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Turkey and China: A Study in Symmetry

By Rosita Dellios and Nadir Kemal Yilmaz¹

Summary

How symmetrical are Turkey and China despite the obvious differences in size and resources? And how are these reflected in their relations? The interface between symmetries and mutual relations is investigated through (1) economy and trade and (2) international relations. The best arena for developing closer relations is Eurasia, specifically through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The possibility of a Sino-Turkish axis of diplomacy would complement their wider security memberships and even bridge them. This represents a cooperative regional dynamic in which Turkey and China might participate more closely.

Keywords

Turkey-China Relations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, NATO, Eurasia, Central Asia, international relations.

Introduction

Little has been written on relations between the Republic of Turkey and the People's Republic of China, let alone their symmetrical nature. John K. C. Daly notes in a Jamestown

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Foundation article that Turkey and China fought each other during the Korean War and concludes that their current battlefield is an economic one where they are competing for the same markets in textiles and over securing energy resources in Eurasia. On this basis, he believes their relations for the foreseeable future will remain “formal but distant”.² One is hard pressed to find deeper or alternative academic analyses on the overall relationship and must resort to diplomatic speeches, news reports, an official website on trade relations, and the occasional paper or relevant interview by think tanks.³ In 2007 there was not even a Wikipedia entry for these two countries, as there was for China and Iran, for example. This is curious in view of a long intertwined history in which many of the people of present day Turkey and China emerged from the same Inner Asian region. Not only did they remain in contact for more than two millennia, principally through trade on the Silk Road, but were keenly aware of each other militarily on either side of the Great Wall.

When it comes to profiling the two countries side by side, rather than in a relationship, the quest becomes more eclectic. A conference paper for the International Studies Association on poliheuristic theory – which seeks to explain foreign policy decision-making by observing it in two stages, cognitive and rational – employs Turkey and China as case studies.⁴ Why? They are seen as “two important states that frequently are characterized as *sui generis*” and show distinctive peculiarities. China’s peculiarity is that it cannot be analyzed purely on the basis of “Western

² John K. C. Daly, “Sino-Turkish Relations Beyond the Silk Road”, *China Brief*, The Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 7, No. 4 (February, 2007), available at http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=422&issue_id=4012&article_id=2371932, accessed 19.12.07. For more in-depth analysis of Sino-Turkish economic relations, see Nadir Kemal Yilmaz, Fang Lee Cooke, and Rosita Dellios, “Turkey’s FDI Policy and Chinese Foreign Direct Investments in Turkey: Some Economic and Management Implications”, *Global Business Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (April/May 2008).

³ For example, “China, Turkey Signed Joint Communique”, *People’s Daily*, 20 April 2000, available at http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/200004/20/eng20000420_39289.html, accessed 19.12.07; Suna Lee, “Turkey and China – Strengthening Economic Ties”, ASAM, 2007, available at <http://www.asam.org.tr/tr/yazigoster.asp?ID=1844&kat1=8&kat2=>

accessed 19.12.07; Anatolian News Agency, “Reinforcing Relations between Turkey, China”, *Turkish Daily News*, 28 November 2007, available at <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=89789>, accessed 19.12.07; and Turkey-China Economic & Trade Cooperation, official website, <http://www.ctc.mofcom.gov.cn/ciweb/tcc/index.jsp>, accessed 1.12.07. On think tanks, besides the above-cited Jamestown Foundation in the US, there are the Ankara-based International Strategic Research Organization (ISRO - USAK) at www.usak.org.tr, and the Center for Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Studies within the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences at www.coscos.org.cn, both of which are cited below.

⁴ Nukhet Sandal, Enyu Zhang, Carolyn C. James, and Patrick James, “Poliheuristic Theory in Comparative Perspective: Theory and Evidence for Turkey and China”, unpublished conference paper, International Studies

rationality, with its cost-benefit analysis” as it is grounded in a different philosophical system; hence “cognitive heuristics” have an important role to play in analyzing Chinese foreign policy-making. Turkey’s peculiarity is that, as with China, its unique (*sui generis*) status means that it will “resist the predictions of models based on Western, social scientific concepts”.⁵ This also permits greater scope for the application of “cognitive heuristics”. What is unique about Turkey? The authors of the study on poliheuristic theory have noted a number of distinctive features, including: its democratic, secular profile in a volatile region; its capacity to absorb several military coups and bounce back as a constitutionally-based democracy; its religious but generally not ethnic ties with the Middle East; its pro-Western strategic affiliation during the Cold War; and even its continuing sound relations with Israel, a situation which is deemed remarkable for a predominantly Muslim country.⁶

Why Symmetry?

Whether Turkey and China are sufficiently different from other states to warrant their coupling in theoretical case work remains outside the purview of this article. More relevant is the implicit recognition by the above study of Turkey and China forming a symmetry of difference. It is this idea which merits exploration as a template for reflection on relations between the two countries – and the potentialities they contain.

Symmetries, it should be emphasized, are not only expressed in terms of broad similarities (in the above case, that Turkey and China are - for reasons specific to each - not confined to the bounds of Western rationality) but also in terms of mirror opposites. To the obvious example of the Cold War between the strategic competitors, US and USSR, may be added the current ‘war on terror’. Frank Furedi, author of *Invitation to Terror: The Expanding Empire of the Unknown*, has described the war on terror as a “symmetry of confusion” – the “incoherent rage” of the terror

Association Conference, San Diego CA, March 2006, available at http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p100451_index.html, accessed 19.12.07.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. See also Bulent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, “Turkey and the Middle East: Frontiers of the New Geographic Imagination”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vo. 61, No. 4 (December 2007), pp. 471-488.

networks being “matched by an equally incoherent response from Western governments”.⁷ This departs from the usual asymmetrical rendering of terrorists as non-state actors versus Western governments armed with the tools of traditional security. ‘Symmetry’ and ‘asymmetry’ have entered the language of strategic studies to a greater degree than in the past when ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ or ‘conventional’ and ‘unconventional’ warfare were closer to the linguistic norm, along with ‘guerrilla’ tactics as an element of indirect strategy. Even if the concept is old, the emphasis on ‘asymmetric warfare’ within the so-called ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’ became notable after 9/11, and has continued since.⁸

‘Asymmetric warfare’ as a popular 21st century military term is not only used to describe a situation of government forces fighting insurgencies, but also of China’s military strategy against the US. In its annual reports to Congress, *The Military Power of the People’s Republic of China*, the US Department of Defense regards China as being engaged in asymmetric warfare. By the 2007 report, the term is rendered as a subheading within chapter 3 on China’s military strategy and doctrine (whereas previously it was only discussed). “Identifying and exploiting asymmetries is a fundamental aspect of Chinese strategic and military thinking,” the 2007 report begins the section on asymmetric warfare, “particularly as a means for a weaker force to defeat one that is stronger.”⁹ China’s anti-satellite test in January 2007 was widely seen as an example of Beijing’s asymmetric strategic thinking: that is, targeting satellite communication as a weak link in US naval warfare capabilities – capabilities that could be used against China in the event of a Chinese military takeover of its ‘renegade province’, Taiwan.

⁷ “The War on Terror is a Symmetry of Confusion”, *Spiked Review of Books*, Issue 7, 7 November 2007, available at http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php?/site/reviewofbooks_article/4129/, accessed 16.12.07; *Invitation to Terror* is published by Continuum (London, 2007).

⁸ See *The RMA Debate* website, sponsored by the Project on Defense Alternatives, The Commonwealth Institute, Cambridge, USA, available at <http://www.comw.org/rma/fulltext/asymmetric.html>, accessed 26.12.07; Michael Rubin, “Asymmetrical Threat Concept and Its Reflections on International Security”, presentation to the Strategic Research and Study Center under the Turkish General Staff, Istanbul, 31 May 2007, available at http://www.aei.org/docLib/20070502_AsymmetricalThreatConcept.pdf, accessed 26.12.07; and Richard Norton-Taylor, “Asymmetric Warfare”, *The Guardian*, 3 October 2001, available at www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/story/0,,562298,00.html; accessed 26.12.07.

⁹ Office of the US Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: The Military Power of the People’s Republic of China*, 2007, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/070523-China-Military-Power-final.pdf>, accessed 2.12.07. For a recent theoretical discussion of asymmetric warfare, see Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005.

What lesson is to be drawn from this brief exploration of the ‘asymmetric’ being equated with security issues in which the weak side is, politically at least, an actual or potential opponent to the West (compared to Furedi’s assessment that there is in fact a symmetry – not one judged by power discrepancies but societal responses - between the West and its terrorist adversaries)? The primary one is that in a world where the ‘balance of power’ (symmetries) has largely left the lexicon and asymmetries have entered in the form of the strategies pursued by unconventional ‘others’, it is instructive to see how existing symmetries of power and diplomacy – even difference to the normative West - might contribute to a more multipolar global arena. In this respect, Turkey and China are not only in a state of symmetry in identifiable areas, but through it they may find much in common upon which to strengthen bilateral relations. This, in turn, can be expected to impact on their common ground of history and future opportunities: Eurasia. In this region which encompasses the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia, and which represents one of the world’s richest, largely untapped, sources of oil and natural gas, Turkey and China have been viewed to be in competition over resources:

The rivalry is particularly pronounced in the struggle for Caspian exports of gas and oil from the former Soviet states ringing the inland sea, whose reserves contain an estimated 32 billion to 220 billion barrels of recoverable oil. Turkey scored an initial demarche in Azerbaijan with the May 2006 opening of the 1,092-mile-long, \$3.6 billion, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, capable of handling one million barrels per day . . .

China, however, has made significant inroads in Kazakhstan. . . . In November 2005, a \$700 million, 600 mile-long Kazakhstan-China pipeline with an annual capacity of 20 million barrels became operational—oil that otherwise might have flowed westwards . . . China has similarly trumped Turkey in Turkmenistan . . . [where China] would receive up to 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from the still undeveloped Yuzhny Iolotan field via a pipeline to be constructed across Kazakhstan.¹⁰

It should be noted that the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline which sidesteps Russia to bring oil to Europe was supported by the US and an alternative pipeline, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) from Kazakhstan to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, was supported by Russia.¹¹ Thus there are multi-level rivalries at play. If there is an East-West symmetry of competition over resources (China-Turkey, Russia-US), then the possibility arises that a symmetry of cooperation may be developed. This is elaborated below by reflecting on the relationship more broadly in time and space, cultures and philosophies.

Eurasia: A Mandalic Region

Eurasia's historic importance in East-West trade along the Silk Road carried political ramifications with attempts to unify the region resulting in inter-ethnic royal bloodlines and pragmatism in civilization crossovers. Thus it is notable that the Tang (AD 618-906) imperial family came from Turko-Mongol ancestry through the Toba tribe of Central Asia. The Toba founded the Northern Wei dynasty in AD 386, reunifying northern China above the Yangze River, and extending dynastic control across the northern steppes, the Tarim Basin, and the North China Plain.¹² Sino-Turkic families not only formed the ruling elites in the Tang, but deployed a multinational army to back China's political power over part of the Silk Road.¹³ While highly Sinicized, the Tang privately maintained their language and customs. It made sense that the 'foreign' rulers should adopt Chinese administrative culture, which was drawn from Confucian learning, in order to maintain so large an empire and retain the *Mandate of Heaven* (the legitimacy

¹⁰ Daly, "Sino-Turkish Relations Beyond the Silk Road".

¹¹ See W Joseph Stroupe, "Strategic Squeeze Over Caspian Resources", *Asia Times*, 11 May 2004, available at <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/chinainstitute/nav03.cfm?nav03=44432&nav02=43876&nav01=43092>, accessed 13-12-07; and Vladimir Socor, "Transneft Squeezing Oil Majors in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 4, No. 142 (23 July 2007), available at http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372309, accessed 21.12.07.

¹² See Edmund Capon and Werner Forman, *Tang China: Vision and Splendour of a Golden Age*, Macdonald Orbis, London, 1989, p. 14; and Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *East Asia: The Great Tradition*, 8th edn, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1970, pp. 154-155.

¹³ Charles Holcombe, *In The Shadow of the Han: Literati Thought and Society at the Beginning of the Southern Dynasties*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2004, p. 139; and Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History*, W.W. Norton & Co Waley-Cohen, New York, 1999, p. 23.

of the time) to rule. The Sui dynasty (581-618) that came before the Tang was founded by Yang Jian, of Sino-Turkic ancestry through his family links to the Northern Zhou ruling family.¹⁴

The first use of ‘Turk’ as a political name, and henceforth as a designation (Turkic) for a linguistic group, was Tujue in the sixth century. The Tujue (or Göktürk) lived in the northern part of presentday Xinjiang in Northwest China and expanded their empire across Eurasia as far as Eastern Europe and North Asia. The area, often referred to as Turkistan, was conquered by the Mongols under Genghis Khan in 1220. By 1279, the Mongols conquered China as well, ruling for 89 years as the Yuan dynasty. Today, after the expansion of Tsarist Russia and, subsequently, the Soviet Union, Turkic culture has survived in its local variations. Five Central Asian states - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan - are identifiably Turkic in culture, though the region as a whole is regarded as culturally diverse. Turkic culture is also found in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. This eastern part of ‘Turkistan’ (hence the name ‘East Turkistan’ or ‘Chinese Turkistan’) was conquered by China’s Manchu rulers, who formed the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), and was given the name Xinjiang – meaning ‘new frontier’ - when incorporated into the Chinese polity.

From the above, it is evident that despite almost 10,000 kilometres dividing Turkey and China across Eurasia, Turkey is no stranger historically or culturally to its vast Eastern neighbourhood. China, in turn, need look no further than its own borders to find Turkic culture and to remember through dynastic records the Western Regions or *Xiyu* from whence Buddhism came but also trade and warfare.¹⁵ To employ a Buddhist metaphor in understanding the region, Eurasia may be viewed as a mandalic region – one that displays the properties of a *mandala*¹⁶ of mutually constitutive relationships in spatial proximity.¹⁷ The Eurasian *mandala* may be seen as framed by

¹⁴ Capon and Forman, *Tang China*, p. 14.

¹⁵ For a comprehensive account, see B. N. Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*, Montilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1987 (reprint 1993).

¹⁶ Sanskrit for circle, it commonly refers to Buddhist cosmograms, typically formed by symmetrical quadrants nested in a circle and focused on a sacred centre.

¹⁷ Mandalic regionalism and the deployment of the mandala metaphor in international relations has been elaborated by various authors in *The Culture Mandala*, available on www.international-relations.com and through CEWCES publications on <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cewcce/>; with the primary author being Rosita Dellios (for published articles, see personal researcher page on http://epublications.bond.edu.au/rosita_dellios).

the emerging powers of the current century: China and Turkey (with the city of Istanbul literally straddling a European and an Asian side) to the East and West; and to the North and South by Russia and India. At the gravitational centre of the *mandala* is Central Asia. It is also depicted by Brookings Institution author, Johannes F. Linn, as a centre of gravity in the unfolding 21st century global economy:

. . . Central Asia lies at the core of the Eurasian super-continent, the most dynamic part of today's global economy. Surrounded by rapidly growing China, India and Russia, Central Asia is a potential transit hub for the rapidly expanding transcontinental Eurasian trade and capital flows. Moreover it is the repository of large energy and mineral resources and home to a large and well educated population – 60 million people in the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia, or 123 million, if one adds Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Mongolia and Xinjian Uyghur Autonomous Region of China to encompass the natural geographic boundaries of today's Central Asia.¹⁸

If Central Asia is the heart of the mandalic region geographically and temporally, what lies at its normative centre? Will it revert to Great Game competition, as occurred in the 19th century when Britain and Russia contested control of the region, but this time in terms of Russia and China as the key protagonists, with Iran, India, Pakistan, the US and Turkey as additional players? Alternatively, concerted effort to overcome endemic security threats could pave the way for a cooperative energy policy – as control of energy stands out as the prime lever of competition. More than that, it would advance the cause of a multipolar regionalism; one that seeks to combine differences within this traditional crossroads of cultures and their empires. Multipolarity, it will be recalled, is better attuned to the articulation of symmetries than an asymmetrical unipolarity. How symmetrical are Turkey and China despite the obvious differences in size and resources? And how are these reflected in their relations?

¹⁸ Johannes F. Linn, “Central Asia: A New Hub of Global Integration”, The Brookings Institution, 29 November 2007, available at http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2007/1129_central_asia_linn.aspx, accessed 16.12.07.

Turkey and China: An Interface between Symmetries and Mutual Relations

1. *Economy and Trade*

Turkey established diplomatic relations with the PRC on 4 August 1971. This was the year that the People's Republic was given the China seat at the United Nations, replacing the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan. In effect, it was a watershed year in which 'Red China', as it was commonly called, came out of the diplomatic cold. By the end of that decade, it had also emerged from economic isolation by joining the liberal international economic order. Since the introduction of market reforms in 1978, China sustained an average annual growth rate of 9.7%,¹⁹ and quadrupled the size of its economy so that it grew to be the world's fourth largest, after the United States, Japan and Germany. By the end of 2006, this Communist Party-ruled state of 1.3 billion people held the world's largest foreign exchange reserves of more than US\$1 trillion.²⁰ Besides benefiting from becoming the capitalist world's 'factory', China has engaged in the rule-based global trade structure through membership in 2001 of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Turkey, too, experienced significant transformation of its economy into a more liberal and open system. In the 1980s, the "Anatolian tigers" emerged in a "private-sector-driven economic development".²¹ After the full liberalization of capital accounts in 1989 and the liberalization process during the 1990s decade, the Turkish economy opened up to international financial markets. Rapid technological development and a concomitant increase in the speed of communications also advanced liberalization. During the past half decade the Turkish economy has grown at 6-7% per annum, which has been hailed as the "highest sustained rate of growth in the OECD".²² Turkey is ranked as the world's 19th largest economy and the sixth fastest growing,

¹⁹ "China – Country Overview", World Bank, 2007, available at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/EASTASIAPACIFICEXT/CHINAEXTN/0,,menuPK:318958~pagePK:141132~piPK:141121~theSitePK:318950,00.html>, accessed 20.12.07.

²⁰ International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *Strategic Survey 2007*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2007, pp. 286-7.

²¹ Taspinar, "The Old Turks' Revolt", p. 123.

²² IISS, *Strategic Survey 2007*, pp. 181-2.

with PriceWaterhouseCoopers forecasting in 2006 that if the Turkish economy continues its current growth rate it will overtake Germany's economy by mid-century.²³

How have these successes issuing from economic liberalization affected the two countries? After WTO membership, China's trade volume increased with almost all countries. Low cost production in China provided an enormous competitive advantage. The textile industry is a notable example of an increase in China's share of the market worldwide. In the US it is expected to account for two-thirds of the market in the next two years. Turkey with its enormous textile industry of about US\$13.5 billion is one of the textile exporters to the EU. However, competition with Chinese producers has forced Turkish manufacturers to either close down their factories or move them to China. Strategies - such as adding high brand value to their products or generating labeled brands - have been developed to compete with Chinese products.

Trade between Turkey and China is increasing at a rapid rate with a sixfold increase in the last half decade.²⁴ Viewed from the perspective of the decade 1996-2006, the increase was greater at 1,567% or 15-fold. Total imports and exports reached US\$10.4 billion in 2006, according to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Trade figures in 2007. Compared to the trading volume between Turkey and its largest trade partner, the EU, the difference in the growth rate is considerable. If growth rates continue as projected, with an average of 50% growth for China and 20% for EU, Turkey's trade volume with China will rise to half of its trade volume with the EU in 2010.

In 2006, Turkey imported US\$9.7 billion worth of goods from China but its exports were less than a billion dollars. This meant that with China's low cost export advantage the trade deficit was as high as US\$8.9 billion in 2006 and accounted for 14% of Turkey's total trade deficit. This represents a major asymmetry in Sino-Turkish relations. It derives not from discrepancies in economic size (Australia, for instance, does not have a trade deficit with China thanks to its keenly sought energy resources) but from the fact that two-thirds of Turkey's imports that include

²³ Cited in Daly, "Sino-Turkish Relations Beyond the Silk Road".

²⁴ Suna Lee, "Turkey and China - Strengthening Economic Ties", *ASAM*, 8 November 2007, available at <http://www.asam.org.tr/tr/yazigoster.asp?ID=1844&kat1=8&kat2=> accessed 19.12.07.

machinery, fossil fuels, and electronics derive from China.²⁵ Turkey's exports are too narrowly concentrated in a few sectors – chromium, iron and steel, marble and granite – which account for over half its China-bound exports.²⁶ Diversification and greater market familiarity with China will help, and to this end establishment of the Turkish Trade Office in Shanghai is an asset. It is also notable that 2000 Turkish business people attended the 2007 China Import and Export Fair (the 'Canton Fair'), which is the world's third largest event of its kind.²⁷ Turkish business people will be encouraged by China being ranked as a top 10 performer in the World Bank's 2006 ranking on the Ease of Doing Business. Moreover, in September 2006, China decided to revamp its tax incentives to promote the higher end exports.²⁸

It may be concluded that while there are symmetries in Turkish and Chinese economic growth trajectories, the trade deficit is a major asymmetry relating to Sino-Turkish trade. Both countries declare that there will be efforts to reduce it. Although the adjustment of the value of currencies may solve this problem in the longer term, the most effective and practical solution for today seems to be foreign direct investment (FDI). Some Turkish and Chinese pioneers have already invested in each other's country. Turkish pioneers in the Chinese market include a number of large companies. Çimtaş NingBo, a subsidiary of ENKA Holding, is one of the biggest contractors in Turkey. It is manufacturing steel piping systems in Ningbo, near Shanghai. Demirdokum, a heating equipment provider owned by Koc Holding, is the largest Turkish conglomerate, and Koc Holding's Arcelik, the leading durable goods manufacturer in Turkey acquired a Chinese washing machine manufacturing firm, Changzhou Casa Shinco Appliances Co.²⁹ Arcelik also indicated that it was seeking acquisitions in China. Another example of a potential investment involves Colins, the Turkish cloth retailing company, which in 2007 was

²⁵ Anatolian News Agency, "Reinforcing Relations between Turkey, China", *Turkish Daily News*, 28 November 2007, available at <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=89789>, accessed 19.12.07.

²⁶ Lee, "Turkey and China - Strengthening Economic Ties".

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ For details, see Turkey-China Economic & Trade Cooperation, official website, <http://www.ctc.mofcom.gov.cn/ciweb/tcc/index.jsp>, accessed 1.12.07.

²⁹ *Turkish Daily News*, 26 September 2007, available at <http://213.243.16.209/article.php?enewsid=84383>, accessed 30.12.07.

negotiating with a Chinese company for investment opportunities in the Chinese market.³⁰ Other than these large-scale investments, trading and consulting companies have entered China for the conduct of import and export transactions and the provision of market entry strategies for new Turkish investors. Examples of business pioneers from China in the Turkish market include: Chery automobiles; ZTE Corporation (telecommunications company), the Yuncheng Company (machinery producer); Orient-Li International (the largest bearing producer in China); textiles manufacturer Hangzhou Fuxing Group (which envisages exporting half its products and selling the other half to the domestic market in Turkey); Ningbo Haitian Group Co. Ltd. (plastic injection molding machines, air compressors); the SML Group (provides garment trim to the apparel industry).³¹

Tourism is another opportunity in Sino-Turkish economic relations. Regular flights to China by Turkish Airlines were established in 1999. Turkish Airlines tries to retain and increase its share of Chinese customers by serving Chinese food, showing Chinese films and providing ‘Miles & Miles’ programs. These have helped develop the traffic between Turkey and China. According to Turkish Statistics Institute data, the tourist arrivals from China indicate a 94% increase from 2000 to 2005. The departures on the other hand indicate an increase of 102% for the same period. Both arrivals and departures increased at an approximate 20% rate. The tourist arrivals between 2000 and 2005 for European OECD countries increased by 102% while the arrivals from US declined by 15%. The departing tourist numbers also indicate similar results: a decline of 12% for the US and an increase of 105% for European OECD countries. Tourism – and other consumer attractions for both countries’ growing middle class - will no doubt play a significant role in enhancing trade relations between Turkey and China in the future. As the chairwoman of the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSİAD), Arzuhan Doğan Yalçındağ, remarked in Beijing where she opened a branch of TÜSİAD: “The consumption habits of the

³⁰ *Milliyet Newspaper*, 1 July 2007, available at <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2007/07/01/ekonomi/eko02.html>, July 1, 2007, accessed 30.12.07.

³¹ Yilmaz, Cooke, and Dellios, “Turkey’s FDI Policy and Chinese Foreign Direct Investments in Turkey: Some Economic and Management Implications”.

Chinese will be a key factor for the world economy. Turkey would love to be active in this process.”³²

2. International Relations

Turning to the international relations sphere, Turkey has long displayed its Western strategic orientation through membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). More recently, its civil-economic role was highlighted through acceptance as a candidate for European Union (EU) membership at the Helsinki Summit in 1999. Accession negotiations were opened in 2005. The prospect of membership deepened structural reforms in the economy and the democratization process.³³ Just as UN and WTO membership gave China the legitimating international credentials it so assiduously pursued, so too acceptance into the EU would represent “the crowning achievement of Turkey’s long and painful modernisation efforts”.³⁴ These efforts began in the late 19th century when “Istanbul launched one of the earliest modernization projects in history” and when the Ottoman military adopted Western equipment and professional education.³⁵ A more radical Westernization took root with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the early 20th century.

China, too, looked to the West in an effort to modernize without losing what it regarded as its cultural “essence” – though whether it was possible to adopt Western form without altering Chinese content was, and still is, open to debate. Modernization efforts became apparent from the Self-Strengthening movement of late imperial times to Sun Yatsen’s post-imperial republican efforts. Then came Mao Zedong’s adoption of a European ideology – Marxism – as the path to modernization and the attempted obliteration of a ‘feudal’ Confucian past that was deemed to have weakened China. Finally, Deng Xiaoping’s reform policy allowed China to switch to market economics and an open door policy to the West. This was not depicted as a capitulation to the

³² Anatolian News Agency, “Reinforcing Relations between Turkey, China”.

³³ See Commission of the European Communities, *Turkey 2006 Progress Report*, Brussels, 8 November 2006, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/nov/tr_sec_1390_en.pdf, accessed 23.12.07.

³⁴ Aras and Polat, “Turkey and the Middle East: Frontiers of the New Geographic Imagination”, p. 473.

³⁵ Ömer Taspınar, “The Old Turks’ Revolt: When Radical Secularism Endangers Democracy”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 6 (November/December 2007), pp. 116-7.

Western economic system or a betrayal of socialism: it was officially rendered as “socialism with Chinese characteristics”. China has often Sinicized its borrowings from the West. Communism acquired Chinese characteristics when Mao declared the peasants and not the proletariat to be the vanguards of the Chinese Communist Revolution. As to the more contemporary Revolution in Military Affairs, this too has been modified with Chinese characteristics (or “features”).³⁶ So while China modernizes, it does so on its own terms.

It may be concluded that Turkey and China shared some similar experiences in the 19th and 20th centuries when their economic and political systems could not successfully respond to the industrializing West. The Republic of Turkey was founded as a nation-state after World War I, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed losing 4.5 million square kilometers of territory. Imperial China also lost territory through the infamous ‘unequal treaties’. During the 19th century foreign powers began to have an increasingly severe political, military, and economic impact on both Turkey and China. In China’s case, potentially, the economic stimulus from this contact could have been positive, but in fact China during the 19th century underwent profound crises, culminating in the Opium War with Britain in 1839 and the Treaty of Nanking (1842), which forced China to cede Hong Kong to British rule.³⁷

(a) *Outsiders in a Western System*

Herein may be found the first key symmetry between Turkey and China whose historical predecessors suffered dismemberment in the case of the Ottoman Empire and humiliation with regard to Imperial China. They are *outsiders* who sought strength and progress from West’s

³⁶ The phrase ‘the revolution in military affairs with Chinese features’ is used five times in China’s 2006 Defence White Paper. See The State Council Information Office, *China’s National Defense in 2006 (White Paper)*, PRC, 29 December 2006, Beijing, available at <http://www.china.org.cn/english/China/194332.htm>, accessed 15.1.07. The commonly used Western term, ‘asymmetric warfare’ is not used at all. The Chinese prefer to speak of unrestricted warfare. See Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, Beijing, 1999, available in English at <http://www.terrorism.com/documents/TRC-Analysis/unrestricted.pdf>, accessed 26.12.07; and Edwin Lowe, “Transcending the Cultural Gaps in 21st Century Analysis and Planning: the Real Revolution in Military Affairs”, *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence*, No. 155, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, 2004.

scientific and social knowledge, but who are still in the process of being admitted into a West-centric architecture of values and institutions. This is despite both having adopted Western institutional modalities, as noted above, from their birth as republics: China in 1912 through the vision of Sun Yatsen and Turkey in 1923 through Mustafa Kemal (or Atatürk). The ‘problem’ for China has been its trajectory into a ‘People’s Republic’ under the Chinese Communist Party. For Turkey it is not so much that a Muslim country seeks to join a ‘Christian Club’, a populist but ultimately unsustainable argument, but that the perceived flouting of Western values is at stake. This was evidenced in the EU’s 2006 Progress Report which cited institutional problems, breaches of Turkey’s legal obligations under the Customs Union, and violations of human and civil rights.³⁸

Indeed, human rights violations are common refrains against Turkey and China. The Armenian ‘massacre’ debate has been sustained for decades, with Turkey denying that Ottoman Turks committed genocide against Armenians during the First World War. Rather, Turkey maintains that massacres occurred on both sides. To Ankara’s dismay, in October 2007, a US congressional committee approved a bill that recognized the mass killing as genocide. China also has its historical record disputed across a number of issues, from the ‘invasion’ and hence current ‘occupation’ of Tibet, to the glorification of Mao Zedong, whose portrait still hangs in Tiananmen Square, but who is widely vilified abroad as comparable to Stalin or Hitler. Turkey’s treatment of its Kurdish population and China’s of its students in the ‘Beijing Massacre’ of 1989, remain part of the Western media narrative of these two countries. This has had political repercussions: an arms embargo by Germany in 1994 on Turkey in case the Turkish military used such arms against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) – a recognized terrorist organization; an EU arms embargo on China since 1989 – lest these weapons are used against Americans in the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan and the US coming to its defence. China is widely seen as obstinate in

³⁷ See Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy, Transitions and Growth*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007, p. 40; and John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: The Modern Transformation*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1965, pp. 136-146.

³⁸ Commission of the European Communities, *Turkey 2006 Progress Report*, Brussels, 8 November 2006, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/nov/tr_sec_1390_en.pdf, accessed 23.12.07. For a discussion of these, see Andreas A. Borgeas, “Is The European Union Being Outmaneuvered By Turkey?”, Hellenic Center for European Studies (EKEM), available at http://www.ekem.gr/archives/2006/12/is_the_european.html, accessed 19.12.07

insisting that Taiwan ‘reunifies’, even though it is a *de facto* independent country that has not sought to join the PRC in the manner of Hong Kong and Macao in the late 20th century. Despite this, most states recognize the ‘one China’ policy that Taiwan is a part of China. That preserves diplomatic and trade relations with the world’s most populous nation and global economic player. As for Turkey, it had been subject to strong international criticism, including UN resolutions, for maintaining an ‘occupation force’ in Northern Cyprus since 1974.³⁹ Still, Turkey’s strategic importance to the US has kept it close to the American bosom, and this despite Ankara refusing to allow US bases in Turkey to be used in 2003 for a northern front in the invasion of Iraq.

(b) *Strong States*

This is related to another significant Sino-Turkish symmetry: the *strong state*. In a world where the sovereign state and its territorial integrity represents a reactionary discourse; where transparency has become the ethos – indeed, a dogma⁴⁰ – of the times and ‘humanitarian intervention’ its empirical reality, the ‘strong state’ syndrome is perhaps feared as much as the ‘failed state’. The former, though, would surely be seen to serve its citizens and the global community far more effectively than the latter. One need only contemplate the alarming scenarios of Turkey and China as ‘failed states’ to appreciate their resolve in cultivating strength. In what ways are they ‘strong states’? Besides their state-centric traditions, both are economically and militarily rising powers with politically responsive armed forces. Indeed, from a Western liberal perspective, both are open to the criticism that they are in fact ‘securitized’ states; their militaries

³⁹ In 1974, Turkish military intervention was prompted by a Greek Government-sponsored attempt to seize control of Cyprus. In 1983, the Turkish-held area became the ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ (TRNC). Turkey was alone in recognizing it. The UN has brokered negotiations between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot community leaders. This ended when the Greek Cypriots rejected the UN settlement plan in a referendum in April 2004. The entire island entered the EU on 1 May 2004. The complication here is that “the EU *acquis* - the body of common rights and obligations - applies only to the areas under direct government control, and is suspended in the areas administered by Turkish Cypriots. However, individual Turkish Cypriots able to document their eligibility for Republic of Cyprus citizenship legally enjoy the same rights accorded to other citizens of European Union states”. *CIA The World Factbook – Cyprus*, 2007, available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cy.html>, accessed 30.12.07.

⁴⁰ See Sean Collins, “Seeing Through the Dogma of Transparency”. *The Spiked Review of Books*, Issue 7, November 2007, available at http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php?site/reviewofbooks_article/4135, accessed 23.12.07. On the issue of transparency, about which China has been criticized repeatedly with regard to its defence budget, from the Chinese perspective it would appear that the US’s transparency is no guarantee of a less militarily active nation.

are ‘politicized’; and national security is not open for public debate. (This reinforces the *outsider* status to which they are still largely consigned.)

It should be remembered, however, that the leaderships of strong states are often beset with economic and societal development issues that act to justify their position. Both Turkey and China are still developing countries, despite urban pockets of 21st century sophistication. The extremities between Istanbul or Izmir on the Aegean coast and the Anatolian heartland are matched by the differences between Shanghai on the Eastern seaboard and backward Shaanxi province further inland. But the two republics are no ordinary developing countries. As noted above, they are experiencing high growth rates and are increasing their strategic profile: Turkey in its potential to become not only an EU member but “an energy hub for the entire Eastern Mediterranean”;⁴¹ China has already become a significant player in East Asia and is on track to become the 21st century’s first superpower. In this tension between backwardness and achievement, constraints and aspirations, lies the potential for instability.⁴²

It is not surprising then that their militaries continue to play a role in politics. China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA), as its name implies, is a political army. It began on 1 August 1927 with the formation of the first unit of what was to become the Chinese Red Army, later renamed the PLA. It developed from a guerilla army of peasants into an infantry-dependent force in which guerilla tactics served a supplementary role. Functioning as the military arm of the Chinese Communist revolutionaries, it was formed to bring the Communist Party of China to power: hence Mao Zedong’s oft-cited dictum that “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”. He was quick to add that the party must control the gun. To this day the PLA - comprising Army, Air Force, Navy and a Strategic Missile Force - remains under the Communist Party’s direction. As stated in China’s 2006 White Paper on National Defence:

⁴¹ Richard Weitz, “Towards a New Turkey-NATO Partnership in Central Asia”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer 2006), available at http://cffss.hudson.org/files/publications/Turkey_NATO_Partnership.pdf, accessed 11.12.07.

⁴² For a social scientific study on this condition, see Ian Bremmer, *The J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2006. Turkey and China are two of a number of case studies.

The state exercises unified leadership over national defense activities. China's armed forces are under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The Central Military Commission (CMC) of the CPC and that of the People's Republic of China (PRC) are completely the same in their composition and in their function of exercising leadership over the armed forces.⁴³

In Turkey, a civilian-military bureaucratic elite presides over a strong state which is softening its image as it prepares to join the EU. However, despite being governed by a moderate Islamic party, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi - AKP), Turkish political culture in the form of illiberal secularism has been blamed for the country's perceived intransigence. Reporting directly to the prime minister rather than the defence minister, the Turkish military has been criticised by the EU for not coming under civilian control and lacking in transparency.⁴⁴ The Turkish Armed Forces justify their position by regarding themselves as the guardians of the secular state established by Atatürk. Such a mission has led to three traditional coups during the life of the republic – in 1960, 1971 and 1980 – one 'postmodern' coup in 1997 (so named because the "army made clear its displeasure, and events followed without the need for much brute force"⁴⁵), and an 'e-coup', as it was dubbed, in April 2007. This was against a perceived Islamist agenda by the AKP. The official military website warned that "if necessary, the Turkish Armed Forces will not hesitate to make their position and stance abundantly clear as the absolute defenders of secularism".⁴⁶

To understand the importance of the guardian roles that the Turkish and Chinese armies play, it is well to remember that both countries regard religious extremism, separatism and

⁴³ The State Council Information Office, *China's National Defense in 2006 (White Paper)*.

⁴⁴ See Seth Rosen, "Reforms Curb Turkey's Armed Forces", *Washington Times*, 26 June 2005, available at <http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-in-the-press/press-coverage-2005/june-2005/reforms-curb-turkeys-armed-forces>, accessed 25.12.07. The Turkish generals had wielded considerable power through the National Security Council (comprising the President, four senior ministers, and five top military commanders). The EU has been critical of the role of the National Security Council as indicating a lack of civilian control over the military, and it has since been reformed to increase the number of civilians in it from five up to nine, while military membership has been held at five. It has been argued that the National Security Council now acts less like a hidden government and more like a think tank.

⁴⁵ Mark Mardell, "Turkish Army Keeps Eye on Politicians", *BBC News*, 7 November 2006, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6122878.stm>, accessed 23.12.07.

terrorism as priority security issues. On this basis Turkey's military has engaged in cross border raids against PKK members based in Northern Iraq. Ankara not only seeks to curtail attacks on its population but prevent loss of territory to separatists who seek the creation of a Kurdish state. China is also determined to prevent separatists from 'splitting' the 'motherland'. Beijing has threatened military action against Taiwan if the island declares formal independence; and it maintains tight security against Tibetan and Uyghur independence movements.

Besides their political utility, the armed forces of Turkey and China are objectively impressive in relation to other militaries in the world, not only numerically but in terms of their modernization. This means that these two 'outsider' strong states are backed by powerful armed forces that can be expected to act as effective deterrents to hostile acts by lesser or greater actors – from separatists to the prevailing superpower. With 514,850 active personnel (another 378,700 are in reserve), the Turkish Armed Forces represent the second largest standing armed forces in NATO after the US, and eighth largest in the world. They are modern and well equipped with 445 combat aircraft (including F-16C & D *Fighting Falcons*), 12 tactical submarines, 26 frigates, 4,205 main battle tanks, as well as amphibious landing craft and helicopter gunships.⁴⁷ China has the world's largest armed force of 2.25 million active personnel (with some 800,000 reserves). It is nuclear armed with a full range of basing modes. It possesses some 46 intercontinental-range ballistic missiles, 35 intermediate-range and 725 short-range ballistic missiles. China has 2,643 combat aircraft that include newer aircraft that are built under license from Russia, such as 116 of the multi-role Su-27SK (J-11) *Flanker* fighters. It is also deploying a fourth generation fighter, China's most advanced, the J-10. The Navy has 76 principal surface combatants, 58 submarines, including one nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, with 12 JI-1 ballistic missiles. The ground force is equipped with over 7,580 main battle tanks, and – like the other services – is updating its equipment.⁴⁸ The 2007 Pentagon report on China's military power, which was cited above with regard to its concerns over China's asymmetric warfare capabilities, stated that the PLA was "pursuing comprehensive transformation from a mass army designed for protracted wars

⁴⁶ Quoted in Taspinar, "The Old Turks' Revolt", p. 115.

⁴⁷ International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2007*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2007, pp. 145-7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 346-350.

of attrition on its territory to one capable of fighting and winning short-duration, high-intensity conflicts against high-tech adversaries”.⁴⁹

For all their clear potential as rising actors with a keen sense of self-preservation against domestic threats, the two have not traveled far into each other’s orbit. (This was also literally the case: the Varyag aircraft carrier which China purchased from Ukraine was at first not even allowed into Turkish waters when being brought to China in 2000.)⁵⁰ On the whole, Sino-Turkish military relations have been confined to the educational exchanges end of the spectrum rather than that of joint military exercises.⁵¹ Yet in view of their convergence of security interests, there is scope for enhanced military relations. During his visit to China in June 2007, Land Forces Commander Ilker Basbug said: “Turkey and China have big similarities in their perspectives on world affairs as well as similarities in threats and risks they face.”⁵² What did Ilker Basbug mean? This question was posed by Ankara’s International Strategic Research Organization to Atilla Sandikli - Turkish author, former TASAM general manager and retired senior colonel - in September 2007. His answer focused on a number of foreign policy commonalities. One was the need for a peaceful international environment in order to pursue economic development. Another was agreement that a united stand against terrorism was necessary. A third was critical of the US: he said that a multipolar world was preferable to a unipolar one in which “the only superpower follows its own power policies and shapes the world according to its own interests”.⁵³

Another question posed was: “We have many military level mutual visits with China, however, no serious reflection of these visits are seen. We only have an agreement about the rocket production in 1996. Later, we developed their range in 1999. How do you evaluate the

⁴⁹ Office of the US Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: The Military Power of the People’s Republic of China*, 2007.

⁵⁰ “. . . Turkey, concerned that the hulk’s passage through the Turkish Straits would be a possible infringement of its sovereign rights under the 1936 Montreaux Convention, refused to grant passage of the ship until November 2001, much to Beijing’s chagrin.” (Daly, “Sino-Turkish Relations Beyond the Silk Road”.)

⁵¹ See *ibid.*

⁵² Quoted by Ankara’s International Strategic Research Organization (ISRO - USAK) interviewer in a question posed to Atilla Sandikli, 2007 (see below).

⁵³ Arilla Sandikli, “The Foreign Policy Principles of Turkey and China Match Well”, USAK [International Strategic Research Organization (ISRO - USAK) www.usak.org.tr] Turkey-China Relations Interview Series - II. Interview by Eyüp Ersoy. 20 September 2007. Trans. Nadir Kemal Yilmaz.

military aspect of relations between Turkey and China?” Atilla Sandikli affirmed that “expectations and willingness” were high and so was a desire “to increase mutual training activities and use of weapon systems”. However the reality was that military relations were sub-optimal:

One of the reasons for this is that Turkey’s current system is inclined to develop relations with the West both in terms of military and economy. In other words, we don’t have an infrastructure to develop relations with the Far East and China. We have neither the ideological infrastructure nor the sociocultural infrastructure. In fact, China also lacks the necessary experience for this. . . . When the necessary systems [of understanding] are formed in time, I believe the relations will be more productive.⁵⁴

The inability to communicate better may be blamed partly on a certain yin-yang symmetry in perceived threat. Each contains a little of the other in its domestic fears: Maoists among the Kurds of Turkey and Turkic Uyghurs among the secessionists of China’s Northwest. Turkey, after all, had outlawed the formerly Maoist PKK, and China distrusts the Turkic Uyghurs who have long regarded Turkey as their ethnic homeland. How serious are these domestic ‘others’ as a threat?

Yin-yang Symmetry in Perceived Threat

For China, its far northwest is blessed with energy resources but disturbed by secessionist sentiments. Xinjiang - the aforementioned ‘new frontier’ acquired by the Qing dynasty - is a vast region accounting for one-sixth of the country’s territory. Rich in oil and gas reserves, it was once treated as a “strategic substitutive zone” compared to China’s eastern oil fields; but with government incentives to develop the west (the Great Western Development program was launched in 1999), it is becoming the main contributor of China’s energy:

⁵⁴ Ibid.

According to the preliminary plans of CNPC and Sinopec, the region's oil and natural gas output will hit 30 million tons and 18 billion cubic meters, respectively, by 2010. Combined with the 20 million tons of crude oil imported from Kazakhstan via pipelines, Xinjiang will become the country's largest oil and gas supply base by then.⁵⁵

Xinjiang is also no substitutive zone where ethnic tensions are concerned. China's indigenous Uyghur Turkic Muslims live in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region where the Han population has grown larger than the indigenous one,⁵⁶ and where separatists have used violence toward their goal of East Turkistan independence. Some even aim for an Islamic regional community.⁵⁷ While Tibet might have more international media exposure, especially through the public diplomacy of the Dalai Lama, it is Xinjiang which presents the greater danger in terms of ethnic volatility. This is not only a factor of the global 'war on terror', with Afghanistan a primary battlefield, but also a peculiarity of the Central Asian ethno-religious landscape. Xinjiang has the fourth largest concentration of Turkic peoples (Uyghurs, Kazaks and Kyrgyz) at about eight million; Uzbekistan is third largest with 23 million (primarily Uzbeks); Iran is second with 35 million Azeris; and in Turkey, of course, reside the largest number of ethnic Turks at 53.6 million.⁵⁸

As for the Kurdish symmetry to the Uyghurs, the socialist Maoist origins of the PKK are not the relevant concern today. Less tangible issues prevail, and then they are more in the nature of potential than reality. China's recognition of the Republic of Cyprus rather than the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is hardly exceptional, and would not compare with the fraught

⁵⁵ Asia Pulse/XIC, 'Oil Focus Shifting to Xinjiang', *Asian Times Online*, 10 September 2005, available at <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/G110Ad05.html>, accessed 25.10.07.

⁵⁶ Han Chinese form 55% of Xinjiang's 20 million people, with 45% being 'ethnic minorities'.

⁵⁷ The separatist groups include the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, the East Turkistan Islamic Party, and the Islamic Holy Warriors. Two precedents for independence may be found in the Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkistan (TIRET) which lasted from 1933 to 1934 and was supported by Britain; and the East Turkistan Republic (ETR) of 1944-1949, supported by the USSR.

⁵⁸ Graham E. Fuller and Frederick S. Starr, "The Xinjiang Problem", Central Asia Caucasus Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 2004, p. 10, available at http://www.cornellcaspien.com/pub2/xinjiang_final.pdf, accessed 5.8.07.

situation of recognition or otherwise of the Republic of China on Taiwan.⁵⁹ So this is an improbable issue of dispute. The interview with Atilla Sandikli sheds further light on sensitivities that could spur frosty relations:

It is natural that each country looks at foreign policy issues according to its own interests. There are Uyghur Turks there [in China], they are our brothers with common cultural and historical backgrounds. Coming from its historical and cultural depth, it is a mission for Turkey to give voice to problems of Uyghur Turks and although this disturbs China, it is not possible to completely eliminate this. So, are we not going to improve our relations on the basis of this problem? [Such stagnation] is out of question. We need to develop our relations with China. China also follows some similar policy elements. It develops relations with Turkey's neighbors, with countries like Iraq. Of course, it also has some relations with the Iraqi Kurds' region. Also, in the Southern Cyprus governance region it has relations. The important thing here [for PRC foreign policy] is not to exceed legitimate levels and not to move together [with other parties] directly against Turkey. Such relationships would certainly disturb us. It would be very disturbing for us to see a country like China, which is growing in global stature, to directly contact these regions and to see that there are sometimes some comments which seem unfavorable to Turkey. . . . I think Turkey, too, has become more experienced about handling the Uyghur issue. China, as well, will have significant experience in understanding issues that disturb Turkey. It is to be expected that in the future the relationship will be less prone to such sensitivities.⁶⁰

What is to be done? If economic relations can be improved by diversifying trade sectors and investing into each other's markets, it could well be that bilateral military relations and perceived insensitivity to domestic 'threats' are also best dealt with by expanding the horizon. This relates back to Eurasia as a mandalic region, one of mutually constitutive relationships.

⁵⁹ See Yuksel Soylemez, "The Question of Cyprus and the Question of Taiwan: A Comparison", n.d., available at <http://www.cceol.com/aspx/getdocument.aspx?logid=5&id=afc206bf-7a2a-47b0-bafd-19fea88cd267>, accessed 30.12.07.

⁶⁰ Arilla Sandikli, "The Foreign Policy Principles of Turkey and China Match Well".

Beyond the Great Wall

When looking at the Eurasian expanse with its Central Asian centre and emerging power periphery, one feature stands out. Snaking across its normative heartland, like the curve separating - and connecting - yin and yang, is the Great Wall. This iconic fortification was built across centuries of Chinese history to protect the northern borders against raids by Mongol, Turkic and other tribes of Central Asia. Its continued construction only ceased when China under a Manchu dynasty, the Qing, expanded its territory beyond the Great Wall into Mongolia. In other words, it took foreign influence for China to outgrow its Great Wall mentality, and then by means of absorbing the lands beyond the Wall into China. Maintaining such a vast domain required a Confucian-trained bureaucracy and a concomitant strategic culture which preferred diplomatic over military solutions to state insecurity.⁶¹ Ultimately, therefore, China needed to ‘trust in virtue, not walls’⁶² to succeed. While it might be argued that the People’s Republic has embarked on an expansionist drive into Central Asia to assure itself of energy security, it could equally (and more plausibly) be said that the solution to China’s energy and security problems (such as ethnic separatism) may be found through diplomatic cooperation. This is where region-building mechanisms come into play, particularly the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Indeed, Beijing’s attempt to limit the danger of separatist behavior among its Uyghur population has been credited with being the inspiration for the SCO. “This was the key reason,” Fuller and Starr argue, “for China’s establishment in 1996 of the Shanghai group as a forum where regional security issues could be discussed . . .”⁶³ Border issues, however, provided the impetus for the organization’s activation. The SCO was originally formed in 1996 as the ‘Shanghai Five’ - comprising China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan - to demilitarize the old Sino-

⁶¹ This is elaborated in Rosita Dellios, “Chinese Strategic Culture - Part 1: The Heritage from the Past”, Research Paper No. 1, Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies (CEWCES), Bond University, April 1994; and Rosita Dellios, “Chinese Strategic Culture - Part 2: Virtue and Power”, Research Paper No. 2, CEWECS, November 1994. Both are available at Dellios’ personal researcher page: http://epublications.bond.edu.au/rosita_dellios/, and the website www.international-relations.com.

⁶² Attributed to a Chinese minister, AD 280.

⁶³ Fuller and Starr, “The Xinjiang Problem”, p. 43.

Soviet border and resolve border demarcation disputes. The ‘Shanghai Five’ became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in July 2001 with the addition of Uzbekistan. In 1999 ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ was seen as the most pressing danger for Central Asian governments; fighting ‘terrorism, separatism and extremism’ came to dominate the agenda. This certainly links to China’s Uyghur problem but the SCO has evolved to specialize in “multifaceted political, economic and cultural cooperation”.⁶⁴ For example, cross-border drugs crime is also targeted by SCO and a development fund is being considered. This takes it beyond a straightforward counter-terrorism function and brings it into multilateral regionalism of the type that could represent a distinctive Eurasian international order – but “under the auspices of the UN”, as SCO Secretary-General Bolat Nurgaliev insists.⁶⁵ The UN’s role was emphasized at the 2007 SCO Bishkek summit in “laying out the member states’ vision for a new international security architecture”.⁶⁶

The geopolitical contours of this emergent regionalism and its security architecture may suggest that while the Uyghur problem could have been uppermost in Chinese minds with regard to establishing the SCO, as well as the new states of Central Asia fearing the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, there is also another motive attributed as the *raison d’etre* of the SCO: strategic denial of US power into energy-rich Eurasia and the possibility of close proximity to the Russian and Chinese borders.⁶⁷ Even emphasizing SCO’s adherence to the UN and its Charter may be interpreted as a criticism of US foreign policy when it disregards the UN, as occurred with the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. In the SCO’s support for a multipolar world resides an implied criticism of US unipolar dominance of the international order. While in declaratory statements the SCO is not a military-political bloc and is not aimed at third parties, its joint military exercises may cause concern to those who fear it is intended as an anti-Western strategic alliance, with implicit strategic opposition to NATO. On the other hand, SCO Secretary-General Bolat Nurgaliev

⁶⁴ See Shanghai Cooperation Organization (2004-2005), www.sectesco.org/news, accessed 23.10.07.

⁶⁵ Bolat Nurgaliev, “Interview of SCO Secretary-General Bolat Nurgaliev with Emerging Markets News Agency”, 2007, SCO Website, www.sectesco.org/html/01794.html, accessed 23.10.07.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ See, for example, M. K. Bhadrakumar, “SCO is Primed and Ready to Fire”, 4 August 2007, *Asia Times*, www.atimes.com, accessed 18.8.07; and Lili Di Puppo, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization on the Brink of a New Era?”, 2006, CAUCAZ.COM, www.caucaz.com/home_eng/breve_contenu_imprim.php?id=252, accessed 8.8.07.

draws attention to the fact that the “SCO and NATO have shared concerns in fighting terrorism, drugs trafficking, as well as stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan”.⁶⁸

With progress in Afghanistan stalling and even sliding backwards in terms of resistance from the Taliban, decline in economic growth and high levels of opium production, accounting for 93% of the world’s production,⁶⁹ a united approach by NATO and SCO is even more compelling. Importantly, SCO regards itself as an open organization and as the Bishkek Declaration states, it “is open for interaction with all interested partners based on international law and generally accepted norms of international relations”.⁷⁰ In this light, an SCO-NATO mechanism deserves serious attention.

Fighting under NATO command would pose a problem for a number of SCO members, including China, a situation that could be circumvented if they were under United Nations command instead. But for this to occur, greater UN-NATO cooperation would be needed.⁷¹ On a lesser scale of expectations, an SCO-derived boost in the UN police presence in Afghanistan would help in that Afghanistan represents a greater vital interest to SCO countries than, say, the Middle East. Compared to the approximately 1000 Chinese peacekeepers serving in United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), China has only one police officer on a UN Peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan. Given that Afghanistan and China (at Xinjiang) share a common border of 75 kilometers, a greater presence would be expected. Moreover, Afghanistan and its border with Pakistan represent the spiritual heartland of Islamic fundamentalism and is therefore of concern to all SCO members. In a sense, SCO’s gradual enlargement through ‘observer’ status and partnership links (including Afghanistan – see below) also prove advantageous. They represent a geostrategic and diplomatic encirclement of the Afghan problem,

⁶⁸ Nurgaliev, “Interview of SCO Secretary-General Bolat Nurgaliev with Emerging Markets News Agency”.

⁶⁹ UN findings cited in James G. Neuger, “NATO Staggers in Afghanistan”, *Turkish Daily News*, 9 October 2007, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Bishkek Declaration, 2007, www.sectesco.org/news, accessed 23.10.07.

⁷¹ See “Debate: Should NATO Support UN Peacekeeping Operations?”, *NATO Review*, Summer 2005, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue2/english/debate.html>, accessed 11.11.07

while laying the foundations for cooperation on a broader scale. In the next section, SCO's modes of expansion are considered, and thence the significance of Sino-Turkish relations.

SCO's Modes of Expansion

India, Pakistan and Iran joined as SCO observers in 2005, and Mongolia in 2004. This has expanded SCO's regional range to South Asia and the Middle East. Observer status is not confined to interested states but may also extend to intergovernmental international organizations.⁷² In the integration of new states or organizations, a 'dialogue partner' mechanism is being introduced, thereby allowing for an earlier stage to observer status and fully fledged member. Concern that expansion of SCO would import rivalries has not been demonstrated in view of India and Pakistan being admitted as observers. Nor are great-power/small-power discrepancies necessarily a problem. Despite Uzbekistan's reported opposition to "quick enlargement of SCO because its voice might be offset by an incoming big constituent power",⁷³ in many ways the current composition of SCO demonstrates an ability to live with power discrepancies. Iwashita has noted SCO's "complex double structure" of Sino-Russian great power bipolarity and "an asymmetric Central Asian influence (middle power Uzbekistan versus Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan)".⁷⁴

Moreover, avoidance of hierarchical relations through consensus decision-making is a common attribute of Asia-Pacific regionalism, notably evident in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which includes a nation as small in power as Laos as well as the more powerful states of Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia; ASEAN+3 (the three being China, Japan, and South Korea); East Asia Summit (comprising ASEAN+3, plus India, Australia and New Zealand), and even the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum that includes not only

⁷² See "Regulations on Observer Status at Shanghai Cooperation Organization", 2004-2005, available at www.sectsc.org/news, accessed 23.10.07.

⁷³ *BBC Monitoring*, 28 May 2003, cited in Akihiro Iwashita, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Implications for Eurasian Security: A New Dimension of 'Partnership' after the Post-Cold War Period", in Shinichiro Tabata and Akihiro Iwashita (eds), *Slavic Eurasia's Integration into the World Economy and Community*, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, 2004, pp. 278, available at http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no2_ses/4-1_Iwashita.pdf, accessed 20.7.07.

Asian countries but those from the Americas, including the US, and also multiregional Russia. China has deliberately favored structuring its relations with ASEAN in such a way as to retain ASEAN as the centerpiece, especially in the new East Asian regionalism which is an enlarged version of ASEAN+3. If China were to place itself in the lead, this would incite rivalry with Japan for East Asian leadership. Similarly in SCO, Russo-Chinese rivalry could be offset by the “balance of interests”⁷⁵ approach and the integration of the region across many sectors, as shown by development of SCO as a security, economic and socio-cultural region.⁷⁶ The attraction of powerful states or organizations to SCO may well be inevitable in view of Eurasia’s strategic importance. However the tiered Asian approach of a core set of states ‘plus’ other states or organizations is already being formulated in SCO – for example SCO+Afghanistan.⁷⁷

Sino-Turkish axis of diplomacy?

The above discussion has a direct bearing on expanding opportunities in Sino-Turkish relations. What might be envisaged as a Sino-Turkic axis of diplomacy would certainly complement their wider security memberships. In Turkey’s case, the principal relevant organization is NATO. It includes some 1150 Turkish troops in its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.⁷⁸ In China’s case it is, as noted, the SCO. While NATO and SCO have been characterized as potential competitors for influence in Eurasia, this article has argued that they are not necessarily so in view of SCO’s open charter and a common need by NATO and SCO to help stabilize Afghanistan – and Central Asia generally.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 260.

⁷⁵ Nurgaliev, “Interview of SCO Secretary-General Bolat Nurgaliev with Emerging Markets News Agency”.

⁷⁶ This tripartite arrangement may be nascent and subject to change as it develops. However, it has been formalized in the much older organization of ASEAN, which began in 1967, and which may be seen as a forerunner in the Asian sphere. Progress on an ASEAN Community - comprising a security community, an economic community and a socio-cultural community – became evident in Bali Concord II (Declaration of ASEAN Concord II) adopted by ASEAN leaders at their Summit in Bali, in October 2003. It stressed shared responsibility, shared prosperity and shared identity (Declaration of ASEAN Concord II 2003). See also R. James Ferguson, “ASEAN Concord II: Policy Prospects for Participant Regional ‘Development’”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 26 (December 2004).

⁷⁷ Personal communication, November 2007, Shanghai, with Center for Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Studies within the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences at www.coscos.org.cn.

⁷⁸ Turkish General Staff, “International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Operation”, 2007, available at <http://www.tsk.mil.tr/eng/uluslararasi/isaf.htm>, accessed 11.11.07.

Further bridging the interests of NATO and SCO is the possibility of an East-West axis between China and Turkey being diplomatically activated, and an EU-Russian arc of influence. Moreover, with the EU dependent on Russia for a quarter of its oil and gas supplies, it is unlikely to promote strategic rivalry with Russia. Meanwhile, the NATO-Russia Council established in 2002 and Partnership for Peace that includes Russia and a number of Central Asian states, may serve as a platform for strengthening relations. SCO member Kazakhstan set the pace by signing an Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO in 2006. A NATO-SCO convergence (or ‘mechanism’) would hold implications for Turkey and, for that matter, the EU. They would find common cause in their foreign policies in the region, but with Turkey acting out of its capacity as a resident actor rather than an external power projecting influence as the EU would. The political and physical distance for the EU would be removed under circumstances of EU enlargement to include Turkey. This would help legitimize Europe as a Eurasian power.

Similarly, the SCO would benefit by making Iran a full member, not to challenge NATO or its most powerful member, the US: the SCO is no 21st century incarnation of the Warsaw Pact. Three purposes are served by giving Iran full membership of SCO in the future. First, Tehran’s foreign policy would be harnessed within a wider Eurasian strategic posture that would dilute threat perceptions of and by Iran. Second, it would assist Tehran in coping with the regional impact of Iraq’s continued civil war (with or without the American presence) and Kurdish separatist aspirations for the creation of an independent Kurdistan.⁷⁹ Third, Iranian membership of SCO would assure China of Iranian and future Iraqi oil supplies, and in return economically benefit Iran. China is estimated to need another 25 years to fully industrialize. Hence its appetite for energy and resources will remain strong. Industrializing India finds itself in a similar situation, and will no doubt find it advantageous to move to full membership of SCO along with Iran.

If full SCO member China and observer-country India represent the energy consuming side of the SCO equation, Russia as a core SCO country and Iran as an observer serve as the main energy providers. Russia possesses the world’s largest and Iran the second largest natural gas reserves.

⁷⁹ This is a problem, as noted above, that is shared with Turkey in that Iraqi Kurds control northern Iraq where the outlawed PKK has maintained bases for terrorist attacks on Turkey.

China is now the world's second largest consumer of oil after the United States; and Russia is the world's second largest oil producer after Saudi Arabia. Converting both India and Iran to full membership would strengthen a common energy strategy, including pipeline projects, production capacity, and transport infrastructure. Bringing Pakistan in would open an 'energy corridor' between China and the Middle East. It would also relieve dysfunctional South Asian rivalries and strengthen SCO influence on Afghanistan. These interlocking strategic symmetries suggest cooperation is the SCO's best policy – both internally and externally.

Turkey's role in Eurasian geopolitics

How does Turkey fit into this scenario and how does it impact its relations with China? Turkish territory may be confined to the Western sector of Eurasia, but Turkish-speaking peoples still inhabit Central Asia and form part of the Chinese state – its northwestern region of Xinjiang. As noted above, secessionist groups there seek to form an independent country of East Turkistan. China would do well to include Turkey in the SCO mission of fighting separatists and thus denying rebel groups potential sources of support through cultural kinship claims. Ankara, for its part, has local Kurdish separatists to consider, and the problems posed by the PKK have not abated. Turkey is also strengthening relations with Russia, which has its own internal challenges from Chechnya, and Russia is China's great power cooperator in Eurasia. In light of Turkey's cultural history, religious identity, and geostrategic location on Eurasia's Western flank, it represents an ideal SCO candidate. Ankara announced in January 2005 that it would explore cooperation with SCO. This occurred during Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Moscow in January that year when he led a huge Turkish delegation of 52 members of parliament and 600 business executives, underscoring the importance of a leading SCO member - Russia - in Turkey's trade and geopolitical relations.⁸⁰ SCO, NATO and (eventually) EU membership would confer on Turkey a genuinely integrative role in Eurasian diplomacy. It is

⁸⁰ Mevlut Katik, "Turkey, Russia Celebrate Trade Ties while Probing an Expansion of Geopolitical Contacts", *Eurasianet.org*, 12 January 2005, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav011205.shtml>, accessed 11.12.07.

worth emphasizing that there is no contradiction between NATO and SCO membership. This was well expressed by Atilla Sandikli:

We would still continue our relations with the West, we would stay in NATO and we would correctly develop EU relations. But I believe that our presence as an observatory state in the SCO would be important in order to follow developments in a region where our interest and influence exist and to have a word about policy development.⁸¹

This would accord with China's visions of cooperative regionalism rather than interventionist methods of promoting change for the better. 'Going with the flow' is a Taoist adage, and combining opposites as represented in the yin-yang symbol is a political stratagem. When China's reformist leader Deng Xiaoping used the formula of *one country* (China), *two systems* (socialism and capitalism) to reunify socialist PRC with capitalist Hong Kong and Macao, he had shown a Chinese philosophical trait of finding an optimal solution through combining differences. This may be regarded as pragmatism but it also strengthens the resultant configuration – like legs of a chair that stabilize. The coordinative approach, which Deng's revolutionary predecessor, Mao Zedong, applied in his time was called the 'United Front' strategy. It used differences for building power and recognized the limitation's of one's own power.

It was suggested earlier in this article that bilateral Sino-Turkish military relations and perceived insensitivity to domestic 'threats' might be better addressed through multilateral regionalism. Conversely, poor or non-existent regional relations might aggravate the bilateral one. The obvious obstacle to the above geopolitical opportunity in Sino-Turkish relations is the Xinjiang Uyghur issue. Just as Turkish SCO membership would be expected to dampen Uyghur separatist sentiments, the absence of Turkey from SCO arrangements – even minimally as dialogue partner – might allow a Turkic identity politics in Eurasia to seek moral support (or more) from its identifiable state metropole, Turkey. While Ankara would not wish to jeopardise relations

⁸¹ Sandikli, "The Foreign Policy Principles of Turkey and China Match Well".

with Beijing by giving separatist elements there any support, it has been argued that the Turkish public holds “emotional support” for this “Turkic nation”.⁸²

Conclusion

The underdeveloped nature of Turkey-China relations prompts an inspection of the two countries side by side. A profile emerges of Turkey and China sharing certain symmetries despite obvious differences in size and resources. They reflect one another in maintenance of a ‘strong state’ ethic in an ‘international community’ wary of strong states other than the United States lest the democracy-human rights nexus be questioned. These and other symmetries may be regarded as ‘keys’ to opening the gates to greater cooperation and consequent mutual benefit in a range of sectors – from the economic to the strategic; or, alternatively, to locking each other out from the prospect of a ‘win-win’ future because of ossified threat perceptions. Today neither is prepared to support Turkic ethnic or former Maoist compatriots that could only render diplomatic relations dysfunctional. As Turkey and China stand at the gates of Eurasia, it is well to dwell on the Turkish word ‘kapi’, which not only means door or gate, but possibility. The possibility of a Sino-Turkish axis of diplomacy would certainly complement their wider security memberships and even bridge them. In view of the SCO being an economic as well as a security organization, and its nested layers of expansion, it is displaying mandalic properties that promote a cooperative dynamic in which Turkey and China might participate more closely.

⁸² Fuller and Starr, “The Xinjiang Problem”, p. 46.