the 2011 data, there is every possibility that in the 2030s or the 2040s the majority of Turkish regions will rise above the threshold of 75% of GDP per capita purchasing power standards (EU-27 = 100)**. This data will depend on the economic dynamics of each party – the EU and Turkey – on demographic trends and on the use that Turkey will make of European funding in its candidature.

In 2009, *Transparency international* ranked Turkey 61st worldwide in terms of corruption, with a Corruption Perceptions Index of 4.4 out of 10 – i.e. below the world average (5). Turkey, then, still has its work cut out to eliminate the endemic problem that affects many sectors, and offer stronger guarantees. It is worth noting that the situation is not improving, as, in 2011, *Transparency international* still ranked the country 61st in the world with a Corruption Perceptions Index of 4.2 out of 10. This slight downturn (-0.2 points) leaves Turkey in an even less enviable situation than Rwanda (5), Costa Rica (4.8), Kuwait (4.6) and Namibia (4.4). Not without reason, lawyers in Ankara point out that the EU currently has four members that are doing even worse : Italy (3.9 out of 10), Romania (3.6), Greece (3.4) and Bulgaria (3.3).

These very human weaknesses lead us to turn our attention to the demographic viewpoint.

II. WHAT ARE THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROSPECTS ?

Before looking ahead, we should first look back at the situation at the start of the decade.

A. Turkey is approaching the end of a demographic transition

At 74 million in 2011, Turkey had a smaller population than that of Germany (81.8), the most heavily populated of the EU-27 member countries ; but how long will this last ?

Since the 1970s, Turkey has been in the second phase of a demographic transition, with fertility down by more than 6 children per woman in 1960 to 2.1 in 2011. Gérard-François Dumont points out that : "The situation in Turkey is nonetheless specific, with strong inter-regional differences in fertility. According to data provided by the Turkish national statistics institute, fertility ranges from 1.51 children per woman in the western region of Marmara to 3.46 in South-East Anatolia. Turkey consequently has a regional demographic divide [13]." The dividing line appears to run from the

south-west to the north-east with, on one side, five regions with fertility above the national average and, on the other, seven regions where the situation is reversed. The most easterly regions, where the population is made up of mostly of Kurds, have a fertility that is significantly above the national average, with the relative demographic weight of the Kurds apparently progressing.

However, on the national scale, the natural growth rate fell by over half between 1960 and 2011. Overall, the outcome of demographic transition is nonetheless an increase in population.

Mid-2011 estimations pointed to a population of 74 million. Turkey's population has consequently already overtaken that of other EU members on the Mediterranean rim, notably France, Italy and Spain. Today, Turkey is reaching the end of its demographic transition, with fertility approaching the replacement level as a result of mortality conditions that remain unfavourable. However, in 2009, this did not prevent the natural growth of Turkey alone from reaching 809,000 people, i.e. 1.6 times the natural growth of the whole of EU-27 (509,200).

The Turkish Prime Minister advocates an increase in fertility

The decline in fertility in Turkey is worrying some sections of the authorities.
"The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, caused a splash by calling for the Turks to have at least three children to prevent the population from ageing, causing an outcry in a country that is fighting poverty and unemployment.
"*We must keep our population young. If you do not want our population to decline, each family should have three children*", said the Prime Minister to an audience of women assembled to celebrate International Women's Day.
Mr. Erdogan, himself a father of four and a practising Muslim, claimed that "*children are a blessing from God*", and regretted that he had not had more.
"*Our population is young, but if the current trend continues, we shall start to age after 2030. This is a threat. We must maintain a balance*", he said. […]
The head of government, leader of a party that has emerged from the Islamist movement, has been blasted by specialists and politicians at a time when he is increasingly suspected of having an agenda to strengthen the influence of Islam over Turkish society, notably through controversial projects such as authorizing the Islamic veil in universities. […]
"*These statements are a bad mistake for a country that is looking to join the European Union*", when the EU is already worried about letting in such a heavily populated country, noted Dr Saylan.
Health Minister, Recep Akdag, a paediatrician and father of five, came to the defence of the Prime Minister, declaring that the average number of children in a Turkish family was 2.1 and that, below 2, international standards considered the population to be in decline".
Source : Agence France Presse, March 13 2008 (our translation)

It is worth noting that Turkey is host to illegal immigrants, over one million of whom, mainly from the former Soviet or Balkan Republics or the Middle East, are thought to be working in Turkey. Immigrants are forced to accept very low wages and particularly harsh working conditions. They are employed notably in the tourist, construction, textile, and leather industries and the services sector. West of the Bosphorus, nearly 15% of textile workers are thought to be Romanian.

B ...but in the 2020s, the Turkish population could exceed that of Germany

44.1% of the Turkish population currently lies in the 0 - 24 age group. This is why, despite the sharp decline in fertility, the Turkish population could continue to grow significantly during the whole of the first half of the 21st century. This would be the result of historic momentum [14], linked to the many generations still at an age to procreate.

According to *World population prospects* the population of Turkey should pull away from that of France, then overtake the declining population of Germany some time around 2020-2025. **Accession would therefore make Turkey the most heavily populated country in the European Union in the second quarter of the 20th century**.

In 2025, its population could reach 85.4 million. By 2050, the Turkish population could be around 94.7 million. This demographic weight would very probably give the country the biggest representation in the European parliament, though it should be noted that its parliamentary representatives, like those of any other country, would very probably be spread over several political groups. There are no obvious reasons why there should be a “Turkish vote”, any more than there is a “French vote” or a “Slovenian vote” at the European Parliament.

Conclusion

So what can economics and demography tell us about Turkey today and tomorrow ?

Turkey has been a member of NATO since 1952

During the Cold War (1947-1990), NATO doctrine was based on the hypothesis that the Warsaw Pact nations could launch a mass attack on Western Europe via Germany. Turkey’s contribution to collective defence should be seen against this backdrop. The role of Turkish forces was to line up on the southern front against some thirty Soviet divisions to prevent the Warsaw Pact countries from maximizing its forces on the western front.

From the economic perspective it seems reasonable to expect the majority of Turkish regions to break through the barrier of 75% of GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (EU-27 = 100) some time between 2030 and 2050. With accession on the agenda, it is important to ensure that the European Union has the necessary financial resources and that Turkey offers sufficient guarantees to optimize the use of European funds.

From the demographic viewpoint, the growth of Turkey’s population could enable the latter to stretch the gap over the population of France, then exceed that of Germany by around 2020-2025. **In other words, Turkey could become the biggest and most heavily populated European Union nation before most of its regions exceed the threshold of 75% of GDP per capita in PPS (EU-27 = 100)**. With accession a possibility, it is important to ensure that the citizens of member

countries bring their support to the financial efforts that will need to be made over the long term, before and after accession. Explicitly or implicitly, these economic and demographic realities and perspectives will carry weight in Turkey's bid to join the European Union. Above all, the governments and the majority of public opinion in the member countries need to be convinced that Turkish accession to the European Union really is desirable, and then, should this happen, to give themselves the means to make membership a success for all parties.

However, this complex process factors in other parameters, notably strategic and political.

Turkey causes deadlock in EU-NATO relations

Turkish policy is a major stumbling block in the progress of cooperation between the EU and NATO. Why ? Turkey has been a member of NATO since 1952 and a candidate for European Union membership since 2005 … while at the same time occupying a member nation, the Republic of Cyprus. Thus Turkey demonstrates its power through its capacity to annoy. It has persistently blocked the signature of a security agreement between Cyprus and NATO. This automatically prevents the exchange of classified information between NATO and the EU and the optimal implementation of the so-called "Berlin plus" [15] agreements. In reality, Turkey is opposed to the involvement of Cyprus in any CSDP mission deploying NATO resources. The disproportionate relationship between the size of a divided Cyprus and the impact of this division on the European Union, as well as on the latter's relations with NATO may appear utterly incongruous. The deadlock speaks volumes about both the European Union's inability to contribute to a solution of the Cyprus question and Ankara's tendency to indulge in power plays in foreign affairs.

It is common knowledge that Washington has been pushing, through the voices of George Bush Jr. then Barack Obama, for Turkish accession to the EU, though of course the USA is not itself an EU member.

On June 7 2012, asked to look ahead at what he thought the next 10 years would have in store for the EU, the former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hubert Védrine, told the Canadian review *Global Brief* : "There is a […] question mark about the geographical extension of Europe. We can say with some certainty that 10 years from now there will be two or three new members. What we do not know, however, is whether Turkey will be among them. We have no way of knowing. We do not know whether the treaty of accession will have been signed and, if so, whether it will have been ratified by every country. It is possible, but we cannot be sure today." [16]

Turkey's posture does however seem to have shifted in since 2011, both in terms of its regional environment and the European Union.

The "Arab revolutions" - with all their ambiguities – seem to have made Turkey into a sort of benchmark, at least for a while, even though the subsequent elections in the countries concerned have brought to power forces that would not necessarily identify with all Turkish values. In 2012, as a result of the dramatic situation in Syria, Turkey came even more to the fore, opening its arms not

only to refugees but also to rebel fighters. More generally, Turkey is exhibiting an economic dynamism that is enviable in the region, and that gives buoyancy to geopolitical designs in the countries of the Middle East, notably those that are linguistically close to Turkish.

This new positioning is bolstered by the slowdown in the process of Turkish accession to the European Union. The European Commission's 2011 report on the forthcoming enlargements point to a possible deterioration of relations between the EU and Turkey. The stumbling blocks remain unmoved, and Brussels is not impressed by Ankara's recourse to strong-arm diplomacy. Negotiations are grinding to a standstill. It has to be admitted that the economic situation in the EU and, more than that perhaps, its economic perspectives, make it less and less attractive. It is, however, worth noting that, on February 12 2013, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Laurent Fabius, made it known that France was raising its veto on the regional policy chapter of Turkey's European Union membership negotiations.

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English Translation : Alan Fell

More

. See the first chapter, "Will the EU Grow Again ? From EU-27 to EU-36 and Beyond ?"

. See the the third chapter, "European External Action Service (EEAS)"

P.-S.

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Notes

[1] Population & Avenir, n°690, November-December 2008, p. 21.

[2] European Commission, Europe in figures — Eurostat yearbook 2011, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2011, 692 p.

[3] To take the crisis year 2009 as a yardstick is clearly contentious. However, to default back to 2007 data - i.e. before the crisis impacted in 2008 – is even more contentious as the data is outdated.

[4] European Commission, Europe in figures — Eurostat yearbook 2011, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2011, p. 50.

[5] European Commission, Europe in figures — Eurostat yearbook 2011, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2011, p. 46.

[6] Eurostat : The volume index of GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) is expressed in relation to the European Union (EU-27) average set to equal 100. If the index of a country is higher than 100, this country's level of GDP per head is higher than the EU average and vice versa. Basic figures are expressed in PPS, i.e. a common currency that eliminates the differences in price levels between countries allowing meaningful volume comparisons of GDP between countries.

[7] Source : Eurostat, on-line database, June 2012 consultation.

[8] Source : Eurostat, on-line database, June 2012 consultation. NB : in 2005 there was a break in continuity for all countries, complicating comparisons with previous years.

[9] This is what happened at the 2004 and 2007 extensions, for example for some regions in the Iberian peninsula.

[10] Source : Eurostat, on-line database, June 2012 consultation.

[11] Though the concept of economic catch-up process is deterministic, and therefore open to debate, it is used by the EU (Eurostat). Here, we are considering the discrepancy in GDP per capita in PPS (UE-27 = 100) for a poor country compared with 75% of the EU average. In other words, we are talking about the difference between the pace in the country considered and that of the EU. To calculate the time it would take for Turkey to reach the 75% threshold, catching up the EU at a speed of 1.3% per year, we divide 23 (= percentage point gap between the GDP per capita in PPS for Turkey and the threshold value of 75% of the average for the EU-27 in 2011) by 1.3. This yields 17.6, rounded up to 18. We then add 18 to the reference year 2011, i.e. 2011 + 18 = 2029. This is obviously an approximation. The same method of calculation is used for the other scenarios.

[12] Source : Eurostat, on-line database, June 2012 consultation.

[13] Gérard-François Dumont, "Turquie et l'Union européenne : intégration, divergence ou complémentarité ?", Géostratégiques, n° 30, Q1 2011. See also Gérard-François Dumont, "Turquie coupée en deux ?", Population & Avenir, n° 703, May-June 2011.

[14] Dumont Gérard-François (2004), Les populations du monde, Paris, Armand Colin, 2nd edition.

[15] The aim of the signature of the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO, referred to as "Berlin plus" is to ensure that the EU has access to NATO command's resources and structures, as well as the use of its operational military planning capability and command structures.

[16] Hubert Védrine, "L'Etat, l'Europe et l'avenir de l'Etat européen", Global Brief, Consulted on line on June 24 2012 (our translation).