



By: **Emre Alkin**

# The difference between economic growth and development is determined by art



Hardly a day goes by without someone stopping me on the street and asking me, "Professor, what do you think I should invest in, euro or dollar, gold or something else?"

Getting sick and tired of all these questions, I finally decided to start a new, yet somewhat peculiar, discussion: "which one do you prefer, dollar or art?"

I know and I can almost hear you say, "what has that got to do with anything?" But, art has tremendous impact on economies, and vice versa. Both human activities are in daily interaction with each other.

Without further ado, I would like to mention two ongoing discussions in economics: it is the never-ending fight between the supporters of development and the supporters of growth.

As you know, developed countries do not necessarily have to have a large GDP. For instance, Scandinavian countries are doing just fine economically, and in terms of per capita income, even though they have a relatively small GDP, not to mention their significant contribution in terms of art.

This clearly shows us that developed countries do not care too much about hitting record high GDP levels. Instead, they keep improving the level of prosperity and welfare for the wellbeing of their people.

## Artists are the real masters of the universe

So, wondering the secret to their success, I decided to do a little research: "why do some countries pursue development while others are trying to achieve further growth?"

In simpler terms, how can art help us describe the difference between growth and

development?

Maybe like this: say that you intend to construct a building. The pro-growth economic policies would focus on the size of the building, thinking, "we will find something to fill that building with anyway".

Pro-development policies, however, will say: "I have some artworks. Now, I should erect such a magnificent building for them that it will reflect the unique form of the artworks inside and the complete skill set of the artist".

In *The World as I See It*, by Søren Kierkegaard, the philosopher tries to tell us that the only thing that tradesmen can do is to play backgammon and card games because they tend to pursue activities that can help them turn their skills into money.

Artists, however, are the real masters of the universe. When you read the book, suddenly you realise the secret of Europe's success, despite the pain and suffering it has faced throughout history: understanding the importance and value of art and design.

## The development will follow when art, design, science and technology work in harmony together

The truth is that the development will follow when art, design, science and technology work in harmony together.

Consisting of some very skilled and hard-working people, the

development had proven itself to be really useful to humanity in many occasions, and one of those occasions was when Brazil played against Germany in the World Cup; because up to that time, it was argued that only the talented could play football.

Obviously, the German National Team was

limited reopening, right?

But, the same thing does not apply to other developing markets, because there, what made people happy was the reopening of the football stadiums! We're In luck!

If you become obsessed about growth and quantity alone, you start moving away from quality. As Turkish people, we unfortunately think too much about money. However, as all experienced people would know, nothing good will come out of any job you take just for the money, or any type of art you make only with aesthetic concerns.

In fact, there is one thing in common between the supporters of growth and the successful ones of the supporters of development: they t worry about a thing. They keep away don' from anxiety and delusion.

In other words, they want the job done right. s not so hard to achieve re truly focused, it ' almost perfect results, obviously with a little help from your skills.

But, if you want something done right, you need to do it over and over again, you need to make mistakes if necessary, and learn from them.

**The East became a place where art and science are completely dead**

money is As Schopenhauer once said, " human happiness in the abstract: he, then, who is no longer capable of enjoying human happiness in the concrete, devotes himself utterly to money".

Although I usually tend to give examples from the Western world, I must say that I quite Le Naufrage des Assurés" (The Wreck of

extremely talented, but there was another important factor that played a crucial role in helping Germany to achieve victory: the Data Science.

Before the semi-finals, all German national footballers knew by heart how Brazilians get upset when they miss open goals, or which side of their bodies they use when they get up from a fall, or which direction their goalkeeper tends to lean when he saves penalties or close range shots.

Brazil was humiliated by Germany at the 2014 World Cup with a devastating 7-1 loss to its opponents. But, how did this happen? Well, with their deep respect for science, Germans knew how effectively to use the accumulated and known human knowledge to their advantage.

This astonishing defeat goes to show that talent alone is not enough. Hard work and the hard work of repetition will help us become fully developed human beings.

**It is a sad truth that we are suffering from a mental distress which causes us to desire the longest, the biggest, the largest, the deepest of everything**

As mentioned above, growth does not care about the quality. It cares about the quantity. The more you produce, the more you are considered good, or sometimes competent, smart, or successful.

Unfortunately, developing countries have been obsessed with quantity especially since the 1950s. It is a sad truth that we are suffering from a mental distress which causes us to desire the longest, the biggest, the largest, the deepest of everything.

What was the happiest news we got about the pandemic in China? Well, it was the fact that several museums across China announced

Atatürk

aw that Europe could sink into a fores  
dark abyss soon, Atatürk warned the U.S.  
beware ambassador before his death: "  
Hitler, for he will be the doom of a highly  
productive and dynamic nation. Beware

Mussolini, for his dreams of a New Roman  
Empire will bring Italy to the edge of collapse".

As predicted by Atatürk, Hitler rose to power  
and, being already chancellor, the first thing  
he did as elected president of Germany was to  
kill art and invent a new form for himself, in  
s complete contradiction to Schopenhauer's  
philosophy.

s developmentalist ideas, Borrowing Europe's  
Hitler combined it with high modernism and  
started building the largest, the biggest, the  
longest, the deepest of everything with his  
chief architect Albert Speer.

As it can be seen, art has always had and still  
has a tremendous power to shape economic  
development, social life, even politics.

s Guernica can actually be traced to Picasso's

of evidence documenting the persecution the  
Spanish and the Portuguese suffered at the  
hands of Salazar and Franco. Interestingly,  
everyone thought that Europe was governed  
by democracy as of the 1940s, but in actuality,  
it wasn't.

Spain and Portugal were ruled by dictators  
until the early 1980s. It was only until Europe  
got rid of their dictatorial and authoritarian  
regimes that it started to sow the seeds of the  
European Union. In other words, Europe was  
only able to overcome its troubles when it  
remembered how education, freedom and art  
are essential and indispensable elements in  
human lives.

When Hitler and Mussolini come to power,  
casting aside development, peace and  
prosperity, they quickly started their "mega"

Les ténèbres "Civilisations", where he says,

ères monde avant se sont  
", which can éteintes  
Darkness loosely be interpreted as, "  
spread all over the world when the lights of  
the Levant burnt out."

I believe what Maalouf is talking about when  
the lights of the East went out. When that  
happened, everyone started to think alike,  
using the same thinking patterns.

The East became a place where art and  
science are completely dead. The Westerners  
are not the only ones who put out the lights of  
the Eastern ports. The tyrannical leaders who  
rose to power, who were mistaken for "  
saviours" failed to enjoy the virtue of diversity.

We should know that over the course of the  
history Europeans engaged in fiery debates  
over art. Just when they thought everything  
was over, art emerged like a miracle to help  
European society return to life.

becoming numb after years of "stagnation"  
chronic  
emotional and physical pain" as explained by  
Maalouf in his book was described decades ago  
in Portugal, and Disquiet is based on

.excessive suffering"

**Art has always had and still has a  
tremendous power to shape  
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Nations that experienced great deal of pain  
and suffering over their history have  
unfortunately become indifferent towards art,  
towards life and hope. These are the nations  
where art no longer exists or is about to fade  
away.

After he established the Turkish Republic,

projects that brought nothing but devastation to their homelands as well as to the world.

## "Art is one of the vital arteries of a nation" (Atatürk)

Atatürk, on the other hand, followed an entirely different path. In 1929 during the Great Depression, a young Turkish Republic was going through many hardships, but, these tough times taught Atatürk and his people one important thing: "what matters is quality, not quantity". What matters is how well you do your job. But first, you have to have faith in yourself.

"To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible..." once said Thomas Aquinas from the School of Salamanca.

Whether as a leader who works for the welfare and the prosperity of his people, or a manager of an art museum, you must avoid expressions like "I am not willing, hopefully and so forth" when you set off on a new journey. In Atatürk's words, "art is one of the vital arteries of a nation".

I must say that the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao holds a particular importance to me. From 2000 to 2007, I was serving as the Secretary General of the Turkish Exporters' Assembly.

My colleagues and I were trying to help Turkey thrive through design and technology. And this handful of people invited Frank Gehry, the designer of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in the Basque city of Bilbao, to Istanbul. During his time in Istanbul, Gehry told us why Bilbao needed to make such a major investment to begin with.

The things he said recalled the past, especially of the Basque Country, which is for me an unforgettable representation of horrible memories of the 1970s.

On March 1978, Italian statesman, leader of the Christian Democratic Party, and 5 time premier of Italy, Aldo Moro, was kidnapped by the far-left terrorist organisation the Red Brigade.

Another notorious far-left guerrilla group of the recent past was the Red Army Faction also known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang whose members were responsible for the killing of more than 30 people in the 1970s and 80s.

In 1972, the world witnessed the moments that went down in history from the Munich Olympics, also known as the Munich Massacre where a Palestinian terrorist group called took Israeli Olympic team members hostage and killed them.

## In the midst of the chaos and killing, Basque Government came up with an answer to the crucial question of "how can we end violence through art?"

Meanwhile in the Basque Country, straddling the border between France and Spain, people were killing each other because of the Basque conflict which was built around the separatist organisation ETA.

So, the Basque Country. Its most popular cities are Bilbao, San Sebastian and Biarritz. Biarritz lies on the Bay of Biscay, in south-western France. Bilbao and San Sebastian are located on the north coast of Spain.

Both cities are famous for their species of plants endemic to the Basque coast. However, the Basque Country suffered a great deal both socially and economically because of the large-scale terrorist activity in the region until the 1990s.

In the midst of all this chaos and killing, Basque Government finally came up with an answer to the crucial question of "how can we end violence through art?"

In 1991, while the members of the City Council of Bilbao were discussing whether they should build a big bridge, or erect a magnificent building, or make large-scale investments to improve the airport, one of the city council members suggested that they should build a new museum.

Established in 1991, yet built and opened in 1997, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao cost 84 million Euros. Designed by the leading exponent of deconstructivism, Frank Gehry, the museum started to change the whole city.

As I have mentioned above, the whole difference between economic growth and development is determined by art.

Countries that do not care about art have to content themselves with economic growth while those that cherish art achieve prosperity. Art is also a very useful tool in terms of helping conflicting parties find common ground.

The City Council of Bilbao could have easily decided to build the highest tower of the world or an outstanding bridge with the thought that prosperity would eventually come if they made contractors wealthy first!

**In order to achieve economic prosperity, developing countries must put art at the centre of all their activities**

Sadly, pro-growth economic policies are designed to suggest the following way of thinking "

have become so wealthy that we won't need to worry about money any more, and then we can think about freedom, justice

and education".

The system, however, does not ensure freedom, justice and equal educational opportunity in order to achieve sustainable development. And that 's focus on from now on, not ' art, culture and gastronomy instead of killing each other", said the people of Bilbao.

Despite the fact that Guggenheim Museum Bilbao cost 84 million euros, with a \$1,000,000 donation from KLM Royal Dutch Airlines towards its construction, the building amortized the cost only in two and a half years. Obviously, there were many objections to its construction on the grounds that it would be too costly.

s gross domestic Today, the Basque Country' product per capita is 32% higher than the EU average. But, did the Basque government achieve this?

s the road map of the considerable Here' patience and resilience they showed from 1997 to 2000: first, an art milieu was formed in Bilbao. Then, one by one, several gastronomic restaurants opened their doors to people travelling in the Basque Country.

Bilbao, San Sebastian and Biarritz are considered to be the paradise of top fine dining restaurants. With its tiny population of 350.000 people, Bilbao is visited by millions every year.

The people of the Basque Country have started to become wealthy and prosperous when the -government managed to establish justice, high quality education, and freedom through art. Even this small example tells us how art can change a whole city, its political and social fate. Today, the Basque Country is home to art and gastronomy together.

Several years ago, my son and I visited Nerua, a 2 Michelin-starred restaurant inside the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, where we met Turkish culinary students who were being trained to be chefs.

30 Michelin-starred Azakur San Sebastian

son, his friend and I were savouring the food, the daughter of the joint

head chef of the restaurant, I would like to meet him daily.

We

had a lovely chat which took us all to the conclusion that "art feeds food and food feeds art".

Upon my return to home, I contemplated how Basque cuisine has become a global cultural treasure. The people of the Basque Country needed some imaginary glue to stick their native culture to the globe, and this glue was none other than art. In short, we too have to produce cultural assets that can be universalised as world heritage.

The bottom line is that, in order to achieve economic prosperity, developing countries must put art at the centre of all their activities.