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The fate of the "Kurdish opening" and its implications for civil peace and national unity remain the major preoccupation of Turkish commentators. In the wake of several incidents of inter-communal violence between Turks and Kurds in the western parts of the country, and not least the attacks on a convoy carrying representatives of the Kurdish DTP in Izmir, the specter of a looming civil war has come to haunt many columnists. The optimistic atmosphere of recent months has all but evaporated, as dire warnings about the future are increasingly setting the tone of the debate.

THE TURKEY ANALYST

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Analytical articles require a three to four sentence Key Issue introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful judgment supported with concrete examples. The ideal length of analytical articles is between 1,200 and 1,400 words. The articles are structured as follows:

KEY ISSUE: A short 75-word statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

BACKGROUND: ca. 500 words of analysis about what has led up to the event or issue and why this issue is critical to the region. Include background information about the views and experiences of the local population.

IMPLICATIONS: 500 to 700 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

CONCLUSIONS: ca. 200 words that strongly state your conclusions about the impact of the event or issue.

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Editor, Turkey Analyst

Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program
Institute for Security and Development Policy

V. Finnbodavagen 2, SE-13130 Stockholm-Nacka, Sweden

info@silkroadstudies.org

NOT YET LOST: TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE WEST

Hüseyin Bağcı

Turkey's recent international initiatives, and not least its "openings" to neighbors with whom relations have traditionally been less than friendly, signal a qualitative as well as quantitative change of what was once a defensive and cautious foreign policy. Turkish as well as international observers are experiencing difficulties as they try to make sense of what is perceived as Turkey's "new orientation". Although it may be tempting for the West to conclude that Turkey is being "lost", the country does in fact remain a principally Western power; albeit one that enjoys much greater room for maneuver in the international arena than ever before.



BACKGROUND: It is an undeniable fact that Turkey is displaying far more self-confidence than in previous years and is beginning to perceive itself as a regional and potentially even a global player. Its new foreign policy, guided by the well-known formula "zero problems with neighbors" coined by Foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, is beginning to reap its first fruits – as for example in its booming relationship with Syria – but is also creating doubts in Western quarters about whether Turkey is moving away from the West. Turkey's "Ostpolitik" or eastern orientation, however, is actually in keeping with the "zeitgeist" of

current global politics and is a natural consequence of regional and global developments. Indeed, Turkey is now enjoying a larger freedom of maneuver and is much more able to assert its influence. In fact, no other Turkish prime minister has had such an auspicious foreign policy environment as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has. Turkey nevertheless remains anchored in the West in political and economic terms; at the same time, however, the way Turkey defines itself in relation to the West has certainly changed.

In the past, Turkey sought the approval of Europe, and pleaded for the affirmation from Europeans that it indeed was European. President Abdullah Gül recently displayed Turkey's new self-confidence and the country's more relaxed attitude to matters European when he declared that being a member of the European Union is not the only measure of being part of Europe. Norway, declared Gül, is as European as anyone else, although it's not an EU member. His message was that Turkey will continue its efforts to live up to European standards regardless of the discouraging attitudes of countries such as France and Germany.

Meanwhile, the "political chemistry" between Russian leader Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Erdoğan is evidently good, with both leaders being interested in further developing the relationship. Russia has used the Turkish policy to promote a stable energy security policy and for its interests in the Black Sea and the Caucasus. The signing of a deal on the Nabucco pipeline does not mean that Turkey is desisting from extension of Russia's Blue Stream pipeline. When he visited Ankara in August, Russian Prime Minister Putin signed 20 agreements with Turkey; Russia is Turkey's largest trading partner, with Turkey being Russia's second-largest gas purchaser after Germany. Russia supports the Turkish opening toward Armenia and when the Armenian and Turkish Foreign Ministers signed the protocols on August 31, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was in attendance.

IMPLICATIONS: Once Turkey's archenemy, Russia is today viewed favorably as never before by Turkish public opinion. Yet for Turkey, Russia is still not a political alternative to its western orientation, but mainly a business partner. That makes Russia a very important country for Turkish foreign policy, and Turkey will take Russian interests into account. But it is unlikely to align itself with Moscow.

The Turkish policy in the Balkans is also experiencing a renaissance with the emergence of the Black Sea region. Never since the end of the Cold war has Turkey been so influential in this region. Nevertheless, the speech of Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu in Sarajevo in October 2009 also arose fears of "neo-Ottomanism" as he claimed that the Balkans had never been as "happy and rich" as during

Ottoman rule. Obviously, the Balkan countries are prone to experience certain unease when confronted with such displays of "Ottomanism". Although Turkey has built itself a reputation as a "soft power" in the Balkans, such exaggerated statements clearly risk undoing part of what has been achieved in the region. Indeed, Turkey runs the risk of overplaying its hand if it assumes that its historical, imperial legacy bestows prominence to it in its dealings with the countries that make up its supposed "strategic depth".

The Balkans and the Black Sea region are closely connected, and the EU is an increasingly important force there, through accession talks with the Balkan states and the Eastern Partnership with the Eastern neighbors, most of which are in the Black Sea region. Turkey is a part of this new architecture. In this area from the Balkans to the eastern neighborhood, the U.S., the EU and Russia are the main power centers together with Turkey. They now appear to act more cautiously toward each other, and Turkey faces the task of regulating its



relations with these three power centers and to define its interests there – but as a soft power, not a country acting unilaterally.

Indeed, the position of the U.S. as Turkey's key partner beyond comparison in the foreign and security policy areas remains unquestioned. The Government's Kurdish or democratic opening of as well as its opening with Armenia is strongly supported by the United States.



However, as Turkey develops its relations with Syria, Iran as well as Iraq, and as Prime Minister Erdoğan plays to the "Arab street" with his criticisms of Israel, it is tempting to conclude that Turkey is being "lost by the West". Yet the Obama administration is not necessarily unhappy with the Turkish criticism of Israel, as the U.S. is pursuing a reconciliation policy with the Islamic world. As a Western ally that is critical of Israel, Turkey may fulfill an essential role in the context of this American strategy.

Turkey is set to continue to develop its close relationship with Iran despite the criticism of

many Western countries, since Iran is above all valued as an economic partner. However, Turkey also wants to continue to act as an honest broker between the U.S. and Iran, and it will therefore need to strike a balance between the conflicting aspirations – economic and geopolitical – that pull its Iranian policy in different directions. Nevertheless, the contracts with Syria, Iraq and Iran are principally economically oriented and are in this sense expression of the strength of Turkey as a "soft power" in the region and of its pragmatism, not of any supposed ideological reorientation away from the Western world.

CONCLUSIONS: Turkey is far from being "lost for the West". Indeed, it may be argued that Turkey in some ways has never been a better representative in its region of the values of the liberal West than it is today. Although the internal and foreign policies of the AKP government are hampered by inconsistencies that do raise justified doubts about its sustained adherence to liberal values and to the Western alliance, Turkey has nevertheless under the rule of the AKP become a more "open" country where the government is willing to engage in dialogue with former, oppressed internal "others" – Kurds, Alevis – and former, external foes – Armenians, Syrians – alike. Ultimately, it is the success or failure of Turkey's internal, democratic "openings" that will decide whether or not the country is lost or won for the West.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Hüseyin Bağcı is Professor of International Relations at Middle East Technical University, Ankara.

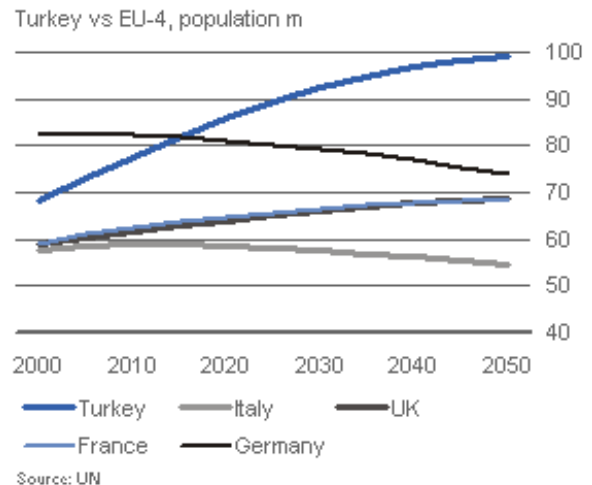
DEMOGRAPHICS ACCOUNT FOR TURKEY'S GROWING INTERNATIONAL CLOUT

Rafis Abazov

Recent Turkish foreign policy initiatives have asserted the country's growing influence in its neighborhood. One of the important, yet overlooked, factors that underpin Turkey's growing clout in international affairs is the demographic dynamics. Today's Turkey is a country of about 76 million people, up from 56.5 million in 1990, making it the second largest European NATO country after Germany. However, the recent report by the UNFPA estimates that by 2050 the population of Turkey will reach 100 million people, making it the largest country in Europe outside Russia. This change has important implications that will affect the new geopolitical and geo-economic balance in Europe. However, although demographics offer Turkey an advantage, it also calls for well-balanced economic policies.

BACKGROUND: Nothing better illustrates the scale of the demographic changes in Turkey than the autobiographic essay *Istanbul* by Turkish Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk. In his book, Pamuk laments the city of his childhood, just 30 or 40 years ago. In the 1970s, Istanbul was a relatively small and sleepy city of about 2.1 million people. Today, it is a bustling mega-polis of about 12 million and counting. One of the most popular descriptions of Istanbul among foreign journalists and writers is the image of an awakening giant in the eastern corner of the Mediterranean.

Turkey experienced an unprecedented demographic explosion during the twentieth century. The first official population census was conducted in 1927, four years after the country was established as a republic; it registered about 13.5 million people. Turkey's population first doubled between 1927 and 1960, growing to about 27.7 million, and again between 1960 and 1989, up to roughly 56.5 million people. By 2009 the country had added another 18 million inhabitants. Not only is Turkey becoming the largest country



in Europe after Russia, many of its cities have become larger than some states in Europe. For example, Ankara alone with its population of about 4.5 million is larger than most newly independent states of the former Yugoslavia. The population is the youngest in Europe, too, with almost 27.2 percent of the population – or about 18 million people – below the age of 14 in 2009.

However, the population growth has been quite uneven. Most of the families in large urban centers in Turkey, like Ankara,

Istanbul and Izmir, have about 2-2.5 children, just above the reproductive rate. In sharp contrast, in the rural areas the families are much larger and it is not unusual to see five or six children marching with their parents to schools or bazaars in small towns and cities. The population growth in the rural areas creates a huge pressure on the labor market as a large cohort of young people of the Turkish baby-boomer generation – those born between 1980 and 1990 – are entering the job market right now. In turn, this creates huge pressures on the Turkish government which has to develop job-creating economic policies.

In fact, the Turkish government conducted quite painful structural adjustment reforms in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Some missteps in policy implementation cost the Turkish economy dearly, causing high

inflation and the near collapse of the Turkish currency. Yet, once reforms and changes were in place, the Turkish economy grew at the fastest pace in Europe between 2002 and 2007, with an average annual economic growth rate of about 5-6 percent. By 2008 the Turkish economy had become the 17th largest economy in the world (according to the 2008 World Bank estimate) ahead of Poland, Switzerland and Sweden, though behind Spain and the Netherlands. Therefore, taking into consideration the growing economic and demographic factors, it is not surprising to

see the increasing role of Turkey not only in the region but also in the international arena.

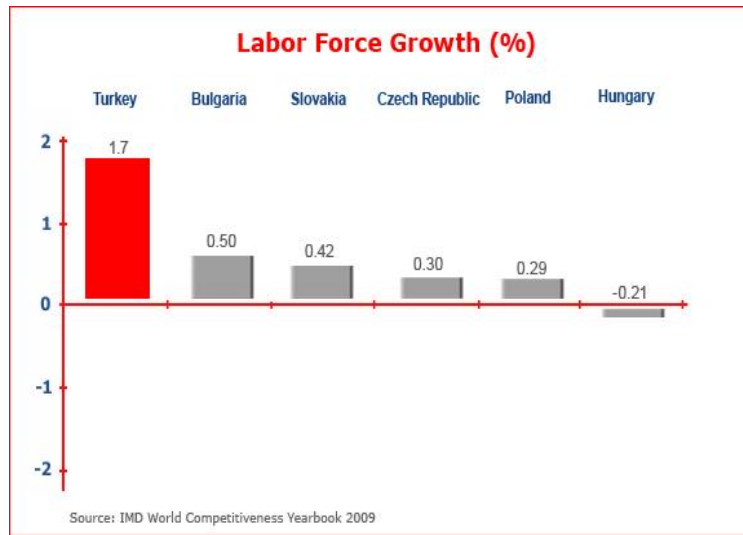
IMPLICATIONS: In the past, development economists considered fast population growth to be a liability. During recent years, however, many economists have revised some of their assumptions and approaches and have begun claiming that a growing population and a younger workforce are indeed valuable assets for a country with sound and balanced economic policies. There seems to be four major advantages: First, the population growth is good for national economies as it leads to growth in

consumption and drives many sectors of the national economy. In the post-industrial world, where service sectors and consumption turn into the most important driving forces of economic development, having more

consumers is an obvious plus.

Second, the size of the consumer market often attracts foreign direct investments (FDIs), as it is among the decisive factors in calculating return on investment. In the case of Turkey both the population and incomes have been growing steadily for about two decades and once Turkey weathers the global financial crisis the growth is likely to continue.

Third, the growing size of the economy and its various sectors leads to the competitive advantage of economies of scale. Large



economies are usually more flexible and able to produce more internationally competitive products simply because of the advantage of targeting both domestic and international markets. Fourth, Turkey with its young workforce has a better economic perspective against the background of the rapidly aging population in the European Union. The shift in demographics in Europe will probably lead to an important geo-economic change taking place. According to some economic predictions, there will be a significant decline in domestic consumption and in economic growth across the EU in the coming decades, making it necessary for the countries of the European Union to turn to the Turkish market for growth by outsourcing some of their industrial production, development of care industries and a number of other services.



Istanbul's population has grown from 2.1 million people in the 1970s to over 12 million today.

CONCLUSIONS: Demographic indicators suggest that the population growth in Turkey is here to stay. However, this trend should be addressed very carefully with well-balanced economic policies. Every year during the next decade or two, about 2-3 million young people will need appropriate education and social services before entering the job market, in order to be competitive in the new economy.

And then, there will need to be jobs for these people. Thus the most important economic issue that needs to be addressed by the Turkish government is to stimulate job creation through various policy measures and initiatives, especially by attracting FDIs, new technologies, and outsourced industrial production from Europe. It is especially important as the global financial and economic crisis has affected the country particularly negatively. According to the Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, recently the unemployment rate in the country reached a decade-high level exceeding 13.4 percent among the general population and a mind-blowing 23.5 percent among the youth.

The Turkish government needs to develop business-friendly relations with its neighbors in order to stimulate its trade and to attract international investors willing to participate in the establishment of new enterprises, especially in export-oriented small and medium enterprises sector, which play a crucial role in job creation. And just as EU members in all probability will need access to the Turkish market in the near future for their economic growth and expansion, Turkey will need access to the EU market for exporting its own goods and services.

AUTHORS' BIO: Rafis Abazov, PhD, teaches at the Harriman Institute of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University in New York. He is author of *The Culture and Customs of Turkey* (2009) and the *Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Central Asia* (2008). In 2009 he contributed to the UNDP and UNFEM reports on the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on migration in the CIS and Eastern Europe.

WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

The fate of the “Kurdish opening” and its implications for societal peace and national unity remains the major preoccupation of the Turkish commentators. In the wake of several incidents of inter-communal violence between Turks and Kurds in the western parts of the country, and not least the attacks on a convoy carrying representatives of the Kurdish DTP in Izmir, the specter of a looming civil war has come to haunt the commentators. The hopeful atmosphere of recent months has all but evaporated, with dire warnings about the future increasingly setting the tone of the debate.

MERT: THE KURDISH OPENING LOOKS LIKE A STATE DICTATE

Nuray Mert in Radikal is critical of the “authoritarian language” and the heavy-handed approach of the government. The attitude of the government is that it knows best how to deal with the Kurdish issue and it expects everybody to comply with its prescriptions without objection. Frankly, I am having a hard time understanding how a democratic environment is going to be introduced this way. Indeed, the Kurdish opening is increasingly appearing to be strategically aimed rather than having anything to do with democratization. The claim of the government that the opening is a “state project”, as well as the fact that the opening has been re-baptized a “national unity project” emphasizes that we are indeed faced with another dictate from the state. The government counters the nationalist opposition to the opening by reverting to a language that comes dangerously close to depicting those who raise objections as “traitors”. And the “democrats” who don’t

want to find themselves in the same camp as the CHP and MHP (the nationalist opposition parties) see no other alternative than to look the other way. Yet, if we are going to keep the hope of democratization alive, we need to apply the same standards to the government and opposition alike. Democracy can never be introduced by an authoritarian mentality.

TEMELKURAN: TURKEY IS BECOMING A FRACTIOUS MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRY

Against the backdrop of recent incidents of inter-communal violence in the western parts of the country, Ece Temelkuran in Milliyet worries about the future of Turkey. Politically, socially and ethnically we are increasingly coming apart. Indeed, we are becoming a typically Middle Eastern country divided into sub-communities that have nothing in common with each other, and where threats are issued from every quarter. The DTP (The Kurdish party) threatens the

Turkish nationalists, declaring that they will not be allowed to enter Diyarbakir. The AKP has its heavy-handed rhetoric, declaring that it knows best how to instruct everyone else. The CHP threatens that “it knows best how to crush a rebellion”. Can anything good come out of such a confrontational political climate?

MAHCUPYAN: THE FLAWED “MODERNITY”

Etyen Mahcupyan in Taraf writes about the predicament of Turkey’s secularists, about what he describes as their innate penchant for violence. The picture of a “modern”-looking young woman, her hair dyed, with a blouse that leaves part of her belly exposed, ready to throw a stone at the convoy of the Kurdish DTP in the supposedly enlightened city of Izmir reveals the psychology of those who were supposed to be “modern”. These people have so little say at the present and will have so little to say about the future of the country that they have become desperate about their marginalization. However, their supposed “modernity” was always flawed; it never encompassed the notion of tolerance toward those others that didn’t look like them. Modernity in this version was always a distorted one.

GÜRSEL: THE KURDS NEED TO EXPLAIN WHY THEY DON’T WANT TO SECEDE

Kadri Gürsel in Milliyet exhorts the representatives of the Kurdish movement to explain loudly and clearly to the Turks why they want to continue to share a commonwealth with them. If they succeed in convincing the Turks that the Kurds indeed

have their own, rational reasons for keeping Turkey intact – for instance, a Kurdish friend of mine expressed the fear that an independent Kurdistan ruled by the PKK risks becoming a fascist state whereas Turkey has a democratic infrastructure – then Kurds will be able to enjoy a peaceful existence along the cities of the Aegean coast that they don’t want to give up on. But they should recognize that the Aegean coast will not come to rest if the Kurds persist in dressing up little children in guerilla outfits, parading them along the streets of Izmir in order to create a psychology of defeat among the Turks.

BARLAS: DTP HAS SABOTAGED THE OPENING

Bernard Lewis once remarked that the “Turks usually make the wrong decisions, but they always make the right decision at the very last moment”, recalls Mehmet Barlas in Sabah. I wonder whether Lewis will be proven right this time as well, about the Kurdish opening. So far, the list of wrong decisions is indeed long. Haven’t we seen how the CHP has identified itself with the positions of the MHP? And finally, the DTP, the party whose existence was supposed to facilitate a democratic solution, has sided with Abdullah Öcalan and made his fate its primary concern. Hasn’t that been the most harmful act of sabotage against the opening? Osman Baydemir, the DTP mayor of Diyarbakir, states that Öcalan and the PKK are ready to commit themselves to a solution. One might conclude that Baydemir is a foreigner. It is as if Osman Baydemir does not practice politics in or even live in Turkey. Is the majority for whom Öcalan is a murderer of children ready to accept a solution that is preferred by the same Öcalan?

ÇANDAR: IT IS THE KURDS THAT HAVE TO BE SATISFIED

Cengiz Çandar in *Radikal* writes that convincing the Turks of the desirability of the Kurdish opening is indeed a necessary precondition for its success. However, to convince the recalcitrant Turks is still not the most important of preconditions. What counts most is that the critical mass of the Kurdish population that is a direct party to the conflict – which is not the case for the Turkish population – is convinced that the

solution that is being proposed indeed satisfies its demands and aspirations. And whether we like it not, that “critical mass” is represented by the PKK and DTP. If the opening eventually ends with a fiasco, it will have come about because of a failure to win over the Kurdish population. It is of crucial importance that the channels remain open between the AKP – that effectively represents a good part of those whose supra-identity is “Turkish” – and the DTP.