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PAGES: 129-158

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/816378>

Turkey's East Asian Policy: From Security Concerns to Trade Partnerships*

Selçuk ÇOLAKOĞLU**

Abstract

Turkey's Asian policy entered a new period after the Second World War as Ankara began to establish relations with East Asian countries,¹ based upon its own foreign policy vision and economic capacity. Either security concerns or economic interests, or sometimes both, have been the main determinants in Ankara's policy for East Asia from 1945 to the present. This article examines Turkish-East Asian relations in four main periods, highlighting the basic characteristics of relations.

Key Words

Foreign Policy Analysis, Turkey, China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan.

Introduction

The most important factors that determined Turkey's Asian policy in the first period covering the years 1950-1970 were security concerns and the Cold War balance of power. Though the Cold

War continued in the second period of 1971-1990, the normalisation of Sino-American relations led to changes in the balance of power in East Asia. Turkey began to shift its East Asian policy orientation from security to economics. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union led Ankara to develop a broader vision of Asia during the 1990s. In the period between 2002-2012, long-planned partnerships with East Asian countries began to be established due to the increase in Turkey's political and economic capacity.

The Cold War Structure in Asia and Turkey's Anti-Communist Solidarity with Japan, South Korea and Nationalist China (1950-1970)

In the first period of the Cold War, Turkey's East Asia policy was shaped by its security policies and by the East-West

* This article was supported under the TÜBİTAK SOBAG-109K238 project.

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balance. During this period, which lasted until the period of détente in the early 1970s, Turkey was in a kind of political solidarity with the pro-Western countries in East Asia, namely Japan, South Korea and Nationalist China, against the communist threat. Within this period, there were two important points that show how Turkey's Asian policy was a security-oriented one. Firstly, Turkey supported the pro-Western South Korea against communist North Korea both militarily and politically by sending troops to the Korean War, which took place between 1950-53. Furthermore, Turkey, like other Western countries, continued to recognise the Republic of China (ROC) on the island of Taiwan instead of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the legitimate representative of China, despite the Chinese Communist Party dominating the entire mainland in 1949.

Turkey could not establish economically meaningful relations with the region despite its intense political interest in East Asia. Only Japan was seen as an economic model and as a source of financing for large infrastructure projects in Turkey. During this period, Turkey could not even establish diplomatic relations with the communist countries of East Asia, namely the PRC and North Korea. Ankara virtually ignored these two countries until the 1970s. However, Turkey began to give a signal of change its

policy towards the PRC in parallel with the overall softening in the world during the 1960s and to seek a relationship model with the PRC. The key point of Ankara's stance was the acceptance of the PRC as a UN member without the dismissal of the ROC (Taiwan).

The Korean peninsula, which was freed from Japanese occupation after the Second World War, was divided into two zones of occupation by the Soviet Union and the United States (US). Immediately after the war with the outbreak of the Cold War, the pro-Soviet Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north and the pro-US Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south were established in 1948. Turkey entered East Asian politics by sending troops under UN command to the Korean War, which broke out in 1950.

In these years, during which the impact of the Cold War was felt very strongly, Turkey had as security agreements only alliance agreements signed with the United Kingdom (UK) and France in 1939. Though Turkey became a member of the UN, it was not possible for the UN to eliminate the Soviet threat to Turkey because of the structure of the organisation. Prime Minister Adnan Menderes argued that the absence of a positive response to Turkey's application for NATO membership as of August 1950 led to a further increase in the threats towards Turkey.²

It was argued that the decision to send troops to the Korean War would be a concrete indication of Turkey's solidarity with the Western bloc. Thus Turkey sent the Turkish Brigade, a force of 4,500, to Korea in 1950. During the Korean War, about 1,000 Turkish soldiers were killed and another 2,000 were wounded. Sending Turkish soldiers to the Korean War had a facilitating impact on NATO membership, given the fact that the UK was not sympathetic to the Turkey's NATO membership in this period.³ In this respect, it was a natural result of this process that Turkey and Greece, both of which had sent troops to the Korean War, were admitted into NATO in 1952.

After joining the Korean War, Turkey's visibility increased in the international arena. Turkey, with support from the Western states, obtained a temporary seat in the UN Security Council, elected from the Middle East region in the vote in the UN General Assembly in October 1950.⁴ Turkey participated in the Geneva Conference held on 26 April 1954 and supported South Korea's argument that free elections should be used to unify the Korean peninsula.⁵ However, Turkey, which did not hesitate to participate in the Korean War in 1950, preferred to remain outside the Vietnam War that began to escalate in 1967. During his visit to the US, President Cevdet Sunay stated that Turkey was in favour of peacefully solving the problem in Vietnam.⁶

A relationship based on very solid foundations between Turkey and South Korea became possible thanks to the Korean War. The Ankara School and Orphanage, created within the Turkish Brigade in Korea for Korean orphans, operated until the 1960s, and led to close relations between Turkish and Korean societies.⁷ The Turkish Brigade in Korea existed until 1960, but in June 1960 it was reduced to a squadron level.⁸ Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel announced that the Turkish squadron in Korea with its 180 soldiers would withdraw in May 1966 and a squad of Turkish soldiers would remain on the peninsula.⁹ The 15 people in the last troop withdrew from South Korea in January 1971.¹⁰

Turkey was one of those countries preferring to recognise the ROC over the PRC, aiming to develop a positive policy of developing economic and cultural relations with Taiwan.

Prime Minister Adnan Menderes' East Asian tour in April 1958 was important because at the time it was the highest-level visit from Turkey to the region. During this visit, Turkey and South Korea stressed their solidarity against communism.¹¹ In contrast to the visit of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes to Japan, economic issues were not on the

agenda in the South Korean visit, which showed the absence of the capacity for bilateral economic cooperation. Despite all the rhetoric of solidarity in bilateral relations, the only visit from South Korea to Turkey during this period was the visit of Defence Minister Yul Kim Cung in January 1959.¹²

The military coups first in Turkey in May 1960 and then in South Korea in May 1961 established a remarkable partnership between the two countries and provided mutual sympathy between the military regimes in both countries. The first government that recognised the government of General Park Chung-hee in South Korea was the Turkish Military Council under the leadership of the retired General Cemal Gürsel.¹³

Until 1971, the ROC in Taiwan was recognised by all Western countries and occupied a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Turkey was one of those countries preferring to recognise the ROC over the PRC, aiming to develop a positive policy of developing economic and cultural relations with Taiwan. Thus, in the period between 1949 and 1971, the “One China” for Turkey was the ROC in Taiwan.¹⁴ Turkey as a NATO member, and as Taiwan was an ally of the US, had strong solidarity against the communist world.

In 1956, there was a significant bilat-

eral exchange of visits and an expansion of relations with the aim of strengthening ties between Turkey and the ROC. In November 1956, Turkish Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu visited Taiwan to strengthen political and economic relations, and to cooperate against communist expansion.¹⁵ In February 1957, Taiwanese Foreign Minister and Permanent Representative to the UN Yeh visited Ankara and signed an agreement to promote cultural exchanges between the two counties.¹⁶

Unlike other regional countries, relations with Japan shifted from a security-oriented relationship to an economic-oriented one.

Prime Minister Adnan Menderes also paid a historical visit to the ROC as a part of his East Asian tour in April 1958, and he made several contacts for economic and cultural collaboration and military cooperation against communism.¹⁷ Within the framework of flourishing relations between Turkey and the ROC in 1959, a Turkish parliamentary delegation chaired by Refik Koraltan visited Taiwan and expressed Turkey’s support for “Nationalist China” against “Communist China”.¹⁸ However, during this period, economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries remained relatively weak.

During the 1960s, it was observed that Turkey sought to build relations with the formally unrecognised PRC. Indeed, a trade delegation from the PRC visited Istanbul in November 1966.¹⁹ The Turkish Ministry of Commerce signed a trade agreement both with Communist and Nationalist China at the same time in December 1969.²⁰ Despite increasing contacts between Ankara and Beijing, Turkey, together with the US, voted against the draft resolution of the UN General Assembly in November 1970 that proposed transferring UN membership to the PRC and the dismissal of Nationalist China. Haluk Bayülken, the permanent representative of Turkey to the UN, stated that Turkey in fact supported the UN membership of the PRC but refused to vote for the resolution since it proposed the dismissal of Nationalist China from the UN.²¹ One of the problems between Turkey and the PRC in the period after 1949 was in Xinjiang. There were groups of Kazakhs and Uyghurs who had escaped from Communist China to Turkey through Afghanistan during the period of 1949-71 and they affected potential relations.²² With the start of the normalisation in Sino-American relations, Turkey and PRC began talks to establish diplomatic relations in May 1971, and assigned their ambassadors in Paris to work on this process.²³

During this period, Turkey had better relations with Japan among the East Asian countries. The Japanese development miracle attracted much interest in Turkey and Japan was seen as a model of development, being the first modernising non-Western country in Asia.²⁴ Thus, unlike other regional countries, relations with Japan shifted from a security-oriented relationship to an economic-oriented one. Japan's first visit to Turkey was carried out by Minister of Development Matsuda Seishin in October 1950.²⁵ The first agreement between Turkey and Japan was a trade agreement, signed in March 1954.²⁶

The visit of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes in April 1958 was Turkey's highest-level visit ever to Japan at that time. Prime Minister Menderes met with Emperor Hirohito and Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, and they emphasised the mutual friendship and cooperation between the two countries.²⁷ Minister of Foreign Affairs İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, together with Undersecretary of State Planning Turgut Özal, visited Japan in March 1970 and discussed bilateral economic cooperation as a priority. While the Japanese firms gave the highest credit for the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul,²⁸ they were also interested in the construction and acquisition of iron and steel, petro-chemical and shipyard facilities in Turkey.²⁹

Sino-American Rapprochement and the Normalisation of Asian Affairs (1971-1990)

In the second period of the Cold War that started in the 1970s, Ankara began to normalise its East Asia policy politically and developed an economic-centred perspective. The normalisation of Sino-American relations and the transfer to the PRC of UN membership from Taiwan in 1971 contributed quite considerably to this shift. The US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973 also contributed to softening East-West tension in Asia.

The period of détente that started in the 1970s between the Eastern and Western blocs also reduced the strength of the bipolar structure in international politics. China started to be presented during this period as a third way. In addition, Turkey's relations with the US and European Economic Community (EEC) countries began to deteriorate because of the Cyprus issue and this led Ankara to look for a more independent policy. Following the 1974 military intervention in Cyprus, the US Congress implemented an arms embargo on Turkey in 1975, and Ankara sought to develop its relations with its Arab neighbours, the socialist countries, and the non-aligned countries.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Turkey began to see East Asia as an opportunity for economic expansion. Economic cooperation with Japan developed rapidly in the 1970s and economic-based contacts increased with the four Asian Tigers, namely South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, in the 1980s. Ankara began closely to monitor the economic reforms in China, which started in 1978, and investigated ways to improve relations with China as a potential trading partner. However, because of the unstable governments and economic crises during the 1970s, Turkey could not develop close relations with East Asian countries. In the 1980s, the military regime, led by Kenan Evren, started an expansion strategy towards the countries in East Asia and this strategy continued with the civilian government under Turgut Özal.

At that time, Japan was the country that came to the fore on economic cooperation in East Asia. In the 1970s, Japanese companies constructed the Golden Horn Bridge in Istanbul and sold many freighters and tankers to Turkey.³⁰ Rapidly improving economic relations with Japan started to slow down due to the economic downturn in Turkey, which was experienced in the second half of the 1970s.³¹ Turkey, with its economic downturn, considered Japan to be among the big economies that could provide foreign financial resources to Turkey.³²

After the military coup of 12 September 1980, Japan became also one of the most important countries in terms of both financial support and foreign investment.³³ Japanese Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe visited Turkey in August 1983, in the last months of the temporary military government. He did not make commitments on economic aid and export credits while supporting Ankara against the Armenian ASALA terrorism group which had targeted Turkish diplomatic missions.³⁴ Prime Minister Turgut Özal, who had visited Japan when he was vice prime minister, gave more importance to trade cooperation with Japan. It was a Japanese company that won the tender for the second Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul. In this respect, Prime Minister Özal's visit to Japan in May 1985 was very important in order to attract Japanese capital.³⁵

Prince Mikasa Takahoito's visit to Turkey in May 1986 showed the density of high-level relations between the two countries.³⁶ In the 1980s, due to the problems in Turkish-European Community (EC) relations, Japan presented an economic alternative to Turkey within the Western bloc.³⁷ Turkey began to see Japan as an attractive centre for finance, direct investment and technology transfer. Even establishing a direct shipping line from Japan to Turkey through the Soviet Union, by using the trans-Siberian railway line,

was seriously considered in this period.³⁸ Prime Minister Özal went to Japan again in February 1989 to attend the funeral of Emperor Hirohito, and during the visit he also held talks on the development of trade cooperation.³⁹ In line with the improved relations during this period, in 1990 Turkey became among the top ten countries to receive Japanese aid.⁴⁰

At a time when other foreign airline companies flying to Iran gave priority to their own citizens and refused to carry Japanese citizens, Ankara assigned Turkish Airlines aircraft for the evacuation of the 215 Japanese citizens.

During the Özal period, it might be said that relations between Turkey and Japan were at their highest level. Turgut Özal visited Japan four times in ten years, first in 1981 as vice prime minister, in 1985 and 1989 as prime minister, and in 1990 as president. Turgut Özal won the admiration of Japan due to his help in evacuating Japanese nationals stranded in Tehran. In 1985, when the Iraqi government started to reject any restrictions on bombing the territory of Iran, many states began to evacuate their citizens from Tehran. At a time when other foreign airline companies flying to Iran gave priority to their own citizens

and refused to carry Japanese citizens, Ankara assigned Turkish Airlines aircraft for the evacuation of the 215 Japanese citizens, an act which was met by Tokyo with a deep gratitude.⁴¹

The first visit from Japan to Turkey at the prime ministerial level was made in 1990. Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu visited Turkey in October 1990 during the crisis that began with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. During this period, Japan was among one of the countries that provided financial support to Turkey, which was affected by the embargo on Iraq. However, Ankara considered Japan's aid inadequate compared to the aid of other donor countries.⁴²

In the 1970s, Turkish-South Korean relations remained at a low level. The withdrawal of the last Turkish squad in South Korea under UN command in 1971 might also be interpreted as a decline in terms of bilateral relations. Though the US based its withdrawal on economic grounds, Turkey stated that the decision to withdraw the Turkish troops was politically motivated. Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil reported that the normalisation of relations between Turkey and the PRC and the insistence of the Soviet Union were the reasons for the military withdrawal. Ankara took this step also as a response to the South Korean delegation's meeting only with the Greek

authorities during its visit to Cyprus and not also with Fazıl Küçük, the leader of the Turkish community, despite Turkey's insistence on the meeting.⁴³ Seoul's request that 15 people from the Turkish squad be left in South Korea as a symbol of Turkish support did not change the Turkish decision.⁴⁴ The first visit from South Korea to Turkey at the prime ministerial level was held in May 1977 by Prime Minister Choi Kyu Hah, but until the 1980s, there was no change in the course of bilateral relations.⁴⁵

The deterioration in relations with the US and Western European countries after the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974 led Turkey to improve relations with the Eastern bloc and third world countries.

President Kenan Evren paid a visit to South Korea as it was one of the countries targeted in the Turkish expansion strategy to Asia in December 1982.⁴⁶ Immediately after his visit in May 1983, Industry and Trade Minister Mehmet Turgut also paid a visit to South Korea.⁴⁷ After the visit of the South Korean speaker of the parliament, Chre Mun Shich, to Turkey in February 1984,⁴⁸ Necmettin Karaduman, speaker of the Turkish parliament, paid a visit to South Korea in September 1984. In the meeting with

President Chun Doo Hwan, Karaduman supported the South Korean policy on the unification of Koreas and cooperation against international terrorism (meaning ASALA terrorism) was discussed.⁴⁹

In October 1986, Prime Minister Turgut Özal conducted an Asian tour covering Bahrain, Bangladesh, South Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Oman. Among the countries visited, the country with the highest economic potential was South Korea. During his visit to Seoul, Prime Minister Özal signed an agreement concerning the reciprocal promotion of investments. During the talks, South Korea indicated that their position on a quick end to the Iran-Iraq War was similar to Turkey's, and stated their solidarity on finding a solution to the Turkish minority's problems in Bulgaria.⁵⁰ Prime Minister of South Korea Kang Young Hoon paid a visit to Turkey in July 1990.⁵¹ The South Korean government was also one of the countries that provided economic aid to Turkey during the 1990 Gulf Crisis.⁵²

Also after the Korean War, Turkey, together with the US, has always continued to support South Korea's official stance. Thus, neither diplomatic relations nor any official contact between Ankara and Pyongyang became possible until the 1970s. Throughout the 1970s, North Korea made various unsuccessful attempts through the PRC and Eastern European countries to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey.

However, the deterioration in relations with the US and Western European countries after the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974 led Turkey to improve relations with the Eastern bloc and third world countries. In such an environment, a foreign trade protocol was signed between Turkey and North Korea in August 1977. This protocol remained in effect for about six years and was dissolved by Turkey in October 1983 because of the attempt by North Koreans agents to assassinate South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan during his visit to Rangoon, the capital of Burma.⁵³ Ankara also harshly condemned the crash of a Korean Airlines passenger plane during its Abu Dhabi-Bangkok flight by North Korean agents in November 1987. Although Deputy Prime Minister of North Korea Gi Ju Chong clearly indicated in a statement in July 1987⁵⁴ that North Korea would like to establish good relations with Turkey at all levels, it did not become possible to establish a healthy relationship between Ankara and Pyongyang during the 1980s.

Relations between Turkey and PRC were established in 1971. From this period on, international security concerns and the economy have been among the factors that shaped Turkish-Chinese relations. During the period between 1971-1990, a rhetoric of solidarity against the danger of Soviet expansionism also became effective in

relations between the PRC and Turkey as with NATO. However, relations between the two countries did not improve to the desired level in the 1970s.

The military regime was marginalised by the EEC after the military coup of 12 September 1980 and the new government sought new political equilibriums. In this respect, the PRC, as one of the UN Security Council's permanent members and as a country newly opened to the capitalist world economy, was regarded by Ankara as an area for political expansion. The first top-level visit from Turkey to China was

held in May 1981 by Trade Minister Kemal Cantürk. The visit of Foreign Minister Ilter Türkmen to China in

December 1981 was of great importance in terms of bilateral relations. During this visit, it was understood that Beijing saw the military coup of 12 September positively on the grounds that it provided political stability against the spread of Soviet expansion. China supported solving the Aegean and Cyprus issues through diplomatic channels between the parties. This visit also paved the way to conclude an economic and technical cooperation agreement, which prepared the background for trade cooperation between Turkey and China.⁵⁵

Turkey recognised the PRC as the sole legal representative of China on 5 August 1971, and pursued a "One China" policy.

President Kenan Evren initiated a kind of Asian expansion in the early 1980s. In December 1982, he visited China, South Korea, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Pakistan.⁵⁶ Although each of these visits was very important, the visit to China became a milestone in bilateral relations as this was the highest-level visit to this country from Turkey.⁵⁷ Following Evren's visit, Minister of Culture Zhu Muzhi visited Turkey in April 1983,⁵⁸ and Foreign Minister Wu Chuochiang visited Turkey in October 1983.⁵⁹

Chinese President Li Xiannian paid a return visit to Turkey in March 1984, 15 months after President Evren's visit.⁶⁰ During President Li's visit, he praised Turkey's

balanced stance in the Iran-Iraq War and emphasised that the Cyprus issue should be solved through inter-communal dialogue between the Greeks and Turkish Cypriots. During the visit, Turkey and China agreed to pursue a common international attitude. President Li's visit was followed by Foreign Minister Vahit Halefoğlu's visit to China in October 1984.⁶¹

Prime Minister Turgut Özal visited the PRC in July 1985.⁶² In the 1980s, the Chinese government encouraged Turkey to invest in Xinjiang Uyghur

Autonomous Region (XUAR), and Xinjiang Prime Minister İsmail Amat and his accompanying delegation visited various cities in Turkey in July 1985.⁶³

Just one year after the visit of Prime Minister Özal to China, Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang visited Turkey in July 1986. As in the previous high-level visits, the two Prime Ministers discussed the possibilities of further development in bilateral political and especially economic relations.⁶⁴ Deputy Foreign Minister Huai Yuan Ci stated in an interview in October 1987 that problems which Turkey was a party, such as the problems of the Aegean, Cyprus and the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, should be solved through diplomatic channels.⁶⁵

The Chinese side continued its high-level visits until 1991. Minister of Culture Wang Meng visited Turkey in March 1988⁶⁶ and China's National People's Congress Vice-President Seyfettin Azizi visited Turkey in April 1990.⁶⁷ Foreign Minister Qian Qichen came to Turkey in September, 1990 to assess the developments in the Gulf crisis.⁶⁸ These mutual visits became a clear indication of the importance given by both parties to each other.

While the good bilateral relations were continuing, a development increased the tension. A commercial counsellor of the PRC embassy in Ankara, Muhammed Niyazi, who had Uyghur descent, sought

asylum in Turkey in September 1986 on the grounds that he was concerned about his personal safety.⁶⁹ This development became a beacon for the end of Chinese policy of using Uyghurs to connect with Turkey. The activities of Isa Yusuf Alptekin, the opposition leader from East Turkestan (Xinjiang), in Turkey in the 1980s also caused problems between Turkey and China.⁷⁰ Xinjiang was already reconsidering its minority policies in the 1990s following the Tiananmen incident in 1989 and the independence of the Central Asian republics after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. In this respect, bearing in mind that there were many high-level visits from China to Turkey in the 1980s, the absence of any Chinese visits even at the ministerial level between 1990-2000 shows the negative change in Beijing's perception towards Ankara.

Turkey recognised the PRC as the sole legal representative of China on 5 August 1971, and pursued a "One China" policy.⁷¹ In this new period, Turkey began to use the word Taiwan instead of "Republic of China" or "Nationalist China" as a sign of its acceptance of Taiwan as an integral part of China. Still, Turkey politically supported the reunification of China by way of peaceful negotiations. The Taiwanese continued its diplomatic mission to Ankara and bilateral relations have continued only in terms of economic, trade, and cultural

relations.⁷² During this period, Turkey pursued a policy that ignored Taiwan completely.

Turkey's Economic- Oriented Asian Policy (1991-2001)

The year 1991 produced great changes both in the international system and in the balance of power in Asia. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, independent Turkic republics emerged in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Ankara's new political, economic and cultural relations with the Central Asian states facilitated Turkey's expansion towards East Asia.

In the 1990s, the improved economic capacities of East Asian countries increased Turkey's desire to cooperate with the major economies, especially China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Problematic discourses in Turkish-EU relations in the 1990s also forced Ankara to take balancing steps.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the sudden emergence of five independent Turkic states enormously increased interest in Central Asia among Turkish society. Turkey showed great interest in the newly independent states, and it had the hope of overcoming its loneliness in the international arena. However, this interest was perceived by the outside world as a pan-Turkish

policy and particularly disturbed Russia and China.

However, it could not be argued that Turkey's strategy of expansion into Asia in the 1990s was very successful. Firstly, Turkey was ruled by politically weak coalition governments between 1991-2001, and this prevented the effective implementation of foreign policy strategies. Secondly, alongside the political instability, the Turkish economy experienced a serious weakness because of financial crises in 1994 and in 2001 and the great damage caused by the Marmara earthquake in 1999. In this period, Turkey could continue strong economic relations only with Japan and South Korea.

At the beginning of the 1990s, a new basis for cooperation between Ankara and Tokyo became possible with the dissolution of the Eastern bloc, and especially the Soviet Union. It was also desirable for Washington that the power gap in the region be filled by Japan and Turkey instead of Russia and China. Japan would rather contribute economically, through development aid, capital and technology, and Turkey would present the model of a democratic and secular country to the Muslim people of the region by using the advantage of its historical and cultural ties.⁷³ During this process, Japan entered the Central Asian market with a low political profile

and became involved with a few large projects. Japan was keen not to come into conflict with Russia and China in its expansion in the region. Turkey's project of being a model to Central Asia was a failure.⁷⁴

Despite the cyclical opportunities, Turkish-Japanese relations stagnated in the 1990s. It was observed that Turkey aimed to attract financial support and investment from Japan during the 1990s. However, Japanese investors and the banks were reluctant because of the Turkey's political and economic instability.⁷⁵ In addition, a long-lasting recession in the Japanese economy since 1991 reduced the attention of Tokyo towards Ankara.

Despite the visit of Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel in December 1992⁷⁶ and of Prime Minister Tansu Çiller in February 1995,⁷⁷ there were no visits from Japan to Turkey at the prime ministerial level in the 1990s. In the second half of the 1990s, high-level political relations were kept at the level of foreign ministers. Foreign ministers Yukihiko Ikeda in May 1996⁷⁸ and Masahiko Komura in August 1999 visited Turkey, and Ismail Cem visited Japan in April 2000.⁷⁹

In the first half of the 1990s, Sino-Turkish relations also seriously stagnated. Although there were many high level visits from China during the 1980s, Chinese concerns about Ankara's

Xinjiang policy was decisive in stopping these visits in the 1990s.

During this period, officials from various levels met with the Uyghur opposition leaders in Turkey. In November 1991, one week before he became prime minister, Süleyman Demirel,⁸⁰ as well as Turgut Özal in February 1992,⁸¹ met with the Eastern Turkestani opposition leader İsa Yusuf Alptekin. In August 1995 the Ambassador of China to Turkey Wu Koming protested when Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan named a park after İsa Yusuf Alptekin.⁸²

In the 1990s, energy-dependent China, Japan and South Korea became Turkey's competitors in the transportation of Caspian energy resources. China especially developed projects to connect with Caspian oil and natural gas directly through the eastern corridor instead of the western corridor, in which Turkey was also included.⁸³

Turkey revised its Central Asia policy in the mid-1990s and developed a strategy of cooperating with Russia and China in the region. President Süleyman Demirel went on an Asian tour in May 1995, including China, Hong Kong and Indonesia. In China, President Demirel tried to gain Chinese support on the Turkish stance on the Cyprus, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Nagorno-Karabakh issues as well as to increase economic

cooperation.⁸⁴ In September 1996, State Minister Ayfer Yılmaz also went to China to increase economic cooperation.⁸⁵

Military cooperation with China gained a new momentum with the visit of Chief of General Staff Geneneral İsmail Hakkı Karadayı to China in October 1996.⁸⁶ The most important step in military cooperation was the agreement to start producing a common missile in December 1996. According to this agreement, Turkey would produce short-range ground-to-ground missiles in partnership with China.⁸⁷

Defence Minister Turhan Tayan criticised the violent suppression of protests in the Xinjiang city of Yining (Gulja) in February 1997. Beijing responded by warning Turkey not to get involved in China's internal affairs.⁸⁸ This statement did not disrupt the overall progress in bilateral relations. China's Ambassador to Turkey Koming made a statement in February 1997 that Sino-Turkish relations were going very well.⁸⁹

Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit visited China in May 1998 and met with President Jiang Zemin. Though economic issues were dominated the agenda, Ecevit was reminded on the demonstrations in Turkey in support the Uyghurs and the Chinese emphasised the importance of China's territorial integrity.⁹⁰

In February 1999, Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz issued a secret circular about Xinjiang, which created a serious problem between Turkey and China. In the circular, it was pointed out that the region should be considered within the framework of the China's territorial integrity and ordered strictly that government officers should not attend any activity of East Turkestani NGOs.⁹¹ In February 2000, Minister for Internal Affairs Sadettin Tantan paid a visit to China and signed the "Agreement on Cooperation in Combating Crime" with Chinese Public Security Minister Jia Chunwang.⁹² Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to Turkey in April 2000 resulted in a new axis in Ankara-Beijing relations. During the visit, agreements on economy, energy and political issues were signed.⁹³

Beginning in the early 1990s, Turkey began to take initiatives to increase its trade cooperation with Taiwan, which had already developed into an important economy. In June 1992, Minister of Public Works and Settlement Onur Kumbaracıbaşı conducted the first unofficial visit to Taiwan for many years. Right after this visit, Minister of Foreign Economic Relations in Taiwan Chang Hsio-Yen meet Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel in Turkey.⁹⁴ During this visit, Demirel stated that it was still possible to develop economic cooperation with Taiwan without recognising it as

an independent state. Indeed, economic relations between Turkey and Taiwan witnessed considerable expansion during the 1990s.

Relations between Ankara and Seoul stabilised in the 1990s. High-level contacts between the two countries and the bilateral trade volume regularly increased. During this period, Korean firms also increased investments in Turkey. Prime Minister Yildirim Akbulut paid a visit to South Korea in May 1991.⁹⁵ Two months later, in July 1991, Prime Minister Kang Young Hoon visited Turkey.⁹⁶ During the visit of Prime Minister Lee Soo Sung to Turkey in May 1996, it was decided that the Hyundai Company would produce automobiles in Turkey.⁹⁷ Foreign Minister Hong Soon-Yong also came to Turkey to attend the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul. During this period, Turkey and South Korea had increasingly improved cooperation in the defence industry. In 2001, an agreement for about US \$1 billion on fire-control systems was signed between the Turkish Land Forces Command and the Korean Samsung Company.⁹⁸

The 1990s were a very painful period of great change and transformation for North Korea. Those years saw the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, its biggest ally, and as its other major ally, the PRC, made a rapid shift towards the capitalist world

and the established good relations with the Western world. Above all, the death of North Korea's founder Kim Il-Sung in 1994, and the deterioration of the overall economy, brought North Korea to face major challenges to its continued existence.

However in the second half of the 1990s, North Korea dealt largely with its huge political, economic and military problems and proved that it would not leave the stage of history so easily. Thus, many states, particularly East Asian countries, felt the need to establish a long-term relationship with North Korea.

For the first time since 1950, Turkey's Asian policy became multi-dimensional and strong partnerships started to emerge after 2002.

North Korea's first official visit to Turkey took place in 1993. The delegation of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea had official contacts in Turkey in December 1993 and proposed to develop bilateral relations in all areas, including the establishment of diplomatic relations.⁹⁹ Turkey entered into the process of normalising relations with North Korea in June 2000, after the historic Pyongyang summit between

North Korean President Kim Jong-il and South Korean President Kim Dae-Sung. In 2001, Turkey established diplomatic relations with North Korea.¹⁰⁰

Turkey's Sophisticated Relations with East Asia After 2002

For the first time since 1950, Turkey's Asian policy became multi-dimensional and strong partnerships started to emerge after 2002. A rapid recovery from the 2001 financial crisis, the rapid growth of the Turkish economy and its foreign

trade volume were important for this development. In this process, Turkey has aimed to transform itself from a security-oriented state to a trading state. The G-20, founded in 1999 and includes the world's largest economies, has also made it easier for Turkey to have a say in global economic policies. In this sense, Turkey wanted to develop a new policy in the Asia-Pacific, centred on Japan, China, South Korea, India, Indonesia and Australia, within the framework of the G-20 platform.¹⁰¹ The trade figures of Turkey with the countries in the region in 2000s show clear differences compared to the previous period (See Table 1).

Table 1: Turkey's Trade with East Asian Countries

Countries	Exports (Million US \$)			Imports (Million US \$)			Total (Million US \$)		
	1990	2000	2012	1990	2000	2012	1990	2000	2012
Japan	239	149	332	1,120	1,621	3,601	1,359	1,770	3,933
China	37	96	2,833	246	1,345	21,295	283	1,441	24,128
S. Korea	109	130	528	302	1,181	5,660	411	1,311	6,188
Taiwan	110	69	120	192	563	2,059	302	632	2,179
N. Korea	26	2	0	1	9	3	27	11	3
Hong Kong	35	114	337	77	152	112	112	266	449
Macau	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	4	0
Total	556	562	4,150	1,938	4,873	32,730	2,920	4,835	36,880

Source: The Ministry of Economy of Turkey

Turkey's total trade with the countries in the region totalled US \$2.9 billion in 1990. The total trade increased to US \$4.8 billion in 2000 and to US \$36.9 billion in 2012. These figures clearly show the increase in the importance of Turkey in the region. In the 2000s, China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have become important trading partners with Turkey. While Japan was Turkey's largest trading partner in the region in the 1990s, starting in 2001, China became the largest, with South Korea second. Moreover, it should be stressed that Turkey's trade with China was US \$283 million in 1990, increased to US \$1.4 billion in 2000 and finally to US \$24.1 billion in 2012. Taiwan and Hong Kong were highlighted as important trade partners for Turkey, though North Korea and Macau, the Special Administrative Region of China, did not have economic importance to Ankara. However, the figures in this table also highlight the weaknesses of Turkey. From the beginning, Turkey has had large trade deficits in favour of East Asian countries. Looking at the figures for 2012, Turkey exported US \$4.2 billion in the region, compared to US \$32.7 billion in imports, and thus it had a US \$28.5 billion trade deficit.

In the 2000s, Tokyo ceased to be Turkey's most important trading partner in East Asia, despite intense high-level contacts. Foreign Minister Makiko

Tanaka visited Turkey in January 2002 and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül had official meetings in Japan in December 2003. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Japan in April 2004 with a large delegation led to a revival of bilateral relations. In the post-1990 period, the first visit at the prime ministerial level was by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in January 2006. President Abdullah Gül also visited Japan with a large delegation of businessmen in June 2008.¹⁰²

Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu and Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada issued a joint declaration on 3 January 2010 at the start of "Year of Japan in Turkey" in 2010. In the declaration, it was stated that the tragic sinking of the frigate *Ertuğrul* in the Pacific Ocean, sent to Japan on a friendship mission by the Ottoman Empire, started relations between Japan and Turkey and became the symbol of Turkish-Japanese friendship.¹⁰³ A "Turkish-Japanese Friendship Celebration Ceremony" was held in Istanbul in May 2010 under the auspices of President Gül and Prince Tomohito Mikasa.¹⁰⁴

Japan has continued its policy of understanding the sensitivities of Turkey's foreign policy in recent years. The Ambassador of Japan to Turkey, Nobuaki Tanaka, supported the Turkish claim on the Israeli attack on the Gaza-

bound aid ship in May 2010, which led to the deaths of nine Turkish citizens and attracted a strong reaction in Turkey.¹⁰⁵

One of the most important reasons for Turkey's rapprochement with China was for Turkish businessmen to benefit from China's economic opportunities.

An important partnership was also realised on investment in nuclear energy, which has been on the state and public agenda for a long time. Turkey signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with Japan in December 2010, following another agreement it had already signed with Russia.¹⁰⁶ However, in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster in March 2011, Japan stopped the project in Sinop in August 2011 because of the accident at the nuclear power plant in Fukushima.¹⁰⁷

In the 2000s, Sino-Turkish relations began to enjoy their most brilliant period in its history. Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan in January 2001 and Prime Minister Zhu Rongjin visited Turkey in April 2002 and ensured the survival of high-level political relations through their visits.¹⁰⁸ The leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, visited

China in January 2003 and held talks on enhancing bilateral cooperation.¹⁰⁹

Alongside the visit of Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Şahin to China in April 2007,¹¹⁰ the state minister responsible for foreign trade, Kürşat Tüzmen, conducted three official visits to China in 2006, 2007 and 2008. During these visits, the priority of the Turkish delegation was on the increasing bilateral trade deficit in favour of China and on how Turkish businessmen could more efficiently enter the Chinese market.¹¹¹

In 2009, it was seen that Turkey's relations with China had not improved as much as Turkey expected. One of the most important reasons for Turkey's rapprochement with China was for Turkish businessmen to benefit from China's economic opportunities. In recent times, however, Turkey has had a large trade deficit with China. Ankara's defence cooperation with Beijing also failed to provide the expected benefits. At this point, Turkey's expectation was to diminish the dependency on Western arms through Turkish-Chinese military cooperation, including technology transfers.¹¹²

China pursued opposite policies to Turkey in the international arena, including on the Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus and Nagorno-Karabakh issues. Immediately after the beginning of the American invasion in 2003, the Chinese administration established a

close relationship with the Kurdistan regional government, with which Ankara had problems.¹¹³ In June 2007, Beijing clearly stated that it was against the military action of the Turkish armed forces in preventing PKK activities in northern Iraq.¹¹⁴ China was again against Turkish membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as an observer member while Russia was in favour.¹¹⁵ In June 2012, this matter was solved through Turkey being made a Dialogue Partner in the SCO.¹¹⁶

President Gül's visit to China in June 2009 was a good opportunity for discussing all aspects of bilateral relations. Regarding the economic sphere, Ankara requested compensation for the foreign trade deficit through more Chinese investment in Turkey, the promotion of Turkey to Chinese tourists, and Turkish-Chinese partnerships in third countries. In the political field, the priority of the Turkish delegation's agenda was on increasing cooperation as much as possible on regional and international issues. At this point, the emphasis that the Uyghurs should be a bridge of friendship was stressed at the highest level during President Gül's visits in both Beijing and Urumqi.¹¹⁷ The visit of a Turkish president to the Xinjiang region for the first time also had a great symbolic value.¹¹⁸

However, the outbreak of the incidents in Urumqi on 5 July 2009 damaged Turkish-Chinese relations. Turkey's ruling and opposition parties held the Chinese government responsible for the incidents in Urumqi, and they condemned the Chinese security forces for bloodily suppressing the incidents.¹¹⁹

China reacted to the Turkish responses to the Urumqi incidents calmly and refrained from statements that would increase tension. Considering this positive attitude in Beijing, Ankara intensified its contacts with China again. Turkey's main concern at this point was not to be alone in not having relations with China because of the Urumqi incidents, as no country in the world wanted to spoil its relations with China.¹²⁰ Turkey's Ambassador to China, Murat Esenli, stressed that Turkey would not interfere in the internal affairs of China and stated the Turkish desire to develop bilateral relations. Additionally, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu called his counterpart Yang Jiechi and discussed the issue of normalisation of relations, which were strained by Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement that the Urumqi incidents were "Almost genocide. If necessary, we'll take it to the UN Security Council."¹²¹

State Minister Zafer Çağlayan went to China to attend the Turkey-China Joint Economic Council meeting in September

2009, and he met with Chinese Commerce Minister Chen Deming to discuss the bilateral commercial relations. In a meeting with Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan, Çağlayan stressed that the Turkish government would always follow the “One China” policy and would not intervene in the internal affairs of China.¹²²

In addition to the Xinjiang visits of President Gül and Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu in previous years, Prime Minister Erdoğan began his Chinese tour in Urumqi in April 2012.

Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu during his visit to Istanbul to attend the conference on Afghanistan in January 2010. The two ministers agreed on a common strategic cooperation agreement on issues such as Afghanistan, the Middle East, Iraq, the global economic crisis and climate change, as well as giving their consent for more extensive work on economic issues.¹²³

Culture and Tourism Minister Ertuğrul Günay and Vice Minister of Culture of China Li Hong Feng attended the Shanghai Expo 2010 on 15 June 2010. During the meeting, an

agreement was signed making 2012 “the Year of China” in Turkey and 2013 “the Year of Turkey” in China.¹²⁴ A request for Chinese warplanes’ participation in the Turkish Air Force’s annual Anatolian Eagle exercise in September 2010 in Konya was denied by the Chinese Air Forces themselves.¹²⁵

Prime Minister Wen Jiabao came to Turkey in September 2010 and signed agreements which would upgrade bilateral relations to the “strategic partnership” level. It was agreed that Turkey and China would cooperate on energy, particularly in the field of nuclear energy, and that bilateral trade would be made in the Chinese yuan and the Turkish lira. The goal was to increase the annual foreign trade volume from US \$17 billion to US \$50 billion in five years, and to US \$100 billion within 10 years.¹²⁶ A “Silk railway” construction, consisting of high-speed train lines between Edirne and Kars, which would be constructed by a Turkish-Chinese joint venture, was also agreed.¹²⁷ Uyghur dissidents protested when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao made his visit to Istanbul. At the protest, Vice President of World Uyghur Congress Seyit Tümtürk made a statement claiming that Prime Minister Wen was responsible for the events of 5 July.¹²⁸

During the visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu to China between

28 October and 2 November 2010, the objectives set out by the two prime ministers in September 2010 were followed up. Davutoğlu visited the Xinjiang's cities of Urumqi and Kashgar, as well as Beijing, Shanghai and Xian, which was interpreted as a gesture from the Chinese side.¹²⁹

Turkey is acting with NATO-allied countries to prevent an increase in global tension, though China has been coming out against Western policies together with Russia.

Vice President of China Xi Jinping's visit to Turkey in February 2012 and Prime Minister Erdoğan's China visit in April 2012 clearly showed a historical turning point in bilateral relations. Those visits were the last of the top-level meetings between the two countries and could be interpreted as a sign of great developments in the Turkish-Chinese relations.¹³⁰

Beijing also made a gesture by letting the Turkish leaders visit cities in Xinjiang. In addition to the Xinjiang visits of President Gül and Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu in previous years, Prime Minister Erdoğan began his Chinese tour in Urumqi in April 2012. Allowing Hainan Airlines to start Urumqi-Istanbul direct flights in 2011

was a considerable development for an easier opening of Xinjiang to Turkey.

In the last few years, some differences of opinion between Ankara and Beijing on global issues have started to appear. Evaluating the "Arab Spring" that had occurred in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria as the internal affairs of those countries, though with destabilising effects, China preferred to support the incumbent Arab regimes. Conversely, Turkey advocated non-violence and soft power as well as supporting the democratic demands of the societies.

As recent events have indicated, Turkey is acting with NATO-allied countries to prevent an increase in global tension, though China has been coming out against Western policies together with Russia. It is possible that Turkey and China would develop completely opposite policies under these conditions, which may prevent them establishing any strategic cooperation. The most obvious economic problem between Turkey and China appears to be the trade deficit. With the membership of China in the World Trade Organisation, the deficit in the bilateral trade is getting worse against Turkey's favour.

Throughout the 2000s, Ankara has searched for ways to develop its trade relations with Taipei. Similarly, Taiwan has sought opportunities to increase its cooperation with Turkey. However, without the PRC's consent, it has been

difficult for both countries to increase their economic relations. Thus, in last decade, Turkey has tried to find ways to further economic cooperation with Taiwan without evoking any reaction from the PRC.

As a result of the rise in bilateral trade, the Turkish-Taiwanese Business Council, which was first established in 1993, came into action again in 2005 after the reorganisation of the Turkish Executive Committee.

For example, in 2010, the expected ratification of an agreement for direct flights from Istanbul to Taipei received a negative reaction from Beijing, and China protested the draft of the agreement with a diplomatic note.¹³¹ Two deputies from the ruling AK Party visited Taiwan in March 2010, which also bothered China, and Chinese Embassy officials in Ankara visited China-Turkey Parliamentary Friendship Group Chairman İhsan Arslan and stated their dissatisfaction.¹³²

As a result of the rise in bilateral trade, the Turkish-Taiwanese Business Council, which was first established in 1993, came into action again in 2005 after the reorganisation of the Turkish Executive Committee. Redirecting Taiwanese capital towards investing in Turkey became the main function of the council.¹³³

For further development of cooperation between the two countries, Taiwanese Vice Minister of Economy Sheng-Chung Lin visited Turkey in April 2011.¹³⁴ At this point, it can be noted that economic relations between Taiwan and Turkey may advance further if Chinese objections can be overcome. Even though taking steps in these matters would not mean that the “One China” policy is being ignored, Beijing has been warning Ankara to not exaggerate its relations with Taiwan. However, Hong Kong is a legal part of China with an autonomous political administration, and it has its own flag and currency. Therefore, Turkey should consider Taiwan just like Hong Kong in order to develop trade and economic relations.

In the 2000s, relations between Turkey and South Korea have developed further. The main agenda item on the visit, paid by Prime Minister Erdoğan to South Korea in February 2004, was to prepare the ground for Korean companies to invest in Turkey.¹³⁵ Then Minister of Foreign Affairs Ban Ki-moon’s visit to Turkey in April 2004 aimed to follow up the objectives set out previously.¹³⁶ President Roh Moo-Hyun’s visit to Turkey in April 2005 had also great importance for the development of bilateral relations. This visit was also the first visit from South Korea to Turkey at the presidential level.¹³⁷

The visit of President Gül to South Korea in June 2010 had two main

objectives. The timing of the visit, on the 60th anniversary of the Korean War, emphasised the friendship between the two countries.¹³⁸ The second major item on the agenda of the visit was for negotiations with the South Korean state-owned company KEPCO to build a nuclear power plant in Sinop.¹³⁹

Considering the current political and economic situation in Pyongyang, it would not be realistic to expect Turkish-North Korean relations to develop much further.

Prime Minister Erdoğan held a summit with President Lee Myung-Bak when he visited South Korea to attend the G-20 Summit in November 2010. Minister of Energy Taner Yıldız also attended to the meeting, though an agreement on the construction of the nuclear power plant in Sinop could not be reached.¹⁴⁰

The second visit from South Korea to Turkey at the presidential level was conducted by Lee Myung-bak in February 2012.¹⁴¹ During the visit a further deepening of the partnership between Turkey and South Korea was agreed, and there was an agreement made to restart the negotiations on the Sinop nuclear power plant.

In the 2000s, there has been little progress in Turkish-North Korean

relations. In November 2004, a Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement was signed between Turkey and North Korea in Ankara.¹⁴² Despite this agreement, the expected development in bilateral relations has not happened. In the 2000s, Ankara has continued its Seoul-based North Korean policy.¹⁴³ Turkey took the side of South Korea in two cases that occurred in 2010 between North and South Korea. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned North Korea's artillery fire on the island of Yeongpyeong on 23 November 2010, and when North Korea sunk a warship, which led to the deaths of 46 South Korean sailors, on 26 March 2010.¹⁴⁴ While Turkey was on the UN Security Council, it was the chair of the "UNSC Sanctions Committee on North Korea" in 2009 and 2010.¹⁴⁵

Considering the current political and economic situation in Pyongyang, it would not be realistic to expect Turkish-North Korean relations to develop much further. The most positive development in this process would be to open mutually diplomatic representations in the capitals of Turkey and North Korea.

Conclusion

From 1945 until today, Turkey's relations with East Asia can be divided into four periods. In the first period covering 1945-1970, Ankara was influenced by security policies within

the East-West balance and took an active stance in favour of South Korea by sending troops to the Korean War. Ankara also continued to recognise the ROC government in Taiwan instead of the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China.

The normalisation of Sino-American relations and Beijing's gaining of China's seat in the UN in 1971 changed the balance of power in Asia considerably. Ankara also recognised the PRC as the legitimate representative of China and began to pursue an economic-based policy in East Asia. The 1980s also witnessed Turkey's Asian expansion to Japan, China and South Korea. Improved political and economic ties with these countries prepared the background for eventually more intensive relations.

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 created an opportunity for Ankara to expand towards East Asia through Central Asia. In the 1990s, Ankara had a close interest in the largest economies in Asia but it could not properly develop relations with Asian countries because of political instability and economic crises.

In the 2000s, domestic political stability and regular economic growth increased Turkey's capacity in the international arena. This increase in capacity allowed Turkey's relations with East Asian countries to considerably improve.

Among the countries that Turkey has enjoyed strong political and economic relations in East Asia have been Japan, the PRC and South Korea. Thus, based on current conditions, relations between Ankara, Tokyo and Seoul will continue to develop. In terms of Turkey's relations with China, Xinjiang and Taiwan might cause political issues. Ankara and Beijing have developed a policy that takes into account the sensitivity of each other on the issues especially related to Xinjiang. Consequently, Turkey and China have enjoyed the opportunity to become closely acquainted with each other in recent years. If both countries could develop a proper policy to overcome the existing problems, it might be possible to achieve a "strategic partnership" in Turkish-Chinese relations.

Turkey has only continued its relation with Taiwan at the economic level since 1971. However, the intensity of the Turkish-Taiwanese economic cooperation continues to be an issue in the Ankara-Beijing-Taipei triangle. Turkey's relations with North Korea are almost negligible. Considering South Korea as an ally, Turkey gives full support to Seoul claims and Ankara-Pyongyang relations will only develop as long as Seoul-Pyongyang relations also improve. However, it is not realistic to expect a considerable improvement in Ankara-Pyongyang relations given North Korea's current economic situation.

Endnotes

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