

CHAPTER IV

THE FACTORS BEHIND TURKEY'S INCONSISTENCY

The inconsistency of Turkish ambition in resolving conflict especially in the Muslim world supposed to be their concern in Islamic democracy values. In the meantime, there was no meaningful action conducted by Erdogan in carrying out many various international agendas on the party's platform related to the Uyghur issue. In this fourth chapter, the researcher will explain why the three influential aspects of Turkish decision-makers have become the pillars that drive its foreign policy towards its partnership with China rather than the Uyghur Issue.

A. The Pragmatic Considerations of AKP Towards China

In the analysis of foreign policy decision making, the domestic politics of a country have been frequently neglected. Many experts only focused on the international system as the primary explanation, while actually the internal factor also become dominant to actively influence the decision-maker of a country. By referring to the fundamental basis of realism and liberalism, Turkish government under the Erdogan's leadership is apparently facing the growth of domestic pressure in formulating its foreign policy.

In the domestic politics context, Partisan influencers are actually the right type to describe AKP as one of the leading influencers of the decision-maker in arranging the foreign policy. To be known, partisan influencers in here means those individuals that committed to be the members in a political party. As a matter of fact,

partisan influencers are not only focusing on domestic policy matters, but also on Turkish foreign policy. That is why AKP as a ruling party in Turkey keeps actively influencing Erdogan to conduct Turkish multidimensional foreign policy (Yılmaz & Özdemir, 2017).

When AKP officially came into power in 2002, their position was relatively weak. The strong position in domestic and foreign politics was generally held by the Turkish army. At that time, the army had been actively strengthening their position inside of the Turkish political system and becoming dominant in the NSC (National Security Council). However, the power of army was gradually declined in the late of 2000s. AKP took this opportunity to get involved in foreign policy decision making without getting intervened by any other institutions (Yılmaz & Özdemir, 2017).

It is obvious to say that the Turkish national capacity has been significantly developing during the governance of AKP. Erdogan claimed this development could be seen in the international political arena (Yılmaz & Özdemir, 2017). In a parliamentary system, the center of authority is located on its cabinet. This also means that the cabinet fragmentation itself can result in the inability to conduct an action. From the case of Turkey, AKP can be considered as a single party in a parliamentary system that actively controls the cabinet through a parliamentary majority (Bunnenberg, 2018).

In the perspective of AKP, the old Turkish authorities had close-minded thinking about Turkey's role world politics throughout the 20th Century. In this necessary context, AKP believes that Turkey has to rearrange its foreign policy and strengthen the bilateral relations with neighboring countries. Turkey should also take advantage of its geographical depth and cultural

diversity and use it as a tool in achieving those goals. AKP is always emphasizing on the main principle of Turkish foreign policy, which is “zero problems” with neighboring countries. Additionally, the multidimensional foreign policy is a soft power that supposed to reinforce the main principle. From this standpoint, AKP suggested that Turkish foreign policy should be proactive rather than reactive (Davutoğlu, 2011).

Generally, the increasing of Turkish national capacity and AKP’s position in domestic politics will enable the Turkish government in applying the active and aggressive foreign policy towards Middle East and China. In the second tenure of AKP, the partnership of Turkey and China has been gradually increasing, which was aligned with its foreign policy and national power. Indeed, AKP has been actively encouraging Turkish government to conduct more cooperation with China (Yılmaz & Özdemir, 2017).

AKP can be considered as the partisan influencer who is actively stimulating the relations with China. Erdogan as the other AKP politicians like the former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and former President Abdullah Gül have always promoted a multidimensional and independent foreign policy. Therefore, AKP leader’s motivation to build closer relations with China is a vital component in their foreign policy. In other words, Turkey and China partnership is likely to be on the same path and further develop.

Since Turkey has been developing its country under the governance of Erdogan in the last decade. AKP as the ruling party puts forth ambitious visions, objectives and plans, comprising the centennial political vision of 2023, the sexcentenary viewpoint of 2053, and millenarian objective of 2071. All of these projects are summarized as a “Turkey dream”. Turkey Dream is the proposing agenda

from the Turkish politicians in increasing their popularity and trust among their people. Specifically, this ambition also came as a form of Turks' self-confidence right after a decade of development (ZAN, "Turkey Dream" and the China-Turkish Cooperation under "One Belt and One Road" Initiative, 2018).

In the matter of economic growth, the AKP's centennial political vision of 2023 comprises the Turkish national GDP volume to be at the Top 10 in the world. In achieving this goal, AKP keeps emphasizing to not only focusing on the European Union (EU) but also exploring another opportunity from Middle East and Central Asia relations, including China. Meanwhile, the "2071 Objective" was described by Erdogan as a general term in which Turkey would be able to return to the "Osman Glory". Unlike the 2023 vision, Erdogan did not explicitly explain about this objective. On the sexcentenary outlook of 2053, AKP and Erdogan put their concern on the current political condition in Turkey. There is a broader scope Turkey could get from its multidimensional foreign policy. However, AKP pursues a rapid development of Turkey by arranging this "Turkey Dream" in a positive direction (ZAN, "Turkey Dream" and the China-Turkish Cooperation under "One Belt and One Road" Initiative, 2018).

In this modern era, the framework of Turkey dream by AKP can be described as the "Erdogan Doctrine". A set of visions and development goals suggested by the AKP is actually aligned with the reasonable condition of the social changes and economic condition in Turkey. AKP and Erdogan keep stressing that Turkey needs to achieve support and assistance from China, which is actually also the actualization of development strategies in "Turkey Dream" (ZAN, "Turkey Dream" and the China-Turkish

Cooperation under “One Belt and One Road” Initiative, 2018).

B. Economic and Military Capability of Turkey in 2009-2019

Economy and military are both the two vital elements of power in achieving national interests. These elements will determine the continuity of a state in the short or long period of time. When we are talking about economic capacity, we should not only put our concern on a country's production capacity but also the comparison between other countries' capability. In a substantive level, it is imperative for the decision-makers to examine about the ability of a state to quantitatively accomplish the economic demands and the stable welfare of its people (Coplin, 2003, pp. 124, 125).

Just like the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate after World War I, the economic crisis hit Turkey since 2018 has actually been predicted for a long time. Various credit and banking problems have resulted in Turkey's prolonged economic crisis. Nevertheless, the recent fall of lira currency rate has surprised many parties. Until 2018, 1 USD was equivalent to 6.5 Turkish Lira or less than a third of its value in 2014. As a result, the Turkish economy is now facing an extreme level of inflation. The commodity export prices that surged also trigger into the increasing of production costs. Many experts argue that Turkish economy will keep crashing until 10 - 20 per cent before the crisis ends and Erdogan needs a miracle to turn things around (Hardoko, 2018).

The similar problem of Lira exchange rates also struck Turkey in 2001. At that time, Turkey asked the IMF (International Monetary Fund) for some financial assistance. Turkey finally borrowed some money and

conducted a rigorous austerity condition to get the fund. Diversifying Turkey's financing has apparently become an urgent task for Erdogan, but it seems that Erdogan will not ask for IMF assistance this time. In 2018, Erdogan stated during his speech that Turkey is currently exploring the new possibilities with China, Russia, and Iran. In fact, Erdogan said, the Turkish government would issue a "Panda Bond" debt on China's local financial markets. To be known, "Panda Bonds" is a type of bond in yuan for non-Chinese issuers. This also means that China has apparently become Turkey's comfort in fixing the economic problem (Hardoko, 2018).

This cooperation could be very beneficial for China. This statement also supported by the statement by Emre Alkin, a Turkish economic expert. Alkin stated, "The stability of the Turkish lira will have resulted from the economic partnership with some important countries including China. It is impossible for our central bank (Turkey) to fix this economic problem alone, we need resources,". He also added, "It does not matter if these resources are coming from China as the most important thing is on how we use these resources wisely. It is very obvious that Turkey needs financial advice, ideas, and suggestions from a superpower country like China" (Hardoko, 2018).

In a substantive level, Turkey also has a similar and comparable economic structure as China. These both countries rely on the labor-intensive industries, export-driven enhancement, and they have been competing in the aspect of fabrics export for a long time ago. Indeed, both Turkey and China have the same interests to become influential in the Middle East region. This is actually why Turkish government sees China as a perfect partner to conduct their foreign policy with (ZAN, "Turkey Dream"

and the China-Turkish Cooperation under““One Belt and One Road” Initiative, 2018).

Furthermore, Erdogan considers that the trade relations between Turkey and China have been established really well. This is proven by the table below, which shows explicitly the trade volume of Turkey’s bilateral trade with China that has been increasing every year. In point of fact, China has become Turkey's first trading partner from the east.

Table 4.2.1 Turkey – China Foreign Trade Values
(\$ millions)

Years	Export	Import	Volume	Deficit	Export/ Import Ratio
2000	96	1,345	1,441	1,249	7.1
2001	199	926	1,125	727	21.5
2002	268	1,368	1,636	1,100	19.6
2003	505	2,610	3,115	2,105	19.3
2004	392	4,476	4,868	4,084	8.8
2005	550	6,885	7,435	6,335	8.0
2006	693	9,669	10,362	8,976	7.2
2007	1,040	13,234	14,274	12,194	7.9
2008	1,437	15,658	17,095	14,221	9.2
2009	1,599	12,677	14,276	11,078	12.6
2010	2,260	17,180	19,440	14,920	13.2
2011	2,467	21,692	24,159	19,225	11.4
2012	2,833	21,295	24,128	18,462	13.3
2013	3,601	24,685	28,286	21,084	14.6
2014	2,862	24,918	27,780	22,056	11.5
2015	2,415	24,874	27,289	22,459	9.7

2016	2,328	25,441	27,769	23,113	9.2
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Source : (Söylemez, Turkey and China: An Account of a Bilateral Relations Evolution, 2017).

However, from this bilateral trade, China is the one who has mostly benefited rather than Turkey. One of the reasons for this imbalance of trade can be explained from Turkey's production capacity. Turkey's export products are mainly consisting of raw materials like marble travertine, chromium, copper, and inorganic chemical compounds. Meanwhile, the main import products from China to Turkey are mainly electronic devices such as wireless telephone devices, automatic data processing machines, televisions, cameras, handphone, cruise and merchant ships, and audio-visual electronical devices (Söylemez, Turkey and China: An Account of a Bilateral Relations Evolution, 2017).

As a matter of fact, Turkey is now has been expanding its military cooperation with China after Russia. Since a significant agreement was signed in 2009, the military cooperation between Turkey and China has been increasing significantly. Both these countries then held their first air forces exercise a few weeks later. Meanwhile, the land forces were working on the counterterrorism mission. These significant developments were quite telling about the future prospect of their mutual relations (Söylemez, Turkey and China: An Account of a Bilateral Relations Evolution, 2017).

It should be noted that there were several naval visits between Turkey and China. The Turkish frigate ships visited Shanghai harbor and Hongkong in 2011 to celebrate the diplomatic relations between those two countries. In 2015, there are at least 55 Chinese frigate ships visited Istanbul as a form of friendly mission. This has resulted in the Turkish military that is currently dominated by pro-

Eurasian generals. Since Erdogan is also having a strong tendency on the side of pro-Eurasia, the military cooperation between Turkey and China has a good potential of getting closer in the upcoming years (Söylemez, Turkey and China: An Account of a Bilateral Relations Evolution, 2017).

Another security cooperation that Turkey is currently seeking from China is SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization). SCO was founded in 2001, based on an organization that initially was known as Shanghai Five. China has become a significant financial support member and provided headquarters for this organization. Initially, the aim of the SCO was to fight any form of terrorism, separatism, and extremism in the Central Asian region. SCO activities also gain a broad economic dimension. In September 2003, the heads of government from SCO member countries signed the Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation Program, designed for a period of 20 years. In addition, the long-term goals of SCO (Brief Introduction To The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 2017).

As happened with other countries in the Middle East, there is a strong possibility of having terrorism, separatism, and extremism attacks or what so-called as the “three evil forces”. Turkey as a country whose geographical location is really close to the Middle East region is currently also facing the problem of terror from various domestic and foreign threats. This has become Turkey’s main concern because it is actually related to one of their national interests.

One of the tools in achieving this security concern is actualized by Erdogan’s interest in joining the SCO. By joining in the SCO, Turkey will be able to have allies that will support Turkey in eradicating these problems. There

are so many considerations to be a part of SCO. China is an important actor who initiated the formation of the SCO. If Turkey keeps supporting the Uyghurs and any East Turkistan movement, it would eventually reduce China's confidence to Turkey and threaten the bilateral relations between them (Söylemez, Turkey and China: An Account of a Bilateral Relations Evolution, 2017).

A. China's Commitments to The Future Prospect of Turkey

China can be considered as one of the world's strongest economies and global powerhouse. It is really beneficial for Turkey and China to keep reinforcing the bilateral relations together. Since the partnership intercourses started, both Turkey and China have gained many benefits in the term of economic and military aspect. For this reason, it is really worthwhile for Turkey to maintain good relations and be more careful in dealing with sensitive issue.

Under the leadership of Erdogan, Turkey sees China as one of the most critical foreign policy tools. In today's globalized world of interdependence, China has become the world's new economic powerhouse and politics leading actor. Its partnership with China is actually also a part of their multi-dimensional foreign policy. Turkey will also gain a new market as a result of its relation with China (Tarihi Y. K., 2017).

Turkish foreign policy in the era of PM Erdogan is always attached with the role of Ahmet Davutoglu, foreign policy advisor since 2009. Davutoglu stated that Turkey is currently implementing the *historical depth* and *geographical depth*. In *historical depth*, Turkey will mainly take the benefits from the geopolitics potential, since they are located in a strategic place including their border with

Europe, Middle East, and East Asia (Aktas, 2010).

Furthermore, in *geographical depth*, Davutoglu keeps embracing the elements of Turkish foreign policy that uphold the freedom and justice, *zero problems with neighbours* concept, multi-dimensional policy, and proactive diplomacy. These elements have eventually become the basic fundamentals of Turkish foreign policy that is flexible and not only focus on Europe only. During its practice of multi-dimensional foreign policy, Turkey puts more concern on the issues that are involving economic aspects. This can be seen by the improvement of its trade partnerships with the Asian countries, including China (Aktas, 2010).

Many scholars and columnists in Turkey began to examine that Turkey should strengthen bilateral relations with Russia and China. They believe that Turkey needs new allies in order to expand its power in today's world of interdependence. Additionally, even though Turkey has been trying to be a part of European Union (EU) since 1963, it has not resulted in any significant progress. In the last period of time, the relations between Turkey and EU have also deteriorated. This is actually why Turkey is looking for another backup plan to conduct its foreign policy. Eventually, China has been considered as one of new alternatives for the Turkish Government under the Erdogan's leadership (Tarihi Y. K., 2017).

Furthermore, some Turkish scholars have frankly expressed that EU is no longer becoming Turkey's priority. The relations in the interdependence of EU, have already started to lose their fundamental meaning for Turkey's interests. Turkey is now even considering EU more like as a tool, not their long-term goal. This also means that EU's existence is not really essential for Turkey's foreign policy.

For that matter, Turkish government has more concern about China's big projects (Tarihi Y. K., 2017).

China is also one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). As a matter of fact, building strong relations with China will eventually give Turkey the capacity to expand its scope of power towards the international context. The "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) that was officially announced by China in 2013 has given Turkey a bright perspective on its future. This project would be the main gate to connect Turkey with Europe, Africa, and Asia. Chinese government also officially stated that Turkey is apparently has a special place in this significant project (Tarihi Y. K., 2017).

The building of OBOR is aimed to fulfil the economic development and strategic demands of both Turkey and China. This Silk Road initiative embodies a new idea of opportunities for China's strategic operation towards Eurasia, Europe, and Middle East. The increasing of China's national power and its OBOR initiative will bring many good future prospects for Turkey to strengthen its position as a world-leading country, as well as a beneficial chance for Turkey to have a strong alliance and play a more significant role in the international relations (Zou, 2003).

During the G20 summit that was held in 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized that China would "obey the integration into the global economic, carry out the OBOR, and create a community that shares common interests" (Xinhua, 2015). Through his speech, Xi also commits to reinforce the strategical communication and development strategies; both China and Turkey should actively use the platforms such as the Silk Road Fund, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and another innovative cooperation style in order to achieve joint

development and welfare (ZAN, “Turkey Dream” and the China-Turkish Cooperation under “One Belt and One Road” Initiative, 2018).

Turkey’s excitement towards OBOR initiative was proven by the Erdogan’s statement in “Belt and Road Forum” in 2017. Erdogan expressed, “I do believe that OBOR will eventually become a win-win project to distribute peace and stability in the next future. This cooperation is a beneficial project for everyone. This initiative, especially as a part of emerging effort to fight terrorism in the world, Turkey is always ready to give any kind of support for this.” (Tarihi Y. K., 2017).

With China’s excellence in many fields, Turkey holds a strategic role in promoting the infrastructure of Silk Road economic belt. Geographically, the geopolitical position of Turkey can be considered unique and strategic. No wonder that Chinese government sees this opportunity as the main bridge to connect the Silk Road with Eurasia. Second, Turkey relatively has a strong economic and cultural relations with Caspian area and Middle East countries. Turkey also has enough power in the national investment and regional development. More importantly, with its good economic relations with the European countries, Turkey has become a long-term realization of OBOR initiative. Indeed, it is really crucial for the Chinese government to bring the prospect of OBOR project from the Pacific Ocean to Baltic Sea (Zou, 2003).

Other beneficial offers that provided by China to Turkey are the international energy development and its projects. Both Turkey and China are the evolving strength that has developed close economic partnerships with the Asian and African countries, as well as the foremost powers at the global level. Furthermore, Turkey has been committed to making their country as the most significant

energy source in Eurasia, which brings many potentials to widen the energy development cooperation to the Caspian region and Middle East countries. In fact, Both Turkey and China have high expectations for getting through the energy channel of Eurasia (Zou, 2003).

Besides taking the advantages of complementarity and elevating the mutually beneficial partnership in the term of communication and transportation, both Turkey and China will also actively expand their cooperation in the more prominent aspects such as renewable energy, finance, mining, high technology, and another practical cooperation. Many experts argue that Turkey's cooperation with China will eventually become really favourable for Turkey's economic development and long-term welfare (Zou, 2003).

As a sovereign country as well as a rational actor, Turkey tends to refuse the claims by the international community and media regarding the domestic conditions of Xinjiang, namely the case in the Uyghur itself. Of course, Turkey does not want the Uyghur issue becomes an obstacle to have a good partnership with Turkey in the term of social and economic. Turkey is aware that China's presence and its strategic location remain to be really essential in order to achieve one of Turkey's national interests.