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TURKEY AND STABILITY IN EAST ASIA

by

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TURKEY AND STABILITY IN EAST ASIA

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ABSTRACT

East Asia is an important region for global stability. Major economies—China, Japan, and South Korea—are located in the region. The phenomenon of a rising China, the response of the United States to a rising China, and the interaction of these two major powers in the area, as well as the relations among the principal actors of the region—the United States, China, Japan, and South Korea—will determine the stability of the region. Realists maintain a pessimistic view regarding a rising China and East Asia; liberals are optimistic and contend that because of the greater economic interdependency of nations in the region, the prospect of a conflict is not likely. However, the long-standing distrust, resentment, and territorial disputes among these nations are drivers of bilateral relations of China, South Korea, and Japan, and these problems may undermine the long-term stability of the region. Turkey is also a growing economy, and stability in East Asia is important for Turkey. Turkey historically has had good relations with China, South Korea, and Japan. Turkey, as a responsible member of the international community, could play a more active role and could contribute to the stability of the region by actively engaging with the three principal actors of East Asia to resolve their problems.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ROK	Republic of Korea
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TURKSOY	International Organization of Turkic Culture
U.S.	United States

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

East Asia's economic and political importance is growing. Major economies—China, Japan, and South Korea—are located in the region. The phenomenon of a rising China, the response of the United States to a rising China, and the interaction of these two major powers in the area, as well as the relations among the principal actors of the region—the United States, China, Japan, and South Korea—will determine the stability of the region. In this era of global economic interdependence, the stability of East Asia is important for the rest of the world, because the level of economic interaction between the region and the world is high. Other countries could contribute to the peace and stability of the region by actively engaging the key countries of the area.

Historical events have shaped contemporary relations in East Asia. The region faced dramatic changes during the 19th and 20th centuries. China realized the great kingdom's backwardness in comparison with the West.¹ Starting from the Opium War in 1839, China lost its sovereign position to the tribute states of Asia. Japan rose to the position of super power of the region after realizing the importance of modernization and industrialization, and later Japan started to conquer and colonize its neighbors. A series of such incidents occurred during World War I, the Inter-war period, World War II, and the Korean War, and created contentious issues and disputed territories among the three leading countries of East Asia. Today, China, South Korea, and Japan still have unresolved, contentious issues and territorial disputes among them.

Moreover, the rise of China exacerbates the situation in East Asia. A militarily and economically powerful China arouses suspicions among its neighbors, and the response of the United States is another important issue for the stability of the region. Two schools of thought suggest two outcomes for a rising China. Realists believe the current situation will eventually lead to a conflict between the United States and China

¹ Conrad Schirokauer and Donald N. Clark, *Modern East Asia: A Brief History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 128–29.

because China will challenge the United States in the region if she keeps up her economic and military growth. China will try to expel the United States from the region, and then conflict is inevitable. Liberals think that the economic interdependence of China and the international community will inhibit China's assertiveness as she is rising. Liberals believe the rise of China will not be a challenge for the current order and will not lead to war among the powers.

The problems among China, Japan, and South Korea are still a source of debate and national resentment among these countries' citizens. These problems are the main obstacles to the long-term stability of East Asia. A third-party country's active engagement with China, Japan, and South Korea would be beneficial for creating another bond among these countries for the long-term stability of the region. In this regard, a third-party country that has good relations with these countries and has no direct interests in the region could play a significant role in opening venues for China, Japan, and South Korea.

Turkey has had historically good relations and is ethnically related to the area. The ancestors of Turkey's Turks emigrated from Asia, from a region near today's China. Turkey has good relations with these three countries, and has no strategic interest in the East Asia. Further, relations between Turkey and Japan date back to the era of the Ottoman Empire and have always been on positive terms. Turkey's relationship with South Korea is not as old, but it is also positive. This tie began with the role of the Turkish Army role in the Korean War. The historical and ethnic linkage of Turkey to the region forces Turkey to be proactive in East Asia.

In this research I will analyze how the International Relations theories view the rise of China in East Asia and how the current problems among the key countries of region—China, South Korea, and Japan—affect the future of the East Asia. Despite the realists' pessimistic view regarding a rising China, liberals are optimistic and contend that because of greater economic interdependency among these nations, the prospect of a conflict is not likely. However, the long-standing distrust, resentment, and territorial disputes are drivers of bilateral relations of China, South Korea, and Japan, and these problems may undermine the long-term stability of the region. Turkey is a growing

economy, and stability in East Asia is important for Turkey. Turkey, as responsible member of the international community, could play a more active role and could contribute to the stability of the region by actively engaging with the three principal actors of East Asia to resolve their problems.

Unsolved problems could trigger a conflict in the region. As M. Taylor Fravel contends, a possible conflict in the area could be over territorial control.² Any attempt to diminish a possible conflict in the region is crucial. An analysis of Turkey's military efforts creates an opportunity to explore solutions to the problems that could trigger a conflict threatening the stability of the region.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rising economic and political powers of East Asia take the attention of the whole world. The key players in the region are China, Japan, South Korea, and the United States. "China is a rising power that is simultaneously transforming its domestic politics and economics, extending its regional influence, and demanding the respect and recognition of other major powers."³ China, Japan, and South Korea have historical challenges in their relations that are major barriers to long-term stability in the region. The interaction among the major powers of the region—the United States and China—will determine the future of the region, which affects other parts of the world in the era of high interdependency. In this regard, the stability of East Asia is important and will be more important in the future for other countries.

The historical and territorial problems and challenges among the key countries of the region and a militarily and economically powerful China are reasons for the lack of stability in East Asia. Notably, China's military spending became second to the United States in 2014 when total expenditures reached USD 216 billion.⁴ China's efforts to

² M. Taylor Fravel, "International Relations Theory and China's Rise: Assessing China's Potential for Territorial Expansions," *International Studies Review* 12 (2010): 506.

³ G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, "International Relations Theory and the Search for Regional Stability, in *International Relations Theory and the Asia Pacific*, ed. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 2.

⁴ "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2014," SIPRI, accessed March 3, 2016, http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database/milex_database.

strengthen its military concern Japan and South Korea, which have historically opposing stances to China and each other and still have unresolved territorial disputes.⁵

The problems among China, South Korea, and Japan, especially territorial disputes could trigger a military conflict.⁶ Given the complicated situation, solving the problems among these countries is essential for the stability of the region. Understanding the prospect and effects of a rising China is crucial to exert policies within the area. There are two prevailing schools of thought regarding the rise of China and the implications of China's ascendance in East Asia. Realists view the rise of China as a reason for conflict and power struggle in the region; a rising power inevitably leads to an environment of conflict, because the other states would be insecure and would perceive the rising power as a threat. On the other hand, liberals view the rise of China as potentially peaceful; liberals are optimistic about the ascendance of China and the future of Asia because of China's interdependence with the global economic order.

Realism mainly "believes that the world, imperfect as it is from the rational point of view, is the result of forces inherent in human nature."⁷ There is no government among states, and the international system is "anarchic."⁸ As John J. Mearsheimer warns, "There is no ultimate arbiter or leviathan in the system that states can turn to if they get into trouble and need help."⁹ The international order is a "self-help system," and states are sovereign "units [that] worry about their survival."¹⁰ The anarchy in international order forces the states to ensure their own security, and the threats are too many in the "anarchic order."¹¹ Cooperation is limited in the international structure because of the

⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, "China's Maritime Disputes," <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/chinas-maritime-disputes/p31345#l/p31345>.

⁶ Fravel, "China's Potential for Territorial Expansions," 506.

⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, Albert A. Michelson, and Leonard Davis, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th Ed. (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1973), 3.

⁸ Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 102.

⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 363.

¹⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 105.

¹¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 619, doi:10.2307/204817.

unequal “division of gains” and fear of dependency on another state.¹² Thus, conflict is inevitable because, according to Kenneth Neal Waltz, “a state that is amassing instruments of war, even for its own defensive, is cast by others as a threat requiring a response.”¹³ States in the international order “struggle for power”; “freedom, security, prosperity, or power itself” is the ultimate goal.¹⁴ The struggle over power generates conflicts among nations and creates an anarchic world order. Mearsheimer, who represents the offensive realist stance, and A. F. K. Organski, who represents the power transition view, give great importance to the rising China phenomenon in realist theory.

Mearsheimer envisions a bleak future. He contends that China will inevitably threaten the United States, based on the offensive realism theory. “The ultimate goal of every great power is to maximize its share of world power and eventually dominate the system. In practical terms, this means that the most powerful states seek to establish hegemony in their region of the world while also ensuring that no rival great power dominates another area.”¹⁵ States only feel secure when they are more powerful relative to their competitors.¹⁶ States would accumulate power to guarantee their security until they are dominant in their region. In this regard, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Mearsheimer assert, “China cannot rise peacefully, and if it continues its dramatic economic growth over the next few decades, the United States and China are likely to engage in an intense security competition with considerable potential for war.”¹⁷ The enormous amount of the U.S. military spending in the world, the power projection of the United States into Asia, and aircraft carriers located in Taiwan could be seen as offensive actions by China.¹⁸ Mearsheimer thinks that “[a]n increasingly powerful China is also likely to try to push the United States out of Asia, much the way the United States pushed the European great

¹² Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 106.

¹³ Waltz, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory,” 619.

¹⁴ Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 27.

¹⁵ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 363.

¹⁶ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 364.

¹⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski and John J. Mearsheimer, “Clash of the Titans,” *Foreign Policy* 146, no. 1 (2005): 47.

¹⁸ Mearsheimer, “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to U.S. Power in Asia,” 385–6.

powers out of the Western Hemisphere.”¹⁹ Economic development will lead China to dominate Asia for its survival in the anarchic world order.

Organski’s power transition theory suggests that the conflict is inevitable between the dominant power and the rising power, when the gap of power narrows. Power asymmetry is the sole reason for the peace. He thinks “that world peace is guaranteed when the nations satisfied with the existing international order enjoy an unchallenged supremacy of power and that major wars are most likely when a dissatisfied challenger achieves an approximate balance of power with the dominant nation.”²⁰ Rising states, due to their dissatisfaction with the current international order, make war to change the situation according to their interests.²¹ The process of power transition ends with a conflict in the international system.²² Back in the 1960s, Organski contemplated that China would become “the most powerful nation on earth.”²³ The rising China eventually will become a challenge to international order as she narrows the power gap between the United States.

Fravel has developed a counter argument against these two alarming thoughts. According to Fravel, these ideas have two limitations. The lack of analysis of the scope and the sources for the unrealized benefits that could force China to be aggressive and the lack of systematical evaluation of costs and advantages of the conflict are main critiques raised by Fravel.²⁴ The benefits of being an aggressive China in the region are not clear.

Another school of thought regarding a rising China is liberalism. Liberals are optimistic about the international system. They focus on the positive side of human nature and think man is mainly good; the likelihood of conflict could be diminished

¹⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, “China’s Unpeaceful Rise,” *Current History* (April 2006): 162.

²⁰ A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 333.

²¹ Organski, *World Politics*, 338.

²² Organski, *World Politics*, 323.

²³ Organski, *World Politics*, 446.

²⁴ Fravel, “China’s Potential for Territorial Expansions,” 506.

through cooperation.²⁵ Sovereign states are not the only central actors in world politics; according to Ole R. Holsti, individuals, interest groups, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations all have an influence on states.²⁶ Liberals believe that conflict could be avoided, although they share the realists' assumption that there is anarchy in the international system.²⁷ Liberalism accepts that states are more prone to cooperate, while realism gives no credit to cooperation.

Liberals believe cooperation and economic interdependence could mitigate conflicts among the states. Cooperation is most likely when there is a minimum level of gain; as Barry Hughes observes, “a state will often cooperate if it can obtain absolute gain from doing so, even if other states might gain more.”²⁸ Besides cooperation, liberals such as Amitav Acharya contend that strong economic and institutional interactions among states and other international actors will decrease the likelihood of conflicts.²⁹ The liberal's main argument is “that interdependence decreases the incentives for conflict and war, in part because states become reluctant to disrupt or jeopardize the welfare benefits of open economic exchange, and in part because domestic interest groups with stake in interdependence constrain the ability of the state to act autonomously.”³⁰ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye define interdependence as “situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries.”³¹ The “costly effect” of “[i]nternational transactions—flows of money, goods, people, and messages across international boundaries” creates a “complex interdependence” among

²⁵ Barry Hughes, *Continuity and Change in World Politics: Competing Perspectives* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 55–64.

²⁶ Ole R. Holsti, “Models of International Relations and Foreign Policy,” *Diplomatic History* 13, no. 1 (1989): 23–26.

²⁷ Arthur A. Stein, *Why Nations Cooperate: Circumstance and Choice in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 7–9.

²⁸ Hughes, *Continuity and Change in World Politics*, 56.

²⁹ Amitav Acharya, “Thinking Theoretically about Asian IR “ in *International Relations of Asia*, ed. David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 69–72.

³⁰ Ikenberry, “International Relations Theory and the Search for Regional Stability,” 17.

³¹ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), 8.

international actors that prevents a likelihood of conflict.³² Given this liberal perspective, George Glasier suggests that “the current international order is defined by economic and political openness, it can accommodate China’s rise peacefully.”³³ China’s economic development has been achieved through high interconnectedness with the global economic system.

China has been interconnected to the East Asian and global economic systems, and “economic interdependence within the region has been robust and growing.”³⁴ China, according to the liberal perspective, has become an engine of growth and a catalyst for regional integration. China’s interconnectedness to the world would inhibit it from taking military action. More likely, China would try to solve its problems with other regional countries in a more peaceful way.

Realism has a pessimistic view on the future of the region, while liberalism suggests a more cooperative and peaceful East Asia. In reality, actions shape the future. The problems among the three main countries of East Asia are sources of instability for the region, and a problem could trigger a conflict in the region.³⁵ Creating opportunities for these countries to provide chances for solving their problems is of utmost importance for the stability of the region.

C. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The problems among these three countries are deep rooted and have an impact on each of their societies. The colonization of East Asia by Japan’s Imperial Army, the wars cited earlier, the unfair treaties, and the history of war crimes have caused problems and the situation of disputed territories among these countries. Worse, the politicians and policy makers sometimes have used these problems to Influence their own citizens. These three countries are so entangled in these problems that a third party’s hand is needed to facilitate an end to these disputes. In this regard my first hypothesis is that the United

³² Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 8–9.

³³ Charles Glasier, “Will China’s Rise lead to War?,” *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2011): 81.

³⁴ Ikenberry, “International Relations Theory and the Search for Regional Stability,” 16.

³⁵ Fravel, “China’s Potential for Territorial Expansions,” 506.

States as a third party trying to facilitate a solution to the problems of these countries would be perceived as threatening and suspicious by China and could be futile.

China is economically developing and commensurately increasing its military spending. This economic and military expansion by China has created the rising China phenomenon that caused the containment and alignment efforts in the region. On the other hand, South Korea and Japan are strong allies of the United States in the region. The United States' efforts to end the problems of these countries would be seen as suspicious, especially by China, and would be futile. In this sense my second hypothesis is that Turkey, which has a good relationship with each country and has no strategic interest in the region, would be more beneficial as a third-party facilitator among these countries.

The Turkish Army is the second largest army in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a strong ally of the West. The Turkish Army has the capability of creating opportunities for these countries to solve their problems. My last hypothesis addresses by which diplomatic means the Turkish military could create a venue for solving the problems among these countries.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

The problems among China, Japan, and South Korea started at the end of the 19th century and deepened throughout the next century. On the other hand, Turkey has its origins in the neighboring Central Asia region and has historical relations with these countries. My methodology for assessing Turkey's suitability as a facilitator in their problem resolution process is a historical approach for this study. The historical approach is the appropriate approach for understanding the sources of the problems among these three countries and Turkey's relations with these countries. Moreover, this approach provides information for understanding the military diplomacy capability of the Turkish Army.

I use a combination of both primary and secondary sources to explain the problems among these three countries, the phenomenon of a rising China, and Turkey's relations with these countries.

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II. TURKEY AND EAST ASIA

A. TURKEY'S BONDS TO ASIA

Turkey thinks of herself as an Asian country and has emphasized on many occasions her historical, cultural, linguistic, and religious ties with the region.³⁶ Despite the long distance between Turkey and Asia, Turkey has close ties with the region. The ancestors of Turkey's Turks emigrated 13 centuries ago from Central Asia and the region near today's China. Turkey remained unaware of her Asian connection during the Ottoman Empire era. Turkey established her first diplomatic relations with China, Japan, and South Korea during the Turkish Republic era. Historical events are the primary source of good relations between Turkey and the region.

More recently, economic relations increased between Turkey and the region after the 1980s during Turkey's search to grow economically. Turkey started to establish economic links with economic success stories with the region—particularly with Japan, South Korea, and China. Later the historically good relations and increased economic relations helped to start some military and defense relations with these countries. Maritime security cooperation with Japan, defense industry projects with South Korea, and failed defense procurement due to the challenge of compatibility with China are military interaction efforts of Turkey with these countries. Turkey has historical bonds to East Asia and has an increasing ratio of cooperation in diverse areas with China, Japan, and South Korea.

B. TURKEY AND CHINA

Turkey has a long relationship with China that dates back to prehistoric times. The ancestors of the modern day Turks originally came from Central Asia, and from the area close to present-day China.³⁷ China still has seven Turkic language-speaking ethnic

³⁶ "Turkey's Relations With Asia-Pacific," Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-relations-with-east-asia-and-the-pacific.en.mfa>.

³⁷ Yilmaz Oztuna, *Türk Tarihinden Yapraklar* [Leaves from Turkish History] (Istanbul: Otuken, 2016), 13.

minorities who live in the country.³⁸ Despite historical closeness, Turks in Turkey did not become interested in their ancestors' homeland until World War I, the last days of Ottoman Empire.

Turkey did not establish a solid relationship with the China other than sending delegates on some minor symbolic visits during the Ottoman Empire. There are historical records that Ottoman official envoys traveled to China in the time of Ming Dynasty.³⁹ Turkey later had no tangible ties with China until the Turkish Republic era. Turkey and China started their fuller relations at the beginning of the 20th century; "a treaty of friendship and commerce was signed in 1934."⁴⁰ Later, World War II and Chinese Civil War decreased the interaction of two countries, and relations became dormant.

The new international order established after World War II and the Cold War shaped the next phase of relations between Turkey and China in the second half of the 20th century. Turkey aligned with the Western world after World War II. The victory of the communists in the Chinese Civil War shifted the aspect of Turkey's relations toward China. Turkey, as a member of the anti-communist group and an ally of the United States, aligned her China policy according to her relationship with the United States and the Western world. Turkey started her relations with Taiwan as the legitimate government of all China; Turkey moved the Turkish embassy to Taiwan and stopped her relations with mainland China.⁴¹

³⁸ Wolfram Eberhard, *Çin: Sinoloji'ye Giriş* [China: Introduction to Sinology] (Istanbul: Pulhan Matbaası, 1946), 8.

³⁹ Giray Fidan, "Sino-Turkish Relations: An Overview," Middle East Institute, October 4, 2013, http://www.mei.edu/content/sino-turkish-relations-overview#_ftn3.

⁴⁰ Selda Altan, "Osmanlı'ya Doğudan Bakmak: 20. Yüzyıl Dönümünde Çin'de Osmanlı Algısı ve Milliyetçilik [Viewing Ottoman from East: The Perception of Ottoman and Nationalism in China in the Wake of 20th Century]," in *Türkiye'de Çin'i Düşünmek: Ekonomik, Siyasi ve Kültürel İlişkilere Yeni Yaklaşımlar* [Thinking on China in Turkey: New Approaches in Economic, Political, and Cultural Relations], ed. Selçuk Esenbel, İsenbike Togan and Altay Atlı (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2013), 95.

⁴¹ Altay Atlı, *Turkey's Foreign Policy towards China, Analysis and Recommendations for Improvement* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University, 2016), 6.

Another confrontation was the Korean War; Turkey sided with the Allies and fought against Chinese-backed North Korea.⁴² Relations remained frozen until the 1970s. Turkey recognized the government of mainland China in 1971, as the United States established her relations with China.⁴³ Nevertheless, Turkey did not take her level of relations with China further at the time due to domestic problems.

In the 1980s, relations between the two countries started again, but this time the interaction was at a high level. After the death of Mao, the economic developments of Deng Xiaoping's China prompted Turkey to engage with China regarding trade and investment. "President Kenan Evren to China in 1982, followed by Chinese President Li Xiannian's visit to Turkey in 1984, Prime Minister Turgut Özal's visit to China in 1985, and Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang's visit to Turkey in 1986 contributed not only to take the first concrete steps toward a stronger relationship but also to a greater understanding and awareness between the two peoples."⁴⁴ Despite these high-level visits, it was the end of the Cold War that changed the level of relations between the two countries dramatically.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War brought new opportunities. The economic development of China and high growth rate made China a major trade partner of Turkey.⁴⁵ In addition to economic relations, China started to offer economically feasible options for the defense industry.⁴⁶ Yet, cooperation in the defense industry comprised challenges in compatibility of the defense systems of the two countries, so the cooperation efforts did not end positively.

⁴² "Relations between Turkey and the Republic of Korea," Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-the-republic-of-korea.en.mfa>.

⁴³ Atlı, *Turkey's Foreign Policy towards China*, 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁵ "Turkey-People's Republic of China Economic and Trade Relations," Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed October 20, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-china.en.mfa.

⁴⁶ Eyüp Ersoy, *Turkish-Chinese Military Relations* (Ankara: USAK Press, 2008).

Economic relations between Turkey and China improved as China's economic growth and economic interaction with the global community ensued. China became an important commercial partner for Turkey.⁴⁷

Turkey's efforts in relations with China were based on economic issues; Turkey would like to benefit from the second largest economy in the world. In other areas, the relations were also on good terms. From China's perspective, "Turkey offers a number of advantages to the Chinese in terms of its access to the EU [European Union], the Middle East and North Africa, and the Caucasus and Balkans."⁴⁸ Turkey as a historically linked country to Asia has good relations with China, and both countries derive mutual benefit of this relationship.

C. TURKEY AND JAPAN

The Japanese people perceive Turkey "as one of the most pro-Japanese nations in the world," which strengthens the "psychological attachment" of the two countries.⁴⁹ The historical events and good nature of the relationship between these two countries has helped to create this perception. Both countries have good relations starting from their first interaction.

The Turkish-Japanese relations date back to the late years of the Ottoman Empire. The good relationship between two countries started after the tragic accident of Ertugrul Frigate in 1890.⁵⁰ The "hospitality and assistance" of the Japanese people to the survivors of the frigate initiated the relations.⁵¹ The Sultan of the Ottoman Empire in search of new political power decided to send a missionary to Asia to engage the

⁴⁷ "Türkiye—Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti Siyasi İlişkileri" [Political Relations of Turkey and People's Republic of China], Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-cin-halk-cumhuriyeti-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa>.

⁴⁸ Fidan, "Sino-Turkish Relations: An Overview."

⁴⁹ Atsuko Higashino, "Turkey-Japan Relations: Images and Reality," *Foreign Policy*, <http://foreignpolicynews.org/2014/11/18/turkey-japan-relations-images-reality/>.

⁵⁰ "Brief Story of Ertuğrul Frigate," Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/enformasyon/brief-story-of-ertugrul-frigate.pdf>.

⁵¹ "Relations between Turkey and Japan," Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-japan.en.mfa>.

Muslims under the colony of Britain, which at that time was the primary challenge to the Empire together with Russia.⁵² “Intended to augment Ottoman prestige in Muslim Asia and establish relations with distant Japan, the Ertugrul frigate was commissioned as a training ship to visit ports with Muslim populations and Japan as its final destination.”⁵³ The frigate sank while returning home; the Japanese government rescued and took the survivors back to Turkey with Japanese ships.⁵⁴ The valiant behavior of the Japanese government and people left a “memory of gratitude” in the Turkish people, and the Ertugrul Frigate became a “solemn symbol of friendship” between Turkey and Japan.⁵⁵ Based on a sentimental issue, the relations between the two nations started well.

After the founding of the new Turkish Republic, the good relations were pursued by both countries. The Turkish Republic started her first diplomatic relations in East Asia with Japan.⁵⁶ Later, except during World War II, relations between the two countries remained on good terms. In the 1980s during the administration of Turgut Ozal, Turkey started a multidimensional policy in search of diversifying the channels to integrate Turkey to the rest of the world economically and politically when Japan was rising economically.⁵⁷ As a result of this active policy of Turgut Ozal, Japanese companies began to invest in Turkey. Toyota’s accumulated exports, for example, have totaled USD 21.4 billion since 2002.⁵⁸ The economic side of the relationship became more important. In recent years Japanese investment in Turkey has been significant; Japanese enterprises

⁵² Bahadır Pehlivanurk, “Turkish-Japanese Relations: Turning Romanticism into Rationality,” in *International Journal* 67, no.1 (2011): 104.

⁵³ Pehlivanurk, “Turkish-Japanese Relations,” 104.

⁵⁴ Selcuk Esenbel and Inaba Chiharu, *The Rising Sun and the Turkish Crescent* (Istanbul: Bogazici University Press, 2003), 21–22.

⁵⁵ “*Brief Story of Ertuğrul Frigate*,”

⁵⁶ Kemal Girgin, *Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet Dönemleri Hariciye Tarihimiz* (Teskilat ve Protokol), [Foreign Relations History During Ottoman and Republic Eras (Organization and Protocol)] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), 122.

⁵⁷ Pehlivanurk, “Turkish-Japanese Relations,” 112.

⁵⁸ Toyota, Invest in Turkey, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/successstories/Pages/Toyota.aspx>

have considerable involvement in major projects of Turkey.⁵⁹ The economic side of the relations remains the dominant part of the interaction between two countries.

Another symbolic incident of the good friendship between these two countries is the rescue of Japanese citizens from Iran by the Turkish Government during the beginning of Iran-Iraq War.⁶⁰ In 1985, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein announced that civilian planes would also be hit if they passed through Tehran. After this announcement of the Iraq government, many countries began to rescue their citizens. Although 250 Japanese citizens were able to leave Iran by using the planes of various European airlines,⁶¹ the hopes of the rest of the Japanese citizens stranded there were decreasing. Japanese citizens were finally rescued from Tehran by the planes of Turkish Airlines sent by Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal.⁶² This rescue operation deepened the friendship between the Turkish and Japanese people; Japanese people perceived that Turkey has sympathy for Japan, and Turkish people see the Japanese as their close friends.

Turkey and Japan have good relations, and both societies perceive each other very positively. Japanese politicians see Turkey as a treasure house of knowledge for the Middle East for expanding the scope of Japanese foreign policy.⁶³ Japan regards Turkey as an important nation, because of her contribution to “regional stability” and her location at “the crossroads of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.”⁶⁴ Turkey and Japan will likely keep their good relations and enhance this relationship in further areas of cooperation.

⁵⁹ Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, “Relations Between Turkey and Japan.”

⁶⁰ “Japan-Turkey Relations,” Japan Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed October 20, 2016, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/turkey/data.html.

⁶¹ “Yüzyılın operasyonuna Türk pilotlar imza attı,” [Turkish Pilots’ Signature in Operation of the Century] *Sabah Daily*, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2004/02/05/gnd110.html>.

⁶² “Japonlar kahraman iki Türk pilotunu konuşuyor” [Japans are Talking about the Two Turkish Pilots] *Vatan Daily*, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/japonlar-kahraman-iki-turk-pilotunu-konusuyor-22036-gundem/>.

⁶³ Higashino, “Turkey-Japan Relations.”

⁶⁴ Japan Foreign Affairs Ministry, “Japan-Turkey Relations.”

D. TURKEY AND SOUTH KOREA

Turkey and South Korea's political relations were established on August 11, 1949.⁶⁵ Turkey's participation in the Korean War on the side of the South Korea marked the start of friendly relations between the two countries. Turkey sent 4,500 soldiers, which was the second largest troop contribution, to Korea as a sign of willingness to participate in peacekeeping efforts and aligning with the West.⁶⁶ Turkey's participation in the Korean War helped Turkey to join NATO.⁶⁷ Moreover, Turkey gained the respect and love of the South Korean people; the participation of Turkey in the Korean War started a firm, friendly relationship between the two countries.

The Turkish contribution to the Korean War was significant in proportion to her capabilities. Turkey sent 14,976 troops to Korea as the fourth largest number of military personnel between 1950 and 1953.⁶⁸ The casualty rate of Turkey was around 3,277, including 721 soldiers killed in action.⁶⁹ Turkey ranked second to the United States in number of casualties.⁷⁰ Turkey and South Korea established diplomatic relations in 1957, after the Korean War. Turkey's support for South Korea during the war and the interaction of the troops with the society helped for stable, friendly relations.

Turkish soldiers stayed in Korea after the war. Turkey sent a brigade each year until 1966, and later a company was stationed in Korea as honor guards until 1971.⁷¹

⁶⁵ "Relations between Turkey and the Republic of Korea," Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-the-republic-of-korea.en.mfa>.

⁶⁶ Serkan Sipahi, "Kore Savaşı ve Türk Kamuoyu" [Korean War and Turkish Public] (master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 2007), 95.

⁶⁷ Ahmet Emin Yaman, "Kore Savaşı'nın Türk Kamuoyuna Yansıması," [The Reflections of Korean War among Turkish Public] *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk involvement Dergisi* [Ankara University Turkish Revolution History Institute Atatürk Involvement Journal] (May-November 2005):238.

⁶⁸ Hyerim Choi, "Mutual Perceptions of Korean and Turkish Societies: Prospects for Development of Political, Economic and Cultural Relations" (master's thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2014), 13.

⁶⁹ Gökhan Durak, "Türk ve Dünya Basınında Kore Savaşı ve Türkiye [Korean War in Turkish and Global Media]" *Journal of International Social Research* 8, no. 36 (February 2015): 333.

⁷⁰ Barış Doster, "Türkiye'de NATO Karşıtlığının Tarihsel ve Siyasal Kökenleri," [The Historical and Political Roots for NATO Opposition in Turkey] *Ortadoğu Analiz* 4, no.40 (April 2012): 35.

⁷¹ Adil Işık, "Kore Savaşı'nda Türk Ordusu'nun Lojistik Desteği" [Logistic Support Operations of Turkish Army in Korean War] (master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 2007), 102.

Turkish troops interacted with the Korean people; the relations between two societies became more intense. The existence of Turkish forces in Korea helped the two cultures to have friendly relations with each other. The Korean War helped the relations between Turkey and South Korea in a better way, and it was a turning point for both countries to have good relations.

The Korean War started the relationship between the two countries on a military basis; however, later the relationship became more economically centered. Especially after the economic growth of South Korea, Turkey-South Korea economic relations became more robust. As a consequence of good relations, South Korea's major enterprises entered Turkey, and investment from South Korea reached the amount of USD 372 million between 2004 and 2014.⁷² The economic relationship eventually led to cooperation in the defense industry.

Turkey and South Korea have remained on good relations since the Korean War. The relationship between the two countries has been enhanced in a broader spectrum of economy, defense industry, military intelligence, and culture. Turkey and South Korea could cooperate in many opportunities to promote stability in the East Asian region.

⁷² Choi, "Mutual Perceptions of Korean and Turkish Societies," 27.

III. TURKEY'S INTEREST IN EAST ASIA

The rising economic and political powers of East Asia take the attention of the whole world. Sixty percent of the world's population is living in this region.⁷³ In this regard, any incident and development in the region will have global effects.⁷⁴ The stability of East Asia is crucial for the rest of the world.

Turkey is a developing economy. Turkey's emerging economy enhances Turkey's influence regionally and globally. Turkey "as the 18th largest economy in the world and 7th largest economy in Europe with a GDP of about 800 billion dollars" is a member of the G20.⁷⁵ East Asia's volatile economy and increasing political importance provide "an attractive opportunity" for Turkey's economy and global political influence.⁷⁶

Two essential aspects shape Turkey's interest and relations in regards to Asia. First, the economic significance of the region forces Turkey to give importance to East Asia in her economic policies. Second, the Central Asian and Xingjian issues are primary aspects of Turkish foreign policy; Turkey has historical, ethnic, and emotional bonds with both regions' people. China's increasing economic dominance and political influence in Central Asia, and the situation of Xingjian Uyghurs in China force Turkey to be proactive in the region, especially in her relations with China.

Asia's increasing role in the global economy and huge population are the aspects that attract the rest of the world. Demographically, with 4.3 billion people Asia comprises 60 percent of the world's population, and "[e]ight of the world's fifteen most populated nations are in Asia (China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, the Philippines,

⁷³ David Shambaugh, "International Relations in Asia," in *International Relations of Asia*, ed. David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 6.

⁷⁴ "Turkey's Relations with Asia-Pacific" Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-relations-with-east-asia-and-the-pacific.en.mfa>.

⁷⁵ "Economic Outlook of Turkey" Turkish Foreign Ministry Affairs, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/prospects-and-recent-developments-in-the-turkish-economy.en.mfa>.

⁷⁶ Selcuk Colakoglu, "Turkey's Evolving Strategic Balance with China, Japan and South Korea" *East-West Center Asia Pacific Bulletin* 235 (October 8, 2013), <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/system/tdf/private/apb235.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=34279>.

and Vietnam).”⁷⁷ The importance and economic volatility provide an opportunity for Turkey to nurture her own economic and global influence.

The end of the Cold War opened a new dimension in Turkish foreign policy; Asia became one of the mainstream foreign policy issues of Turkey. The independence of the Central Asian countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union opened new opportunities for Turkey.⁷⁸

Central Asia is imperative for Turkish foreign policy; however, the deficiency in projecting economic and political power has kept Turkey’s relations with countries in this region mainly on the cultural and education levels. The International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY),⁷⁹ The Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries (TURKPA)⁸⁰ were the agencies established to enhance the cooperation among Central Asian countries and Turkey. Despite being the one major economic party within the region, Turkey lags behind Russia and China. China has risen as a major economic player in the region, mainly as an energy buyer.⁸¹ China is particularly interested in energy resources of the region. However, China tries to use the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to expand her influence in the region.⁸² By contrast, the United States has had little involvement in this region. “U.S. policymakers generally viewed the region as a relatively low priority, and American engagement to achieve greater stability, security, and prosperity as well as better governance remained limited.”⁸³ Turkey has been using soft power instruments like education and cultural cooperation agencies in her

⁷⁷ Shambaugh, “International Relations in Asia,” 6.

⁷⁸ Mustafa Aydin, “Foucault’s Pendulum: Turkey in Central Asia and the Caucasus,” *Turkish Studies* 5, no. 2 (2004): 3.

⁷⁹ “Turksoy Hakkında,” TURKSOY, accessed September 18, 2016, <http://www.turksoy.org/tr/turksoy/about>.

⁸⁰ “Turkey’s Relations with Central Asian Republics,” Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed September 16, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa.

⁸¹ Martha Brill Olcott, “Central Asia” in *International Relations of Asia*, ed. David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 281.

⁸² Olcott, “Central Asia” 284.

⁸³ Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky, and Paul Stronski, “U.S. Policy toward Central Asia 3.0,” Carnegie Endowment, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/01/25/u.s.-policy-toward-central-asia-3.0-pub-62556>.

Central Asian policies; these soft power tools could be valuable in exerting policies to shape China's rising influence. Turkey's close engagement with China could help pursue better policies in Central Asia.

Xinjiang is a sensitive issue in relations between China and Turkey. Turkey has close cultural, religious, and ethnic links with the Uyghurs, who live in China's Xinjiang region.⁸⁴ China views the Uyghurs as a separatist domestic problem.⁸⁵ Turkey insists on for the "political and cultural rights of Uyghurs" to China.⁸⁶ The Uyghurs remain as a potential problem maker between Turkey and China.

Turkey is relatively dormant for the disputes in Asia that affect the foreign policies of all the regional countries.⁸⁷ Although Turkey has taken no sides in disputes of the region, the problems among China, South Korea, and Japan acting as a trigger for major problems is a concern for the stability of East Asia.

Turkey, as a developing country has an interest in engaging with Asia—especially with China—because the economic importance of region gives an opportunity to enhance her influence globally. Another significant advantage of Turkey's close engagement with China serves the interest of Turkey in Central Asia and Xinjiang problem. First, Turkey's involvement in the region could help to exert better policies especially when Central Asia faces China's increasing economic dominance and political influence in Central Asia. Turkey's closeness to China can give her an upper hand in handling Xinjiang Turks' problems.

⁸⁴ Galia Lavi and Gallia Lindenstrauss, "China and Turkey: Closer Relations Mixed with Suspicion," *Strategic Assessment* 19, no. 2 (July 2016): 122.

⁸⁵ R. Kutay Karaca, "Türkiye-Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti İlişkilerinde Doğu Türkistan Sorunu," [The Problem of East Turkistan in Relations of Turkey and People's Republic of China] *Akademik Bakış* 1, no.1 (2007):237.

⁸⁶ Selçuk Çolakoğlu, "Turkey-China Relations: Rising Partnership," *Ortadoğu Analiz*.5, no.52 (April 2013): 41.

⁸⁷ Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, "Turkey's Relations with Asia-Pacific."

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IV. CHINA, JAPAN, AND SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The history of East Asia bears the key aspects of current relations among China, South Korea, and Japan. The defeat of China in the Opium War was a sign of backwardness of the Asian countries in comparison to the industrialized West.⁸⁸ The lost wars and invasions kicked off by the Opium War made China a “semi-colonial” country.⁸⁹ The unequal treaties that were forced upon the Asian countries fueled the Japanese to find ways to modernize and catch up with the Western countries; Japan started a modernization program in 1868 and became the first industrialized Asian country.⁹⁰ Japan followed the path of developed Western powers. Japan after industrialization turned her massive Imperial Army to the other Asian countries for their resources.⁹¹ Military elites ruled Japan during World War II, and the Japanese Army caused too many traumas in China and Korea that remain as contentious issues between these countries.

The current bilateral relations of China, Japan, and South Korea are forged by Japan’s pre-World War II colonization of Korea and China and by war crimes of Japanese Army. The distrust and resentment among these societies and long-standing territorial disputes are drivers of their bilateral relations.

A. THE CHINA–JAPAN RELATIONSHIP

The realization of China’s defeat after the Opium Wars, Japanese colonization of Chinese territory, and the war against the Japanese Army shaped the current China–Japan relationship. In 1895 the Sino-Japanese War over Korea marked the emergence of Japan as a world power and showed the weakness of the Chinese empire; China was no longer the leading hegemon in the Asia and had to give concessions to Japan, a former tribute

⁸⁸ Schirokauer and Clark, *Modern East Asia*, 128–129.

⁸⁹ Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 48.

⁹⁰ Schirokauer and Clark, *Modern East Asia*, 154–158.

⁹¹ Rhoads Murphey, *East Asia: A New History* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), 367–368.

state.⁹² The traditional Sino-Japanese relations changed profoundly; Japan's emergence as a military power in the region affected the image of Chinese superiority.⁹³ The Japanese Army caused traumatic incidents in China; the Nanking massacres, crimes of the Japanese Army are the historical events left in the psyche of Chinese society.⁹⁴ The 20th century historical incidents between China and Japan shape their current relations.

The exploitation of history, territorial disputes, economic relations, and the economic and military rise of China are at the core aspects of Sino-Japanese relations. The historical enmity and territorial disputes are the main challenges between these two countries.

Past trauma caused by Japan's Imperial Army and the use of history by both China and Japan still shape the relations between these two countries. Japan's atrocities conducted in China before and during World War II is a source of resentment for the Chinese people against Japan. There are two explanations for this resentment: the effect of these crimes was so horrific that it arouses tensions even today, and the Chinese Communist Party emphasizes these historic and traumatic events as a way of building Chinese identity and the legitimacy of the party.⁹⁵ China's exploitation of the Japanese Army's atrocities contributes to the erosion of security between these two countries. Yinan He states that "historically derived mutual antipathy and mistrust can worsen the security concerns generated by the high ambiguity in their current power balance and cause serious mutual threat perception."⁹⁶ The threat perception of China and Japan of each other could affect the stability of their relations, if not lead to a major military problem.

⁹²Schirokauer and Clark, *Modern East Asia*, 208.

⁹³ Murphey, *East Asia: A New History*, 302.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 367–368.

⁹⁵ Shogo Suzuki, "The Importance of 'Othering' in China's National Identity: Sino-Japanese Relations as a Stage of Identity Conflicts," *The Pacific Review* 20, no. 1 (March 15, 2007): 25–26, doi:10.1080/09512740601133195.

⁹⁶ Yinan He, "History, Chinese Nationalism and the Emerging Sino-Japanese Conflict," *Journal of Contemporary China* 16, no. 50 (February 1, 2007): 20, doi:10.1080/10670560601026710.

The dispute over the sovereignty of Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is another source of tension between China and Japan. In 2010, Japan captured a Chinese fishing boat around the islands.⁹⁷ China cut export of rare materials to Japan; stopped diplomatic, cultural, and tourist relations; and detained some Japanese citizens in China as a response to the Japanese government.⁹⁸ China's reaction was strong as China perceived she was being forced to accept that the islands belong to Japan; the white papers of both countries reflected their opposing views on the sovereignty of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.⁹⁹ In 2012, Japan's government bought the islands from private owners, which exacerbated the situation between China and Japan.¹⁰⁰ The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands raised the old tensions between the two countries.

The territorial dispute between China and Japan has become an issue of identity and security. Ryoko Nakano contends that "faced with anti-Japanese demonstrations and Chinese official actions to claim the islands, many Japanese who were originally not particularly passionate about the defense of the territory now perceive China as a real threat and believe that China always uses history to claim the moral high ground against Japan."¹⁰¹ Japan has used the dispute over the islands in domestic politics to increase military compatibility of Japan's Self Defense Forces.¹⁰² China's stance about territorial disputes causes friction in the region. Research conducted by Pew Research Center regarding how Asians view each other paints a picture that is not optimistic: "there is

⁹⁷ Martin Fackler and Ian Johnson, "Arrest in Disputed Seas Riles China and Japan," *New York Times*, September 19, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/20/world/asia/20chinajapan.html>.

⁹⁸ Michael Green, "Japan's Role in Asia," in *International Relations of East Asia*, ed. David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 204.

⁹⁹ Ryoko Nakano, "The Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute and Threat Perception in Power Transition," *Pacific Review* 29, no. 2 (March 14, 2016): 175, doi:10.1080/09512748.2015.1013493.

¹⁰⁰ Jane Perlez, "China Accuses Japan of Stealing after Purchase of Group of Disputed Islands," *New York Times*, September 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/12/world/asia/china-accuses-japan-of-stealing-disputed-islands.html>.

¹⁰¹ Nakano, "The Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute," 181.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 177.

widespread concern among publics in East, Southeast, and South Asia that these frictions could lead to military conflict.”¹⁰³

A rising China economically and militarily is the primary concern for Japan in Sino-Japanese relations. The military build-up of China in the region, the modernization of the People’s Liberation Army, and the aggressive actions in territorial disputes force Japan to be suspicious of China’s “peaceful rise.” Although there is a significant economic relationship between these two countries, their problems impede further cooperation. The use of memories of atrocities committed by the Japanese Army in China for constructing a Chinese identity and the territorial disputes are the main challenges between China and Japan.

B. THE CHINA–SOUTH KOREA RELATIONSHIP

China historically has tried to have a friendly bordering neighbor in the Korean peninsula.¹⁰⁴ After World War II and the Korean War, the relationship between these two countries was not established because of lingering enmity from the Korean War. Relations between South Korea and China, though, changed as the Cold War ended. In 1992, the two countries renewed their relations; after the normalization of China–South Korea relations, the economic and later political relations between these two countries improved over the years.¹⁰⁵ Economic reasons were the principal driver for establishment of their relations.

South Korea has an ambivalent perception of China; while she thinks of China as an important partner for the development South Korea’s economy and as an essential element for reunification of the two Koreas, South Korea also believes a rising China could be a source of instability in the region.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ “How Asians View Each Other,” Pew Research Center, July 14, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-4-how-asians-view-each-other/>.

¹⁰⁴ Scott Synder, “The Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asian Stability,” in *International Relations of East Asia*, ed. David Shambaugh and Michael Yahuda (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 302.

¹⁰⁵ Synder, “The Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asian Stability,” 303.

¹⁰⁶ Suk-hee Han, “South Korea Seeks to Balance Relations with China and the United States,” Council on Foreign Relations, November 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/south-korea/south-korea-seeks-balance-relations-china-united-states/p29447>.

South Korea expanded her economic, political, and social ties with China after the normalization.¹⁰⁷ China is the first major trading partner of South Korea with a share of more than that of both the United States' and Japan's trade volume, which are South Korea's second and third largest trade partners.¹⁰⁸ The relationship between China and South has improved in the last years. During the tenure of both countries' recent leaders, bilateral bonds improved, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)-China Free Trade Agreement was signed in 2015.¹⁰⁹ South Korea responded positively to China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, and joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.¹¹⁰ Both countries benefit from their economic relations. China's role for the long-term objective of South Korea, reunification of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the ROK, is the other side of their relationship.

Economic benefits were the key factors in their relations; however, another factor for South Korea was the expected benefit of having strong relations with China to improve the bond with North Korea.¹¹¹ South Korea is aware of the role of China in resolving Korean Peninsula problems.¹¹² South Korea tries to improve her relations with China to get support for the reunification.

Although South Korea perceives a rising China as less threatening than Japan does,¹¹³ China still is a threat for South Korea as she "rank[s] the issues of China's continued rise, China's military modernization, and South Korea's increasing

¹⁰⁷ Min-hyung Kim, "South Korea's China Policy, Evolving Sino-ROK Relations, and Their Implications for East Asian Security," in *Pacific Focus*, XXXI, no. 1 (April 2016): 57, doi: 10.1111/pafo.12065.

¹⁰⁸ "SouthKorea," The Observatory of Economic Complexity, accessed November 21, 2016, <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/kor/>.

¹⁰⁹ Alice Ekman, "China's Rise: The View from South Korea," European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2016, accessed October 28, 2016, http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_19_China_ROK.pdf.

¹¹⁰ Ekman, "China's Rise: The View from South Korea."

¹¹¹ Scott A. Snyder, "This Is Why Ties between South Korea and China Are Growing Stronger," National Interest, September 2, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-ties-between-south-korea-china-are-growing-stronger-13763>.

¹¹² Ekman, "China's Rise: The View from South Korea."

¹¹³ Ekman, "China's Rise: The View from South Korea."

dependency on China's economic high on the list of potential security threats to South Korea in the mid- to long term.”¹¹⁴

South Korea's security alliance with the United States is a main concern for China in their relations. The deployment of the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-ballistic missile system against North Korea's potential missile attack is a contentious issue for South Korea, as China opposes the expansion of U.S. military posture in the region.¹¹⁵ The hegemonic rivalry between the United States and China is the main concern for South Korea.¹¹⁶ South Korean leaders try to interact with both powers “separately and cooperatively.”¹¹⁷ South Korea in her relations with China tries to manage the super powers' rivalry. China is essential for the economy and the strategic plans of South Korea, and the alliance between the United States and South Korea is important for the security of the ROK.

Relations between China and South Korea have improved over the decades, and the trajectory of their relations is improving positively despite the hegemonic rivalry of powers.

C. THE SOUTH KOREA–JAPAN RELATIONSHIP

History is the main challenge between South Korea and Japan. The Korean Peninsula was seized by and suffered under the hard rule of Japan between 1905 and 1945.¹¹⁸ In the new world of the two rival super powers after World War II and the Korean War, both Japan and South Korea became strong allies of the United States. The diplomatic relations between these two countries started in 1967.¹¹⁹ Despite being a close

¹¹⁴ Suk-hee Han, “South Korea Seeks to Balance Relations with China and the United States.”

¹¹⁵ Ekman, “China's Rise: The view from South Korea.”

¹¹⁶ Ekman, “China's Rise: The view from South Korea.”

¹¹⁷ Suk-hee Han, ““South Korea Seeks to Balance Relations with China and the United States.”

¹¹⁸ Murphey, *East Asia: A New History*, 327–329.

¹¹⁹ Malcolm Cook, “Northeast Asia's Turbulent Triangle: Korea-China-Japan Relations,” Lowy Institute for International Policy, January 2014, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/northeast-asia-turbulent-triangle-korea-china-japan-relations>.

ally to the United States, both countries have challenges that emanate from historical legacies of the Japanese Army.

South Korea and Japan share strategic interests in the region. As Kei Koga states “both [are] treaty allies with the United States and share common strategic interests regarding regional security, including the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”¹²⁰ However, the historical problems pose a tense bilateral relationship.

The issue of the forced sex slaves known as “comfort women” is the most sensitive problem between South Korea and Japan. The Japanese Army forced mostly Korean women to be sex slaves in comfort places for the troops during World War II.¹²¹ Despite an agreement between the two countries in 2015 about resolving the “comfort women” issue with Tokyo’s contribution to the fund for the survivors, the lack of an apology or admission of legal responsibility by Japanese officials aroused criticism from the Korean population.¹²² The unresolved “comfort women” issue needs several generations to soften South Korea’s anguish and resentment.

Another problem is the Japanese leaders’ visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, a shrine dedicated to warriors, including the Japanese war criminals from World War II. The Japanese leaders’ visit to the shrine caused tremendous protests within both South Korean and Chinese societies.¹²³ The Yasukuni Shrine problem inhibits resolving problems between the two countries.

South Korea and Japan are allies of the United States and have security cooperation agreements with the United States. However, the historical legacy of the Japanese Army is the main challenge between two countries. The “comfort women” issue and the high-level visit of Japanese officials to the Yasukuni Shrine are a great source of tension between the two countries.

¹²⁰ Kei Koga, “The Yasukuni Question: Histories, Logics, and Japan–South Korea Relations.” *Pacific Review* 29, no. 3 (May 26, 2016): 332, doi:10.1080/09512748.2015.1022583.

¹²¹ Yuki Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the U.S. Occupation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1–5.

¹²² Ekman, “China’s Rise: The View from South Korea.”

¹²³ Koga, “The Yasukuni Question,” 331.

D. THE CHALLENGES

The countries of East Asia witnessed tremendous changes in the 20th century; the realization of their inability to compete against the Western powers, and the rise of China's former tribute country, Japan as an industrialized nation and the new colonizer of the region, the World Wars, and the Japanese Army atrocities in the region during World War II, and the Cold War have shaped the relations of China, South Korea, and Japan.

The current bilateral relations of these countries are mainly affected by the Japanese Army's atrocities and war crimes during the colonization of Korea and China in the beginning of 20th century. The distrust and resentment among these societies, and long-standing territorial disputes are challenges in bilateral relations of China, South Korea, and Japan.

V. CONCLUSION

East Asia is important for the rest of the world, because the level of economic interaction between the region and the world is high. The rising China phenomenon, the response of the United States to a rising China and the interaction of these two major powers in the area, as well as the relations among the principal actors of the region—the United States, China, Japan, and South Korea—will determine the stability of the region.

Historical events have shaped economic and security relations in East Asia. The region faced dramatic changes during the 19th and 20th centuries. China realized the great kingdom's weak competitive status in relation to the West at that time.¹²⁴ Starting from the Opium War, China lost its sovereign position to the tribute states of Asia. Japan rose to become the super power of the region after realizing the importance of modernization and industrialization. Following in the path of developed Western powers, after industrialization Japan turned her massive Imperial Army to the other Asian countries for their resources.¹²⁵ Military elites ruled Japan during World War II, and the Japanese Army caused many traumas in China and Korea that remain as contentious issues between these countries.

The current bilateral relations of China, Japan, and South Korea are forged by Japan's pre-World War II colonization of Korea and China and by war crimes of Japanese Army. The distrust and resentment among these societies, and long-standing territorial disputes are drivers of bilateral relations.

The problems among China, South Korea, and Japan, especially territorial disputes could trigger a military conflict.¹²⁶ Given the complicated situation, solving the problems among these countries is essential for the stability of the region. Understanding the prospect and effects of a rising China is crucial to implementing policies within the area.

¹²⁴ Schirokauer, *Modern East Asia: A Brief History*, 128–129.

¹²⁵ Murphey, *East Asia: A New History*, 367–368.

¹²⁶ Fravel, "China's Potential for Territorial Expansions," 506.

There are two prevailing schools of thought regarding with the rise of China and the implications of China's ascent in East Asia. Realists view the rise of China as a reason for conflict and power struggle in the region; a rising power inevitably leads to an environment of conflict, because the other regional states would perceive the rising power as a threat. On the other hand, liberals view that the rise of China would be peaceful; liberals are optimistic about the ascendance of China and the future of Asia because of China's interdependence with the global economy.

Realists are pessimistic about the rise of China. The offensive realist Mearsheimer and power transition theorist Organski are the leading scholars on the phenomenon of a rising China. Mearsheimer contends that China will inevitably threaten the United States, because China would ultimately seek to maximize her share of world power. States only feel secure when they are more powerful relative to their competitors.¹²⁷ Current economic and military development will inhibit a peaceful rise of China, and conflict is inevitable. Organski's power transition theory suggests that the conflict is inevitable between the dominant power and the rising power, when the gap of power narrows. He contemplated that China would become "the most powerful nation on earth" back in the 1960s.¹²⁸ A rising China eventually will become a challenge to international order as she narrows the power gap between the United States.

Liberals are optimistic about the international system. They believe cooperation and economic interdependence could mitigate conflicts among the states. Cooperation is most likely when there is a minimum level of gain. Liberals also contend that strong economic and institutional interactions among states and other international actors will decrease the likelihood of conflicts.¹²⁹ Interdependence eliminates the possibility of conflict and war. China's economic development has been through high interconnectedness to the global economic system.

¹²⁷ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 364.

¹²⁸ Organski, *World Politics*, 446.

¹²⁹ Acharya, "Thinking Theoretically about Asian IR," 69–72.

China's interaction with the global economic order increases the level of economic interdependency between China and the rest of the world. The growing economic interdependency has transformed the relationship between China and the rest of the world in a constructive way. China has become an engine of growth and a catalyst for regional integration. China's interconnectedness to the world would inhibit it from taking military action. China would most likely try to solve its problems with other regional countries in a more peaceful way. Creating opportunities for these countries to solve their problems is important for the stability of the region.

Turkey is a developing economy. East Asia presents a good opportunity for Turkey to develop her economy and increase her global political influence. Turkey thinks of herself also as an Asian country. Historical events are the primary source of good relations between Turkey and the region. Turkey's economic relations increased after the 1980s during her search to grow economically. It was during this period that Turkey started to establish economic links with Japan, South Korea, and China. Later, the historically good relations and increased economic relations helped to start some military and defense relations with these countries. Maritime security cooperation with Japan, defense industry projects with South Korea, and failed defense procurement due to the challenge of compatibility with China are military interaction efforts of Turkey with these countries.

Two essential aspects shape Turkey's interest and relations in regard to Asia. First, the economic significance of the region compels Turkey to give importance to East Asia in her economic policies. Second, the Central Asian and Xinjiang issues are primary aspects of Turkish foreign policy; Turkey has historical, ethnic, and emotional bonds with both regions' people. China's increasing economic dominance and political influence in Central Asia, and the situation of Xinjiang Uyghurs in China force Turkey to be proactive in the region, especially in her relations with China. Turkey's engagement in East Asia by using historical bilateral good relations with China, South Korea, and Japan could contribute to the stability of East Asia.

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