

Turkey-Taiwan Relations in the Context of Turkey's Asia Pacific Policy

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the Turkey-Taiwan relationship will be analyzed through its place in Turkey's Asia-Pacific policy, where in the context of changes in Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War international environment, Turkey-Taiwan relations will be evaluated. Since Turkey's policy towards Taiwan and mainland China, particularly in the Cold War era, was in parallel with the US's regional policy, the US policy will also be dealt with. The situation in Taiwan-mainland China relations was a factor impacting Taiwan's relations with many countries, and Taiwan-Turkey relations were not an exception. Despite Turkey's lack of expertise regarding Asia-Pacific region, the new international environment has opened new prospects for Turkey to be involved in Asia-Pacific affairs.

Keywords: Turkey, Taiwan, US, Foreign Policy, International System.

Türkiye'nin Asya Pasifik Politikası Bağlamında Türkiye-Tayvan İlişkileri

ÖZET

Makalede Türkiye-Tayvan ilişkileri Türkiye'nin Asya-Pasifik politikası çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Soğuk Savaş dönemi sonrası Türk dış politikasındaki değişim çerçevesinde Türkiye-Tayvan ilişkilerinin inceleneceği makalede ABD'nin Tayvan politikası ve bölgeye yönelik politikası da ele alınacaktır. Çünkü Türkiye'nin Tayvan politikası ABD'nin bölge politikasındaki değişimlerle özellikle Soğuk Savaş döneminde paralellik göstermiştir. Tayvan ve Kıta Çin'i ilişkilerinin durumu Tayvan'ın pek çok ülke ile ilişkilerinde etkili bir faktördür. Türkiye-Tayvan ilişkileri de bundan doğrudan etkilenmiştir. Türkiye'nin Asya-Pasifik bölgesine yönelik bilgi eksikliklerine rağmen, yeni uluslararası ortamın Türkiye'ye sunduğu fırsatları değerlendirme düşüncesi Türkiye'yi Asya-Pasifik bölgesiyle ilgilenmeye itmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Tayvan, ABD, Dış Politika, Uluslararası Sistem.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyze the political, economic and social aspects of Turkish-Taiwanese relations in order to understand the basic parameters and place of these relations in Turkey's Asia-Pacific policy. Turkey is currently trying to improve its political and economic relations with the Asia-Pacific region. In fact, Turkish foreign policy has had an Asian dimension since the end of the Cold War. The independence of the Turkic republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia opened up Turkish foreign policy toward the Caucasus and Central Asia. However to open up to the Asia-Pacific region is much more difficult due to the lack of knowledge about, and previous contact with, the region. This lack of knowledge has also existed in the Asia-Pacific countries about Turkey. Turkey-Taiwan relations differed before and after 1971. While Turkey follows a "One-China" policy, it also tries to improve its relations with Taiwan but Turkey's initiatives towards Taiwan have triggered reactions from the People's Republic of China (PRC) from time to time.

Foreign policies of states change due to different factors. Changes in the international system is one of the most important factors, which forces states to adopt their foreign policies accordingly. States also consider the changing policies of allies when implementing foreign policy changes. The post-Cold War international environment has impacted almost all states' foreign policies. With the end of the Cold War, bipolarity ended and regional powers have had more say in their regional policies. In this article, Turkey-Taiwan relations will be analyzed in the framework of the new international environment, as well as the policies of allies, and regional developments. The main argument is that as a rising region in the world, the Asia-Pacific region is received attention from all over the world and many countries, including the US and other major powers, have given special importance to their foreign policies towards Asia-Pacific. Turkey's interest regarding Asia-Pacific has also increased – Taiwan, with its economic potential and as a result of a new type of dialogue process with mainland China, has gained an important place in the region. This has increased the importance of Turkey-Taiwan relations in Turkey's Asia-Pacific policy.

In this article Turkey-Taiwan relations will be discussed considering the periods which have importance in bilateral relations. Since Turkey recognized Taiwan until 1971, the developments in Turkey-Taiwan relations in that era will be dealt with in separate subtitle. Turkey's recognition of PRC as the sole legal representative of China in August 1971 changed the character of Turkey-Taiwan relations. The end of the Cold War opened a new era in Turkey's Asia-Pacific policy and it reflected on Turkey-Taiwan relations and also Turkey's relations with the PRC. The US policy towards Taiwan had impacted on Turkey's regional policy, particularly, during the Cold War era. Therefore the US policy and its implications on Turkey-Taiwan relations will be analyzed.

The US Policy towards Taiwan and its Implication for Turkey-Taiwan Relations

Turkey's special ties with the US were an important factor shaping Turkey's Asia-Pacific policy and Turkey's relations with Taiwan, particularly during the Cold War era. Therefore it would be appropriate to evaluate Turkey's policy towards the region in line with the US and NATO strategies during the Cold War era.

Turkey-Taiwan relations started just after the end of the civil war in China in 1949, which was also the early time of the Cold War era. Turkey's policy at that time was mainly shaped by the Cold War and the bipolar structure of the international system. Turkish foreign policy makers were concerned about the Soviet threat and looking for security guarantees. In fact it was not surprising that Turkey wanted to be a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Turkey's application for NATO membership was not welcomed at first so Turkey was even rejected initially. Turkey was finally accepted as a NATO member in 1952, three years after NATO was established.¹ Besides Turkey's strategic importance, developments in the Asia-Pacific region played a role in the approval of Turkey's membership. Turkey was very eager to play an active role in preventing the spread of communism and cooperate with the West, since Turkey and the West had common perceptions of the security threat. The US policy towards Taiwan was based on preventing the spread of communism in Asia. In that atmosphere, Turkey recognized the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC) instead of People's Republic of China (PRC) as a natural result of its policy against Communist expansion. At that time, Taiwan had a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

One major event that also helped Turkey's integration with the West and membership in NATO was the Korean War. Turkey sent troops to Korea to support the pro-Western Republic of Korea against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Turkey's policy in line with the West and Turkish troops' help under the UN Command were very much appreciated. The Commander of the UN Coalition Forces, General Douglas Mac Arthur, said "the Turks are the hero of heroes. There is no impossibility for the Turkish Brigade."² The Korean War had also implications for what happened in China. Since the US and China were adversaries in Korea, the PRC's victory over the ROC became unacceptable for US foreign policy. This would be interpreted as a communist expansion in the region. Therefore the US sent its Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait,³ demonstrating the US guarantee for the defense of the ROC. Turkey's relations with Taiwan intensified after Turkey's membership of NATO, since Turkey became fully engaged in security field with its Western allies. Turkey hosted NATO air bases and its large territorial army became a shield against the Soviet threat while Turkey provided security for the southern wing of NATO.⁴

Turkey and Taiwan until 1971

Turkey started to follow the U.S. in maintaining close bilateral relations with Taiwan. In 1956, Turkish Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and a parliamentary delegation visited the ROC in order to foster further cooperation. In the same year, a delegation from the ROC government visited Turkey. One year later, in 1957, ROC's foreign minister and Permanent Representative to the UN, George Kung-chao Yeh, visited Turkey and an agreement was signed for cultural exchanges between the two countries. The agreement included exchanges of students and athletes, provided scholarships, and resulted in the establishment of a Chinese language department in a Turkish university and a Turkish language

1 <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2012/Turkey-Greece/Greece-Turkey-membership/EN/index.htm>, (Accessed on 28 April 2014).

2 Richard Weitz, "Turkey: Forgotten Ally in a Forgotten War", http://www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication_details&id=9164, (Accessed on 27 April 2014).

3 See Richard C. Bush, *Untying the Knot: Making Peace in the Taiwan Strait*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2005.

4 Harris S. George, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspectives*, Washington, American Enterprise Institute, 1972, p.62.

department in a Taiwanese university. Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes visited the ROC in 1958, and he spoke in the ROC Parliament. In his speech Prime Minister Menderes stressed cooperation against communism. A delegation from the Turkish Parliament that was led by Refik Koraltan visited the ROC in 1959 with similar messages from the Turkish Prime Minister regarding a common goal of struggling against communism.⁵

Turkey-ROC relations followed this developing trend in many fields until the 1970s. The main characteristics of the relationship were shaped by the Cold War-era international system. Turkey and Taiwan had the same objective with regard to preventing the spread of communism. Another factor of these developing relations that was particularly important for Turkey was the policy of Western allies towards ROC and the Asia-Pacific region in general. Turkey, as a NATO country following alliance policy and US policy, was particularly affected in that matter. In fact, a change in the US policy towards the PRC transformed the Turkey-Taiwan relationship. Until the US rapprochement with the PRC, Turkey recognized the ROC as a state representing all of China and voted against the PRC's membership in the UN. However, this all changed with the alteration of the US policy towards the PRC. Turkey recognized the PRC as the sole legal representative of China as a way of implementing its One China Policy of August 1971.

The US Policy Change towards China and Implications on Turkey's Policy towards Taiwan

What were the factors to change the US policy towards the PRC in the period of the Cold War? The US rapprochement with the PRC started with the so-called "ping-pong diplomacy". The American national ping-pong team, in Japan for the 31st World Table Tennis Championship, received an invitation to visit the PRC. Players, accompanied officials and journalists to cover the event, went to the PRC in April 1971. This paved way for further official contacts between the US and the PRC, resulting in President Nixon's National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, paying a secret visit to Beijing. After Kissinger's visit, President Nixon visited the PRC in February 1972. However, the formal US recognition of the PRC did not come until January 1979.⁶

The Vietnam War was one of the factors that had an impact on the US decision to recognize the PRC. The PRC's dispute with the Soviet Union was also an encouraging reason for the PRC and the US to establish formal relations. The US created a unique policy towards the PRC; while supporting a "One China" policy recognizing the PRC, the US did not recognize the PRC's claim over Taiwan and considered the situation to be unsettled. The US argued that the problem should be solved by the people on both sides using peaceful means. The Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 has guided these relations in the absence of a diplomatic relationship. The Taiwan Relations Act clearly stated that "to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, is a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States." The US also stated that with this act the US will "provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character" and the US will "maintain the capacity of the US to resist any resort to

5 Selçuk Çolakoglu and Arzu Güler, *Turkey and Taiwan: The Relationship Seeking Its Ground*, Policy Brief, No.2, Ankara, USAK, 2011, p.10-11; Selçuk Çolakoglu, "Turkey's East Asian Policy From Security Concerns to Trade Partnership", *Perceptions*, Vol. XVII, No.4, Winter 2012, p.132.

6 Nicholas Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History behind the Game that Changed the World*, Simon&Schuster, 2014.

force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan.”⁷

The US also gave “Six Assurances” to Taiwan on 14 July 1982 when Ronald Reagan was President. According to this, the US would not:

- agree to set a date for termination of arms sales to Taiwan,
- alter the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act,
- consult with China in advance before making decisions about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan,
- mediate between Taiwan and China,
- alter its position about the sovereignty of Taiwan that the question was one to be decided peacefully by the Chinese themselves, and would not put pressure on Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China,
- would not formally recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.⁸

The change of policy by the US and Turkey’s other Western allies led Turkey to change its policy towards Taiwan. Turkey recognized the PRC, and started to pursue a “One China” policy in 1971. After that, Turkey-Taiwan relations continued in economic and cultural platforms, but Turkish officials used the word “Taiwan” instead of “Republic of China”.⁹ On the other hand, Turkey’s relations with the PRC improved, particularly in economic fields, with the Agreement on Trade in 1974. The political aspects of the relationship started to develop in the 1980s when the political environment was suitable for both countries. There was a military coup in Turkey in 1980 that created problems in Turkey-Europe relations that required Turkey to look to other regions to develop relations. At that time, the PRC was also trying to open up to the West. A Turkish trade minister’s visit occurred in 1981, followed by a foreign minister visit. However, the most important visit in that era came with Turkish President Evren’s visit to China in 1982. Since it was a visit at the presidential level, the visit was well publicized with some important events.¹⁰

The Turkish President’s visit was followed by visits from the PRC. Minister of Culture Zhu Mu-zhi visited Turkey in April 1983; Foreign Minister Wu Chuochiang paid a visit to Turkey in October 1983. President Li Xiannian’s visit to Turkey came in March 1984. Turkish Prime Minister Özal also visited the PRC in July 1985, which was reciprocated when the Chinese premier visited Turkey in July 1986. While Turkey’s relations with the PRC developed in the 1980s, problems arose over the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Eastern Turkestan). Uyghur opposition leader Yusuf Alptekin’s relations with Turkey and asylum for PRC Commercial Attaché Muhammed Niyazi in 1986 indicated problems before the end of the Cold War era.¹¹

7 For Taiwan Relations Act See <http://www.ait.org.tw/en/taiwan-relations-act.html>, (Accessed on 12 June 2014).

8 For six assurances see, <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/assurances.htm>, (Accessed on 11 June 2014); William Lofther, “US Pay Tribute to Six Assurances”, *Taipei Times*, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2012/07/15/2003537795>, 15 July 2012, (Accessed on 15 June 2014); Szu-Yin Ho, “The Republic of China’s Policy Toward the United States, 1979-1989”, Yu San Wang (Ed.), *Foreign Policy of the Republic of China on Taiwan, An Unorthodox Approach*, New York, Praeger Publisher, 1990, p.29-44.

9 Çolakoğlu and Güler, *Turkey and Taiwan*, p.13.

10 Kenan Evren visited Children Palace in Shanghai and the 10 year old child Wang Quing accompanied him. Friendship between Kenan Evren and Wang Quing continued and she became like a granddaughter to Kenan Evren. Later Wang Quing studied at Bosphorus University in Istanbul. Wu Keming, “Kenan Evren’in Çin Sevgisi”, *CRI Online*, <http://turkish.cri.cn/882/2009/04/01/1s112846.htm>, 4 April 2009, (Accessed on 10 April 2015).

11 Selçuk Çolakoğlu, “Turkey-China Relations: Rising Partnership”, *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol.5, Issue 52, April 2013, p.34.

Turkey and Taiwan in the Post-Cold War Era

Turkey and the Post-Cold War International System

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War had an impact on the foreign policies of almost all states. The most important change was the end of the bipolar international system in 1991.

Turkey was an important member of the Western alliance during the Cold War and was particularly affected by its end. The new international environment provided new opportunities as well as a measure of unpredictability for Turkey. The role of regional powers in international politics had also increased as a result of a loss of control of hegemonic powers over their allies.¹² On the one hand, there was an impression that Turkey's strategic value for the West might diminish with the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, Turkey's regional role increased particularly with the independence of the Turkic Republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia, with which Turkey has ethnic, cultural and linguistic linkages. Turkey had a chance to become a leader, or at least to be held up as a role model of development for the new republics. Turkey had to change its foreign policy to adapt itself to the post-Cold War environment.

The end of the bipolar world has also made change in foreign policy easier.¹³ In the bipolar world, the capacity of states to maneuver was limited by the hegemonic power of the alliance that exercised tight control over its allies. The end of the Cold War forced states to adapt their foreign policies to the new realities of world politics. Although changes in the external environment may not necessarily result in foreign policy changes, authors like Holsti considered it crucial and argued that the structure of the international system conditions states' actions and brings changes to the foreign policy objectives and alters the behavior of states. Holsti stressed the need for an examination of the changes in the patterns of foreign policy behavior over time. He distinguished foreign policy restructuring from normal foreign policy change. According to Holsti, normal foreign policy change is usually slow and incremental. Foreign policy restructuring is a major, comprehensive change in the foreign policy orientation of a nation, over a relatively short period of time, as manifested through behavioral changes in a nation's interactions with other actors in international politics.¹⁴

The change in Turkish foreign policy was a normal foreign policy change since Turkey did not change its foreign policy orientation, and it continued to follow a pro-Western foreign policy, with the aim of full integration with the West. A state, which has centralized political institutions and a strong bureaucracy, can resist domestic demands for foreign policy change better than a state with fragmented political institutions.¹⁵ The former type of state is more likely to change its foreign policy

12 Graham E. Fuller and John Arquilla, "The Intractable Problem of Regional Power", *Orbis*, Fall 1996, p.610-611.

13 Thomas J. Volgy and John E. Schwarz, "Foreign Policy Restructuring and the Myriad Webs of Restraint", Jerel Rosati, Joe D. Hagan and Martin W. Sampson III (eds.), *Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Change*, University of South Carolina Press, 1994, p.33.

14 See Kal J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework For Analysis*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1988; Kal J. Holsti, "Restructuring Foreign Policy: A Neglected Phenomenon In Foreign Policy Theory", Kal J. Holsti, *Change in the International System, Essays on the Theory and Practice of International Relations*, Edward Elgar publishing Company, 1991, p.83-101.

15 Peter Katzenstein, "International Relations and Domestic Structures: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced

as a result of external pressure, namely pressure from the international community. Turkey might be considered to be the of state with a strong state tradition and entrenched bureaucracy. Therefore, the main motivation for change in foreign policy came from the international community.

Turkey initiated regional integration projects and an active regional policy in order to have a new role in the “new World Order”. Turkey’s regional initiatives and opening up to the Caucasus and Central Asia were misinterpreted by some, like Samuel Huntington, as he stated that “having rejected Mecca, and then being rejected by Brussels, where does Turkey look? Tashkent may be the answer”.¹⁶ He interpreted Turkey’s active foreign policy towards the Turkic republics as a way of constructing a new direction related to identity. Contrary to this, the Turkish foreign policy goal of membership in the EU has continued. However, the new realities of the international environment and Turkey’s export-oriented economy have required Turkey to open up towards other regions. In fact, Turkey’s interest towards the Asia-Pacific region was the typical example of the impact of economic motivation and conditions on foreign policy.

Taiwan and Post-Cold War International Environment

The end of the Cold War and resulting developments starting in the final days of the Cold War had implications on the Asia-Pacific region. In the international arena, the bipolar world ended without a large-scale war among the big powers and the expectation was that the post-Cold War international system would be much more peaceful, with cooperation being the main element in the new system. However, regional conflicts with global implications created disturbances in many parts of the world from the Balkans to the Caucasus. New states joined the international community with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, some controversial entities in this process also entered into the international community. The independence of Kosovo in February 2008 was one of them, since Kosovo was not one of the republics formed initially from the former Yugoslavia, but had remained an autonomous region of Serbia. Then after the August 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia, the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was recognized by Russia.¹⁷ The Ukrainian region of Crimea joined the Russian Federation after a referendum. These examples opened the way to separation of that type of entity. Taiwan also separated from mainland China in 1949 and it was representing the whole of China until the change of the West’s and the US’s policy regarding the PRC. After Taiwan lost its seat in the UN as the Republic of China, it continued to conduct relations with other countries in a different way.

One of the most important elements in Taiwan’s foreign policy is the “cross-strait relations”. The way that the post-Cold War world affected cross-strait relations and, the US’s view about it as a superpower, are the factors to be considered in Taiwan’s policy in the post-Cold War era. With the end of the Cold War, as countries like Turkey have adopted their foreign policies according to the new realities, Taiwan also had to adapt its foreign policy.

Industrialised States”, *International Organisation*, Vol.30, 1976, p.1-45; David Skidmore, “Explaining State Responses to International Change”, Jerel Rosati, Joe D. Hagan and Martin Sampson III (eds.), *Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Change*, University of South Carolina Press, 1994, p.48-52.

16 Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.72, No.3, 1993, p.42.

17 Kamer Kasim, “The August 2008 Russian-Georgian Conflict and its Implications: A New Era in The Caucasus?” *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies*, Vol.5, No.9, 2010, p.64-81.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union reduced the threat for the PRC, so the PRC gained more flexibility regarding its policy in the Asia-Pacific region. The PRC continued its policy of the threat of the use of force against Taiwan under certain conditions in the post-Cold War era. In fact the PRC published a white paper in 1993 called “The Taiwan Question and the Reunification of China”, indicating the PRC’s stance on the use of force against Taiwan.¹⁸

In 1999, when President of Taiwan Lee called the cross-strait relations a special state-to-state tie, the PRC perceived this as a deviation from the One China policy, and threatened the use of force against Taiwan.¹⁹ Chen Shui-bian from Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the Taiwanese presidential elections in 2000 and the power transfer happened democratically from the Kuomintang (KMT) to the DPP. DPP then began to follow a different policy than that of KMT regarding cross-strait relations, questioning the One China policy. For example Joseph Wu, Deputy Secretary General of the Presidential Office of Taiwan during Chen’s Presidency, argued that independence is the real status quo. He further argued that Taiwan’s independence is a reality that China cannot change.²⁰ In 2008, the KMT won the elections; Ma Ying-jeou became President and Taiwan resumed the cross-strait dialogue. His policy has “three noes” - no independence, no unification and no use of force. This opened a new era in cross-strait relations.²¹ With Ma’s presidency, “Taiwan has proposed a model of a mutually beneficial equilibrium, or what has been called a *modus vivendi* or ‘flexible diplomacy,’ designed to achieve a dignified, pragmatic and responsible diplomacy composed of comprehensive dimensions.”²²

President Ma stated that cooperation with the PRC would continue on the basis of the 1992 consensus but each side has its own interpretation of what “One China” means.²³

The US Policy towards Taiwan in the Post-Cold War Era

We discussed Turkey’s and Taiwan’s position in the post-Cold War international environment. The US policy towards the PRC and Taiwan also particularly impacts Taiwan’s regional position in the post-Cold War era. As we will mention below, Turkey’s policy towards the PRC and Taiwan may not necessarily be in line with the US in the post-Cold War era since the aim of preventing communist expansion in Asia is not been a factor in regional policies any more.

US President Clinton followed a policy to engage and to deter the PRC. While supporting PRC’s membership in the World Trade Organization, Clinton maintained security cooperation with the US’s close allies, and he did not hesitate to send two aircraft carriers to Taiwan to deter PRC action

18 See <https://www.fas.org/irp/nic/battilega/taiwan.pdf> (Accessed on 16 May 2014).

19 Gary Klintworth, *China and Taiwan-From Flashpoint to Redefining One China*, Research Paper, 15-2000-01, http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp0001/01RP15#develop, 7 November 2000, (Accessed on 16 May 2014); Andrew Scobell, “Show of Force: The PLA and the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis”, <http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/10091/Scobell.pdf>, January 1999, (Accessed on 17 May 2014).

20 Joseph Wu, “Independence is the real Status quo”, *Taipei Times*, 6 January 2004.

21 Jacques DeLisle, *Taiwan under President Ma Ying-jeou*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, <https://www.fpri.org/enotes/200806/delisle.taiwanmayingjeoufull.html>, June 2008, (Accessed on 17 May 2014).

22 Francis Yi-hua Kan, “Taiwan’s New Foreign Relations and National Security”, <http://www.mcsstw.org/web/content.php?PID=5&Nid=947>, 30 May 2012, (Accessed on 18 May 2014).

23 Shirley A. Kan and Wayne M. Morrison, *US-Taiwan Relationship: Overview of Policy Issues*, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, 18 November 2013.

prior to presidential elections in Taiwan in 1996.²⁴ President Clinton indicated that the cross-strait dispute had to be solved, not only peacefully but also with the assent of Taiwan's people. After the Clinton era, US President Bush re-emphasized the Six Assurances given to Taiwan by President Reagan in 1982, stressing the US's commitment to defend Taiwan and continuation of the Taiwan Relations Act.²⁵ The US continued proving security guarantees to Taiwan, which gave courage to the DPP to challenge China regarding Taiwan's independence, as mentioned above.

The US policy has focused more on the Asia-Pacific region with Obama's Presidency. The main difference between Obama and the other post-Cold War presidents was his overemphasis of Asia-Pacific policies. President Obama has declared a rebalancing strategy towards the Asia-Pacific region and gave priority to this region in US foreign policy. In fact, just after the elections in November 2012, Obama visited the region and the US's European allies complained about this US strategy, interpreting "rebalance" as the Obama Administration neglecting Europe. Despite the fact that the rebalancing strategy has not only a military component, but that it also has economic and political dimensions, it was perceived by the PRC as a US containment strategy. The military aspect of the rebalancing required strong military ties with Australia, Singapore and the Philippines.²⁶ In 2011, the US signed an agreement with Australia, which includes plans to deploy 2500 US Marines to Australia. The agreement represented the first long-term expansion of American military presence in Asia-Pacific since the end of the Vietnam War.²⁷

The US rebalancing strategy towards China, however, could not be evaluated as a Cold War-type containment strategy. As Joseph Nye argued, the US containment strategy of the Soviet Union meant virtually no trade and little social contact. However, the US has massive trade with the PRC and extensive social contact, including 157,000 Chinese students at American universities.²⁸

The crisis in Ukraine and tension between the US and Russia might also change strategic parameters. In the Cold War era, Soviet Union's expansionist policy and its dispute with the PRC were some of the most important reasons for the establishment of diplomatic ties between the US and the PRC. Russian policy in Ukraine and Eurasia in general might open way to a new kind of cooperation or constructive engagement between the US and China. In the new world system, China does not have to be behind Russia, particularly in the UN Security Council and other platforms, while the US and China do not have to be competitors in Eurasia. If this becomes the case, Obama's rebalancing strategy would not be perceived as a threat by the PRC.²⁹

24 Robert G. Suttart *et.al.* *Balancing Acts: The U.S. Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability*, The George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs and Sigur Center for Asian Studies, 2013, p.5.

25 Shirley A. Kan, "China/Taiwan: Evolution of the 'One China' Policy-Key Statements From Washington, Beijing, and Taipei", Meredith A. Costa and Jeremy P. Silva (Eds), *China, Taiwan and the Evolution of "One China" Policy*, New York, Nova Science Publishers, 2011, p.10-11; John F. Copper, "The Taiwan Factor in US-China Relations", Suisheng Zhao (Ed.), *China and the United States, Cooperation and Competition in Northeast Asia*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.171-191.

26 See Suttart *et.al.*, *Balancing Acts*.

27 Jackie Calmes, "A US Marine Base for Australia Irritates China", *The New York Times*, 16 November 2011.

28 Joseph S. Nye Jr, "Our Pacific Predicament", *The American Interest*, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2013/2/12/our-pacific-predicament/>, March/April 2013, (Accessed on 18 May 2014).

29 Kamer Kasım, "Obama's Asia Tour under the Shadow of the New Cold War", *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3878/obama-s-asia-tour-under-the-shadow-of-the-39-new-cold-war-39.html>, 2 May 2014.

The US-PRC relations would also have implications for Turkey-PRC relations. As will be mentioned below, Turkey's military relations with the PRC, depending on the level of contact-based objection from the US, which was evident in Turkey's proposed agreement with the PRC regarding a new missile defense system. On the other hand it might be argued that Turkey's political, economic and cultural relations with Taiwan developed independently from Turkish-US relations in the post-Cold War era since there was no common objective that necessitated close cooperation in the new era, like the struggle against communism had in the previous era.

Political, Economic and Cultural Aspects of Turkey-Taiwan Relations in the post-Cold War Era

The post-Cold War international environment impacted foreign policies of some states, including those of Turkey and Taiwan. While continuing its aim of membership in the EU, Turkey has tried to extend its reach to far away regions for political and economic reasons. Turkey's close ties with the Caucasus and Central Asian republics have provided opportunities to show that its strategic importance has not decreased with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Turkish foreign policy should be opened up to include beyond Central Asia and reach to the Asia-Pacific region in order to have a broader strategic vision and to support an export-oriented economy. For Taiwan, although cross-strait relations and the ties with the US are important, an export-oriented Taiwan needed to reach different regions. It was also important for Taiwan to recover relations with Turkey in the new global world since physical distance between countries is not the obstacle like it was before. Turkey-Taiwan relations had also to be based on those in the time that Turkey first recognized the Republic of China until 1971. Turkey and Taiwan's position in the 20 largest economies in the world also indicated great potential and benefits from resumed close relations.

Taiwan's foreign policy became open to the influence of public opinion and also Taiwan gave importance to soft power in implementing its foreign policy. Democracy became a key feature of Taiwan's soft power strategy. The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy was established in 2003 to study and support democracy, and to highlight Taiwan's accomplishments.³⁰ An economy-oriented policy, focused on Free Trade Agreements and investment opportunities, goes hand in hand with the promotion of soft power in the relations, particularly with countries that are geographically far from Taiwan. This opened the new window for Turkey-Taiwan relations.

The first important high-level contact was the visit of Public Works and Settlement Minister Onur Kumbarcıbaşı and after that Chang Hsio-Yen, Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, came to Turkey to talk with Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel. However, in the 1990s bilateral ties were limited. Turkish foreign policy was busy dealing with regional developments and conflicts in Balkans and the Caucasus, while domestic issues were also dominating the agenda during the 1990s. Turkey's membership process with the EU and the customs union agreement, which came to force in 1996, was the main foreign policy issue. However, regarding Turkish foreign policy towards Asia-Pacific and Taiwan, things started to change at the beginning of the 2000s.³¹ Trade volume between Turkey and Taiwan was \$631.825 million at that time and, even at the beginning of 2000, trade vol-

30 Jacques DeLisle, "Soft Power in a Hard Place: China, Taiwan, Cross-Strait Relations and U.S. Policy", *Orbis*, Vol.54, Issue 4, September, 2010, p.518-519.

31 Çolakoglu and Güler, *Turkey and Taiwan*, p.15.

ume was less than \$1 billion. For example, trade volume in 2002 was \$752 million and 2003 was \$883 million.³² However, trade volume has been over \$2 billion since 2011. This was mainly the result of increasing contacts starting from the 2000s. Representatives of large Taiwan enterprises visited Turkey in 2001. The Turkish-Taiwanese Business Council, which was established in 1993 and reactivated in 2005, started to function as a vehicle to encourage investment in Turkey. Investment from Taiwan is important for Turkey since the trade deficit became greater with the increase of trade volume. Turkey's imports from Taiwan reached \$2.011 billion in 2014, which are mainly electronics and stainless steel products. Turkey's exports to Taiwan were mainly composed of synthetic textile fibers, raw materials for fertilizer and iron, with a total volume of exports of just \$132 million in 2014. The only realistic way for Turkey to correct this imbalance would be with direct foreign investment from Taiwan.³³

Turkey, with its suitable geographic location, would be an important country for Taiwanese firms to enter European markets. Mexico played a similar role regarding Taiwan's ties with the US. As the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) indicated, Taiwanese firms would benefit from lower tariffs or tariff free access through shipping the products to these countries. According to Simon Wang, Executive Director of TAITRA's Market Development Department, Taiwanese firms can ship components to these countries and then assemble the parts there using lower labor costs in those countries before shipping them to the US or EU.³⁴

Turkey could also play an important role in Taiwan's connection with the Caucasus region and Central Asia due to its strong connections with especially the Turkic republics of the region. Taiwanese firms may need Turkish connections in order to invest in the Caucasus and Central Asia, since Turkish firms have experience in the region as they have been there since the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Basic Issues in Turkey-Taiwan Relations and New Actors-New Dimensions

Turkey-Taiwan relations have improved since 2000. However, this improvement has not been free from obstacles. First of all, as discussed above, Turkey followed a policy of "One China" since recognizing the PRC in 1971. After that Turkey-Taiwan relations continued through the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Turkey and the Turkish Trade Office in Taipei.

One obstacle for this formulation was the PRC's objection to some steps which would make Turkey and Taiwan closer. Turkey followed careful policy when improving its relations with Taiwan in order to reassure the PRC that Turkey would continue its One China policy and that Turkey wanted to further develop relations with the PRC. However, the Eastern Turkistan problem has from time to time disturbed the relationship. For example, a riot in Urumqi and the death of more than 200 people in July 2009 resulted in demonstrations in Turkey; Prime Minister Erdoğan labeled the incident as close to genocide.³⁵ However, this did not prevent increasing diplomatic contact and economic

32 See the web page of *Turkish Ministry of Economy*. <http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr>, (Accessed on 10 April 2015).

33 See Çolakoğlu, "Turkey's East Asian Policy"; Çolakoğlu, "Turkey-China Relations". See also the web site of Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Economy, <http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr>.

34 James Lee, "Taiwan to use Mexico, Turkey as detours to trade with U.S., EU", CNA, 13 February 2013.

35 Zan Tao, *An Alternative Partner to the West? Turkey's Growing Relations with China*, Middle East Institute, <http://www.mei.edu/content/alternative-partner-west-turkey%E2%80%99s-growing-relations-china>, 25 October 2013, (Accessed on 20 May 2014).

relations. Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited Turkey in September 2010, where Turkey and the PRC agreed to conduct bilateral trade in Turkish lira and the yuan. It was agreed that Turkish and Chinese companies would construct a railway in Turkey for high-speed trains. Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu visited the PRC during 28 October-2 November 2010. Vice President Xi Jinping's visit in February 2012 and Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit in April 2012 led relations into a new phase. In terms of cultural relations, the year 2012 was Chinese Culture year in Turkey and 2013 was Turkish Culture Year in China.³⁶

As a result of the developing economic relationship, trade volume reached over \$27 billion. However, the remarkable increase in trade volume was the result of Turkey's imports, which was over \$24 billion, which caused further trade imbalances, disturbed Turkey.³⁷ On the political front, besides the Eastern Turkistan (Uyghur) issue, the PRC's exaggerated warning regarding Turkey's ties with Taiwan was also problematic. The PRC's policy towards Turkey's Taiwan policy would not be acceptable since many countries such as the US, Japan, and Germany had close ties with Taiwan without the same objections from the PRC. Any attempt like solving the visa issue between Turkey and Taiwan, as well as for the open direct flights between Turkey and Taiwan faced objection from the PRC.³⁸ This indicated that improved economic ties did not change the PRC's policy in the political arena despite Turkey's strong emphasis of its One China policy.

Turkey-PRC relations have a potential for cooperation in the defense industry. Turkey's decision to have long-range air and anti-missile defense system gave a Chinese company (CPMIEC) an opportunity to participate in the tender (contract competition). At the end, the Chinese company overcame the competition. The main reason for that was the Chinese offer of joint production and technology transfer. The US and other Western countries tried to get Turkey to cancel the contract for the Chinese missile system. For China, selling this missile system to NATO ally Turkey was an important landmark in its growing global influence. The US action was based on an argument that Chinese system may not be compatible with the NATO defense network.³⁹ Turkey's \$4 billion deal with China, if the agreement is finalized and Turkey gets missile defense system, would have an impact beyond its specific financial and technical aspects⁴⁰ – it might be considered to be a new stage in Turkish-Chinese relations. It would also indicate that Turkey might look for new partners for military cooperation other than its NATO allies. This was the reality of post-Cold War international system. This would also have implications on Turkey-Taiwan relations and Turkey's Asia-Pacific policy. First of all, Turkey-PRC military ties would provide an opportunity for Turkey to attract more investment from the PRC and Taiwan and Turkey would also be more involved in the affairs of Asia-Pacific region.

Regarding improvement of Turkey-Taiwan relations, two issues were critical: visa problems and direct flights. Visa problems cause delay and sometimes obstacles for the movement of people between countries. Therefore, abolishment of visa restrictions or at least opening a way to simplify the

36 See Çolakoglu, "Turkey-China Relations".

37 Detailed analysis of Turkey-China economic relations see Altay Atlı and Sadık Ünay, *Küreselleşme Sürecinde Türkiye-Çin Ekonomik İlişkileri*, İstanbul, SETA, No.96, June 2014.

38 See Çolakoglu, "Turkey-China Relations".

39 "Made in China? US Warns Turkey Its Missile Deal With Beijing May Not Be Compatible With NATO", <http://rt.com/news/us-turkey-china-missile-defense-689/>, 24 October 2013; Peng Yining, "Missile Sale To Turkey Confirmed", *China Daily*, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-03/19/content_19850713.htm, 19 March 2015.

40 The process about missile deal has not been completed yet when this article was written.

visa process would be an important element for the development of relationship between two states. Turkey and Taiwan relations are not an exception. Taiwan had wanted abolishment of visa restrictions for a long time. However, Turkey acted with caution to avoid taking the initiative so as not to disturb the PRC by abolishing a visa requirement for Taiwanese nationals. At the end, Turkey and Taiwan reached an agreement whereby Turkey included Taiwan in its e-visa system in May 2013. Taiwan then extended landing visa privileges to Turkish citizens.⁴¹

The other issue facilitating further improvement in relations is direct flights between Turkey and Taiwan. Flights conducted through Hong Kong, Shanghai, Bangkok and Seoul, for example, rather than directly between Istanbul and Taipei, resulted in an addition five hours at least, which is particularly important for business persons. In order to solve this problem, Turkish Airlines opened its first offline office in Taipei. Negotiations involved in launching direct flights between Istanbul and Taipei were conducted between the two Star Alliance member airlines: Turkish Airlines and Eva Air. Taiwan expected an aviation agreement to be signed for this, but Turkey argued that this was not necessary because it could be done by agreement of Turkish Airlines and Eva Air. The Taiwanese side wanted formal documents to be signed before the operation of direct flights. At the end, direct flights from Turkey to Taiwan started on 31st March 2015, which opened a new page in contact between Turkey and Taiwan. Turkey expects the number of tourists coming from Taiwan to rise from 40,000 to 100,000.⁴²

Taiwan requested to open an Economic and Cultural Office in Istanbul. The existence of the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) office in Istanbul created questions regarding the necessity of a second economic and cultural office in Istanbul after the one in Ankara. However, it should be noted that multiple Taiwanese representative offices exist in countries like the US, Japan and Germany. Turkey could collaborate with Taiwan regarding its relations with the PRC since Taiwanese businesspersons invest vastly in mainland China. This further became an issue with the new type of relations between Taiwan and China.

Where is the Place of Taiwan in Turkey's Asia-Pacific Policy?

Although Turkey's interest towards the region rises from time to time, Turkey did not come up with a comprehensive strategy. The great economic boom in Asia motivated Turkey towards expanding relations with the region. Turkey declared "The Strategy for Improving Trade and Economic Activities with the Asian-Pacific Countries" in 2005. The share of Asia-Pacific countries in Turkey's trade volume was 3.3% in 2005 and this increased to 5.7% in 2010. However, this also resulted in an increase in the trade deficit regarding Turkey's trade with the Asia-Pacific region.⁴³

Turkey's relations with Japan are traditionally good despite the fact that trade volume should have been much more than the current state of \$3,575,626 billion. In 2014, Turkey's imports from

41 See Shih Hsiu-chuan, "Turkey to include Taiwan in E-visa System: Ministry", *Taipei Times*, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2013/05/03/2003561342>, 3 May 2013, (Accessed on 20 May 2014).

42 "Turkish Office Touts Direct Flight Launch", *Taipei Times*, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2015/03/09/2003613135>, 9 March 2015; "THY'den Taipei'de Muhteşem Açılış", <http://www.apron24.com/thyden-taipeide-muhtesem-acilis/>, 31 March 2015.

43 <http://www.economy.gov.tr/index.cfm?sayfa=countriesandregions&region=6>, (Accessed on 20 May 2014).

Japan were \$3,199,889 billion and Turkey's exports to Japan were \$375.737 million in 2014.⁴⁴ Turkey's relations with South Korea developed after Turkey's participation in the Korean War; Turkey still supports South Korea in its disputes with North Korea. Turkey's trade volume with South Korea reached \$8,019,044 billion in 2014. However, \$7,548,311 billion of this trade was Turkey's imports from South Korea.⁴⁵ Turkey's relations with the PRC developed in the economic field and trade volume between the two countries reached \$27,780.2 billion in 2014. Turkey's export to PRC was just \$2.862 billion, which indicates a huge trade deficit against Turkey.⁴⁶

As compared to the abovementioned countries whose populations are much more than that of Taiwan, the Turkey-Taiwan trade volume, which was \$2.143 billion in 2014, would be considered to be encouraging. However, the trade deficit with Turkey is also a problem since the deficit was \$ 1.879 billion in 2014.⁴⁷

In terms of political and cultural ties, Taiwan had a special place with Turkey until 1971; however, as was discussed above political ties diminished afterwards and relations focused on economic and cultural aspects. It might be argued that Taiwan's place in Turkey's regional policy is not as central as the position of other countries, such as Japan and South Korea. However, developing economic and cultural relations indicate that Taiwan is becoming more important in Turkey's Asia-Pacific policy. This might particularly be the case with the new type of relations between Taiwan and the PRC. This development creates opportunities for Turkey to focus on its relations with Taiwan as well; Turkey has the chance to change an overcautiously policy towards Taiwan. Taiwan may not be an obstacle for Turkey-PRC relations. In fact Taiwan might even be catalyst for further trade and common investment opportunities for Turkey's relationship with China.

Turkey and Taiwan should continue to develop their relationship within the parameters of Turkey's One China policy. Turkey's increasing role in the Asia-Pacific region would also reflect its relationship with Taiwan. For example, Turkey's role as a mediator in the Philippines between Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front increased Turkey's visibility in the region.⁴⁸

Conclusion

In a globalized world, physical distance among countries does not constitute an obstacle for the development of relations. This is even more accurate if these relations have historical bases. Before 1971,

44 See the web site of Turkish Ministry of Economy, <http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr> (Accessed on 13 April 2015). Turkish-Japanese relations were initiated more than a century ago. The nephew of Emperor Meiji, Prince Akihito Komatsu visited Ottoman Empire in 1887. In 1890 Sultan II. Abdülhamit sent the frigate Ertuğrul, commanded by Admiral Osman Pasha, as a gesture. However, during its voyage to the Ottoman Empire the Ertuğrul sunk off the coast of Ooshima. Only 69 of total 609 crewmembers survived and they were sent back to Istanbul on two Japanese navy vessels. After the Republic of Turkey was founded, diplomatic relations between Turkey and Japan were established in 1924. See the webpage of the Turkish Embassy in Japan, <http://www.turkey.jp/english/turkey-japanrelations.htm>, (Accessed on 13 April 2015).

45 See the web site of Turkish Ministry of Economy, <http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr> (Accessed on 13 April 2015).

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Aurea Calica, "Turkey to Support Mindanao Peace Process", *The Philippine Star*, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/11/18/1393006/turkey-support-mindanao-peace-process>, (Accessed on 18 November 2014).

Turkey and Taiwan had close ties despite the distance; these relations have been re-energized in recent years. The economic dimension is much more important in the relations since Turkey and Taiwan have high GDP's. In addition, there is a potential for further development of economic ties. However, there should be a concrete strategic road map to improve trade relations to cover which sectors should be targeted and what is the expected level of bilateral trade for next 10 years. Investment opportunities in Turkey and Taiwan, plus cooperation between Turkish and Taiwanese companies regarding investments in other regions such as the Caucasus and Central Asia, should be analyzed in this road map as well.

Turkey should expect the PRC to follow the same policy as it did towards Canada, the US, Japan and Germany regarding their contact with Taiwan. The PRC's overreaction about Turkey's relations with Taiwan became difficult to understand given the fact that the trade volume between Taiwan and mainland China reached US \$197.2 billion in 2013. There are 1,804 projects for Taiwan investors and \$1.89 billion investments from Taiwan in 2013.⁴⁹ It is expected that the current status quo will continue regarding cross-strait relations and the US commitment to Taiwan. This means that Turkey should continue to find ways to improve relations within the parameters of its One China policy.

Turkey and Taiwan relations will improve in economic and cultural aspects. The relationship should also focus more on cooperation in education. Cooperation among universities and think tanks, coupled with academic exchanges, will create a solid basis for long-term cooperation. Turkey is a suitable environment for investment by Taiwanese companies. Turkey might be a firm base for Taiwan to make further inroads into the European economy, whereas Taiwan might provide a suitable environment for Turkish companies to make further inroads to mainland China. The two important steps taken in Turkey-Taiwan relations were solving the visa issues and initiating direct flights. Taiwanese citizens were included in the e-visa system of Turkey and Turkish citizens have had the right to obtain a visa when landing in Taipei since 2013. Direct flights between Istanbul and Taipei started on 31st March 2015. It is expected that the number of Taiwanese tourists in Turkey and the number of Turkish tourists in Taiwan will increase substantially after these steps. Given the fact that Taiwan has a population of 23 million, which is much less than Turkey's major trading partners in the region like the PRC, Japan and South Korea, the trade volume of \$2.143 billion between Turkey and Taiwan is substantial. However the trade deficit problem for Turkey continues to be the case as for other Asia-Pacific countries. To overcome this problem Turkey should attract more direct foreign investment from Taiwan.

Mutual understanding between Taiwan and mainland China within the parameters of the current status quo might help Turkey-Taiwan relations to develop further. Turkey's export-oriented economy encouraged Turkey to focus on the Asia-Pacific region where lucrative export and investment opportunities exist. The political weight of the Asia-Pacific region is also increasing, which is another reason for Turkey to focus on the region in order to protect its interests. Turkey-Taiwan relations are crucial in that respect and the absence of a dispute between the two also provides a suitable atmosphere for Turkey and Taiwan to focus on various aspects of the relationship.

49 http://www.china.org.cn/business/2014-01/15/content_31201482.htm, (Accessed on 25 June 2014).

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