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**TURKEY IN ASIA:
THE SCOPE OF ANKARA'S OPENING TO EAST ASIA**

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Ankara has initiated an opening initiative to distant neighborhood to the Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America as well as East Asia since the early 2000s.¹ Turkey opened new embassies and representatives of state-endorsed institutions like TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency), Yunus Emre Institute, Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs), YTB (Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities), Maarif Foundation, AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Authority), and Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent). With the help of increasing Turkey's GDP and foreign trade, Turkish public & private institutions, companies, and humanitarian aid organizations have become more visible in Asia.

Ankara also proposed a new foreign policy approach on August 5, 2019 at the 11th Ambassadors' Meeting of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA): the Asia Anew initiative.² The new initiative aims to improve ties with Asian countries in different regions that would include cooperation in education, the defense industry, investments, trade, technology, culture, and political dialogue. While the initiative was welcomed by many, it also created a wave of surprise, merely due to Turkey's traditional stance that almost always faces towards the Western world. Turkey's new initiative consists of four main pillars: 1) improvement of interstate relations, 2) expanding the trade capacity of the private sector, 3) improvement of academic cooperation and 4) development of interaction between the societies.³ However, Ankara did not share further details showing how Turkey implements this initiative. This article aims to analyze Turkey's opening to East Asia in the 2000s in terms of political, economic, and institutional aspects.

Turkey's Increasing Institutional & Diplomatic Capacity in Global Scale

Turkey has an increasing role in the participation to international & regional organizations and diplomatic representations across the world. With a total of 246 diplomatic and consular missions, Turkey has spawned the fifth largest global diplomatic network.⁴ Turkey is an active member of United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and the Turkic Council.

Turkey has already a systematic engagement policy with Asian institutions for last two decades. Turkey became a Dialogue Partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2013.⁵ Turkey first acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia on 23 July 2010 in Hanoi, and then achieved the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) by the 50th Foreign Ministers' Meeting in August 2017 in Manila.⁶ Ankara has also paid attention to China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI)

¹ Selçuk Çolakoglu, "Turkey's East Asian Policy from Security Concerns to Trade Partnership", *Perceptions*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Winter 2012.

² "11th Ambassadors Conference, 5 August 2019", Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/onbirinci-buyukelciler-konferansi.en.mfa>

³ "Asia Anew: Initiative to shape future of Turkish diplomacy", *Daily Sabah*, August 11, 2019.

⁴ "Turkey's Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy", Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa>

⁵ Dmitry Solovyov, "Turkey becomes partner of China, Russia-led security bloc", *Reuters*, April 26, 2013.

⁶ ASEAN, "ASEAN, Turkey launch sectoral dialogue partnership for stronger cooperation", May 31, 2018. <https://asean.org/asean-turkey-launch-sectoral-dialogue-partnership-stronger-cooperation/>

since 2013.⁷ Turkey is a member of the G20 since the foundation of the grouping in 1999.⁸ Turkish leaders, ministers, and bureaucrats have a chance to meet regularly with leading Asia-Pacific countries counterparts from China, Japan, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and Australia within the framework of the G20. Moreover, Turkey together with South Korea, Indonesia, Australia, and Mexico formed another grouping within the G20 in 2013 under the name of MIKTA consisted by Asia-Pacific or Indo-Pacific countries.⁹

Turkey has a considerable cultural influence in Asia due to the dense Muslim population and the historical links that tracing back to the Ottoman Empire in East Asian countries. There are intense relations with the Muslim-majority nations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Maldives under the roof of the OIC. Again, the D-8 group, which consists of eight large Muslim-majority countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and Nigeria) and was founded in 1997 under the leadership of Turkey, serves to improve relations with East Asian countries Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Turkey is also taking steps to provide contributions to peace and stability of Southeast Asian countries. Turkey, just like Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Britain, is a member of the International Contact Group that is conducting peace negotiations between the Philippines government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).¹⁰ Again, during the period as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in the years 2009 and 2010, Turkey had taken initiatives in solving the problems of East Timor, which gained its independence from Indonesia.

Hosting of the UN Conferences on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by Turkey has provided a leverage to increase its ties with its least contacted Asia-Pacific countries. The First UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-I) took place in Istanbul, in July 2007. The Fourth LDC Conference also took place in Istanbul in May 2011.¹¹ Finally, the “World Humanitarian Summit” was held in Istanbul in May 2016. Turkish officials had many chances to keep regular contacts with their counterparts from Nepal, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, East Timor, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Samoa, and Solomon Islands before, during and after these forums.

Ankara initiated the Turkey-Pacific Islands Ministers of Foreign Affairs Meetings in 2008 and 2014 in Istanbul, with participation of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.¹² The main purpose of Ankara to organize these meetings was to get support from the Pacific islands states for its candidacy to the UN Security Council non-permanent membership.

Turkey has already remarkably improved its interstate relations by opening new embassies in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos since 2010. In return, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Brunei, and Cambodia opened their embassies in Ankara after 2012. There are only

⁷ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, “China’s Belt and Road Initiative and Turkey’s Middle Corridor: A Question of Compatibility”, Middle East Institute, January 29, 2019.

⁸ Selçuk Çolakoğlu and Mehmet Hecan, “Turkey in Global Governance: An Evaluation of Turkey’s G20 Presidency and the Antalya Summit 2015”, Global Summitry, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp.143-160.

⁹ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, “Has MIKTA augmented the global governance role of middle powers?”, The Global, May 29, 2018.

¹⁰ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, “Can the Mindanao Peace Process end with a success story?”, The Journal of Turkish Weekly, July 2, 2014.

¹¹ “Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA)”, LDC Watch. <https://www.ldcwatch.org/index.php/about-ldcs/istanbul-programme-of-action>

¹² “Turkey - Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) Foreign Ministerial Meeting to be held in İstanbul”, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_pacific-small-island-developing-states-psids_foreign-ministerial-meeting-to-be-held-in-istanbul.en.mfa

North Korea, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu with no Turkish embassies in East Asia.¹³

As of 2020, TİKA has resident offices in Yangon (Myanmar), Manila (Philippines), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Islamabad, Karachi (Pakistan), Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif (Afghanistan), and Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) in East Asia.¹⁴ Yunus Emre Institute has cultural centers in Kabul (Afghanistan), Melbourne (Australia), Tokyo (Japan), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Seoul (South Korea), Karachi and Lahore (Pakistan) for teaching Turkish language & culture.¹⁵

However, Turkey has to face certain limitations and challenges for its institutional & diplomatic capacity. The large-scale purges of Turkish civil servants had a devastating effect on Turkey's institutional capacity since July 2016, in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt. More than 150,000 civil servants, including academics, teachers, medical doctors, judges, prosecutors, police and military officers, were dismissed without due process of law.¹⁶ This has caused more political appointees as ambassadors abroad. Only in the Asian continent, the Turkish ambassadors to China, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, Qatar, and Kuwait are political appointees.¹⁷

Increasing Economic and Trade Capacity of Turkey

A vibrant Turkish economy was the main pillar for its Asian opening for last two decades. The Turkish GDP and foreign trade had remarkably increased from 2000 to 2013, with the exceptions of the domestic-driven financial crisis in 2001 and the international financial crisis in 2009. Turkish foreign trade had tremendously increased from \$82.3 billion in 2000 to \$403.5 billion in 2013. The only big exception of this gradual and consistent increase was the year of global financial crisis, as the Turkish foreign trade dropped \$243 billion in 2009. There is a fluctuation for Turkey's foreign trade between \$403.5 billion and \$341 billion in last six years (see Figure 1).

¹³ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Portal, <http://cd.mfa.gov.tr/>

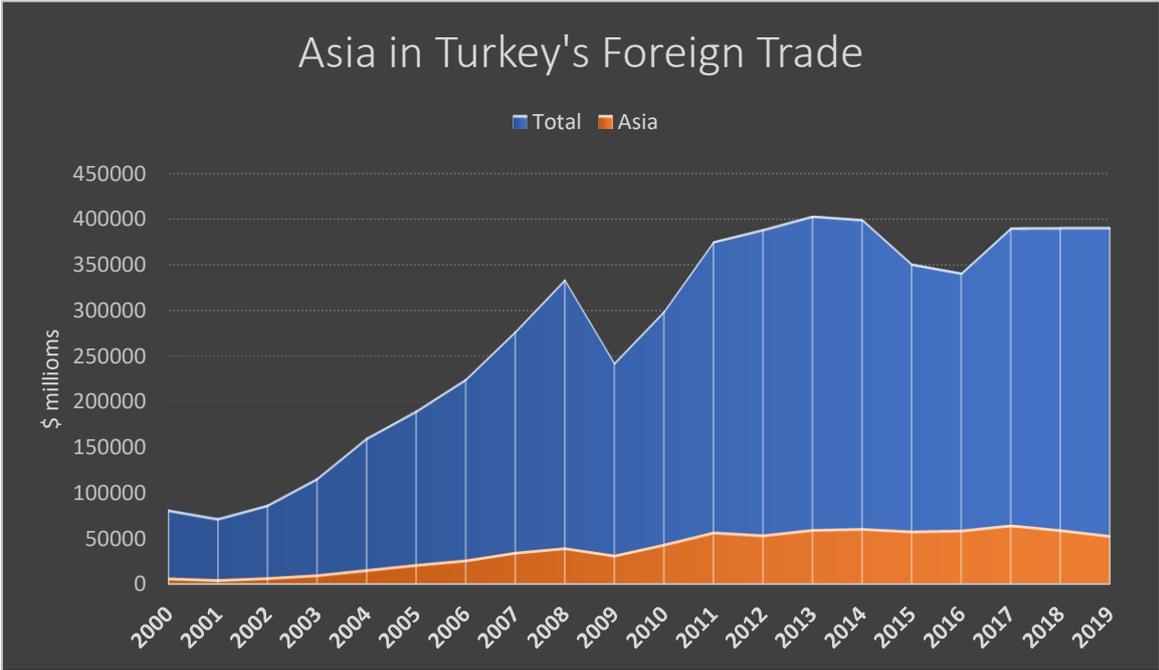
¹⁴ "Overseas Offices", TİKA. <https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/overseasoffices>

¹⁵ "Our Cultural Centers", Yunus Emre Insititute. <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/corporate/yunus-emre-institute>

¹⁶ "How the Turkish Purge Unfolded", The Wall Street Journal, December 30, 2016, Diego Cupolo "Dismissed civil servants continue fight to restore rights in Turkey", Al Monitor, February 24, 2020.

¹⁷ Emin Çölaşan, "Yeni model büyükelçiler! [New Type Ambassadors]", Sözcü, August 24, 2019; "A new phase in Turkey's crackdown: Torturing diplomats", Washington Examiner, June 3, 2019.

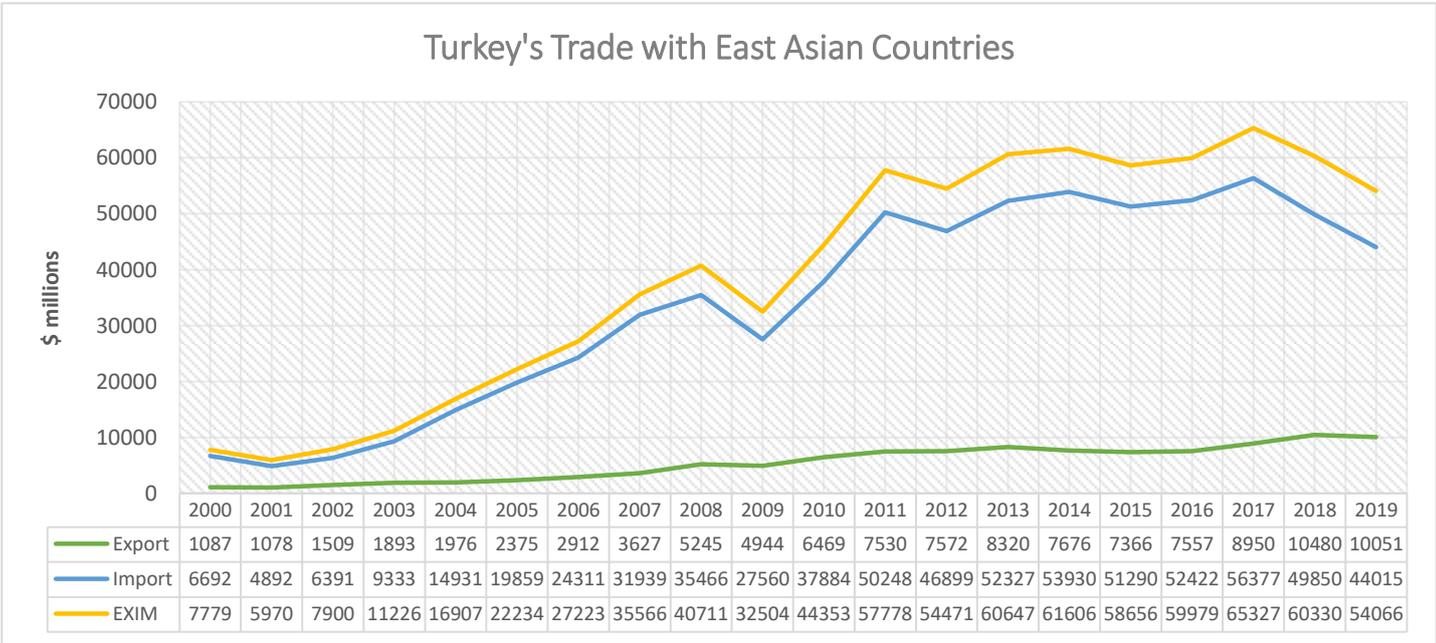
Figure 1: Turkey's Foreign Trade and the Asian Share



Source: Made by the Author with data from the Ministry of Trade

Turkey's trade with East Asian countries had tremendously increased from \$7.8 billion in 2000 to \$57.8 billion in 2011. Turkey's trade volume with East Asian countries from 2013 to 2019 has stagnated and made a fluctuation between \$58.7 billion and \$65.3 billion. The highest volume of trade with Asian countries was in 2017 with \$65.3 billion. Asian share in Turkey's total foreign trade did not change dramatically and there was mainly a parallel course between the two figures. Although the Asian share in total trade was increased in 2015 and 2016, then there was more balanced move between the two figures from 2017 to 2019 (see Figure 1). The other characteristic of Turkey's trade with Asia is a significant deficit. In 2017, Turkey's export to the regional countries was only \$9 billion, while Turkish import from East Asia was around \$56.4. The trade deficit of Turkey with East Asia relatively narrowed in 2019, as Turkey's export rose to \$10 billion and the import from the region declined to \$44 billion (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Turkey's Foreign Trade and the Asian Share

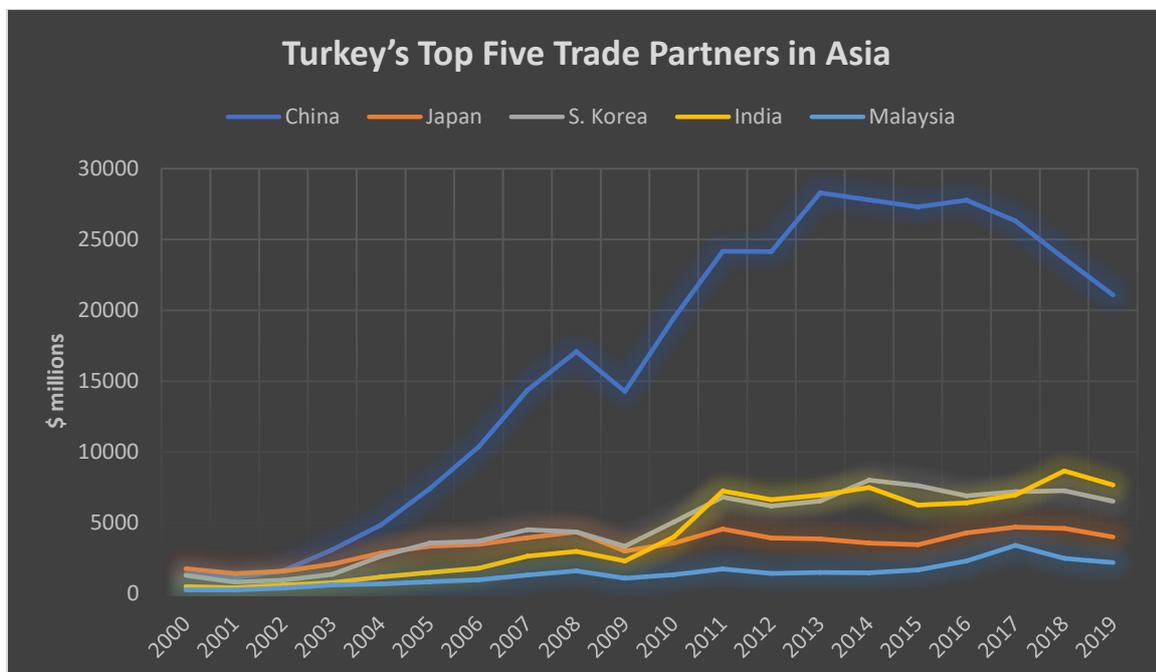


The East Asian Countries in the chart: China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar.

Source: Made by the Author with data from the Turkish Ministry of Trade

Turkey's top five Asian trade partners are China, Japan, South Korea, India, and Malaysia (see Figure 3). China has become a leading economic partner for Turkey not only in Asia but also in general since 2008 after Germany and Russia. Japan lost its position as the largest Asian trade partner for Turkey in the early 2000s. Then, China, South Korea, and India has surpassed Japan for their trade volumes with Turkey. After signing free trade agreement (FTA) with Turkey, Malaysia has become fifth largest trade partner in Asia-Pacific and surpassed Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, and Australia.

Figure 3: Turkey's Top Five Trade Partners in Asia



Source: Made by the Author with data from the Turkish Ministry of Trade

Turkey's Economic Relations with Northeast Asian Countries

Northeast Asian countries have been playing a major role in Turkey's economic relations across the continent. Northeast Asian countries do not only trade with Turkey, but also support the economic relations with their foreign direct investments (FDI). While Turkey's total trade volume with Northeast Asia was \$5.4 billion in 2000, it increased to \$16.2 billion in 2005, \$30.5 billion in 2010, and to \$41 billion in 2015. As of 2019, Turkey's total trade volume with the region decreased dramatically to \$34.1 billion (see Figure 4). The large trade deficit is the main problem of Turkey's relations with Northeast Asian countries since the mid-1990s. Turkey have only trade surplus with North Korea, Mongolia, and China's Hong Kong and Macau special administrative regions with smaller volumes. Turkey has tried to develop a balancing strategy in economic relations particularly with China, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan.

Figure 4: Turkey's trade with Northeast Asian countries since 2000 (\$ millions)

Countries / Years	2000 \$ millions	2005 \$ millions	2010 \$ millions	2015 \$ millions	2019 \$ millions
China	1441	7435	19450	27290	21084
Japan	1771	3343	3570	3475	4010
South Korea	1311	3585	5068	7626	6535
North Korea	12	4	6	20	0
Taiwan	632	1608	1980	2102	1524
Hong Kong	266	235	366	426	928
Macau	4	4	1	9	17
Mongolia	3	4	12	24	39
Total	5440	16218	30453	40972	34137

Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

China: Turkey and China adopted the Joint Declaration on the Establishment and Development of the Strategic Relationship of Cooperation in September 2010. Ankara and Beijing agreed to cooperate in the field of energy, primarily the nuclear one, and to realize bilateral trade through Chinese Yuan and Turkish Lira. It was aimed to increase the annual foreign trade volume to \$50 billion by 2015 and to \$100 billion by 2020.¹⁸

The rise in importance of China for Turkey in economic sense took place to a certain degree in the 1990s, but especially in the 2000s. China had become Turkey's third largest trade partner with \$ 28.3 billion of trade volume by 2013 after Germany and Russia. However, the Sino-Turkish bilateral trade had been then stuck between \$28.3 billion and \$21 billion for the last six years. While the trade volume missed the \$50 billion target for 2015, there is no sign that the total trade volume could reach to \$100 billion envisaged for 2020. Moreover, the trade balance continues to be skewed sharply in China's favor. In 2013, Turkey's deficit in its trade with China constituted \$21 billion. In 2019, the value of Turkish imports from China was \$18.5 billion, Turkey's exports to China were a mere \$2.6 billion (See Figure 5).

¹⁸ Shehab Al-Makahleh, "How China built strategic alliances with Iran and Turkey", Al Arabiya, July 4, 2018.

Figure 5: Turkey's Trade with China (2011-2019)



Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

Ankara in the economic field has requested to balance trade by China's investment in Turkey, by the intensification of the Chinese tourists' visits to Turkey, and by Turkish-Chinese joint ventures in third countries. According to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, Chinese FDI in Turkey in 2016 was valued at \$642.3 million.¹⁹ The Turkish Ministry of Economy shared that there were 786 companies of Chinese origin registered in Turkey as of 2017. About 426,000 Chinese tourists visited Turkey in 2019 as the highest number.²⁰ China's ambassador to Ankara, Deng Li, said in March 2019 that Beijing wanted to double its investments in Turkey to \$6 billion and increase the number of Chinese tourists visiting the country to 800,000 by 2021.²¹ However, the unexpected novel coronavirus pandemic may result in a downward revision of those targets.

Additionally, Turkey and China have been developing a Silk Road cooperation since 2013. Turkey wants its Middle Corridor to integrate into China's BRI. China-led Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) is financing the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP) that pipes Azerbaijani gas through Georgia and Turkey into Europe.

Chinese smartphone giant ZTE bought 48.8% of Turkish Telekom in December 2016. In 2017, Turkish banking watchdog BDDK granted the operational rights in Turkey to the ICBC and the Bank of China.²² In December 2017, Turkey's state lender Ziraat Bank signed a \$600 million credit agreement with China Development Bank in an effort to attract Chinese investment for infrastructure projects.²³

¹⁹ George Marshall Lerner, "In Turkey, US Loss Is China's Gain", The Diplomat, January 31, 2017.

²⁰ "Havayollarının Çin seferleri durma noktasına geldi: Türkiye ne kadar Çinli turisti ağırlıyor? (How many Chinese tourist visited Turkey?)", Euronews, February 1, 2020.

²¹ Sinan Tavşan, "Turkey seeks Asian investment as Western ties fray", Nikkei Asian Review, June 23, 2019.

²² "Turkish regulator approves license for Bank of China to operate in Turkey", Hürriyet Daily News, December 1, 2017.

²³ "Turkey sees China as 'strategic partner'", Anadolu Agency, December 15, 2017.

Beijing has recently increased its investment in Turkey for the implementation of the BRI particularly for mining, energy, and transportation infrastructure. For this end, the Turkey Wealth Fund (TVF) headed by President Erdoğan with his son-in-law, Treasury & Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, as his deputy, inked a \$5 billion agreement in March 2020 with China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinasure) to promote bilateral trade and investment as part of the BRI.²⁴ Sinasure will provide financing, guaranteed loans and export insurance for Chinese investors. Meanwhile, Turkey has the world's largest reserves of boron and is the mineral's biggest exporter. China is the biggest importer. Eti Maden, the Turkish public company that produces boron, is controlled by the TVF.²⁵

Chinese banks and companies have recently been increasingly involved in transportation infrastructure projects. The operator of the new Istanbul Airport was in talks in February 2020 with Chinese banks to refinance €5.7 billion (\$6.2 billion) of existing loans. Around half of the new borrowing could come from Chinese banks led by the ICBC, while some banks on the original loans may also participate.²⁶

Five China-based highway companies (Anhui Expressway, China Merchants Expressway, Zhejiang Expressway, Jiangsu Expressway, and Sichuan Expressway) bought 51% majority shares of three investments in Istanbul (the Third Bosphorus Bridge, North Marmara Motorway, and Eurasia Highway) in December 2019.²⁷ The Erdoğan government approved in January 2020 a 45km-long Kanal Istanbul tender, running parallel to the Bosphorus strait between the Black Sea to the Marmara. Chinese companies are interested in a project to build a shipping canal in Istanbul.²⁸ If China decides to construct the \$25 billion Kanal, Istanbul in return will get privileges of operating some ports, airports, and highways, there will be a tremendous increase of Chinese economic influence over Turkey and the implementation of the BRI will become more concrete.

The Turkish Ministry of Transport & Infrastructure purchased 176 metro vehicles from China's CRRC Zhuzhou Locomotive for the Istanbul Airport metro line in April 2020. Delivery of all metro vehicles will be completed by the end of 2022 and a total of 1.6 billion Turkish lira will be paid for metro vehicles.²⁹ If Beijing and Ankara can eliminate remaining uncertainties & challenges to increase the connectivity of the BRI and the Middle Corridor, the Sino-Turkish Silk Road cooperation will enter to next stage.³⁰

There were also two big missed opportunities for the bilateral economic partnership in the last decade. One of the projects which could give a new impetus to the Turkey-China partnership was the Sinop nuclear power plant (NPP) tender. Korean, Chinese, and Japanese firms embarked on a fierce competition since 2009 over the nuclear power plant in Sinop with a price of about \$22 billion. Chinese CGNPC, which proposed the most suitable offer, was elevated to an advantageous position. While it was expected that Chinese CGNPC would take up the tender for the plant in Sinop, a surprise move came from Japan again. Japan's

²⁴ Maddy White, "Turkey inks US\$5bn BRI agreement with Sinasure", *Global Trade Review*, 31 March 2020.

²⁵ Zülfikar Doğan, "Sino-Turkish deal, coronavirus could open the way for Chinese takeovers", *Ahval*, April 8, 2020.

²⁶ Karakaya, Kerim, Ercan Ersoy, and Çağan Koç, "China's ICBC, Turkey's Largest Airport in Talks for Refinancing", *Bloomberg*, 10 February 2020.

²⁷ "Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge Sold to Chinese for 688 Million Dollars", *Railly News*, 29 December 2019.

²⁸ "Tender for Kanal Istanbul expected this year: Minister", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 4 February 2020.

²⁹ "Ministry of Transport bought 176 metro vehicles from China for Istanbul Airport: 1 billion 545 million 280 thousand TL will be paid", *MBC News*, 27 April 2020.

³⁰ Zan Tao, "Turkey Dream and the China-Turkish Cooperation under One Belt and One Road Initiative", *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2016, pp.63-65.

Mitsubishi which established a consortium with France's Areva won the tender in May 2013.³¹

Another big project was the tender of missile defense system worth \$ 3.5 billion. Turkey's Defense Industry Department gave priority to Chinese CPMIEC company in September 2013 over French-Italian consortium Eurosam and American RatheonCo. - Lockheed Martin Partnership in negotiations. Afterwards, Turkey under the pressure of the United States and NATO made a step back. At the 2014 NATO Wales Summit, Ankara stated that the negotiations with Chinese company had failed and the negotiations with Eurosam which was in the second place had started.³² In November 2015, just prior to President Xi Jinping's arrival to the G20 Antalya Leaders' Summit, Turkey cancelled negotiations over the Chinese missile defense bid.³³ The timing of the cancellation was humiliating for China and a personal embarrassment for President Xi.

Japan: During the Cold War, Japan was the largest trade and economic partner of Turkey in Asia and Japanese companies invested large infrastructure projects in Turkey. However, in the last two decades there was stagnation in the bilateral trade volume. Although the bilateral trade volume reached its highest level in 2017 with \$4.7 billion, Japan has still been Turkey's fourth largest trading partner in East Asia after China, India, and South Korea. The Turkish-Japanese trade dropped to \$4 billion in 2019. Japan has a huge surplus in its trade with Turkey. In 2017, while Turkey's imports were around \$4.3 billion, its exports to Japan remained at \$412 million only (see Figure 6).

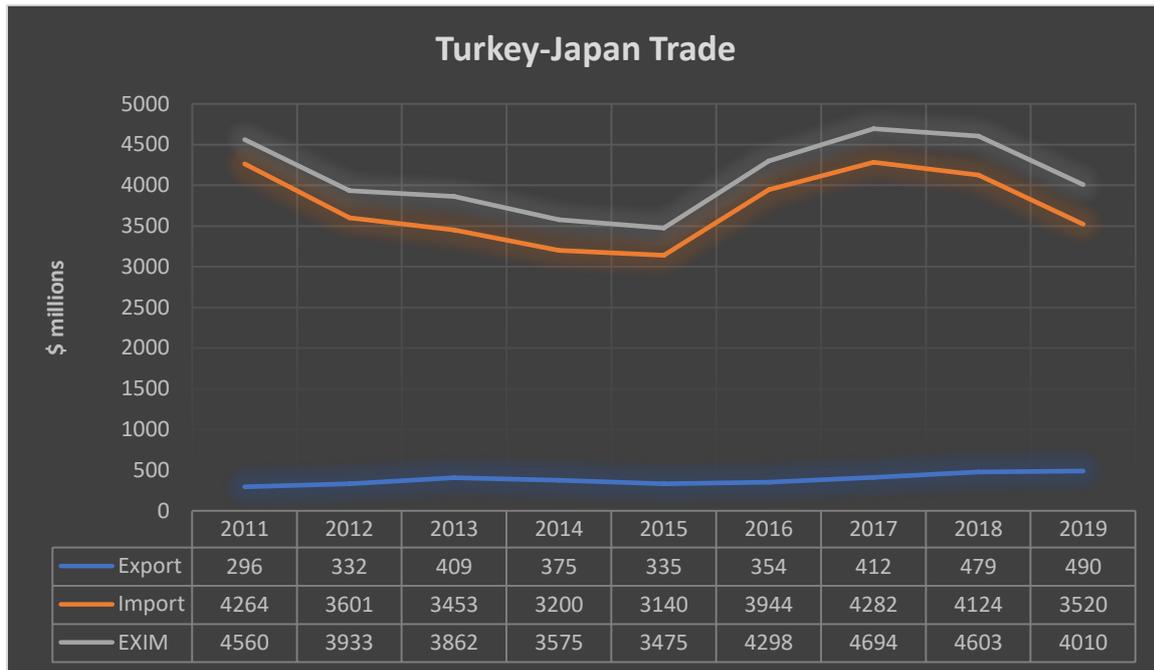
In order to further enhance bilateral trade relations, Turkish and Japanese sides have started negotiations to establish FTA in 2013. Ankara as a member of EU's Customs Union, by starting FTA negotiations with Tokyo was conducting a parallel process to the EU-Japan FTA negotiations. After the EU-Japan FTA entered into force on 1 February 2019, Ankara and Tokyo have accelerated their negotiations. Japan with \$2.7 billion ranked 15th among the countries that brought FDI to Turkey during the 1975-2002 period. The Japanese FDI in Turkey during the period of January 2007 and June 2013 was only around \$940 million. Around 227 Japanese companies are currently operating in Turkey.

³¹Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "Turkey's Evolving Strategic Balance with China, Japan and South Korea", Asia Pacific Bulletin, No.235, October 8, 2013.

³² Ali Topuz, "Türkiye, Çin füzeleri konusunda kararsız", Rusya'nın Sesi, September 1, 2014.

³³ "Turkey scraps Chinese air defense system," DW News, November 18, 2015.

Figure 6: Turkey's Trade with Japan (2011-2019)



Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has evaluated the major tenders in Turkey as an opportunity to revive the Japanese economy and considers Turkey as a strategic partner in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea basins. Turkey also considers Japan as an important partner in terms of advanced technology and investment financier. Behind the acceleration of Turkish-Japanese relations in the last decade there is a great contribution of Abe's new Japanese foreign policy. The signing of the Turkey-Japan strategic partnership document in May 2013 is not a random case.³⁴

The nuclear energy cooperation was the priority of the two sides and the Sinop NPP contract was awarded in 2013 to a consortium of Japan's Mitsubishi and France's Areva. The consortium originally had said the reactor would be ready by 2023. However, the cost problem could cause that date to slip. Finally, the Mitsubishi-Areva consortium was set to abandon the Sinop NPP in December 2018, because construction costs ballooned to around \$44 billion from \$18.8 billion in 2013.³⁵

There was opening ceremony of the Marmaray Bosphorus tunnel which was constructed by the Japanese company on October 29 of 2013. The satellite of Turksat 4A, which was launched in 2014, had been produced by Japanese firms and created a good basis for cooperation between the two countries in the aviation and aerospace industry.³⁶ The world's fourth longest suspension bridge, namely Osman Gazi over the Bay of Izmit, was built by Japanese companies and became operational in 2016.³⁷

³⁴ Atsuko Higashino, "Türkiye-Japonya İlişkileri: İzlenimler ve Gerçeklik (Turkey-Japan Relations: Impressions & Realities)", Analist, November 2014.

³⁵ Takashi Tsuji, "Japan to scrap Turkey nuclear project," Nikkei Asian Review, December 4, 2018.

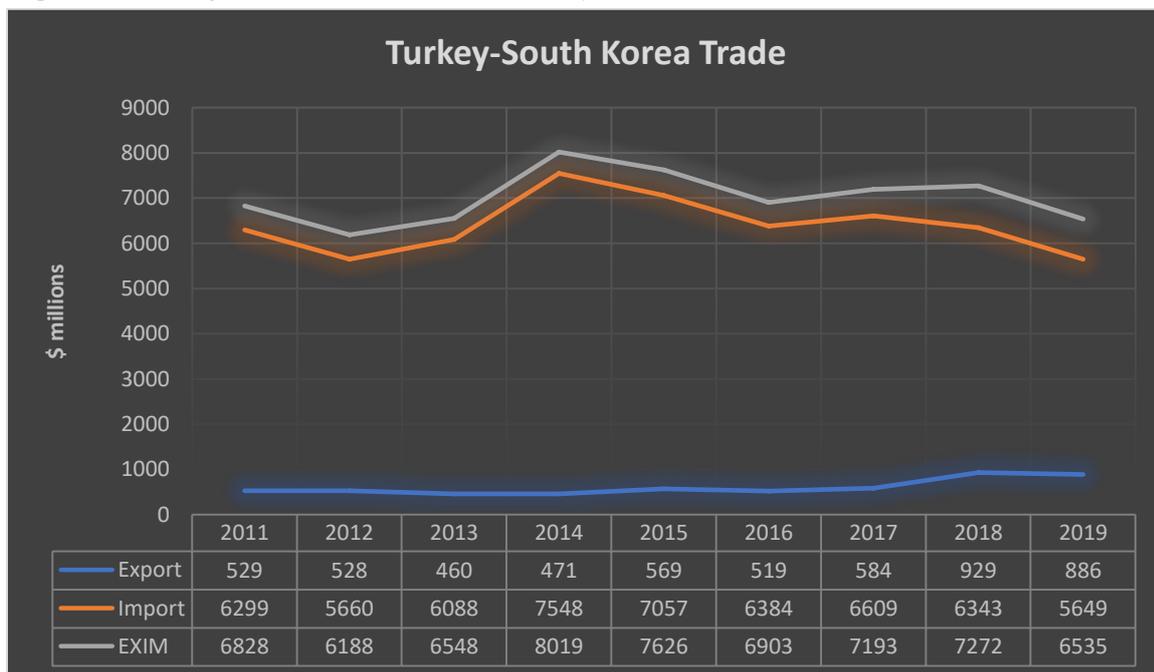
³⁶ "Turkey and Japan sign agreement on space Technologies", Daily Sabah, September 10, 2016.

³⁷ "Nearly 1 mln vehicles crossed newly-opened İzmit Bay Bridge during Eid holiday", Hürriyet Daily News, July 11, 2016

In 2017, the Turkish Japanese Science and Technology University was founded in Istanbul to carry out activities aimed at increasing scientific, technological, and social cooperation between the two countries.³⁸

South Korea: Economic relations constitute the most dynamic dimension of the Turkish-Korean relations and have entered a new stage after the implementation of the FTA in 2014. The total trade volume reached its highest level with \$8 billion in 2014 and then had gradually dropped to \$6.5 billion in 2019 as the level before the FTA. In economic relations, South Korea is more competitive than Turkey. An amount of \$ 7.5 billion out of total \$ 8 billion trade volume in 2014 constituted Korea’s exports to Turkey (See Figure 7).

Figure 7: Turkey’s Trade with South Korea (2011-2019)



Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

Taking this reality into account, Seoul has implemented compensatory policies to amend this asymmetry by requiring Korean companies to make investments in Turkey, and to meet the technology needs of certain Turkish companies. For example, the Hyundai Motor Company decided to produce automobiles in Turkey in 1996 as the first big Korean FDI. Moreover, since the beginning of the 2000s the two countries have been increasingly engaging in cooperation in the defense industry. In 2001, the Turkish Land Forces and Korean Samsung signed an agreement on an artillery control system which was valued at around \$1 billion. The Turkish variant was designated Firtina or T-155 K/M Obus. Turkey received its first batch of eight Firtina howitzers in 2004 and a total of 150 units were delivered to the Turkish Army in 2009.³⁹

The most important issue on the agenda of economic cooperation between the two countries was the Sinop NPP tender in recent years. Despite the initial agreement between Turkey and South Korea on the NPP planned to be built in Sinop a northern city of Turkey by KEPCO,

³⁸ Turkish Japanese Science and Technology University. <https://www.tju.edu.tr/english/>

³⁹ “K9 Thunder Self-Propelled Howitzer”, Army Technology, 2020.

the negotiations ended without any result in March 2012.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Turkey's plan to issue a tender for a third nuclear power plant or redelivering the Sinop NPP tender could represent a new opportunity for South Korean companies.

People-to-people exchanges between the two countries are still far from being satisfactory in the 2000s. For example, 46.8 million foreign tourists visited Turkey in 2019, while the number of Korean travelers dropped 140 thousand in 2019 from 250 thousand in 2014.⁴¹ Whereas, the number of Koreans going abroad on holiday in 2019 was around 17.5 million. The number of Turks who visited Korea in 2019 was only 9 thousand.⁴²

Taiwan: Turkey and Taiwan restarted their economy-based relations in the early 1990s. From an economic perspective, there has been a remarkable increase in bilateral trade in the last three decades. Annual trade numbers have fluctuated between \$1.5 billion and \$2.2 billion in the last decade. The bilateral annual trade volume reached at the highest level in 2017 with \$2.2 billion, but then declined to \$1.5 billion in 2019 (see Figure 4). The emerging problem of Turkey's trade with Taiwan is that it is highly imbalanced – to the detriment of Ankara. In fact, of the \$2.2 billion in bilateral trade in 2017, \$2 billion was Turkish imports from Taiwan. Considering Taiwan's competitive advantage, Ankara wants to compensate for this imbalance through tourism and Taiwanese FDI into Turkey. For instance, Taiwan Cement Corporation bought 40% of the shares of Turkey's OYAK Cement Group in October 2018 with the amount of \$1.1 billion.⁴³ As of 2019, Taiwan's commercial banks, security firms, and fund management companies had invested around \$4.5 billion in Turkey.⁴⁴ The Taiwanese FDI to Turkey signalled the potential for future economic cooperation between Ankara and Taipei.

Yaser Tai-hsian Cheng, Representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Mission in Ankara, said in July 2019 that Turkey and Taiwan cooperated on culture, healthcare, medicine, agriculture, science, and smart cities. According to Cheng, Taiwan wants to use Turkey as a regional investment hub for Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. However, the two countries' continuing double-taxation problem has shifted Taiwanese investors from Turkey to Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia. In 2019, around 100,000 Taiwanese visited Turkey, and several thousand Turkish nationals visited Taiwan.⁴⁵

North Korea: North Korea is the only country of Northeast Asia where there is no diplomatic representation of Turkey. Turkey's bilateral annual trade volume with North Korea reached its highest level in 2008 with \$52 million as an exception. In 2019, Turkey's trade volume with North Korea was less than \$1 million (see Figure 4). Turkey has sent humanitarian aid to North Korea which was affected by the floods in 2012. At the request of the North Korean

⁴⁰ Delphine Strauss and Christian Oliver, "Kepeco falls after Turkish talks fail", Financial Times, November 16, 2010.

⁴¹ Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN,36568/number-of-arriving-departing-visitors-foreigners-and-ci-.html>

⁴² Korea Tourism Organization, http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/eng/tourismStatics/keyFacts/KoreaMonthlyStatistics/eng/inout/inout.kto?func_name=3

⁴³ Matthew Strong, "Taiwan Cement to form joint venture with Oyak Cement Group of Turkey", Taiwan News, October 26, 2018.

⁴⁴ "Taiwan sees Turkey as hub to explore Europe, Africa", Daily Sabah, October 10, 2019.

⁴⁵ "Taipei Ekonomi ve Kültür Misyonu Ankara Temsilcisi Yaser Tai-hsian Cheng ile söyleşi (Interview with Yaser Tai-hsian Cheng, Representative of Taipei Economic and Cultural Mission in Ankara)", Haber Ajanda, July 2019.

Embassy in Sofia accredited to Turkey, TIKA sent a total of 100 tons of food assistance to kindergartens affected by the floods.⁴⁶

Mongolia: Despite the strengthening of political relations between Turkey and Mongolia over the last three decades, economic relations between the two have developed far less than desired. Bilateral economic relations, starting with a trade volume of \$1 million in 1992, reached their highest volume at \$48 million in 2013. Yet in 2019, the bilateral trade volume declined to \$39 million (see Figure 4). The trade volume between the two countries is primarily made up of Turkey’s exports to Mongolia. Logistical deficiencies, as well as geographical distance, have perpetuated the low level of trade and economic exchange between Turkey and Mongolia. Mongolia’s involvement China’s BRI may facilitate Mongolian logistic connection with Turkey. So far, TIKA has spent \$28 million in Mongolia for infrastructure and cultural projects.⁴⁷

Turkey’s Economic Relations with South Asian Countries

Turkey’s total trade volume with South Asia was around \$ 9.7 billion in 2019, mostly constituted by Turkish imports from the region. Turkey’s largest trading partner in the region is India, with whom Turkey made \$ 7.7 billion trade in 2019. Bangladesh was Turkey’s second largest trading partner with \$ 810 billion, while Pakistan was the third with \$ 803 million in 2019. In 2019, Turkey’s bilateral trade volumes with Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives were at \$ 178 million, \$81 million, and \$27 billion, respectively. There was a negligible trade exchange with Bhutan (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Turkey’s trade with South Asian countries since 2000 (\$ millions)

Countries / Years	2000 \$ millions	2005 \$ millions	2010 \$ millions	2015 \$ millions	2019 \$ millions
India	505	1501	4016	6263	7681
Pakistan	135	504	998	600	803
Bangladesh	52	191	1015	1196	810
Afghanistan	9	121	265	174	162
Sri Lanka	18	76	188	139	178
Nepal	3	9	19	63	81
Bhutan	0	0	0	2	2
Maldives	0	2	8	18	27
Total	722	2404	6509	8455	9744

Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

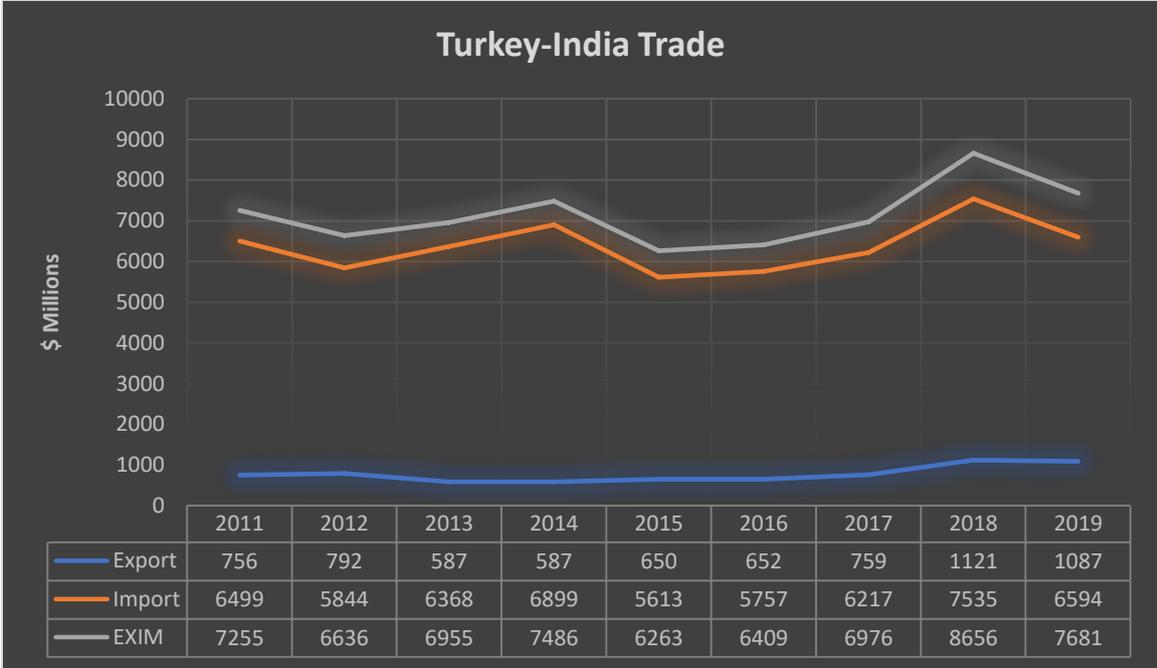
India: Turkish-Indian economic relations has remarkably developed in the 2000s. The bilateral trade volume soared from \$505 million in 2000 up to \$8.7 billion in 2018 and India has become Turkey’s second largest trade partner in East Asia after China (see Figure 3). As

⁴⁶ “Türkiye, Kuzey Koreli Yetimleri Unutmadı (Turkey sent aids to North Korean orphans)”, TIKA, January 25, 2013.

⁴⁷ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, “Could Turkey be a Third Neighbor of Mongolia?”, The Journal of Turkish Weekly, May 19, 2015.

in the case of its trade with many other East Asian countries, Turkey has a huge trade deficit with India. Turkey’s trade deficits with India were \$6.4 billion in 2018 and \$5.5 billion in 2019 (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Turkey’s Trade with India (2011-2019)



Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

Preparations for an FTA have been in progress since 2008, but negotiations are yet to be commenced. The two parties can formulate the agreement in a way in which both benefits. Turkish companies taking part in infrastructure and construction projects in India, and Indian companies with high-tech capabilities increasing their investments in Turkey, form the solid ground upon which a balanced economic partnership can flourish. Likewise, sectors such as the defense industry and tourism have a high potential for boosting bilateral cooperation. Cooperation in the film industry and education can further serve public diplomacy by enabling the Turkish and Indian peoples to gradually come into frequent cultural contact and to familiarize themselves with one another.

Pakistan: The extremely favorable atmosphere surrounding bilateral contacts between Turkey and Pakistan on the political level is not mirrored in the two countries’ bilateral trade and economic relations. The fact that the economies of Turkey and Pakistan are not complementary plays a large part in this reality. Both the volume of bilateral trade and the flow of mutual FDI remain rather low. The Pak-Turkish bilateral trade volume had been fluctuating between \$500 million and \$1 billion from 2005 to 2019. The highest bilateral trade volume was recorded as \$1 billion in 2011 and dropped to \$803 million in 2019 (see Figure 8).

Earlier, Turkey did not favor signing the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Pakistan because Ankara was worried that Turkey’s labor-intensive sectors – the textile sector in particular – would suffer. However, at this current juncture, Ankara and Islamabad both

receive the idea of signing the agreement favorably, with the aim of lending impetus to bilateral relations.⁴⁸

Bangladesh: Turkey's trade linkages with Bangladesh have grown rapidly and annual bilateral trade volume has hovered at about \$1 billion over the past decade. The bilateral trade volume reached its highest level in 2013 with \$1.2 billion and then dropped to \$810 million in 2019. Since 2010 Bangladesh has emerged as Turkey's second-largest trade partner in South Asia after India (see Figure 8).

Turkey has aimed to increase in bilateral trade with Bangladesh to \$2 billion by late 2020.⁴⁹ However, this target seems unrealistic, given the slowdown of the Turkish economy since 2018 and negative economic effects of coronavirus pandemic across the world. Ankara and Dhaka attempted to forge an FTA in 2012 to increase economic partnership, though its ratification was suspended indefinitely due to disapproval from the EU, which sought to protect its Customs Union with Turkey.⁵⁰

Turkey's development assistance to Bangladesh during 2004-2014 totaled about \$13 million.⁵¹ The great part of the aid is in education, health care, and vocational training. It is expected that TIKA's development assistance to Bangladesh will gradually increase after opening an office in Dhaka in 2014. FDI inflows in both directions are unremarkable. According to the Central Bank of Bangladesh, net FDI inflows in the fiscal year 2015-2016 from Turkey to Bangladesh realized as \$1.41 million and the total FDI stock in Bangladesh has been \$11.9 million as of June 2016.⁵²

Ankara has strengthened its defense links with Dhaka in recent years. In 2015, Turkey offered Bangladesh guided missile frigates in a major government-to-government deal.⁵³ Turkey, along with South Korea and the United States, provides military training to the SWADS, Bangladesh's most sophisticated naval unit.⁵⁴

Previously in 2013, Turkey supplied Otokar Cobra light armored vehicles to the Bangladesh Army.⁵⁵ Similarly, the Turkish firm Delta Defense was awarded \$1 billion contract for 680 light armored vehicles in August 2017.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Turkish ROKETSAN secured a contract in March 2019 to supply a regiment of medium-range guided multiple rocket launchers to the Bangladeshi Army in a sign of increased defense cooperation between the two countries.⁵⁷

Sri Lanka: The bilateral trade relations started to flourish throughout the 2010s. Economic relations, starting with a trade volume of \$18 million in 2000, reached their highest volume at \$220 million in 2018. Yet in 2019, the bilateral trade volume declined to \$178 million (see Figure 8). Turkey and Sri Lanka could undertake joint enterprises in sectors they have a

⁴⁸ "Pakistan-Turkey trade drops due to protective duties", The Express Tribune, July 13, 2019.

⁴⁹ "Türkiye-Bangladeş İş Konseyi'nden 2 milyar dolarlık ticaret hacmi hedefi (\$2 billion trade volume target by the Turkey Bangladesh Business Council)", Hürriyet, November 23, 2018.

⁵⁰ Refayet Ullah Mirdha, "FTAs far away," The Daily Star, June 28, 2018.

⁵¹ "Turkish Development Assistance 2014 Report", TIKA, Ankara:2014.

⁵² "Turkey-Bangladesh Economic and Trade Relations", Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_bangladesh-economic-and-trade-relations.en.mfa

⁵³ Samuel Ramani, "Can Bangladesh and Turkey Mend Frayed Ties?", The Diplomat, July 4, 2016.

⁵⁴ "Strategies for the Bangladesh Navy leading up to 2030," BD Military, December 29, 2017.

⁵⁵ "Turkey delivers Otokar Cobra II LAV's to Bangladesh Army," BD Military, May 1, 2017.

⁵⁶ "A Turkish Company will Supply 680 Armored Vehicles to Bangladesh Army," Medium, August 15, 2017.

⁵⁷ "Turkey secures Bangladesh Army medium range guided multiple rocket launchers to the Bangladesh Army," BD Military, March 27, 2019.

competitive advantage like construction, defense industry, textiles, tourism, agricultural production, and food security.

Turkey's Economic Relations with Southeast Asian Countries

Turkey strives to improve its relationship with Southeast Asian largest economies as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore in the 2000s. Turkey's trade with Southeast Asia remains extremely low compared with Northeast Asia, but almost equals to South Asia. Turkey's total trade with all ASEAN countries has remarkably increased from \$1.1 million in 2000 to \$8.4 billion in 2019. Turkey has also a great deficit in trade with Southeast Asia too. Turkey has usually a balanced trade relations with Singapore, the Philippines, Brunei, and Laos. Turkey's trade with Myanmar and Cambodia was on the rise in the past decade. Laos and Brunei have less trade with Turkey in the region (see Figure 10).

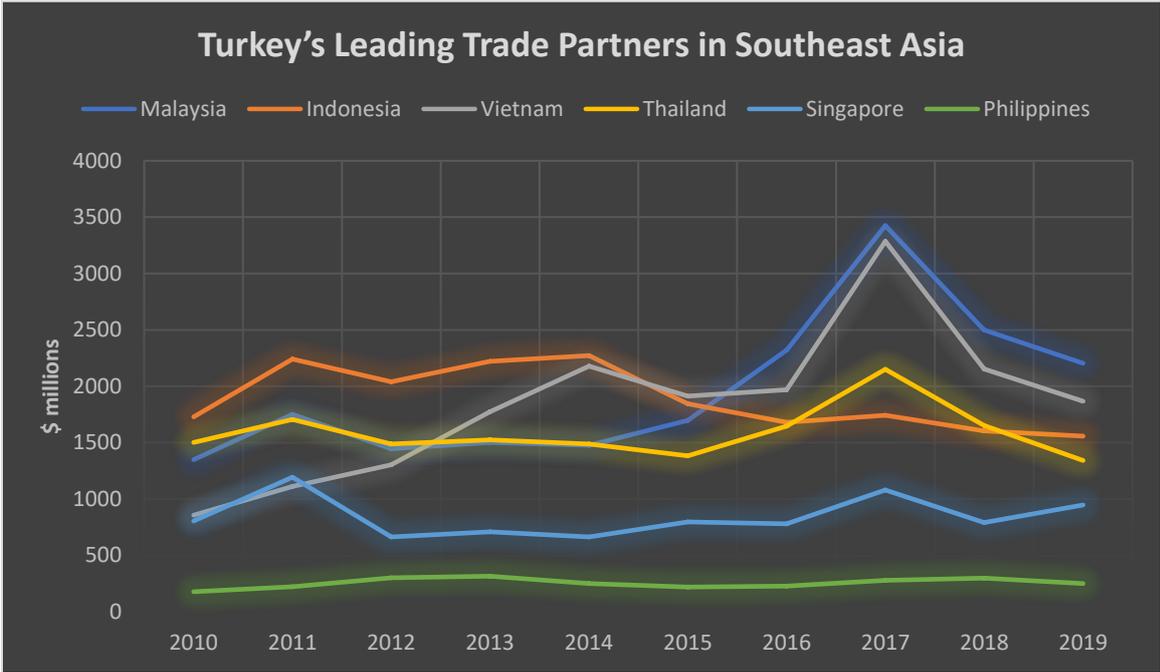
Figure 10: Turkey's trade with Southeast Asian countries since 2000 (\$ millions)

Countries / Years	2000 \$ millions	2005 \$ millions	2010 \$ millions	2015 \$ millions	2019 \$ millions
Indonesia	262	831	1728	1845	1558
Malaysia	308	843	1349	1696	2205
Thailand	248	730	1501	1384	1342
Singapore	281	296	805	798	947
Vietnam	29	154	857	1912	1868
Philippines	45	148	178	220	252
Myanmar	1	5	43	39	98
Cambodia	2	11	33	109	94
Laos	1	1	2	2	14
Brunei	0	1	1	5	5
Total	1117	3020	6497	8010	8383

Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

The three leading regional trade partners of Turkey are Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia in the last decade. However, Turkey's the highest bilateral annual trade volume with a regional country could barely reach to \$3.5 billion (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Turkey’s Leading Trade Partners in Southeast Asia



Source: Made by the Author with TurkStat data

Malaysia: The Turkey-Malaysia FTA took into effect on 1 August 2015 and then Malaysia has become the largest trade partner of Turkey in Southeast Asia. When the bilateral trade volume was around \$1.5 billion in 2014, it gradually increased to \$3.4 billion in 2017 and declined to \$2.2 billion in 2019 (see Figure 11). However, trade balance is extremely in favor of Malaysia. For example, the amount of \$3.2 billion out of \$3.4 billion consisted of Malaysian exports to Turkey in 2017. Ankara wants to keep a balance with the help of Turkish defense products sales to Malaysia and a flow of Malaysian FDI to Turkey. For example, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport has been owned and managed by Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad since 2014. The Malaysian wealth found Khazanah bought majority shares of Acıbadem Hospitals in 2011.

Indonesia: Turkey and Indonesia, as being among the top 20 economies of the world, have become important parties of the global economy as members of the G20 and MIKTA. But the current state of the bilateral trade volume remains insufficient in comparison with their economic sizes. The annual highest turnover of \$ 2.2 billion was reached in 2014 and then it dropped to \$1.6 billion in 2019 (see Figure 10). Turkey has also trade deficits in its foreign trade with Indonesia as with other East Asian countries. The investments of Turkish and Indonesian businesspeople through joint ventures both in Turkey and Indonesia and in third countries would also promote the economic integration between the two countries. Tourism, construction, energy, mining, and defense industry might be suggested as the potential sectors for the joint ventures of the two countries.

Vietnam: While the bilateral trade volume stood at \$29 million as of 2000, this number reached its highest level to \$3.3 billion in 2017. In 2019, the bilateral trade volume dropped to \$1.9 billion and Vietnam was the second biggest trade partner of Turkey just after Malaysia (see Figure 11). While Turkey’s exports to Vietnam total up to \$237 million in 2017, it

imported about \$3 billion in the same year. There is a consensus between Ankara and Hanoi that economic cooperation ought to be prioritized to increase the trade volume.

Singapore: The volume of trade between Turkey and Singapore was \$281 million in 2000 and increased to \$947 million in 2019. The highest trade figure between the two countries was \$1.2 billion in 2011 (see Figure 11). Singapore is one of few East Asian countries with which Turkey has a bilateral trade surplus. Singapore has also begun operating an office of the Ministry of Commerce's International Enterprise Singapore which aims to increase foreign trade with foreign countries. On January 1, 2017, the Turkey-Singapore FTA has come into force.⁵⁸

Singapore's FDI was on the rise in recent years. PSA International manages Mersin International Port since 2007 and invested over \$1 billion. Olam International, a global agribusiness company which presides over Proğıda, is Turkey's second largest producer of hazelnuts, with factories in the Black Sea region. DP Architects designed the redevelopment plan for the historic Haliç Shipyard in Istanbul, while Ascott Holdings, a global hospitality brand, has a property in Istanbul. Singapore's Sovereign Wealth Fund also invests in Turkish companies and financial instruments.⁵⁹

Thailand: Thailand is usually the fourth largest trade partner of Turkey in Southeast Asia. While Thailand's trade volume with Turkey was around \$248 million in 2000, it increased to \$2.2 billion in 2017. The bilateral trade volume dropped to \$1.3 billion in 2019 (see Figure 10). The amount of \$2 billion out of \$2.2 billion in 2017 consisted of Turkey's imports from Thailand.

Turkey's Economic Capacity as a Facilitator for its Relations with East Asia

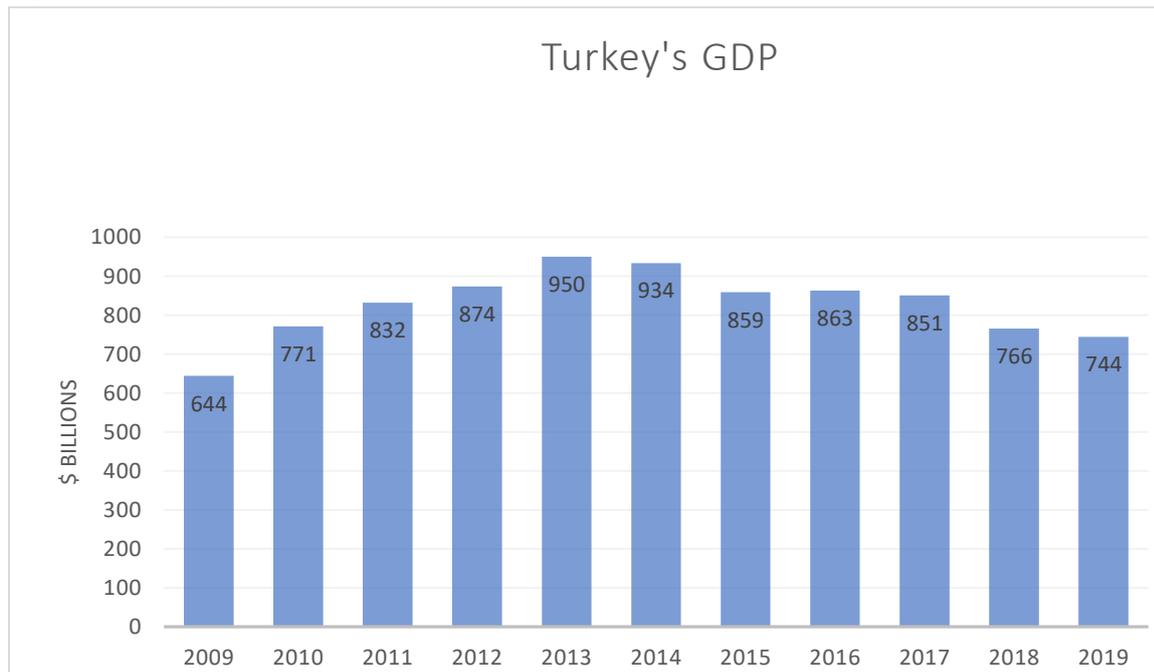
Turkey's economic growth was the main engine for its foreign trade and official & humanitarian activities abroad in the 2000s. Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP) had gradually increased in the 2000s and peaked in 2013 with \$950 billion. Afterwards, economic slowdown of Turkey in recent years caused a gradual drop in its GDP to \$744 billion in 2019 (see Figure 12). Decreasing GDP in last 6 consecutive years presents another obstacle for expanding the trade & investment capacity of Turkish public & private sectors in third countries. As of June 2020, the IMF expects Turkey's GDP to show a negative growth around 5% in 2020.⁶⁰ If this projection comes true, the Turkish government will have less budget to spend on its involvement in third countries, including Asia.

⁵⁸ Rachelle Lee and Brandon Tanoto, "Turkey-Singapore FTA to come into force in October", Channel News Asia, August 21, 2017.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Tow, "Marking 50 years of Turkey-Singapore relations", Daily Sabah, December 19, 2019.

⁶⁰ International Monetary Fund, "Turkey". <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/TUR>

Figure 12: Turkey's GDP Growth



Source: World Bank

It seems that there will be no significant improvement in Turkey's trade with Asian countries as long as there will be no increase of Turkey's GDP in coming years. Signing FTAs and developing cooperation on defense industry may provide new opportunities to spread Turkey's economic cooperation with Asian countries. For example, after an FTA came into effect with South Korea in 2014, Malaysia in 2015, and Singapore in 2017, Turkey's bilateral trade volume with those countries has dramatically increased (see Figure 3).

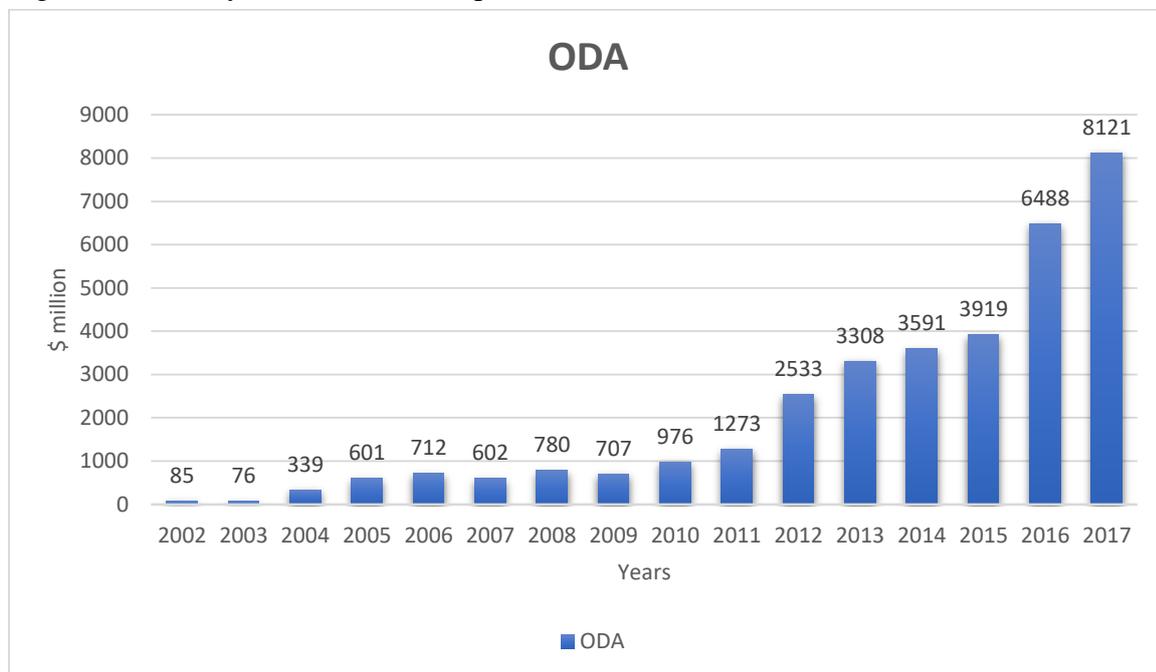
Asia has also become an increasing market for Turkish defense industry products. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines are closely interested in Turkish defence industry products. Turkey is also cooperating with China and South Korea for their defence industries. Armored vehicles, weapon systems, drones, attack helicopters, tanks, and frigates are main Turkish products offered to Asian market. However, Turkey's purchase of the S-400 missile systems have created a crisis between Ankara and Washington and it will likely hamper Turkish defence industry and its exports to third countries, because the United States, and possibly other NATO allies, may put some sanctions to Turkey including its defence industry, if Ankara activates the Russian missiles. Turkey's defence industry products are integrated into NATO systems and include other allies' technology, software, and critical parts like engines. Recently, Pakistan and Turkey have signed a contract for the sale of 30 T129 ATAK multirole attack helicopters on 16 July 2018. It is estimated at over \$1.5 billion making it one of Turkey's most expensive defense acquisitions in recent decades.⁶¹ However, the problem is related with the U.S.-made parts for which Turkey will need U.S. export licenses in order to materialize the deal. If Ankara does not find a middle ground with Washington in a short time of period, Turkey will lose not only its revenues from defence industry contracts, but also lose some of its political influence over Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and others.

⁶¹ Burak Ege Bekdil, "Diplomatic row jeopardizes \$1.5B helicopter deal between Turkey and Pakistan", Defense News, August 13, 2018.

Turkey's Increasing Official Development Assistance

The Turkish public & private institutions' prominence in humanitarian diplomacy helped Turkey's rise from 19th to 3rd place among donor governments delivering international aid.⁶² Turkish Official Development Assistance (ODA) had remarkably increased from \$85 million in 2002 to \$1.3 billion in 2011. This ODA increase is parallel with Turkey's GDP growth from 2002 to 2011. However, there is tremendous increase of Turkey's ODA much more than its GDP growth since 2012. Turkey's ODA increased from \$1.3 billion in 2011 to \$ 8.1 billion in 2017 (see Figure 13). However, \$7.3 billion of its total ODA belonged only to one country, Syria. This explains why there was a tremendous increase of Turkish ODA in recent years, as the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey has dramatically increased during that period and finally reached 4 million in 2020. There is an ongoing debate whether Ankara's expenditure on Syrian refugees in Turkey is ODA. So, it is difficult to calculate Turkey's real ODA after 2012 as a global engagement activity.

Figure 13: Turkey's Official Development Assistance-ODA (\$ Millions)



Source: The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA)

The Asian countries benefitting from Turkish ODA in the top ten list in 2017 were Palestine with \$400 million, Afghanistan with \$36 million, Kazakhstan with \$20 million, Kyrgyzstan with \$18 million, and Pakistan with \$20 million. These numbers indicate that Turkey allocates most of its ODA to neighboring and/or Turkic nations.

The long-term challenge for sustainability of Turkey's opening to Asia-Pacific is that expenditures of TIKA, Maarif, Diyanet, Yunus Emre Institute, YTB, and AFAD are covered by the Turkish taxpayers' money. As a middle-income country and having only 0.9% of the World GDP in 2020, Turkey has a certain financial limitation to its engagement in third

⁶² "Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014", ReliefWeb, September 10, 2014. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2014>

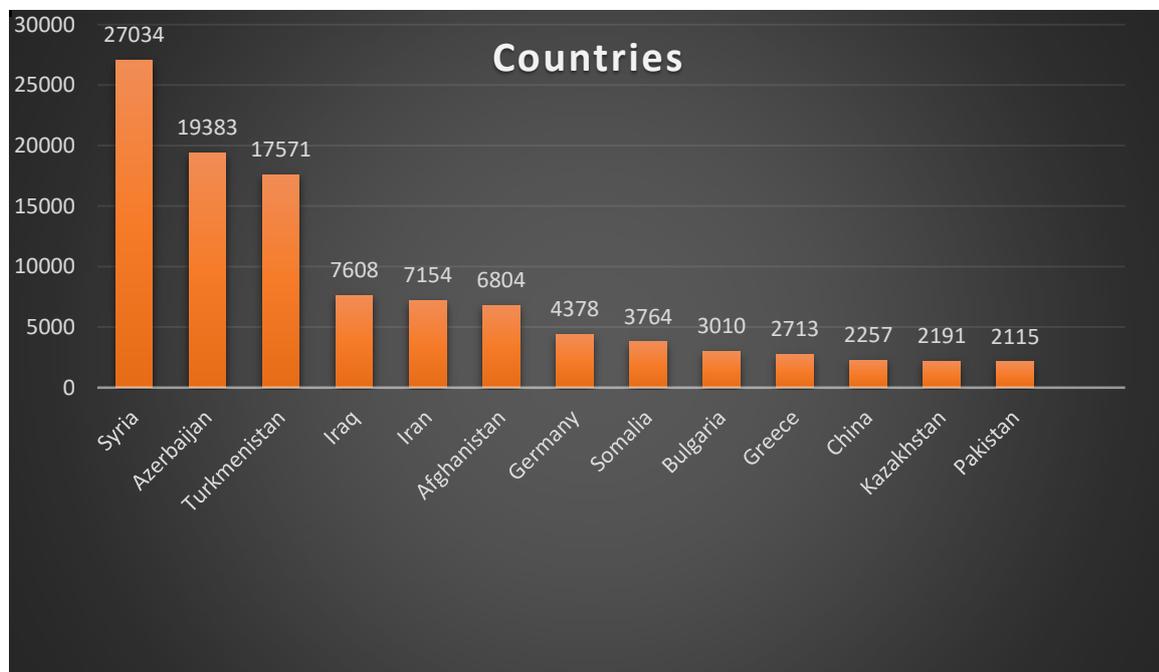
countries.⁶³ These financial restraints of Turkey seem to be main challenge to its Asia Anew Initiative.⁶⁴

Increasing Academic Cooperation

Improvement of academic cooperation is one of the four pillars of the Turkey’s Asia Anew Initiative. Indeed, Turkey’s academic capacity has developed remarkably for last three decades and has become a leverage Ankara’s involvements in international sphere. For instance, Turkey became one of the most international student welcoming countries in the world with 154,446 international students in the 2018-2019 Academic Year, 25 thousand of which are scholarship students. Ankara aims to host 200 thousand international students by 2023.⁶⁵

Despite this dramatic increase of international students in Turkish universities reaching at 154,446 in the 2018-2019 Academic Year, excessive number of them are from neighboring and/or Turkic nations (see Figure 14). The Syrians are dominant in Turkish universities because they are already living in Turkey. The Azerbaijanis, the Turkmen, and the Kazakhs are also crowded groups, because they speak Turkic languages and can easily integrate into Turkish society. The majority of college students in Turkey is coming from Iran, Iraq, Germany, Greece, Bulgaria, and China is Turkish minority & community members living in those countries. Turkey has provided high scholarship quota to the students from Afghanistan and Somalia to contribute their state building process. Pakistani students have also generous scholarship quota in Turkey because of the special relationship between Ankara and Islamabad.

Figure 14: International Students in Turkish Universities by Countries in the 2018-2019 Academic Year



⁶³ “Projected GDP Ranking (2019-2023)”, Statistics Times. <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/projected-world-gdp-ranking.php>

⁶⁴ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, “Turkey’s Asia Anew Initiative: Assessment and Shortcomings”, Middle East Institute, October 15, 2019.

⁶⁵ YTB, “International Student Mobility”. <https://www.ytb.gov.tr/en/international-students/international-student-mobility>

Source: The Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK)

Turkey's improvement of academic cooperation with Asian countries is not that easy, due to institutional and human capacity problems that arose during the post-2016 coup attempt era. In Turkey, around 1,200 private schools, including 16 universities and 30 think tanks and research centers, were closed. 33,000 teachers and 8,000 academics from public institutions were dismissed and the teaching certificates of 22,000 teachers from private sector were cancelled. So, around 63,000 teaching & academic staff are out of the Turkish education system since 2016.⁶⁶ Therefore, there is dramatic decline for the capacity and reputation of Turkish universities & academic institutions.⁶⁷ Because of these purges, Turkish universities have failed to join the top 500 World University Ranking list of since 2016.⁶⁸

Turkey's Political Relations with Leading Asian Countries

China

The signing of a joint communiqué in 2000, which was followed by a flurry of reciprocal visits and an uptick in bilateral trade, set Turkey's relations with China on a positive trajectory. The relationship began to develop rapidly ten years later, when, during Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Turkey, Ankara and Beijing signed agreements lifting bilateral relations to the level of "strategic cooperation."⁶⁹ Overlapping with the visit, the Turkish and Chinese air forces conducted their first ever joint military exercises at Konya air base in central Anatolia.⁷⁰

Sino-Turkish relations have become more dynamic in the Xi Jinping era. Xi first visited Turkey as Vice President in February 2012; large-scale projects, in the nuclear energy and railroad sectors topped the agenda.⁷¹ Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reciprocated Xi's visit, traveling to China three months later.⁷² The same year, Turkey was accepted as a "dialogue partner" of the SCO, of which China is the most influential member.⁷³

The subsequent blossoming of Turkey's relations with China has occurred against the backdrop of Turkey's apparent strategic estrangement from the West. The differences between Turkey and the United States and other NATO allies have accumulated, straining their relations. Indeed, Turkey's relations with the West are at an all-time low in the post-2016 failed coup attempt. These circumstances have prompted some observers to consider

⁶⁶ Suzy Hansen, "The Era of People Like You Is Over': How Turkey Purged Its Intellectuals", The New York Times, July 24, 2019.

⁶⁷ Hümeýra Pamuk and Ece Toksabay, "Purge of academics leaves future of Turkish universities in doubt", Reuters, March 1, 2017; Umar Farooq, "Post-coup purge will affect Turkey's education sector for decades", Los Angeles Times, November 26, 2016.

⁶⁸ CWUR, "World University Rankings 2019-2020". <https://cwur.org/2019-2020.php>

⁶⁹ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "Dynamics of Sino-Turkish Relations: a Turkish Perspective," East Asia, Vol. 32, No. 7, 2015.

⁷⁰ Jim Wolf, "China mounts air exercise with Turkey, U.S. says," Reuters, October 10, 2010.

⁷¹ "Speech at the China-Turkey Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum," Ministry of Foreign affairs of the PRC, February 23, 2012.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/xybfs_663590/gjlb_663594/2898_663796/2900_663800/t908616.shtml

⁷² "Turkey's Erdogan Makes Landmark Visit to China," DW News, May 4, 2012.

⁷³ "SCO accepts Afghanistan as observer, Turkey dialogue partner," People's Daily, June 7, 2012.

whether Ankara's increasingly tempestuous relationship with the West might lead to a fundamental shift in its strategic orientation, toward the East.⁷⁴

In November 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan indicated — and not for the first time — that he might abandon Turkey's quest for accession to the EU in return for full membership in the SCO.⁷⁵ Opinion is divided as to how to interpret Erdoğan's remarks. Some experts on Turkey consider such statements to be a reaction to the slowdown in EU accession negotiations.⁷⁶ Yet, others believe that Erdoğan's lashing out represents serious consideration of a purposeful shift in Turkish foreign policy toward the East.⁷⁷

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming was one of the early visitors to Ankara to express Chinese solidarity with the Justice and Development Party, or AKP government in the wake of the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016.⁷⁸ Since then, with Ankara's relations with the United States seemingly in tatters, the AKP government has tried to strengthen ties with China. In an effort to boost the relationship, President Erdoğan, accompanied by a very large delegation, participated in the Silk Road Forum in Beijing May 2017. Following the Forum, Turkey and China signed agreements on the extradition of criminals, international highway transportation, and reciprocal establishment of cultural centers.⁷⁹

Beijing might well be using the BRI to coax Ankara to take additional steps against Uyghur dissidents in Turkey. Yet, whether or not that is the case, the Erdoğan government has seemed keen to win Beijing's trust and confidence. On August 3, 2017, the two countries' foreign ministers, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Wang Yi, met in Beijing. At the conclusion of the meeting, Çavuşoğlu vowed to root out anti-Chinese militants and to prohibit in Turkey "any activities targeting or opposing China," including measures to suppress media reports that could be considered as anti-Chinese.⁸⁰

The Communist Party of China (CPC) delegation visited Turkey at the invitation of the ruling AKP on 27-30 December 2017. Hu Changsheng, head of the CPC delegation, met separately with party representatives from the ruling AKP, the main opposition (i.e., the Republican People's Party, or CHP), and the Vatan Party (formerly Workers Party).⁸¹ It is highly interesting that the CPC delegation visited very small Vatan Party having not a single seat in the Turkish parliament while they did not pay a visit to the coalition partner of the AKP- the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) since 2016. The other opposition parties-The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), and the İyi Party- which have large groups in the parliament too did not get any visit from the CPC. It seems that the CPC considers the Vatan Party as an important partner on Turkey-related affairs as de facto partner of the AKP-MHP coalition since 2016. The visit of CPC to AKP indicates that not only the governments in the capitals but also the ruling parties in two sides have an ambition to intensify their cooperation to create alternative channel of dialogue.

⁷⁴ Liz Sly, "For Turkey and U.S., at Odds over Syria, a 60-year Alliance Shows Signs of Crumbling," *The Washington Post*, October 29, 2014.

⁷⁵ "President Erdoğan: EU not everything, Turkey may join Shanghai Five," *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 20, 2016.

⁷⁶ Marcus Benath, "Erdogan: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation an alternative to EU", *Europolitics*, January 28, 2013.

⁷⁷ Kadri Gürsel, "Erdogan Serious about Turkey's Bid for Shanghai 5 Membership," *Al-Monitor*, January 31, 2013.

⁷⁸ Wang Jin, "After the Failed Coup: A New Dawn for China-Turkey Relations?", *The Diplomat*, August 10, 2016.

⁷⁹ "Erdoğan emphasizes importance of adopting win-win approach in New Silk Road Project", *Daily Sabah*, May 14, 2017.

⁸⁰ Shazar Shafqat, "China, Turkey seek bridge over troubled waters of Mideast," *Asia Times*, August 7, 2017.

⁸¹ "Turkey ready to promote cooperation with China under Belt and Road", *Xinhua*, December 30, 2017.

In October 2017, President Erdoğan appointed his Chief Advisor Abdülkadir Emin Önen as Ambassador to China.⁸² The selection of Önen — the first non-career diplomat appointed to this post — is a clear sign that Erdoğan wants to develop a direct channel to Beijing and a closer relationship with the Chinese leadership.

However, Turkey-China relations have continued to have their ups and downs. There are several areas where either the relationship has not met the expectations of one of the sides, or where the two governments have clashed. The fact that Beijing has never declared the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to be a terrorist organization has rankled Turkish leaders, especially as Ankara, in deference to China, has designated the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as such. Beijing's argument that it does not customarily list terrorist organizations in China is far from satisfactory to Ankara.⁸³ Ironically, whereas neither Russia nor China have declared the PKK as a terrorist group, NATO members have.

Differences over the Uyghur issue have also bedeviled Turkey-China relations.⁸⁴ Beijing is quite uncomfortable with the anti-China activities of the Uyghur diaspora and nationalist circles within Turkey. In this respect, Beijing considers Ankara's issuance of Turkish passports in recent years to Uyghur asylum seekers a direct affront.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Ankara has insisted that such actions be viewed within the framework of Turkey's humanitarian responsibilities, rather than as an anti-China stance.

According to some reports, there were anywhere between 10,000 to 20,000 Uyghurs living in Idlib province in Syria, and the Uyghur militants have been fighting in the ranks of the opposition groups as of 2017. Beijing is concerned that should some of these fighters return to China, they could become a security threat.⁸⁶ In this juncture, Beijing considers Ankara as a critical partner to prevent efficiency of the Uyghur jihadi network in Syria.

An additional sore point — at least partially related to the Uyghur issue — was Beijing's imposition of new visa restrictions on Turkish citizens as of February 15, 2016. The new visa regime followed several instances in which Chinese authorities claim to have uncovered plots by a group of Turks and Uyghurs to use counterfeit Turkish passports to smuggle people from China to Syria.⁸⁷ The new visa regime made it almost impossible for Turkish citizens to visit China. China did this arrangement while Turkey has granted e-visa system to the Chinese citizens in 2015.

The AKP-MHP coalition government had successfully pursued its pro-Beijing policy during the extremely critical presidential and parliamentary election on 24 June 2018. After time being, there were increasing claims on the right violations in Xinjiang covered by international media. In Turkey, the influential Uyghur lobby had continued its pressure over parties and got increasing support from opposition parties in 2018 and 2019. Finally, the news on the death of distinguished Uyghur folk poet Abdurehim Heyit, who was sentenced to eight years in prison for one of his songs, sparked an outrage in the Turkish public on February 9, 2019 and the Turkish MFA had to react harshly to China's "Sinification of All Religions and Beliefs" policy in the same day.⁸⁸ The Embassy of China in Ankara responded to the Turkish

⁸² "Belt and Road project to boost Turkish economy, new envoy to China says", Daily Sabah, November 19, 2017.

⁸³ "Turkey-China Relations: From Strategic Cooperation to Strategic Partnership?", Middle East Institute, March 20, 2018.

⁸⁴ Matt Schiavenza, "Why Thailand Forced Uighurs to Return to China," The Atlantic, July 12, 2015.

⁸⁵ "Turkey offers shelter to 500 Uighur refugees who fled Chinese crackdown", Daily Sabah, January 15, 2015.

⁸⁶ Christina Lin, "Chinese Uyghur colonies in Syria a challenge for Beijing," Asia Times, May 21, 2017.

⁸⁷ "China breaks 'Turkish-Uighur passport plot,'" BBC News, January 14, 2015.

⁸⁸ "QA-6, 9 February 2019, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in response to a question regarding serious human rights violations perpetrated against Uighur Turks and the passing away of folk poet Abdurehim Heyit", Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 February 2019.

MFA's critical statement the next day on February 10, 2019, defending Chinese policies towards its ethnic and religious minorities with lower tone and without targeting Turkey and the AKP-MHP government.⁸⁹

The Turkish MFA's statement in February 2019 on the Uyghur issue was the first official reaction to China since 2009. The AKP(-MHP) government had preferred not to criticize China publicly, particularly on the Uyghur issue. This policy was depending an assumption that there would be no tragic incidents in Xinjiang because the Turkish public were extremely sensitive to the Turkic-Muslim minorities of China. Moreover, the opposition parties- Turkish nationalist İyi Party and Islamist Saadet Party- had begun to conduct a campaign to support Turkic Muslim minorities in China and put increasing pressure on the Islamist AKP and Turkish nationalist MHP coalition ahead of the local elections on March 31, 2019, which the opposition bloc won in major cities, including Istanbul and Ankara. The AKP-MHP coalition had fallen in a dilemma during the process between economic interest of the government and their supporters' will, depending on the Turkish-Islamist nationalism.

Four Turkish employees of three Turkish companies that have offices in China were detained shortly at the Xiamen International Stone Fair in March 2019 on charges of tax evasion. This created a fear among 150 Turkish participants in the fair they might be next. It appeared to be a deliberate reminder by Beijing of the economic costs of Ankara's Uyghur criticism to China, because marble is the largest Turkish export good to China for years, around annual \$4 billion Turkish exports to China.⁹⁰

Turkey did not make a high-level participation to the Second Silk Road Forum in April 2019. Turkish officials at the time said their absence was because the country had become increasingly aware of BRI-linked debt troubles in other states. The disagreement with Beijing over the Uyghurs might be another reason for Ankara to miss the second forum.⁹¹

Later, President Erdoğan wanted to normalize Turkey's relations with China and kept dialogue with Chinese President Xi. Erdoğan and Xi met in the side-line of the CICA Dushanbe Summit in Tajikistan on June 14-15, 2019. During the meeting in Dushanbe, the two leaders underlined a cooperation to struggle against terrorism to develop cooperation on the BRI, and to strengthen coordination in the G20 and other multilateral areas.⁹²

Erdoğan made a short visit to Beijing on July 2, 2019 after his participation to the G20 Osaka Summit in Japan. The special visit to Beijing by a Turkish president was seen as a strong sign of Ankara's eagerness to normalise its relations with Beijing in all means. Erdoğan talked about their cooperation on the silk road initiative, including the Kars-Edirne high speed train in Turkey built by Chinese companies, and put a target for bilateral trade at the amount of \$50 billion in a five-year time.⁹³

On the other, the Xi Administration wanted to get a full support from Turkey to the Chinese policies in Xinjiang towards the Uyghurs and other Turkic-Muslim minorities. Beijing had also concerns over Uyghur fighters in Idlib, Syria and their possible returning to China. In this regard, the Xi Administration demanded certain assurances from Ankara that the Uyghur fighters would be eliminated or kept in Syria or in Turkey or deported to China. Chinese

http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-06_-uygur-turklerine-yonelik-agir-insan-haklari-ihlalleri-ve-abdurrahim-heyit-in-vefati-hk.en.mfa

⁸⁹ "Why Turkey Finally Criticized China's Uighur Internment Camps", WPR, February 19, 2019.

⁹⁰ Nicole Hao, "4 Turkish Businessmen Detained in China After Turkey Condemns Xinjiang Internment Camps", The Epoch Times, March 14, 2019.

⁹¹ Maddy White, "Turkey inks US\$5bn BRI agreement with Sinosure", Global Trade Review, March 31, 2020.

⁹² "Xi Jinping Meets with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey", The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 15 June 2019. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1673155.shtml

⁹³ "Xi, Turkish president hold talks, agreeing to deepen strategic cooperation", China Daily, July 2, 2019.

media reported that President Erdoğan supported Beijing's policies in Xinjiang during his China visit. However, at a closed-door gathering of diplomats at the Turkish embassy in Beijing in July 2019, Turkish officials said Erdoğan's comments on Xinjiang were mistranslated and Beijing refused to correct them.⁹⁴

If there was a U.S. sanction in 2019 because of the purchasing of the Russian S-400 missiles, Erdoğan wanted to use China as a political and economic leverage against the United States and other NATO allies.⁹⁵ On the other, the Xi Administration did not likely want to be used as a leverage against the United States for the sake of Turkey, as China had its own trouble with the Trump Administration over the trade war and Hong Kong protests.

After Erdoğan-Xi meetings in Dushanbe and Beijing, the AKP-MHP government did not talk about the Uyghur issue again. As a sign of this policy, the AKP-MHP government refused to start a parliamentary investigation on the Uyghur detention camps in Xinjiang proposed by the İyi Party on 20 June 2019.⁹⁶ As opposition parties the CHP, the HDP as well as the İyi Party voted in favour of the investigation, AKP said no and its Turkish nationalist coalition partner, the MHP, stayed neutral. This was strong gesture from Ankara to Beijing.

Xi and Erdoğan made a phone conversation on 9 April 2020 on their fights against the coronavirus pandemic. Xi said that China and Turkey should cooperate with each other closely and strengthen coordination to implement the consensus reached at the Extraordinary G20 Virtual Leaders' Summit on March 26, 2020, to make joint contributions to international cooperation against the pandemic.⁹⁷

The AKP-MHP government's recent efforts since July 2016 to broaden and deepen relations with China have shown positive results. However, Turkey-China relations have not yet developed into a comprehensive strategic partnership — and there are strong reasons to believe that it is unlikely they will.

For another, mutual trust and confidence is somewhat wanting. Beijing, evincing “cautious optimism” about future relations with Ankara nonetheless is careful to avoid drawing too close to Turkey, lest the latter's policies toward Syria, Libya, Cyprus, Iran, Russia, or the West jeopardize its own interests. Meanwhile, Ankara seems to have no clear strategy in crafting its relations with Beijing — somewhere between seeking to diversify its relations with the major powers and seeking a sharp break from the past by shifting its strategic orientation from the West to the East.

Japan

When Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office for a second term in 2013, he began to build new regional and global partnerships alongside the country's traditional alliance with the United States. Under this new Japanese strategy, Turkey shone out as a prominent regional partner with which the Japanese leadership believes it can rely on for in-depth cooperation in the Middle East and Central Asia. Ankara has long been seeking opportunities for further cooperation with Japan on regional and global matters, within the context of establishing a wider scope of bilateral relations. Thus, the stage was set for Ankara and Tokyo to embark on a new quest to materialize their long-held desire of a multi-dimensional partnership.

⁹⁴ Jun Mai, “Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ‘happy Xinjiang’ comments ‘mistranslated’ in China”, South China Morning Post, July 22, 2019.

⁹⁵ Pepe Escobar, “Sultan shines in the court of the Dragon King”, Asia Times, July 9, 2019.

⁹⁶ “Uygur Türklüne yönelik baskının araştırılmasını isteyen önerge reddedildi (The Draft Resolution aiming to investigate atrocities against the Uyghurs was rejected)”, Euronews Türkçe, June 21, 2019.

⁹⁷ “Chinese-Turkish ties grow stronger in fight against COVID-19, experts say”, People's Daily, April 10, 2020.

The Abe government wanted to use Turkey as a hub for its economic opening policy towards the Middle East. However, the current instability of the region in general resulted in ambiguities for the Turkish-Japanese joint regional policy. Syria and Iraq are not stable enough. Re-imposing sanctions on Iran by the United States provoked a setback to potential Turkish-Japanese joint ventures in Iran at the stage.

Cooperation on fighting against terror groups should have been other area of cooperation, particularly in the Middle East.⁹⁸ However, the Abe government was disappointed at Erdoğan government's failure to set free the Japanese journalists in 2015. Japanese journalist Kenji Goto was beheaded by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) in Syria in February 2015. The AKP government could successfully set free the hostages, 46 Turks and three Iraqis, seized on June 11, 2014 as ISIS militants took control of Mosul and the Turkish consulate in the city in Iraq three months later September 20, 2014. A potential cooperation to fight against terrorism between Tokyo and Ankara was ceased. The number of Japanese tourists sharply decreased from 202 thousand in 2012 to 81 thousand in 2018 because of deterioration of safety image of Turkey in Japan.⁹⁹ However, another Japanese journalist, Jumpei Yasuda, held in hostage in Syria in 2015, was successfully freed in October 2018 with a joint Turkish-Japanese intel operation.¹⁰⁰

Ankara and Tokyo have an ambition to get more active in Central Asia. However, reaching out to the landlocked region without direct geographical reach has been a main difficulty for both Turkey and Japan. After Beijing became more active under the BRI, Tokyo wants to develop a balancing strategy under the "Central Asia plus Japan" initiative.¹⁰¹ Turkey is also seeking a partner or partners to get support to its Middle Corridor. Compatibility of Turkish and Japanese economies would make easy to establish a cooperation in Central Asia between Turkey and Japan. Turkish-Japanese joint ventures can easily work profitable for both sides in Central Asia.¹⁰² On the other, Chinese companies are competitors rather than partners for Turkish companies in Central Asia.

Japan has long been arguing for an overhaul of the constitution of the UN on the grounds that the UN system at large was structured within a post-World War II context. At this juncture, Ankara holds views like Tokyo. Turkey backs the idea of comprehensive reform in the UN system in its own demands and the recently developed official discourse employed repeated statements such as, "The world is greater than five". Turkey's chances of becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council, however, are lower than those of Japan, even if calls for reform are favourably received. Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Egypt, which, like Turkey, are members of the OIC also voice similar notions and may receive preference in nomination.¹⁰³ On the other, Japan has actively cooperated with India, Brazil, and Germany for UNSC permanent seats. Ankara's demand for reform to the structure of UNSC has complicated the situation more and prolonged the reform debate unlike Tokyo's wish.

In conclusion, there is a steady increase of cooperation in the fields of economy and politics between Turkey and Japan since 2013. However, as of 2020, the current assessment of the

⁹⁸ "Abe, Erdogan agree to cooperate on refugees, fighting terrorism", The Japan Times, November 14, 2015.

⁹⁹ "Japonya ile turizm atağı: Uçuş sayısı artıyor, hedef 500 bin turist (Tourism campaign towards Japan)", Turizm Günlüğü, September 9, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Louisa Loveluck, "Japanese reporter returns home after three-year 'hell' in Syrian militant custody", The Washington Post, October 25, 2018.

¹⁰¹ Almas Dissyukov, "Central Asia and Japan: 15 Years of Multilateral Cooperation", The Diplomat, May 22, 2019.

¹⁰² Bahadır Pehlivan Türk, "Turkey-Japan: Dialogue on Global Affairs", Perceptions, March 7, 2016.

¹⁰³ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "Towards multi-dimensional cooperation in Turkey-Japan relations", The Journal of Turkish Weekly, March 7, 2016.

Turkish-Japanese partnership fell short of earlier expectations. There are some critical initiatives having a potential to move the partnership between Ankara and Tokyo to next stage in the next coming years. The convergence of Silk Road initiatives in Central Asia, and the building a joint Turkish-Japanese strategy towards the Middle East will take the partnership to a more intensive level.

South Korea

Turkey has fostered friendly relations with the Republic of Korea since the latter gained independence in 1948. The relationship first began when, in act of military solidarity with pro-West South Korea and in political opposition to communist North Korea, Turkey sent troops to the Korean War which took place from 1950-53. Due to the Korean War, a relationship based on a very solid foundation has been formed between Turkey and South Korea. For such reasons, assessments of Turkey-South Korea relations frequently employ the reference of a unique “blood brotherhood”.

Despite the lofty rhetoric of friendship in the realm of Turkish-South Korean relations, the two countries share no common political vision that ensures their cooperation at both the bilateral and international level. Therefore, Ankara and Seoul have been striving to elevate the framework of their political cooperation to that of a strategic partnership throughout the 2000s. However, if such a strategic partnership is to be successful, Turkey and South Korea should develop common political stances on regional and global issues, and furthermore, they must be able to defend these postures within international organizations & forums such as the UN and the G20. In this context, the MIKTA grouping which was established in 2013 has become a tool to assist in the development of a common approach towards global issues that could be adopted between Ankara and Seoul.¹⁰⁴

Ankara supports Seoul in the conflict between the two Koreas. The Turkish MFA made a statement in March 2010 when the South Korean Cheonan warship was sunk by North Korean torpedo and became graveyard for 46 sailors. Ankara also made a statement in November 2010 on the opening artillery fire on Yeongpyeong island of South Korea by North Korea. By these statements Ankara clearly condemned the aggressive actions of Pyongyang against Seoul. In addition, Turkey as a non-permanent member UN Security Council in the years of 2009 and 2010, served as the chair of the 1718 DPRK (North Korea) Sanctions Committee.¹⁰⁵ However, this does not mean that Ankara has troubled relationship with Pyongyang. Indeed, North Korea is acting more enthusiastic about the development of relations with Turkey. On August 10, 2014 when Prime Minister Erdoğan was elected as president, Speaker of North Korean Assembly Kim Young Nam sent an official congratulatory message.¹⁰⁶

India

Turkey-India relations have entered new stage after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power over the leading Congress Party in 2014. Although the BJP is a Hindu nationalist party and the ruling AKP has turned an Islamist party since 2011, Ankara and New Delhi have hoped for more cooperative relations in terms of economy and global governance under the

¹⁰⁴ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, “Turkey and Korea: From Blood Brotherhood to Strategic Partnership”, EMERiCS, August 2015.

¹⁰⁵ OSCE, “Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine: Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan”.
<http://www.osce.org/node/117726>

¹⁰⁶ “Congratulations to Turkish President-Elect”, Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, August 13, 2014,
<http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm>

G20, because both Turkey and India were emerging economies and their global appearance was on the rise.

In this respect, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has prioritized economic policies according to the general view after taking power in 2014. India has needed to improve its relations with all major economies in the world, and with China first and foremost. Prime Minister Modi was aware of the fact that he first needed to improve New Delhi's relations with Islamabad, as opposed to giving rise to further tensions with this most important neighbor, in order to promote bilateral ties with the Islamic world and in particular with the G20 members such as Indonesia, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia which harbor Muslim majorities. Likewise, in order to attract foreign capital and investment, he has needed to preserve the harmony between coexisting ethnic and religious groups in India, including the large Muslim population in the country, within a democratic and multi-cultural framework.

Turkey and India are also in agreement about various regional issues. They share a set of common policies aimed at the stabilization of Afghanistan. Turkey and India carried out significant projects in Afghanistan, following the NATO intervention in 2001. The two countries can follow a common cause and cooperate more closely in the maintenance of stability and promotion of development in Afghanistan following NATO's withdrawal from the country at the end of 2014.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, India and Turkey can embark on joint economic projects and seize the initiative for conflict-resolution in various parts of Africa, a continent over which both have considerable influence. Ankara also hoped to cooperate with New Delhi in finding a solution to the ongoing civil wars in Iraq and Syria.

The Turkish-Indian relations had developed until summer 2019 without significant difficulties. Prime Minister Modi attended the G20 Summit in Antalya, Turkey in November 2015 and had bilateral talks with President Erdoğan. Again, Modi and Erdoğan held a bilateral talk in Hangzhou, China in September 2016 on the sidelines of the G20 Summit. Erdoğan paid an official visit to India on April 30 – May 1, 2017. The two leaders also interacted with each other on the sidelines of BRICs Plus meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa in July 2018 and on the sidelines of G20 Osaka Summit in Japan in July 2019.¹⁰⁸

Since India abrogated Article 370 of its constitution, which gave Jammu and Kashmir special status, in August 2019, Ankara has been raising the Kashmir issue at different forums. President Erdoğan first raised the issue of Kashmir at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2019. As a counter step of New Delhi against Ankara's criticism over the Kashmir issue, Prime Minister Modi responded by holding meetings with the president of the Republic of Cyprus and prime ministers of Armenia and Greece on the sidelines of the UNGA. Then, New Delhi cancelled Modi's planned visit to Turkey in October 2019 and a lucrative \$2.32 billion naval deal with Turkish defense company Anadolu Shipyard for five 45,000-ton fleet support ships for India. In the view of growing defense ties between Turkey and Pakistan, India cut its defense exports to Turkey and reduced imports from Turkey. India also pushed forward its defence relations with Armenia with a \$40 million deal.¹⁰⁹

When President Erdoğan again spoke about Kashmir at his addressing to the Pakistani Parliament in February 2020, New Delhi responded by issuing a strong demarche to Turkey's envoy to India, stating that Ankara should not interfere in India's internal matters.¹¹⁰ Despite

¹⁰⁷ Selçuk Çolakoğlu and Mehmet Yegin, "Future of Afghanistan and Turkey's Contribution", USAK -IPC-NATO Report, September 2014.

¹⁰⁸ "India-Turkey Relations", The Embassy of India in Ankara. <https://www.indembassyankara.gov.in/page/relation>

¹⁰⁹ Niranjana Marjani, "India's Quiet Responses Against Turkey's Diplomatic Offensive", The Diplomat, March 7, 2020.

¹¹⁰ Shishir Upadhyaya, "India Wins Defense Deal with Armenia in Bid to Chasten Turkey", The Diplomat, March 18, 2020.

having very busy bilateral commercial relations, the diplomatic ties between Ankara and New Delhi turned cold, and is far from early expectations when the BJP came to power in 2014.

Pakistan

Turkey and Pakistan have a history of cooperation in the realms of foreign policy and security, having supported each other to defend their respective interests in the international arena. Since the early Cold War period, Turkey and Pakistan have sided with the other's approaches to Cyprus and Kashmir issues. Additionally, strong relations have also been established between the Turkish and Pakistani armies in terms of defense cooperation.

Currently, political relations and high-level contacts at the bilateral level are intensive as well. To remedy this, relations between the two countries gained a structural form in 2009 with the establishment of the High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC) mechanism. With this Council Turkey and Pakistan have gained the opportunity to develop common stances in international and regional affairs as well as to cultivate coordinated approaches in their bilateral relations.¹¹¹

Pak Prime Minister Imran Khan made his first official visit to Turkey in January 2019 after taking his office. During the visit, both sides reiterated the importance of the Turkey-Pakistan HLCC mechanism that also includes several working groups in further strengthening bilateral relations. That meant that the high-level political cooperation would continue as usual during the Imran government.¹¹²

Turkey reaffirmed its support for Pakistan's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) based on non-discriminatory criteria and reaffirmed that Pakistan's participation in the NSG would strengthen the global non-proliferation objectives. Ankara backs more on Islamabad's nuclear policy in international arena. The two leaders delivered to their support for the continuation to the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Turkey trilateral initiative lead by Ankara. The trilateral summits were ceased in 2014 after the outbreak of great differences between Kabul and Islamabad over the future peace process of Afghanistan.

Erdoğan and Imran underscored the need for resolution of the issue of Jammu and Kashmir through a sustained dialogue process and in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. This means that Ankara will give further support to Pakistan in the Kashmiri issue in the new term. In return, Pakistan reiterated its full and resolute support to the efforts for the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue based on the political equality of the two communities on the Island. Islamabad has also delivered diplomatic support's for Ankara's policies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Syria, and Libya.

The most important part of Imran Khan's visit to Turkey is to put bilateral relations on its usual track after the step down of Nawaz government two years ago. Erdoğan and Nawaz Sharif were close to each other not only personal level but also Islamic ideology. The step down of Nawaz depending on corruption charges was harshly criticized by pro-government Turkish media. Turkey and Pakistan have reiterated a full commitment to the Pak-Turkish strategic partnership again.

Bangladesh

After establishing diplomatic ties, Ankara-Dhaka relations flourished; and Bangladesh became a diplomatic ally of Turkey in international affairs. Dhaka was a staunch supporter of Turkish claims on the Cyprus issue during the 1970s and 1980s and Turkey provided

¹¹¹ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, Turkey and Pakistan: Beyond Friendship”, The News, February 17, 2015.

¹¹² “Pakistan-Turkey joint statement on PM Imran Khan's visit to Turkey”, The News, January 4, 2019.

technical and financial assistance to Bangladesh during its state-building process and creation of a stable and sustainable national economic system. The bilateral relations have gradually increased in all fields after establishing diplomatic ties without any single incident until 2012.¹¹³

From 2012 to 2016, Turkey-Bangladesh relations were strained because of Ankara's strong condemnation of the International Crimes Tribunal's (Bangladesh)¹¹⁴ indictments against, conviction and execution of leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest Islamist party. Turkey's ruling AKP, which adopted a political Islamist ideology in 2011, forsaking its liberal democratic stance, has provided support to the Muslim Brotherhood network across the world, including the Jamaat-e-Islami Party in Bangladesh.¹¹⁵ Therefore, AKP leaders' reactions to this tribunal were likely a function of their solidarity with the Muslim Brotherhood, and not consistent with Turkey's established Kemalist foreign policy tradition.¹¹⁶ In December 2012, President Abdullah Gül wrote a letter to his Bangladeshi counterpart Zillur Rahman, urging Bangladeshi courts to grant 1971 war suspects clemency. A 14-member Turkish Islamist group that had arrived in Dhaka in December 2012 to monitor the International Crimes Tribunal was detained and subsequently deported by the Bangladeshi authorities.¹¹⁷

On May 12, 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan issued a scathing condemnation of the Bangladeshi government's use of capital punishment against Motiur Rahman Nizami, head of the Jamaat-e-Islami Party.¹¹⁸ Shortly after Erdoğan's statement, Turkey recalled its ambassador to Bangladesh, precipitating a diplomatic standoff. Three months later, however, Turkey's ambassador returned to Dhaka.¹¹⁹

Past Turkish governments had lodged protests in similar circumstances, as when Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit did all within his power — though without harming the overall bilateral relationship with Pakistan — to save Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from eventual execution in 1979.¹²⁰ In sharp contrast, the AKP government's censure of the Bangladesh War Crimes Tribunal not only diverged from Turkey's established diplomatic norms but also offended Bangladeshi government and public sensibilities.

A second source of friction in the bilateral relationship was the Gülen Movement's involvement in Bangladesh. After declaring the Gülen Movement a terrorist organization in May 2016,¹²¹ the AKP government put pressure on the Bangladeshi government to ban the Movement, close its businesses and institutions, and deport its activists. The Turkish Embassy in Dhaka designated Turkish-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the International Turkish Hope School — the latter having been established in Dhaka in 1996 and grown to six branches with 2000 students, 33 Turkish and 210 local teachers — as Gülenist institutions.¹²² Turkish Ambassador Devrim Öztürk asked the Bangladeshi government to

¹¹³ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "Turkey-Bangladesh Relations: A Growing Partnership between Two Friendly Nations", Middle East Institute, June 25, 2019.

¹¹⁴ This was a domestic crimes tribunal established in 2009 by Bangladesh to prosecute suspects for the genocide committed in 1971 by the Pakistan army and their local collaborators.

¹¹⁵ Stasa Salacanian, "Not so splendid isolation: Erdogan's geopolitical nightmare," Qantara.de, February 19, 2019.

¹¹⁶ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "The Rise of Eurasianism in Turkish Foreign Policy: Can Turkey Change its pro-Western Orientation?" The Middle East Institute, April 16, 2019.

¹¹⁷ Samuel Ramani, "Can Bangladesh and Turkey Mend Frayed Ties?", The Diplomat, July 4, 2016.

¹¹⁸ "Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan Condemns Execution of Bangladesh Jamaat-E-Islami Leader Motiur Rahman Nizami", NDTV Beeps, May 12, 2016.

¹¹⁹ Kumar Sarker, "Turkey goes to bat for executed Jamaat leaders again," Dhaka Tribune, June 17, 2017.

¹²⁰ "Ecevit Butto'nun affını istedi (Ecevit demands pardoning of Bhutto)," Milliyet, March 21, 1978.

¹²¹ "Turkey officially designates Gulen religious group as terrorists," Reuters, May 31, 2016.

¹²² "Gülenists exist in Bangladesh," The Independent, July 16, 2017.

hand over the Gülen schools to the Turkey's public Maarif Foundation. However, the Bangladeshi Foreign Ministry demurred, having regarded the request as a violation of diplomatic norms.¹²³

Yet, despite the political setbacks experienced during the period 2012-2016, Bangladesh's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam left the door open for normalization. The reciprocal visits of Bangladeshi President Md. Abdul Hamid and Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım in 2017 were indicative of the healing of the relationship. Bangladesh Ambassador to Turkey Allama Siddiki recently described the current state of the relationship as the best it has ever been.¹²⁴

Turkey's response to the Rohingya refugee emergency has served as a vehicle to put the relationship back on a stable and productive footing. The 2016 violence against Rohingya residents of Rakhine State in Myanmar triggered a mass influx of about 600,000 refugees into Bangladesh, in addition to an estimated 250,000 undocumented Myanmar nationals already present in the country.¹²⁵ Myanmar's denial of citizenship and basic rights of the Muslim minority Rohingya of Rakhine State is the root cause of the problem.¹²⁶

Turkey has mounted an active diplomatic campaign on behalf of the Rohingya and in support of Bangladesh in the UN, the G20, MIKTA, the OIC, and other multilateral fora.¹²⁷ Turkey's TIKA, AFAD, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Diyanet, and Islamist nongovernmental organizations (NGO) have constructed camps, hospitals, schools, orphanages, and facilities for refugees and the poor across Bangladesh.¹²⁸

The Bangladeshi National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister's Office Tarique Ahmed Siddique and Chief of Army Staff of Bangladesh General Aziz Ahmed participated to the Turkish military's Winter-2019 exercise in the eastern province of Kars in February 2019. Some 251 personnel from 15 countries, including Bangladesh, took part in it. Bangladesh Army dispatched a Special Forces unit to participate in the winter 2019 multi-national exercise in Turkey.¹²⁹ Bangladesh has also paid attention to purchase some military equipment and arms from public and private Turkish defense companies. Bangladesh military and police forces want to benefit from Turkish capacity for modernization and training to their staff.

In conclusion, with the exception of the years 2012-2016, Turkey-Bangladesh relations have been cordial and cooperative. Now, the two newly emerging economies desire to get more intensive cooperation with each other.

Malaysia

Turkey and Malaysia have adopted similar attitudes toward many regional and international issues from within international organizations. There are no concrete problems between the two countries; however, relations were partially overshadowed due to an incident pertaining to domestic political developments in Malaysia between 2008 and 2013. Anwar Ibrahim, the

¹²³ Syed Zainul Abedin and Adil Sakhawat, "Turkish nationals in Bangladesh living in fear," Dhaka Tribune, August 4, 2017.

¹²⁴ "Bangladeshi Embassy in Ankara marks national day," Anadolu Agency, March 27, 2019.

¹²⁵ "Future of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh 'hangs in the balance' – UNHCR chief", UN News, April 26, 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1037421>

¹²⁶ Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Md. Shahidul Haque's briefing on "migration governance and the Rohingya crisis" in Ankara on May 19, 2019, The Turkish Center for Asia-Pacific Studies. <http://www.asianpacificcenter.org/apac-news-in-2019.html>.

¹²⁷ "Turkish resolution on Rohingya gets UN approval", Hürriyet Daily News, November 17, 2018.

¹²⁸ "Turkey leads humanitarian aid efforts to Rohingya refugees", Daily Sabah, August 22, 2018.

¹²⁹ "Army chief set for Turkey visit," Dhaka Tribune, February 17, 2019.

leader of the opposition party called the People's Pact (Pakatan Rakyat), took shelter in the Turkish Embassy in Kuala Lumpur because he was accused of sodomy and his life was therefore under threat. Even though Anwar Ibrahim did not submit a request for political asylum in Turkey, this incident caused a minor crisis between Turkey and Malaysia. The government formed by the National Front (Barisan Nasional), which had been ruling the country since it gained independence, got the impression that the AKP government was supporting the opposition led by Anwar Ibrahim. This impression notwithstanding, Malaysia continued to take policy measures to carry bilateral relations a step further. In this respect, the visit by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Abdul Razak to Turkey in February 2011 was of utmost significance. In return, Prime Minister Erdoğan made one of his initial visits in the beginning of 2014 to Malaysia was a constructive step toward mending and rejuvenating bilateral relations. The two countries signed a declaration on the Framework for Strategic Cooperation in order to boost bilateral relations on a wide array of fields, including politics, trade, education, and security.¹³⁰ Ankara and Putrajaya also mutually agreed to lift visa requirements.

After a historic government change in Malaysia, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad paid an official visit to Turkey in July 2019 and was accompanied by three ministers, namely Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu, and International Trade & Industry Minister Datuk Ignatius Darell Leiking. Mahathir focussed on two main items during his Turkey visit: increasing cooperation in economy in general and the defence industry and deepening international cooperation between Ankara and Putrajaya.¹³¹

There were already 10 agreements on the side-lines of the 2019 Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA 2019) in Malaysia between Turkish defence companies and Malaysian counterparts. Turkey's first big defence sale to Malaysia was in 2011 with a deal of the 257 PARS armoured vehicles at the amount of \$600 million. Then, ASELSAN has begun to sell its MUHAFIZ- a 30MM Remote Controlled Stabilized Naval Gun System since April 2017. Recently, ASELSAN decided to find a production base in Malaysia for Muhafiz for the Southeast Asian market.¹³²

In a joint news conference on July 25, 2019 both Mahathir and Erdoğan said that they discussed cooperation between Turkey and Malaysia as two D-8 and OIC members and strategic partners. Both leaders were also critical of Western powers and particularly Mahathir had a rhetoric against neo-colonialism. More importantly, Mahathir announced a tripartite pact between Malaysia, Turkey, and Pakistan to lead the renaissance of the Muslim world.¹³³ It is an interesting initiative at the time of the Saudi-Iranian confrontation in the Gulf. Three countries foreign ministers firstly met in March 2019. The ambitious initiation may have further focus particularly on Palestine, the Rohingyas, and the Uyghurs. The trio may have some leverages to make a contact between Tehran and Riyadh. However, these three countries have some adversary relations with some other OIC members- Turkey with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt; Pakistan with Bangladesh; and Malaysia with Indonesia and this may make the trio less effective in the Muslim world. Besides, except the Palestinian issue, the trio has no common approach to other issues. Pakistan unlikely supports any anti-China initiative on the Uyghurs. Even Ankara is not consistent in defending the Uyghurs' rights against Beijing. Malaysia has some certain constraints to support the Rohingyas against Myanmar, because the ASEAN Way prevents member states to interfere deeply in minority issues of

¹³⁰ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "A New Page in Turkey-Malaysia Relations", *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, January 20, 2014.

¹³¹ Zurairi Ar, "Three things we learnt from: Dr M's visit to Turkey", *Malay Mail*, July 28, 2019.

¹³² "Turkish defense industry to ink over 10 deals at leading Asia-Pacific fair", *Daily Sabah*, March 29, 2019.

¹³³ "Malaysia's PM stresses Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan solidarity for Ummah's unity", *The Express Tribune*, July 26, 2019.

other members. In the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the trio has a limited leverage and they cannot give a meaningful support to the Palestinians without Egyptian and Saudi consent. It is likely that Islamabad wants to use the trio to get more support to its Kashmir policy against India. The foundation of Turkey-Malaysia-Pakistan trio is an ambitious initiative to increase the global leverage for three countries. It is too early to say that it will be a very efficient initiative, but the trio helps first to increase strategic cooperation between Ankara, Islamabad, and Putrajaya further.

In conclusion, Turkey and Malaysia will likely go further in cooperation in the fields of defence industry and international cooperation despite the political turmoil in Malaysia and replacement of Mahathir by Muhyiddin Yassin as prime minister.¹³⁴ Coming years will likely be more promising for increasing defence industry and political cooperation between the two countries.

Indonesia

Turkey and Indonesia have historical deep-rooted and strong links of friendship with no outstanding issues between the two countries and this offers a unique opportunity for increased cooperation. Turkey-Indonesia relations have become multidimensional both in terms of the number of the political visits and in terms of economic cooperation during the 2000s. Both Turkey and Indonesia countries are willing to improve their cooperation in global affairs under the framework of the G20 and MIKTA.¹³⁵ Turkey not only considers Indonesia as a regional partner, but also as a "strategic partner" that could cooperate in the fields of global political and economic issues.

Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Indonesia after the earthquake and tsunami disaster in 2005. The mutual visits of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in June 2010 and Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gül in April 2011 constituted a remarkable turning point in the bilateral relations. President Erdoğan in August 2015 and Indonesian counterpart Joko Widodo in July 2017 also paid another reciprocal visit to increase the bilateral cooperation, especially in the spheres of trade, health care, energy, and defense industry.¹³⁶

Both countries have much to offer each other in several areas. Turkey could provide Indonesia its quality in service sector and competitive strategy in foreign trade and Indonesia as a leader country of ASEAN could provide Turkey its rich natural resources and broad market.¹³⁷ Turkey and Indonesia could become important partners through compatible foreign policy strategies and complementary economic policies.¹³⁸

Vietnam

The establishment of the diplomatic relations between Turkey and Vietnam lead back to 1978. However, the relations have fared at a low rate of engagement until the signing of the Bilateral Trade Agreement in 1997.¹³⁹ Both Turkey and Vietnam have drawn attention to

¹³⁴ James Chin, "Commentary: Three underlying forces fueled Malaysia's recent political crisis", Channel News Asia, March 3, 2020.

¹³⁵ Selçuk Çolakoglu, "MIKTA in Global Governance as a Middle Power Grouping: A Turkish Perspective", in *MIKTA: Current Situation and The Way Forward*, Retno Marsudi (ed.), Jakarta: Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, pp.51-72.

¹³⁶ "Relations between Turkey and Indonesia", Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-indonesia.en.mfa>

¹³⁷ Dipo Alam, "Natural Partners", Jakarta Globe, April 5, 2011.

¹³⁸ Djisman Simandjuntak, "Giving a tailwind to Turkey-Indonesia relations", The Jakarta Post, April 5, 2011.

¹³⁹ "Relations Between Turkey and Vietnam", Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-vietnam-siyasi-iliskileri.en.mfa>

themselves with their economic development performance since 2010. The past decade has also witnessed attempts to further the relations between these two emerging economies.¹⁴⁰ It is necessary for Turkish and Vietnamese decision makers to draw a strategic roadmap based on opportunities for cooperation and existing difficulties to upgrade their vibrant economic partnership to a political one.

Conclusion

Ankara has stated that Turkey's main goal with the Asia Anew Initiative was not an "axis shift." Turkish officials have also underlined that Turkey values its allies and at the same time aims to increase the number of its partners in international arena. Ankara has been stressing that enhancing ties with a specific country does not necessarily mean giving up on its current allies.¹⁴¹ However, some members of the Turkey's ruling AKP-MHP-Vatan Party alliance and pro-government media frequently talk about an axis shift for Ankara towards to the anti-West orientation. Turkey's relations with China and engagements with the SCO and BRICS are often presented as an axis shift by the Turkish Eurasianists.¹⁴² These conflicting arguments make confusion both in Turkish and international public and cause some concern about the Asia Anew Initiative.

Economy is usually at the forefront when Turkey's relations with East Asian countries are concerned, as well as giving vitality to the political, and cultural relations. From this point, the increasing social contacts with high-level visits in recent years are not an accidental situation. However, Turkey is not the decisive side in the economic relations and has a deficit on a large scale in its foreign trade with East Asian countries. Turkey has tried to use its competitive sectors like tourism, service sector, defense industry, and construction in the continent to take a leverage.

Turkey's more active role in international organizations & forums have contributed to develop its relations with Asian countries during the 2000s. Being a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 2017 within ASEAN was an important step. Turkey wants to be a Dialogue Partner of the ASEAN by developing this cooperation. Being a Dialogue Partner of the SCO provides an institutional framework for Turkey for its cooperation with China, Russia, Central and South Asian countries. Through the G20, Turkey has captured the chance for assessing global issues even closer with leading Asia-Pacific countries like China, Japan, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and Australia. The OIC have long been providing a basis for closer ties with East Asian Muslim-majority nations like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Maldives. In recent years, Turkey have been in close cooperation with the OIC, and closely concerned with the problems of Muslim minorities in Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand, and seeking to find a solution to the problems.

Nevertheless, Turkey is still far from having a full-fledged Asia-Pacific or Indo-Pacific strategy with strict guidelines. For example, the recently declared Asia Anew Initiative does not clarify how Turkey would develop its relations with leading Asian countries like China, Japan, and India together. It is also not clear enough how Turkey will have a position in inter-Asian affairs like sea and territorial disputes in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and island disputes. Recently, outbreak of so-called trade war between China and the United States and a trade standoff between Japan and South Korea made Turkey's Asian initiative

¹⁴⁰ Bui Nhat Quang, "Vietnam – Turkey Relations: Solutions for a Better 2020 Perspective", Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, September 11, 2014.

¹⁴¹ "Turkey's Asia Anew initiative no "axis shift": FM", Xinhua, August 9, 2019.

¹⁴² Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "The Rise of Eurasianism in Turkish Foreign Policy: Can Turkey Change its pro-Western Orientation?", Middle East Institute, April 16, 2019.

more complicated. Recent developments on Hong Kong, Taiwan, North Korea, and the Indo-Chinese border skirmishes may also raise loopholes in Turkey's new Asian engagement. Asia is not a politically united continent like Europe and the inter-Asian disputes may pose risks rather than opportunities in some cases for Turkey. The unitary and simplistic Asian approach of Ankara may not work properly to get more active involvement in the continent.

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