

“Turkey Dream” and the China-Turkish Cooperation under “One Belt and One Road” Initiative

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Abstract: *Since the Justice and Development Party (AKP)’s coming to power in 2002, Turkey has experienced a decade of high-speed development under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s political group. After outstanding economic and social achievements of the past years, the ruling party of Turkey put forth ambitious visions, plans and objectives, including the centennial political vision of 2023, sixcentenary outlook of 2053 and millenarian objective of 2071, all of which could be summarized as “Turkey dream”. The proposing of “Turkey dream” is both an elaboration of Turkey’s politicians for increasing their popularity among people and a reflection of Turks’ self-confidence after a decade of development. In terms of cooperation under the framework of the “One Belt and One Road” initiative, it is important for China to understand Turkey’s social and economic development strategy. When studying Turkey’s advantages and problems, China needs to pay special attention to Turkey’s soft power in Eurasia. The proceeding of the “One Belt and One Road” initiative in Turkey and even in the Middle East will benefit from exploring the possibility of cooperation on improving both sides’ international influence and on the fight against terrorism.*

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Key Words: *“Turkey Dream”; AKP; “One Belt and One Road”; China-Turkish Relationship*

In recent years, along with the “Chinese dream” and the “Belt and Road Initiative” proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, relevant countries have paid attention to the Chinese people who have become subject in their fields of research. In the past decade of the 21st century, the development of Turkey is remarkable. The country proposed the ambitious “Tükiye hayal” (Turkey dream) at 3 levels ^①: the vision for the 100th anniversary of Republic of Turkey in 2023 (referred to as the “centennial political vision of 2023”), the outlook for the 600th anniversary in 2053 of the Ottoman Empire’s conquest of Istanbul (referred to as the “sexcentenary outlook of 2053”), the goals for the 1000th anniversary in 2071 of the victory in Battle of Manzikert, in which Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantine Empire and started the campaign to conquest Anatolia (referred to as the “millenarian objective of 2071”). Via specific analysis and explanation over the process that Turkey proposes these development plans, goals and vision, this article will explore the context of these proposals, and analyze the conditions to achieve the Dream. At a second part, the article will focus on the fundamentals of Turkey from the perspective of China-Turkis relations, and discuss the foundations and prospects of China-Turkis cooperation under the “Belt and Road Initiative”.

^① The “Turkey Dream” is not a special term in Turkey, but instead, a summarization created by the author. The Turkish also seldom use the word “Tükiye hayal” to refer to the visions, outlook, and goals mentioned in this article. Nevertheless, the English news and analysis will use a phrase like “Turkey’s Dream”. In Turkey, the topic of the hottest discussion is the “2023 Vizyonu”.

I. Three Levels and Connotation of “Turkey Dream”

At present, the most popular expectation towards the future development of the country is the realization of specific development goals in such fields as the economy, society, politics, and diplomacy, referred to as the centennial political vision of 2023. When further analyzing remarks of Turkish leaders, we found that they not only have in mind a centennial vision, but also the sexcentenary outlook of 2053 and the millenarian objective of 2071. For example, cited in an article published in the Turkish press Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that “We truly believe, the future of Turkey is bright...We are currently living in dark days, however, in 2023, 2053, and 2071, our visions will surely come true” (Insanhaber, 2015: September 16).

1. The “centennial political vision of 2023”

Turkey’s “2023 Centenary Vision” has become a necessary content of Turkish leaders’ speeches in recent years. It was first proposed in January 2011, when Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan mentioned the “centennial political vision of 2023” of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in a TV talk show of “Ulusa Seslenig” (Patronlar Dünyası, 2011: January 28). On September 30, 2012, the AKP officially released the “AKP 2023 Political Vision (AK Parti 2023 Siyasi Vizyonu)” at the 4th National Congress.^① In terms of economic development goals, the AKP’s centennial political vision of 2023 includes: the GDP volume of Turkey to rank among the Top 10 in the world; to steadily reduce inflation and keep interest rates at a single digit rate; export to grow to \$500 billion; the national income per capita to reach \$25,000; annual GDP to reach \$2 trillion in 2023; to bring down unemployment to

^① The full text can be downloaded from AKP’s official website. Contents quoted from it in this article will be footnoted unless there is a special case. See <http://www.akparti.org.tr/upload/documents/akparti2023siyasivizyonuturkce.pdf>.

5% and increase the employment rate by 50% compared to the current figure. In addition, this document also has some unique merits: 1) with regard to the ethnic problems, it encourages Turkey to actively solve the Kurdish problem and the problem of national unity by emphasizing cultural autonomy, bilingualism and pluralism; 2) in terms of external relations, it continues to take the path of multilateralism, not only stressing the need to join the European Union (EU), but also adhering to the development of the Islamic Middle East and Central Asia relations. It adheres to the accession of Turkey to join the EU, and also stresses the need to define the “Copenhagen criteria” as the “Ankara standard”. It pledges to join the EU in 2023, and become a full member state; it emphasizes collaboration among the Turkic speaking countries and fight Islamophobia; it speaks highly of the “Arab Spring”; 3) it redefines secularism. Under the premise of adhering to the separation of church and state, it has put more emphasis on freedom of religion, which should not be affected by political power, and emphasizes the harmonious coexistence of different faiths.

2. The millenarian objective of 2071

The millenarian objective of 2071 was first officially proposed by Erdoğan at the end of 2012. At the 4th National Congress of the AKP, Erdoğan had mentioned the history in 1071 (AK Parti, 2012: September 30). According to the official narrative of Turkey about the history, 1071 is indeed an important starting point. This is because it marked the origin of Turkification and Islamization of Anatolia (Zan, T., 2011). The “Generation of 1071” (1071’in nesli) and “2071 Objective” (2071 hedefi) were proposed after the 4th National Congress of the AKP. The so-call “2071 Objective” is very vague and unfilled, unlike the specific plan of the “2023 Vision”. When Erdoğan talked about the “2071 Objective”, he just said in general terms that the country would return to the “Osman level”

(Osmanlı derecesi). In a speech delivered on December 16, 2012, Erdoğan pointed out the goal to be realized by 2071, stating that, “By 2071, that is, the 1000th anniversary, God bless, at that time, Turkey will reach the level that Selcuk and Osman had ever reached. When the developed countries were caught in a serious global financial crisis, we Turkey still continue to forge ahead. We can’t live to 2071. Young people! I say to you, and in particular to those of you who are still single. You please get married. I hope you will bring up a generation of 1071” (Bostan, Y., 2012: December 17; Haberler, 2012: December 16).

3. The sexcentenary outlook of 2053

The sexcentenary outlook of 2053 is mentioned less frequently but it has become part of the current political discourse in Turkey. On May 7, 2013, Erdoğan mentioned the 2053 Outlook, “600 years after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, that is, 2053, we also set the AKP’s goal... “Without Osman Gazi’s dream of the conquering of Istanbul 150 years before the conquest, there will be no the Conqueror Sultan Mehmet, who opened a new era and terminated the old one. We are instilling a sense of consciousness to today’s young people, that is, to become the parents of a generation of conquerors” (Radikal, 2013: May 7).

In contrast, Turkey’s centennial political vision of 2023 is more practical, which involves various objectives to be met; however, the sexcentenary outlook of 2053 and the millenarian objective of 2071 are very general and are part of impractical political propaganda.

II. The Background of the “Turkey Dream” and Related Arguments about It

In this part, we will first discuss why the party has put forward such a grand goal, and why it did not put forward such a grand plan at the beginning of its ruling. Then, we also analyze

the disputes regarding the realization of the “Turkey dream” through case study approach on typical views.

(a) The background and causes of the “Turkey dream”

1. The most important reason is the 10 years’ economic success under AKP’s ruling

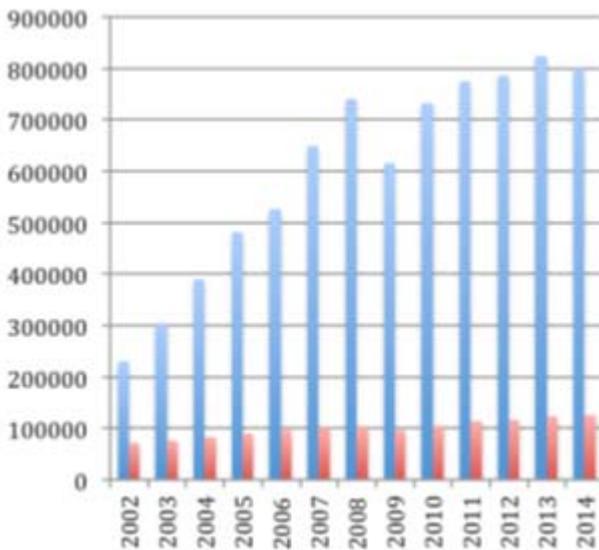
Turkey has achieved unprecedented economic success in the first ten years under the AKP rule and has become the most powerful Muslim country economically. Rapid economic growth has made Turkey a beacon of the world economy and the whole nation’s confidence has soared. A structural factor has contributed to this: setting the Middle East as a strategic region, while maintaining a long-term, special and close relationship with the West. Since the Özal administration in 1980s, Turkey has actively participated in globalization; with the implementation of export-oriented economic policy, the economy has achieved rapid development. Since the AKP came to power in 2002, Turkey’s economy has continued to develop rapidly (see Table 1 and Table 2). The time that Turkey proposed the Centennial vision and objectives of the millennium, is exactly the period that Turkish economy experienced economic development by leaps and bounds, and it reflects the confidence of the Erdoğan’s administration.

Table 1: 2002-2014 Turkey’s Economic Figures 2002-2014

Year	GDP in current exchange rate of US Dollar (Unit: 100,000 US Dollar)	GDP in fixed Lira rate of 1998 (Unit: 100,000 Lira)	Growth rate in fixed Lira rate
2002	230494.22	72519.831	6.2
2003	304901.341	76338.193	5.3
2004	390386.833	83485.591	9.4
2005	481496.931	90499.731	8.4
2006	526429.394	96738.32	6.9

2007	648753.606	101254.625	4.7
2008	742094.395	101921.73	0.7
2009	616703.325	97003.114	-4.8
2010	731608.367	105885.644	9.2
2011	773979.672	115174.724	8.8
2012	786282.517	117625.021	2.1
2013	823044.428	122556.461	4.2
2014	799001.454	126127.931	2.9

Table 2: Changes in Turkey's Economic Figures 2002-2014



Left: GDP in current exchange rate of US Dollar (Unit: 100,000 US Dollar)

Right: GDP in fixed Lira rate of 1998 (Unit: 100,000 Lira)

(The author built the chart according to OECD data in September 2015, Source: Turkey Statistics Associations, www.turkstat.gov.tr)

2. Turkey’s geographical advantages has become increasingly prominent in the era of globalization

With the end of Cold War, Turkey began to get rid of its status as a “periphery state”. Turkey has since positioned itself as a “bridge” connecting the West and the East as well as a “hub country” connecting Europe, Asia and Africa. Turkey’s strong rise in recent years has strengthened its position in the center of Eurasia. 1) Turkey has proposed to extend the Silk Road plan from Beijing to London, which crosses the tunnel of the Strait of Bosphorus. 2) On the construction of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean trade port and route, it has put forward a number of projects, including the construction of the undersea tunnel. 3) Construction of the international aviation center; Istanbul is currently building its third airport, to be the world’s largest airport with an investment of \$28 billion. 4) In term of new energy development (mainly nuclear energy, wind and water), it wants to reduce dependence on external energy sources (currently 98% of Turkey’s energy relies on imports); Turkey is also an important energy transit country. 5) Turkey also hopes to transform Istanbul into a new financial center (Foreign Affairs, 2013: September-October).

3. Turkey’s imperial heritage and great power consciousness constitute an important psychological basis

In the age of Kemal Atatürk, Turks used to deny and reject the history of the Empire in order to modernize. After it reached a certain level of development, Turkey undertook a re-evaluation of the Empire; in 1999, Turkey even celebrated the 700th anniversary of the founding of the Ottoman Empire. These reflect its consciousness as an old empire. The history of the Ottoman Empire is a compulsory course for students in Turkey, which has an important role in shaping the Turkish national and historical consciousness. Such learning will enhance knowledge about the Empire—it is a history about the rise, conquests, expansion,

prosperity and decline of an Empire. The national spirit, historical consciousness and great power's emotion are awakened and shaped through this historical memory. It naturally will shape the Turks' national view, view of history, view of the future and view of the world. A series of goals set by the AKP for the Turks are a reflection of the sense of a great power.

4. The inherent requirements of the historical development of Turkey at the current stage

The era of the AKP's ruling corresponds to the period of the rise of emerging powers in the world. Expectations on the stability of the order and prosperity of the future make it necessary for today's Turks to present their goals in line with the country's historical development phase. At present, the proposals of the AKP can be depicted as the "Erdoğan doctrine" (Zan, T., 2012: March). From a historical perspective, a series of development goals and visions put forward by the AKP is in line with the internal logics of the economic and social changes in Turkey in the post-cold war. From Özal in the 1980s to today's Erdoğan, modern Turkish history has entered a new stage; it has come to a critical moment when something must be done about how to identify the country, politics and culture and how to adjust foreign relations. In this historical context, the AKP put forward its vision and objectives.

5. The individual impact of Turkish leaders cannot be ignored

Turkey's various vision and goals are also closely associated with Erdoğan's. In 2007, Turkey, under the leadership of the AKP, amended the constitution. The new change indicated that in the future, the President would no longer be elected by the Grand National Assembly, but instead, would be elected directly by the people. In August 2014, Erdoğan became the first democratically elected president in the history of Turkey. If no accident, Mr. Erdoğan can be reelected and remain in power until 2024, just

after Turkey’s Centennial vision in 2023. Erdoğan also wants to ensure that Turkey can implement the presidential system. If Erdoğan succeeds, he will rule for a longer time than the Father of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1923-1938). He will also be the most powerful leader of Turkey since Atatürk (Zan, T. & Dong, Y., 2015: December 26).

(b) Disputes around the “Turkey Dream”

After Turkey advanced its centenary visions and the Millennium goals/prospects, it has caught wide attention and resulted in disputes both at home and abroad. It receives applauses, and at the same time, criticisms, doubts and even taunts. On the one hand, there are people praising Erdoğan and the AKP. One representative is the Turkish columnist Mustafa Yürekli. Early on May 1, 2011, in his article, he illustrated the historical significance of the AKP and Erdoğan. He also spoke highly of the centenary vision, “the AKP’s goals in 2023 have expressed its determination to develop Turkey; it is going to provide human beings with a new world order, and promise to bring peace, justice, and goodness” (Yürekli, M., 2011: May 1). On the other hand, there are also criticisms of the “Turkey dream” from different perspectives. Some people cite economic data to reprove Erdoğan and the AKP, saying that the vision and objectives cannot be achieved, and are purely a “dream”; some people point out that Turkey is facing major problems, such as the lack of innovative talents, heavy dependence on imported energy, challenges from Kurdish separatist, etc.; there are also some people who question the party’s new constitution design from a narrow perspective of nationalism, saying that it is actually succumbed to pressure from the PKK and aims at dividing Turkey. Even the historical analogy and beautification of the conquest in history that Erdoğan loves to use are subject to criticism. These issues raised by critics are great obstacles to the realization of the dream of Turkey.

The above opinions from different positions and angles, no matter in favor or against the 2023 Vision, both make some sense. The vision and goals Erdoğan and the AKP set forth are rooted in the inherent logic of modern Turkish history. It has certain rationality and necessity, but also has a strong sense of political propaganda. However, the wish is one thing, the reality is another. What is worth mentioning is that the critics are worried about the Islamist preference of Erdoğan and the AKP, that is, Erdoğan and AKP threaten secularism. In fact, to examine Erdoğan and the AKP from the perspective of Islamism is very one-sided and narrow. Turkish people's support for the AKP is not due mainly religious claims (Çarkoğlu, A. & Klaycıoğlu, E., 2007: 216-218).

III. Cooperation between China and Turkey Based on the “Turkey Dream” and the “Belt and Road Initiative”

Turkey is a regional power located in Eurasia with an extremely geopolitical position and thus plays an important role in the “Belt and Road Initiative”. In November 2015, the G20 summit, which Chinese President Xi Jinping attended, was held in the Turkish city Antalya. President Xi stressed that the Chinese would “adhere to its deep integration into the global economy, carry out the ‘Belt and Road initiative’..... and build a community of common interests” (Xinhua, 2015: November 6). Before the summit, Xi met with Erdoğan. Xi emphasized that both countries should strengthen strategic communication and build development strategies; the two sides should actively use platforms, such as the Silk Road Fund and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and explore innovative cooperation channels and models, to achieve common development and common prosperity; Erdoğan said that Turkey attached great importance to relations with China and was willing to work with China to deepen cooperation in various fields, and Turkey would

actively participate in the cooperation under the “Belt and Road” framework, welcome Chinese companies to increase investment in infrastructure and other areas of Turkey. China and Turkey signed the “memorandum of understanding for the government to jointly promote the construction of the ‘Belt and Road initiative’”, which provided important policy support for both sides to promote cooperation in various fields in the Belt and Road Initiative framework (Wei, J. & Li, B., 2015: November 15).

Therefore, both countries have made it clear to strengthen cooperation under the framework of the “Belt and Road”. In particular, President Xi emphasized the need to achieve buttressing the development strategies of the two countries, which is the reason why and significance of the article’s focus on the development strategy of Turkey (the “Turkey dream”). On this basis, it is necessary for us to analyze Turkey’s attitude and needs on China’s “Belt and Road initiative” from the angle of China, in order to understand the basic condition of Turkey, and to research the possibility of “docking Turkey dream” and the “Belt and Road”.

(a) Turkey’s views and perspectives on the “Belt and Road”

On the whole, Turkey is generally positive about and interested in the “Belt and Road Initiative”. However, Turkey also has serious concerns about China’s initiative; this is because: 1) China has become the second largest economy in the world since 2010 and has strong influence power in the world; Turkey cannot ignore the existence of China’s rising power; 2) China is a permanent member of the Security Council; it plays a pivotal role and has influence on some of issues that relates to Turkey’s national interests; 3) there is a huge trade deficit in Turkey’s trade with China. It has been seeking a possible breakthrough for long and is trying to make up for Turkey’s trade deficit by attracting more investment from China. Erdoğan also specifically talked about this when he met with President Xi Jinping; 4) “The Belt and

Road” provides an important opportunity for Turkey to achieve the “Turkey dream”. The Turkish side attaches great importance to the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund. Turkey is a founding member of the AIIB.

So, what are the Turks’ specific views on the “Belt and Road initiative”? According to the research this author conducted in recent years, they can be roughly classified as the following aspects:

1) Turkey has a huge potential benefits in the “Belt and Road initiative”. Turkey’s current economy is experiencing some consequence of the economic crisis; the lira depreciates quickly, and inflation is serious, which has caused AKP’s concern. Therefore, searching for new economic opportunities has become an urgent need. The “Belt and Road” means new opportunities for Turkey.

2) The Silk Road Economic Zone is a good idea. Turkey is considered as a traditional channel of the Silk Road, in which Istanbul is the end; there are a lot of ancient Silk Road remnants in the territory of Turkey. Turkey has a close relationship with the traditional Silk Road. It desires and wishes to find new ideas for economic and cultural prosperity of contemporary Turkey by such a remarkable revival of historical philosophy, and docking with China’s the “Belt and Road initiative”.

3) Some have voiced concerns over the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Turkey’s economic structure has a great similarity with China’s, and the economic development models of the two countries are similar.^① Turkey has also elaborated a plan to find markets and attract investment from abroad. Leaders of China and

^① Turkey has a similar economic structure as China. They both rely on labor-intensive industries, focus on export-driven development, and the two sides have been in competition in the field of fabrics export for a long time. The two countries are both eager to expand influence in the Middle East and Africa.

Turkey mentioned several times during the meeting that they would connect the “Silk Road Economic Belt”. Together with China, Turkey put forth the “Middle Corridor” plan^①, and connected the initiative to their all-round development plans. Turkey views Central Asia as part of its sphere of influence, and the Caucasus is regarded as a very important sphere of influence, therefore, some Turks expressed their doubts about China regarding the “Silk Road Economic Belt”: Is not there competition between China and Turkey?

4) The Turks realize that the Silk Road Economic Zone is not only an economic project, but also a cultural and security plan. Turks are more concerned about the relationship between Xinjiang and the “Silk Road Economic Belt”.

(b) Turkey’s unique advantages and problems

From the perspective of China-Turkey cooperation and docking of the development strategy of the two sides under the framework of the “Belt and Road”, Turkey has “five advantages” and “five problems”.

1. Turkey’s five advantages

(1) In terms of geopolitical pattern, Turkey connects to parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is in the south of Russia, west of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Iran, and east of Europe. The Arab North Africa region is in its southern and southeastern flank. Turkey also controls the Strait connecting the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea; it has a strong geographical advantage, and its strategic position is very important. Such a unique geographical advantage makes Turkey a bridge for the communication of Eastern and Western economies and cultures. As Ahmet Davutoğlu said, Turkey’s advantage is the capability to speak

^① The Middle Corridor (Orta Koridor) put forward by Turkey in recent years is a communicational network (ulaşım ağı) connecting Asia and the Europe. It covers an area from Turkey and Azerbaijan to Central Asia and China via the Caspian Sea.

languages of two civilizations. In terms of the promotion of the "Belt and Road", first of all, we need to pay attention to Turkey's geographical advantage.

(2) In the economy, although Turkey is now facing the challenges of economic slowdown, reviewing the past decade under the AKP's leadership, we found that Turkey has made great progress in economic and social development. It is still making progress in its application to membership to the EU and is an important member of the G20. Turkey has a population of 77 million, and the average age is 30 years old, which is very young and provides great potential. Turkey is not an energy abundant country. The fact that it can achieve today's success shows that its economic development model and industrial structure is healthier than countries relying on energy as their main income source.

(3) In politics, Turkey is a relatively stable state that has already completed the political transition to democracy. Ninety years since the founding of the Republic of Turkey, it has been implementing the westernized policy; in 1946, Turkey made political reforms to achieve a multiparty democracy. In terms of the system environment, Turkey's politics, economy, investment, social welfare, culture, media and other aspects are all based on European standards; although it has not fully met the European standard yet, the long-term joint effort to join the EU has changed and is changing Turkey, making it more standardized and more suitable for foreign investment. Mr. Davutoğlu also emphasized improving the institutional environment in his London speech in mid-January of 2016, in order to make Turkey more suitable for investment. He also stressed the importance of Turkey's application to join the EU.

(4) With regard to the culture and system, Turkey is a secular state. The Kemalist doctrine of a secularist system is accepted by all parties in Turkey. It has not yet been subjected to fundamental challenges. In addition, Turkey's version of Islam is also more

moderate and inclusive. Because Turks converted to Islam later than others, had been constantly absorbing many historical and cultural heritage of ancient Persian, Byzantine, ancient Greece-Rome, and converted to this belief mainly through the practice of Sufism, Turkey’s Islam showed quite unique characteristics: in simple terms, it has more emphasis on introverted tradition of mysticism, and has less dogmatic understanding (Zan, T., 2011: 326-327)^①; it also actively plays a role and expands its influence through Islam.^②

(5) In education, Turkey also has relatively advanced resources. Turkey has a relatively high level of secondary education: most outstanding universities have carried out teaching in English; they try to catch up with advanced Western models and standards; Turkey has recognized China’s college entrance examination scores, therefore there are no institutional barriers in admission of Chinese students. In related fields, there is a lot of space for future cooperation between China and Turkey. In addition, religious education in Turkey is also very advanced, and its “de-radicalization” experience is a good lesson to learn from.

2. Five problems of Turkey

(1) Turkey is part of a complex regional pattern. The Middle East region suffers from long-term instability. In recent years, the situation in Iraq and Syria have deteriorated. Turkey, as their neighbor, has been affected: such as the “Daesh” issue (ISIS), the Kurdish issue, that more than 2 million refugees stayed in Turkey, and the deterioration of relations with Russia because of fighter incident, etc.

^① In the era of Kemal Atatürk, there even was a tendency to balance against Islamic identity with the invented secular tradition of the Turks.

^② From the field research in Turkey in February-March 2015, the author found that not just the state, but, more importantly, Turkish Folk Religious Force also played an important role in the form of business association and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Balkans, Africa and Central Asia.

(2) The practice of Turkish leadership led by Erdoğan in the treatment of internal and external crises is very controversial. Examples include the relationship between the AKP government and the Gülen movement (the movement led by Fethullah Gülen, also known as cemaat or hizmet hareketi), aircraft incident between Russia and Turkey, and the purchase of HQ-9 Anti-aircraft Missiles System from China (Hu, L, 2015: November 18)^①, and so on. The disputes in dealing with these issues have hurt the prestige and reliability of the Turkish leadership. The presidential system proposed by Erdoğan also raised concerns among critics. They hold the view that Erdoğan is seeking larger individual power which is not subject to constraints. Some Turkish critics even said that what Erdoğan wants is not a presidential system, but an authoritarian one (Hakan, A., 2015: February 1), or to become a “Sultan” through a legitimate election.

(3) In the economy, Turkey has shown a slow growth and a lack of growing force; it is facing the middle-income trap. Turkey’s per capita GDP has exceeded \$10,000; it is one of the middle and high income countries. The key to overcome the middle-income trap is the industrial upgrading and technological innovation, which needs a lot of talents and cannot be solved with a short-term policy.

(4) The long-term stability of Turkey is subject to the increasingly serious conflict between religious and secular forces. The AKP has an Islamist background, which cannot be ignored; since it came to power in 2002, although it has made prominent achievements, the AKP represents Turkey’s conservative forces, and therefore wants to revive Islamic values. A series of “little tricks” by the AKP, including the lifting of the ban of headscarves legislation, have raised concerns among Turkey’s secular factions.

^① Turkey decided to manufacture military equipment in its own. It finally decided not to purchase the HQ-9 Anti-aircraft missiles System from China with the excuse of “self-manufacturing”.

They are afraid that Turkey’s secular democracy will be harmed. In recent years, relations between Turkish military and the AKP government, the relationship between secularists and conservative factions, and the relationship between the liberals and Erdoğan, have become sources of instability in Turkey.

(5) Turkey is facing long-term challenges from extreme nationalism. In the two elections in 2015, the Kurdish issue was the hot topic. The HDP on behalf of the Kurdish people successfully took a seat in the Parliament. “The process of Imrali” has been terminated. The fear of terrorism and Kurdish separatism has resulted in the rise of nationalism within Turkish mainstream society. Antiterrorism operations against the PKK, including the bombing of the military base in northern Syria, had been catering to nationalist emotions, and eventually improved the poll in favor of Erdoğan (Zan, T., 2015: November 3). Extreme nationalism also led to irrational remarks and activities about China’s Xinjiang issue. The “Anti-China” incident in July 2015 marks the sensitive issues between the two countries which have spread to the mass media, and have impacted relations between the two countries and people’s emotions in different degrees. As a result, the image of Turkey in Chinese public opinion has also deteriorated. The normal development of bilateral relations between the two countries will inevitably be affected by public opinion and the negative impression and mood.

The advantage that Turkey has is the great attraction for China-Turkey cooperation and investment; indeed, the problems of Turkey potentially increase the risks for cooperation, especially the complex and sensitive issues in the regional situation and bilateral relations. China needs serious research on these and treat them rationally. In short, Turkey’s strategic position, comprehensive strength and correlation with China in economic, political and cultural aspects, cannot be ignored; there is still great space for progress in bilateral relations under the “Belt and Road”

framework.

(c) Issues that China should pay attention to in promoting the “Belt and Road” in Turkey

To work with Turkey to promote the “Belt and Road” and dock it with the “Turkey dream”, in addition to understanding the attitude of Turkey on the “Belt and Road”, and the overall grasp of the advantages and problems of Turkey, China also need to pay attention to the following issues.

First of all, the relationship between China and Turkey does involve some sensitive issues which cannot be ignored. The quantity and quality of knowledge production regarding Turkey are not sufficient in China, and it is difficult to meet the demand of knowledge on Turkey in the fields of diplomacy, science, ideology and media. Since the 7/5 incident, Turkey’s image in the eyes of the Chinese people took a turn for the worse (Karaca, R. & Wang, L., 2015: 227-250); that is, Chinese people believe Turkey “underneath” is a supporter and sympathizer, or even an advocate of “pan-Turkism” – either in politics or in culture (Zan, T., 2011). The East Turkistan Islamic Organization is a barrier to the relationship between the two countries.

Secondly, Turkey has soft power in Central Asia. Huntington once said, Turkey was rejected by Brussels, and it refused Mecca; its fate will be attributed to Tashkent. He linked the fate of Turkey with Tashkent because he noticed the special connection between Turkey and Central Asia in race, history, language and culture. Huntington made this judgment at a moment when Pan-Turkism was rejuvenating soon after the end of the cold war. Özal himself used to actively support pan Turkism, but the output level of Turkey is not large enough to support Central Asia to re-enter the world system of division of labor; the dependence of Central Asian countries on China’s economy is far higher than on Turkey’s. Therefore, the so-called “Tashkent fate” of Turkey can only be a culture or civilization, rather than hard power.

The influence of Turkey in Central Asia is achieved through the promotion of its soft power, and the links in race, language, culture, and religion are widely utilized. In a period of time after the independence of Central Asian countries in the early 1990s, Turkey’s secular democratic politics and market economy as a model used to have a certain appeal for the majority of Central Asian countries. Although the AKP government declared that they had abandoned pan-Turkism or the political aspirations of “the unity of the Turkic world”, Turkey’s cultural influence in Central Asia is still a remarkable force. Pan-Turkism has been turned from the “territorial unity” into cooperation and cultural demands. Through the mechanism of different levels, Turkey has maintained a special relationship with Central Asian Turkic countries, which is worth paying attention to and China should learn from it.

Thirdly, for further development of bilateral relations, the two sides need to explore some new issues. In terms of existing international organizations and structure, both China and Turkey are aware of the importance of strengthening cooperation to improve their weight, but at present, it is difficult to achieve substantial breakthroughs. For example, Turkey seeks to improve the status in the United Nations, and want to cooperate with China in the IMF and other institutions. On the other hand, as emerging economies and regional powers, both China and Turkey are facing the challenge from terrorism, which is a common challenge for all mankind in the 21st century. How to carry out agenda setting in this field, strengthen cooperation, understand many problems in the relations between the two countries under the framework of international development and global governance, and break through the cognitive framework of the traditional relationship between states, is an important breakthrough point in the relations between the two countries. Given Turkey’s soft power in the Turkic world, and relatively

stronger hard power China has, it is necessary and feasible to strengthen cooperation in the “Belt and Road Initiative” framework, which is also a breakthrough for the two countries to build new bilateral relations and dock their development strategies in this context.

IV. Conclusion

Turkey has obvious geographical advantages, but the key is to turn this advantage into real economic reverberations. If Turkey could resume its economic development momentum and overcome the middle income trap, its central position in Europe and Asia is expected to be established and consolidated. Its internal problems will have the biggest impact on the future of Turkey. On the one hand, it is uncertain whether Turkey can skillfully and gracefully find a balance between the Islamic world and the West; on the other hand, Turkey’s Kurdish problem is a long-term constraint which cannot be solved in the short term. But Turkey is currently making efforts in many aspects; if handled well, Turkey’s stability and development will be further guaranteed. In addition, Turkey’s external environment is also a factor that limits its development--the Middle East has been in turmoil for a long time. To maintain the long-term relative peace of the Middle East serves the vital interests of Turkey.

Although the bilateral relations between the two countries have experienced some setbacks, overall, they pursue rapid development in a good and positive direction. Especially after the initiative of the “Belt and Road”, there is a wider space for further enhancement of the cooperation between the two countries. We summarize Turkey’s development objectives as three levels of “Turkey Dream”, namely the centennial political vision of 2023, sixcentenary outlook of 2053 and millenarian objective of 2071. These ambitious goals involve both the construction and

development of Turkey, and the surrounding countries. It is global, based not only on an economic need to attract a large number of investments from foreign countries, including China, but also on a foreign strategy. In this regard, understanding both the advantages and problems of Turkey objectively, China should accordingly dock the “Belt and Road initiative” and the “Turkey dream” to achieve win-win and common prosperity.

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