

Chapter Sixteen

The Repercussions of Turkey-China Relations on Turkey's Transatlantic Relations: The American Perspective

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This chapter explores factors that influence Sino-Turkey ties and implications for transatlantic relations. The rise of China in the Euro-Mediterranean region, driven by the need for energy and market access as well as protection of its expanding assets and citizens overseas, is entering Turkey's strategic calculus. In the aftermath of the Syrian crisis, new Trump presidency, and growth of Chinese Uyghur militants in Syria and Iraq that is provoking a robust security posture from Beijing, Ankara would need to balance its transatlantic ties with the need for economic and security cooperation with China.

In the short term, the geopolitical impact of China's expanding Mediterranean presence via the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative would likely remain limited, presenting Turkey and Eastern Mediterranean countries with an additional economic partner to the EU, U.S., and Russia. In the longer term, there may be risk of importing additional tension and instability to the region should Sino-US competition worsen, coupled with dwindling support for transatlantic partners as Turkey becomes more dependent on Chinese trade and investment. The chapter concludes with recommendations for the U.S. and EU post-Brexit to leverage the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a cooperative platform to mitigate this risk, which provides an opportunity for a joint pivot to Eurasia and a silver lining of renewed transatlantic coordination.

Terrorism and Limited Security Cooperation

The presence of ISIS and Al Qaeda affiliates in the Middle East, such as the Uyghur terrorist group East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) or Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), poses a challenge not only for Turkey

and regional countries, but also to China's energy, maritime trade, and human security.¹

Chinese interests in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean are mainly threefold. Firstly, it is a source of energy, with more than half of China's crude imports coming from the Mideast. It is also a hub for market access in Europe and Africa, where the EU is China's largest export market, with trade volume at around 514.8 billion euros in 2016 (544.45 billion dollars).² Finally, the region is a forward front for counter-terrorism. The presence of ISIS, Al Qaeda groups, and anti-Chinese Uyghur militants is posing a security challenge to China's overseas citizens and assets, so they are driven to adopt a more robust security posture to protect those interests.³ This is evidenced by the establishment of their naval base in Djibouti,⁴ signing security cooperation with the governments of Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan to help fight Uyghur terrorists,⁵ offering 8,000 UN peacekeeping troops,⁶ and reinforcing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China's main vehicle to combat terrorism abroad, with the admission of India and Pakistan as members to enable a more comprehensive regional approach.⁷

¹ Lin, Christina. "The ISIS Security Challenges to China's 'One Belt, One Road' & SCO." *Journal der Politisch- Militarischen Gesellschaft*, No. 99, December 2015. <http://pmg-ev.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2015-99-Denkwaerdigkeiten-3-1.pdf>.

² "European Union, Trade in goods with China." European Commission, Directorate General for Trade. http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113366.pdf.

³ Lin, Christina. "China's Emerging Role as a Security Provider in the Middle East—The EU's Response." *EU-China Observer*, Issue No. 2.16, College of Europe, July 2016. https://is-suu.com/collegeofeurope/docs/eu-china_observer216.

⁴ Blanchard, Ben. "China hints more bases on way after Djibouti." Reuters, March 8, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-djibouti-idUSKCN0WA0IT>.

⁵ "China forms Anti-terror Alliance with Pakistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan." Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, August 5, 2016. <http://www.rferl.org/a/china-forms-anti-terrorism-alliance-pakistan-tajikistan-afghanistan/27901474.html>; and "China steps up 'military cooperation' with Assad as top admiral visits Damascus." Telegraph, August 18, 2016. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/18/china-steps-up-military-cooperation-with-assad-as-top-admiral-vi/>; Lin, Christina. "China's Interests in Syria and the Middle East," Syria Comment, November 13, 2016. <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/chinas-interests-syria-middle-east-dr-christina-lin/>.

⁶ "President Xi Jinping pledges 8,000 UN peacekeeping troops, US \$1 billion to peace fund." *South China Morning Post*, September 29, 2015. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1862255/chinese-president-xi-jinping-makes-us-1-billion-pledge>.

⁷ Turebekova, Aiman. "SCO Presidents Urge Cooperation in Transit, Infrastructure, Counter-Terrorism." *The Astana Times*, June 25, 2016. <http://astanatimes.com/2016/06/sco-presidents-urge-cooperation-in-transit-infrastructure-counter-terrorism/>.

Turkey is a Dialogue Partner of the SCO, and over the years, Uyghur activists in Xinjiang found shelter in Turkey, to which they have a strong ethnic and historical affinity. In late 2014, China complained about “ambiguous Turkish policy” in facilitating Chinese Uyghurs to cross the border and travel via Southeast Asia to Turkey, *en route* to joining ISIS and Al Qaeda groups in Syria.⁸ Estimated at several thousand, China fears that these terrorists will return to its territory and escalate terrorist attacks on the homeland, after an uptick of attacks in China since 2013 (Tiananmen Square 2013,⁹ Kunming mass stabbing 2014,¹⁰ bombings in Urumqi April/May 2014,¹¹ stabbing at a coal mine September 2015).¹² They also fear escalating attacks on Chinese interests and citizens abroad, following the 2015 Bangkok bombing that targeted Chinese tourists, and the August 2016 attack on the Chinese embassy in Kyrgyzstan by Syria-based Uyghur militants, financed by the rebranded Al Nusra, and coordinated from Turkey.¹³

⁸ Yongzheng, Qiu. “Turkey’s ambiguous policies help terrorists join IS jihadist group: analyst.” *Global Times*, December 15, 2014. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/896765.shtml>.

⁹ Zenn, Jacob. “Turkistan Islamic Party Increases Its Media Profile.” *Central Asia Caucasus Analyst*, Feb. 5, 2014. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12909-turkistan-islamic-party-increases-its-media-profile.html>; Mullen, Jethrow. “Report: Militant Group Says Tiananmen Attack Was ‘Jihadi Operation.’” CNN, Nov. 25, 2013. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/25/world/asia/china-tiananmen-attack-report/>.

¹⁰ “China Mass Stabbing: Deadly Knife Attack in Kunming.” *BBC News*, March 2, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-26402367>; and “At Least 33 Dead, 143 Wounded in Train Station Terror Attack in China, Authorities Say.” *New York Daily News*, March 2, 2014. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/27-dead-train-station-knife-attack-china-article-1.1707232>.

¹¹ Boltelho, Greg. “3 killed, 79 hurt in blast, knife attack at China train station.” CNN, May 1, 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/04/30/world/asia/china-xinjiang-explosion/>; and Demick, Barbara. “Explosions Kill 31 at Market in China’s Troubled Xinjiang Region.” *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 2014. <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-explosives-rip-through-xinjiang-market-20140521-story.html>; and Lyons, Kate and Reilly, Jill. “Terrorists Throw Bombs From Car Windows in Crowded Chinese Market, Setting Off Huge Explosions, Killing at Least 31 and Injuring Score More.” *Daily Mail*, May 21, 2014. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2635772/Explosives-used-attack-Chinas-Xinjiang.html>.

¹² McCrae, Michael Allen. “Fifty Killed in a Knife Attack at a Chinese Colliery.” *Mining*, Oct. 1, 2015. <http://www.mining.com/fifty-killed-in-a-knife-attack-at-a-chinese-coliery/>; and “Death Toll in Xinjiang Coal Mine Attack Climbs to 50.” *Radio Free Asia*, September 30, 2015. <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/attack-09302015174319.html>.

¹³ Fuller, Thomas and Wong, Edward. “Thailand Blames Uighur Militants for Bombing at Bangkok.” *NY Times*, Sept. 15, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/16/world/asia/thailand-suspects-uyghurs-in-bomb-attack-at-bangkok-shrine.html>; and Dzyubenko, Olga. “Kyrgyzstan Says Uighur Militant Groups Behind Attack on China’s Embassy.” *Reuters*, Sept. 7, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-kyrgyzstan-blast-china-idUSKCN11C1DK>; http://www.guancha.cn/Neighbors/2016_09_06_373642.shtml.

Compounding this challenge is Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's known stance for supporting secession of Xinjiang, or "East Turkestan," which is well-known among Chinese counter-terror and intelligence officials.¹⁴ While he was mayor of Istanbul In 1995, Erdoğan named a section of the Sultan Ahmet (Blue Mosque) Park after China's archenemy and leader of the East Turkestan independence movement, Isa Yusuf Alptekin.¹⁵ After Alptekin's death, Erdoğan erected a memorial in the park to commemorate Eastern Turkistani *Şebitlerinin*, or martyrs, who lost their lives in the "struggle for independence" and declared, "Eastern Turkestan is not only the home of the Turkic peoples, but also the cradle of Turkic history, civilization and culture. To forget that would lead to the ignorance of our own history, civilization and culture. The martyrs of Eastern Turkestan are our martyrs."¹⁶

In view of the close ties between the Chinese Uyghurs and the Turks, China is interested in strengthening cooperation with Turkey to stem the passage of extremist Uyghurs to Syria. As such, Ankara and Beijing pledged security cooperation at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in late April 2016.¹⁷ They have also issued statements to dilute the tension and signal some reconciliation, with Erdogan in 2015 expressing that Turkey will respect China's territorial integrity and oppose any terrorist acts against China including from ETIM/TIP, and at the G20 meeting in September 2016 Xi expressed hopes that "both sides can achieve even more substantive results in counter-terrorism cooperation."¹⁸ After the Istanbul nightclub attack on New Year's eve 2016, China immediately issued a statement to condemn the attack and express its intention to increase cooperation with Turkey and

¹⁴ Shichor, Yitzhak. *Policy Studies No. 53: Ethno Diplomacy: The Uyghur Hitch in Sino-Turkish Relations, East-West Center* (2009), pp. x, 2, 36. <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/ethno-diplomacy-uyghur-hitch-sino-turkish-relations>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Clarke, Michael. *Uyghur Militants in Syria: The Turkish Connection, Jamestown Foundation: Terrorism Monitor, Vol. 14 Issue 3*, Feb. 4, 2016. <https://jamestown.org/program/uyghur-militants-in-syria-the-turkish-connection/>; *Eastern Turkestan Information Bulletin Vol. 5 No. 4* (Aug. 1995), http://caccp.freedomsherald.org/et/etib/etib5_4.html#4.

¹⁷ "China, Turkey vow greater anti-terrorism cooperation." *China Daily*, April 27, 2016. http://www.chinadailyasia.com/nation/2016-04/27/content_15423994.html.

¹⁸ Qingyun, Hu. "Turkish president opposes terror against China." *Global Times*, July 31, 2015; and Tham, Engen. "China, Turkey pledge to deepen counter-terrorism cooperation." Reuters, September 3, 2016.

the international community to jointly prevent and cope with the threats of terrorism.¹⁹

Although both countries share concerns about terrorism, tensions over China's treatment of the Uyghurs and Turkey's aid for them will continue to keep their security cooperation at arm's length, while Beijing's security clout in Turkey's neighborhood is still too small to provide a credible security alternative to Ankara's transatlantic ties.²⁰

However, increasing economic cooperation with China may provide Turkey with a diplomatic lever in its negotiations with the U.S. and the EU in the economic and trade domain.

OBOR and Expanding Economic Cooperation

In contrast to security issues, there is a positive outlook for closer Sino-Turkey economic cooperation. Located on two opposite ends of the Eurasian continent, both countries are upgrading their ties through the new Silk Road. In November 2016, Ankara and Beijing signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on harmonizing China's "Belt and Road" initiative with Turkey's "Middle Corridor," based on a high-speed rail linking Kars in Turkey's east with the country's western city of Edirne, and eventually connecting Turkey with China via Central Asia and the Caucasus.²¹

The Middle Corridor is centered around the completion of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railroad, expected by 2017.²² Complementing this is

¹⁹ Baijie, An. "Xi sends condolences to Turkish president over Istanbul attack." *China Daily*, January 2, 2017. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2017-01/02/content_27840405.htm.

²⁰ Hornby, Lucy and Zalewski, Piotr. "China accuses Turkey of aiding Uyghurs." *Financial Times*, July 12, 2015. <https://www.ft.com/content/93607210-285c-11e5-8613-e7aedbb7bdb7>; and Volodzko, David. "China's New Headache: Uyghur Militants in Syria." *The Diplomat*, March 8, 2016. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/chinas-new-headache-uyghur-militants-in-syria/>.

²¹ "Turkey and China ink 7 agreements." Anadolu Agency, November 16, 2015. <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/english/agenda/turkey-and-china-ink-7-agreements/87292>; and "Spotlight: China, Turkey working toward modern Silk Road." Xinhua, November 28, 2016. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-11/28/c_135864545.htm; and "Turkish-Chinese Think Tanks Summit Held in Beijing." *Tepav*, December 21, 2015. <http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/haberler/s/3988>.

²² Rukhadze, Vasili. "Completion of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Project Postponed Again." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, XIII:42, 2016. <https://jamestown.org/program/completion-of-baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-project-postponed-again/>; and Ögütçü, Özge Nur. "Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and regional connectivity." *Daily Sabah*, February 21, 2016.

the China-Turkey intermodal corridor, inaugurated in December 2015 by DHL Global Forwarding, a leading provider of air, sea, and road freight services in Europe and Asia.²³ The Lianyungang-Istanbul corridor takes around 14 days to transit Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, as well as the Caspian and Black Sea, with the option for immediate freight forwarding by truck to any Turkish city and onto the EU. The rail corridor is expected to generate 2.5 trillion dollars in annual trade within the next ten years, and was expanded to connect Taiwan with Europe via China, thereby linking the Pacific Ocean with the Atlantic Ocean with Turkey as a key trading hub.

Turkey also expressed interest in joining the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) at the G20 Summit in September 2016. Valued at 54 billion dollars, CPEC is a collection of infrastructure projects and the establishment of special economic zones, and is linked to Gwadar port for onward maritime shipment to Africa and the Middle East. The Turkish Minister of Economy, Nihat Zeybekçi, suggested that Ankara can serve as a logistical bridge to connect China and Europe.²⁴

In addition to rail infrastructure, other OBOR-related economic engagements include China acquiring a 65 percent stake of the Kumport container terminal in Turkey's third largest port Ambarlı in Istanbul, as well as China's Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) financing of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP) that allow Azeri gas to pass through Georgia and Turkey to Europe.²⁵ Turkey is a founding member of AIIB and was the 2017 Chair for the SCO Energy Club.²⁶

<https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2017/02/20/baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-and-regional-connectivity>.

²³ "DHL lays track for new Silk Road with China-Turkey rail corridor." DHL Press Release, December 17, 2015. http://www.cn.dhl.com/en/press/releases/releases_2015/local/121715.html; Christina Lin, "Erdogan's Neo-Ottoman Vision Meets Xi's Silk Road Dream in the Middle East." CSS ETH Zurich, January 22, 2016. <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/articles/article.html/195602>.

²⁴ "Turkey keen to join CPEC." *The Express Tribune*, September 6, 2016. <http://www.cpecinfo.com/cpec-news-detail.php?id=NTUI>; and "CPEC soars to \$54 billion, says minister for planning, development." ARY News, January 7, 2017. <http://arynews.tv/en/cpec-soars-to-54-billion-minister-for-planning-development/>.

²⁵ "Chinese JV inks Kumport Terminal Purchase Deal." *World Maritime News*, November 17, 2015. <http://worldmaritimeneews.com/archives/176678/chinese-jv-inks-kumport-terminal-purchase-deal/>; and "AIIB approves \$600M in loans for TANAP." *Daily Sabah*, December 23, 2016. <https://www.dailysabah.com/energy/2016/12/23/aiib-approves-600m-in-loans-for-tanap>.

²⁶ "Turkey to chair SCO energy club in 2017." *European Dialogue*, December 2, 2016.

Thus, Ankara appears to be following the Balkan and southeast European countries' footsteps in forging a multi-vector policy by virtue of geographic location in the eastern Mediterranean. Similar to Serbia, which has declared a "four pillar" foreign policy of balancing China with the EU, U.S., and Russia in its diplomatic strategy, making China an attractive fourth option partner in Southeast Europe.²⁷ This is especially the case for Greece, where port Piraeus is the centerpiece of China's OBOR via the "land-sea expressway," connecting Beijing with Europe through the Belgrade-Budapest railway in the Balkans.²⁸

Geopolitical Implications for the EU and U.S.

As China becomes a more significant geopolitical actor in the Mediterranean, Turkey and other regional countries will become more dependent on Beijing for their trade and investment relations. This means that they are likely to reduce their dependency on transatlantic partners and broaden their foreign policy options that may not always align with U.S. and EU interests. They now have a new option to develop economic and security relations, as Turkey attempted to do in 2013 when it selected a Chinese firm to co-produce its missile defense system.²⁹

Moreover, similar to the growing Turkey-transatlantic rift, this may increase the rift between cash-strapped eastern and southern European countries with their wealthier western and northern neighbors. For example, China courting Central and East European (CEE) countries via the

<https://www.eurodialogue.eu/Turkey%20to%20chair%20SCO%20Energy%20Club%20in%202017>.

²⁷ Ramani, Samuel. "China's Growing Ties with Serbia." *The Diplomat*, February 29, 2016. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/02/chinas-growing-ties-with-serbia/>.

²⁸ Lin, Christina. "China drops anchor in the Mediterranean." Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) Blog, May 25, 2016. <https://blog.merics.org/en/blog-post/2016/05/25/china-drops-anchor-in-mediterranean-ports/>; Van der Putten, Frans-Paul *et al* eds. *Europe and China's New Silk Road*, ETNC Report, December 2016. <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/ETNC-report-Europe-China-New-Silk-Roads.pdf>; *The Geopolitical Relevance of Piraeus and China's New Silk Road for Southeast Europe and Turkey*, Clingendael Report, December 2016. <https://www.clingendael.nl/publication/geopolitical-relevance-piraeus-and-chinas-new-silk-road>.

²⁹ Toksabay, Ece. "Chinese firm under U.S. sanctions wins Turkish missile deal." Reuters, September 27, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-china-defence-idUSBRE98Q0SC20130927>; Lin, Christina. "A New Eurasian Embrace" in Niv Horesh ed., *Toward Well-Oiled Relations? China's Presence in the Middle East following the Arab Spring*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

CEE 16+1 platform may transform the 11 EU member states into a *de facto* China lobby within the EU, as Hungary supported China's quest for EU Market Economy Status, while Croatia, Greece, and Hungary blocked EU support for the UNCLOS ruling in the South China Sea.³⁰

As such, in the 2016 EU Strategy on China, the conclusions called for the EU and China to work together in the Balkans and EU's Eastern and Southern neighborhoods to encourage rule-based governance, sustainable development and regional security, and to support 16+1 and OBOR that "complements EU policies and projects."³¹ In this notion, Turkey's Kumport is only one of a growing number of Chinese-owned ports around the Mediterranean, such as Algeria's port Cherchell,³² Egypt's ports Said³³ and Alexandria,³⁴ Israel's ports Ashdod³⁵ and Haifa,³⁶ and Italy's ports Genoa³⁷ and Naples. These projects provide an opportunity for the EU and China to jointly promote regional economic integration via OBOR.

³⁰ Angela Stanzel, "Xi's Visit to the Czech Republic," European Council on Foreign Relations, April 7, 2016. http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_xis_visit_to_the_czech_republic6083; "Hungary's Foreign Minister: EU should declare China market economy." *Daily News Hungary*, June 10, 2016. <http://dailynewshungary.com/hungarys-foreign-minister-eu-should-declare-china-market-economy/>; Gatién Du Bois and Magdi Birtha, "Hungary: the flagship of China in Europe?" *Nouvelle-Europe*, June 29, 2015. <http://www.nouvelle-europe.eu/en/hungary-flagship-china-europe>; Georgi Gotev, "EU Unable to Adopt Statement Upholding South China Sea Ruling." *EurActiv*, July 14, 2016. <http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-unable-to-adopt-statement-upholding-south-china-sea-ruling/>.

³¹ European Commission, *Foreign Affairs Council 18/07/2016*. <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11252-2016-INIT/en/pdf>; Van der Putten, Frans-Paul *et al* eds. *The Geopolitical Relevance of Piraeus and China's New Silk Road for Southeast Europe and Turkey*. Clingendael Report, December 2016, p. 27.

³² "China, Algeria to build mega sea port." *Xinhua*, January 18, 2016. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/18/c_135018002.htm.

³³ Scott, Emma. "China's Silk Road Strategy: A foothold in the Suez, But Looking to Israel." *China Brief*, Vol.14, Issue 19, October 10, 2014. https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-silk-road-strategy-a-foothold-in-the-suez-but-looking-to-israel/#.VzL_d2xlOUk.

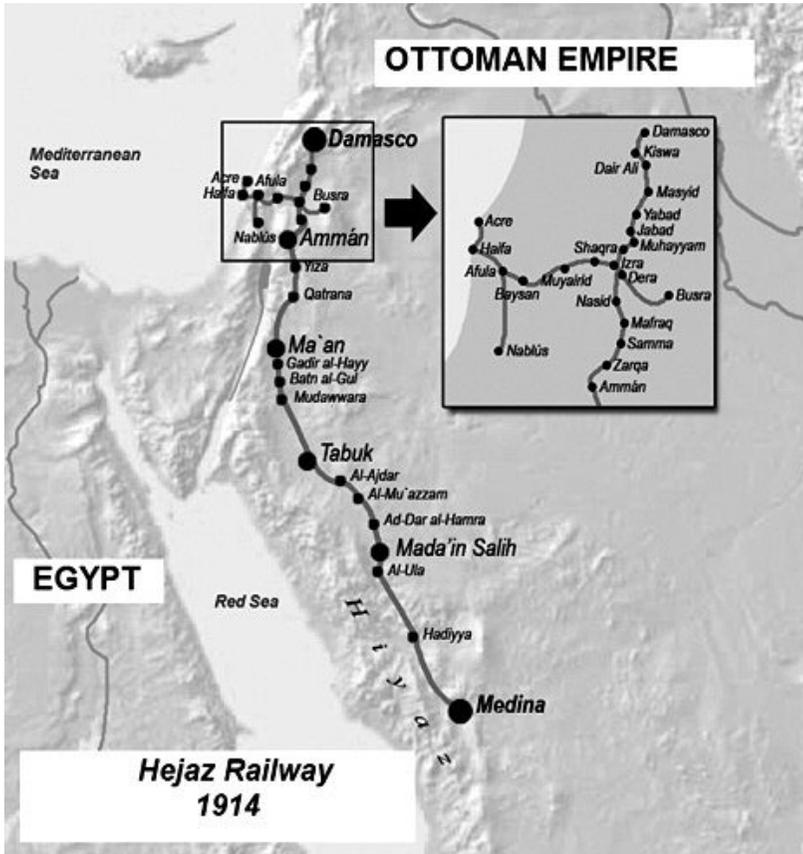
³⁴ "Hutchinson of China to construct container terminals in Alexandria." *Daily News Egypt*, December 23, 2006. <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2006/12/23/hutchison-of-china-to-construct-container-terminals-in-alexandria/>.

³⁵ Shamah, David. "China firm to build new Ashdod 'union buster' port." *Times of Israel*, September 23, 2014. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/china-firm-to-build-new-ashdod-union-buster-port/>.

³⁶ Petersburg, Ofer. "Chinese company wins bid to run new Haifa port." *Ynet News*, March 24, 2015. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4640513,00.html>.

³⁷ Ewing, Jack. "European Companies Turn to Chinese Investors." *New York Times*, October 21, 2014. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/21/business/international/european-companies-turn-to-chinese-investors.html?_r=1.

Map 1: Hejaz Railway during the Ottoman Empire 1914.



Source: Wikipedia

For example, with growing Chinese investments in Turkey and Israel, this may be utilized for broader cooperation at the regional level. One such project is the Jezreel Valley railway line. Revived after 65 years, in August 2016, cargo traveling by sea from Turkey to Haifa was placed on the Jezreel line, and transported to Jordan and the broader Arab Gulf region.³⁸ The Jezreel Valley train, part of the Turkish Hejaz railway built

³⁸ Galia Lavia and Gallia Lindenstrauss, "China and Turkey: Closer Relations Mixed with Suspicion." *INSS Strategic Assessment*, Vol 19, No. 2, July 2016, p. 126.

under the Ottoman Empire in 1905, ran until 1951.³⁹ With China winning a tender to operate the Haifa port for 25 years, this would facilitate China to ship goods from Turkey to Jordan and Asia via the Red Sea or the Arab Gulf region, and vice versa.

Indeed, it is within the context of the OBOR and goal of broader regional cooperation that the Israeli transport minister, Capt. Yigal Maor, proposed the Israel-Gulf Economic Corridor (IGEC) in September 2016.⁴⁰ He believed that if China could invest in IGEC (which would link infrastructure projects in the Arab Gulf region with Israel and Jordan to transship Chinese goods), this could push Gulf countries into more formal ties with Israel. In turn, this could jumpstart the Arab Peace Initiative that aligns with EU and U.S. goals in the Middle East Peace Process, with the added benefit of promoting broader regional cooperation with Turkey and the EU in the eastern Mediterranean. The recent Israeli-Turkish reconciliation, launched after six years of broken relationship following the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident, would also help in this regard.⁴¹

Additionally, the EU and U.S. could coordinate efforts to prevent redundancies and misallocation of scarce resources. Currently, there are three overlapping Eurasian integration projects: China's OBOR, Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the EU Eastern Partnership's (EaP) own New Silk Road Initiative launched in Prague in 2009 on a southern energy corridor. A broad platform is needed to coordinate these three initiatives, and one existing tool that has been sorely neglected is the OSCE, whose role we discuss in the following section.

³⁹ Shpigel, Noa. *Ha'aretz*, August 29, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/1.739283>; "Restored northern railway sees historic maiden voyage." *Times of Israel*, August 29, 2016. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/restored-northern-railway-sees-historic-maiden-voyage/>; Orr Hirschauge and Rory Jones. "Israel Builds Railway in Hope of Boosting Commerce With Arab Neighbors." *Wall Street Journal*, June 22, 2016. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-builds-railway-in-hope-of-boosting-commerce-with-arab-neighbors-1466614190>.

⁴⁰ Elis, Niv. "Could Israel become a linchpin of China's trade strategy?" *Jerusalem Post*, September 29, 2016. <http://www.jpost.com/printarticle.aspx?id=469093>; Evron, Yoram. "Can China Participate in Middle East Stabilization Efforts by Supporting Regional Connectivity." *Asia Pacific Bulletin* No. 363, East West Center, December 1, 2016. <http://www.eastwest-center.org/publications/can-china-participate-in-middle-east-stabilization-efforts-supporting-regional>.

⁴¹ Keinon, Herb. "First Israeli-Turkish Diplomatic Talks in Years Kick off in Ankara." *Jerusalem Post*, January 31, 2017. <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/First-Israeli-Turkish-diplomatic-talks-in-years-kick-off-in-Ankara-480171>.

The OSCE as New Transatlantic Platform to Engage Turkey and China

There are several reasons why the OSCE is a timely cooperative platform that provides the EU and the U.S. with a broad, comprehensive approach to engage Turkey and China in a post-Brexit and multi-polar world.

Overlapping Region and Membership

Geography matters, and the 57-member OSCE covers a similar region on the OBOR across the Eurasia landmass including U.S., Canada, European countries, Central Asia, Russia, and Mongolia for a broad regional approach towards OBOR projects. The OSCE and SCO also have overlapping membership with Russia and the four Central Asian republics, including with Turkey, a NATO member as well as a SCO Dialogue Partner.

Renewed Transatlantic Coordination

The OSCE can provide a platform for renewed transatlantic coordination. It is a better platform for the U.S. and the EU to engage China post-Brexit, as it includes both EU member states and the U.K., which is still an important NATO ally and a permanent member of the UN Security Council.⁴² It also provides a transatlantic approach to engage countries that are neither members of NATO or the EU, or only in one of the organizations and not in the other (e.g., Great Britain, Turkey, Cyprus). Since legacy institutions from the Cold War have built-in biases—such as NATO's tendency to be suspicious of Russia, or China's distrust of NATO due to the 1999 NATO bombing of its embassy in Belgrade—the OSCE may be a timely alternative paradigm for global engagement between the West and global rising powers.⁴³

This is especially important with an EU post-Brexit, and NATO as an exclusive military alliance ill-equipped to address new security challenges

⁴² Ferrier, Kathleen. "Post -Brexit, the OSCE should transcend the EU for dealing with China." *Harbour Times*, July 5, 2016. <http://harbourtimes.com/2016/07/05/post-brexit-the-osce-should-transcend-the-eu-for-dealing-with-china/>; Jan Gaspers and Mikko Huotari, "Why EU should use the OSCE to engage China on security issues", Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) Blog, May 17, 2016. <https://blog.merics.org/en/blog-post/2016/05/17/why-the-eu-should-use-the-osce-to-engage-china-on-security-issues/>.

⁴³ "NATO expresses regret, resolve after bombing Chinese embassy." CNN, May 8, 1999. <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9905/08/kosovo.03/>.

Map 2: OSCE and SCO members



such as counter-terrorism, refugee crises, conflict prevention and resolution. In contrast, the 57-member OSCE—that includes Turkey, is an inclusive dialogue and confidence-building mechanism across Eurasia, and its explicit mandate on security could stimulate a structural dialogue with China. It would also support the new Trump administration’s focus on burden sharing among U.S. allies and counter-terrorism that NATO as a military organization is not equipped to address.

Here, the OSCE's 2017 Austrian Chairmanship⁴⁴ priority on counter-terrorism may provide room for transatlantic cooperation with Turkey and China, on the heels of the 2016 German Chairmanship of using the OSCE to engage with China to promote connectivity⁴⁵ on OBOR projects. This is built on the ongoing Sino-EU cooperation via the EU-China Connectivity platform, launched at the EU-China Summit in June 2015 to identify synergies between OBOR and EU's own policy priorities in the 315 billion euros (358 billion dollars) Juncker Fund, mainly focused on high-risk projects on innovation, energy, and infrastructure. For the OSCE's incoming 2018 Italian Chairmanship, there have already been proposals to allow China SCO observer status in order to better coordinate OBOR projects and incorporate China's presence in the Euro-Mediterranean region.⁴⁶ With NATO and OSCE-member Turkey chairing the SCO Energy Club in 2017, as well as being an AIIB founding member and cooperating with China to finance the TANAP project, the U.S. could follow its European allies and join the AIIB to enable a coordinated transatlantic approach on the OBOR.⁴⁷

Support Western Values

The OSCE also provides a platform for U.S.-EU coordination on security issues with Turkey and China that support Western values in OBOR. Its holistic notion of security—encompassing politico-military, economic-environmental, and human aspects—provides a suitable “playing field” for addressing a wide range of issues in a cross-dimensional manner. For example, cooperation with Ankara and Beijing on counter-terrorism within the OSCE framework could open up a venue for addressing wider human

⁴⁴ “In first address to OSCE Permanent Council, Incoming Chairperson-in-Office Austria's Foreign Minister Kurz, stresses need for decisive action and cooperation,” OSCE Press Release, July 14, 2016. <http://www.osce.org/pc/253846>.

⁴⁵ “Conference on OBOR Silk Road Initiative at the Federal Foreign Office.” February 3, 2016, German Federal Foreign Office. http://www.auswaertigesamt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Aktuelle_Artikel/China/160202_Seidenstra%C3%9Fen_Initiative.html.

⁴⁶ Valori, Giancarlo Elia. “Using the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).” *Foglio Verde*, August 4, 2016. <https://foglioverde.com/2016/08/04/using-the-organization-for-security-and-cooperation-in-europe-osce-giancarlo-elia-valori/>; Christian Nünlist, “The OSCE and the Future of European Security.” *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, No. 202, February 2017, ETH Zurich. <https://foglioverde.com/2016/08/04/using-the-organization-for-security-and-cooperation-in-europe-osce-giancarlo-elia-valori/>.

⁴⁷ Dominguez, Gabriel. “Why Europe defies the US to join a China-led bank.” *Deutsche Welle*, March 18, 2015. <http://www.dw.com/en/why-europe-defies-the-us-to-join-a-china-led-bank/a-18322773>.

rights and rule-of-law issues, which have so far been a stumbling block in EU-Turkey and EU-China cooperation in the fight against international terrorism.⁴⁸

Engage Russia, Iran, and Syria

The OSCE as a multilateral platform focused on confidence building and crisis management can engage Turkey and China on issues regarding Russia, Iran, and Syria. The organization was initially conceived as a forum to mitigate tensions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and as such, the OSCE may once again reduce current tensions between NATO and Russia.⁴⁹ Indeed, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier penned an article in August 2016 calling for the OSCE to take a role in launching a dialogue with the Russians to reduce tensions, with NATO itself issuing an article in November on the same notion for crisis management.⁵⁰

Moreover, the purpose of the OSCE was to reduce military tensions and to redirect focus on broad security issues including the economic, ecological, and human dimensions of security. As a confidence building measure, the OSCE can coordinate with China and Turkey's railway projects that include Iran under the auspices of SCO and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Based in Tehran, ECO was founded in 1985 by Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan to build a free trade zone of non-Arab Muslim nations, and expanded in 1992 to include the five Turkic Central Asian republics, Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan.

With overlapping members in both ECO and SCO, there has been joint cooperation in a series of transport infrastructure projects, such as

⁴⁸ Nielsen, Nicola J. "Turkey won't reform terrorism law to conform with EU deal." *EU Observer*, August 9, 2016. <https://euobserver.com/foreign/134599>; Tulay Karadeniz and Gabriela Baczynska, "Turkey digs in heels over terrorism law, to EU chagrin." Reuters, May 11, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-eu-turkey-idUSKCN0Y20SN>; Pantucci, Raffaello. "Can the EU and China work together on violent extremism?" *EU Observer*, March 1, 2016. <https://euobserver.com/opinion/132505>.

⁴⁹ Pisiou, Daniela. "The OSCE and the SCO—Perspectives for Cooperation." OIIP Policy Paper 8, November 2015. [http://www.oiiip.ac.at/index.php?id=49&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=20&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=906&cHash=f6633ed6a893f8c4a8c28cd1f7eca8b8](http://www.oiiip.ac.at/index.php?id=49&tx_ttnews[backPid]=20&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=906&cHash=f6633ed6a893f8c4a8c28cd1f7eca8b8).

⁵⁰ Steinmeier, Frank-Walter. "Reviving Arms Control in Europe." *Project Syndicate*, August 26, 2016. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/reviving-arms-control-in-europe-by-frank-walter-steinmeier-2016-08?barrier=accessreg>; Loïc Simonet and Veera Tuomala. "How can the OSCE help to reduce the risk of hazardous military incidents." *NATO Review*, November 2, 2016. <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2016/Also-in-2016/OSCE-help-reduce-risk-military-incidents/EN/index.htm>.

the 2011 rail link from the Iran port of Bandar Abbas to Almaty in Kazakhstan that connects with China, or the 2012 Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad train to boost trade among member states in Central Asia.⁵¹ By using the OSCE platform to engage Turkey and China, the U.S. and EU could broaden their regional approach to also address both economic and security issues pertaining to Iran, and by extension Syria. This would also mirror China's regional approach, as Beijing has participated in the OSCE Mediterranean partners program⁵² on a SCO ticket, and the Asian partners program on an ASEAN ticket. Now that Egypt and Israel are following Turkey's footsteps and have applied to join SCO as Dialogue Partners, this provides an opportunity for the SCO and OSCE to coordinate on Syria and other issues in the Mediterranean.⁵³

During the Cold War, NATO took center stage to address conventional warfare and the OSCE was in a supporting role. However, in the post-Cold War 21st century environment of unconventional warfare and new security challenges, it is important to have a paradigm shift so that now the OSCE can take center stage for transatlantic security relations, with NATO having a supporting role. Dialogue, confidence building, and crisis management—rather than mere military power—could pioneer U.S. and Europe diplomacy efforts with countries such as China, Russia, and Turkey—nations that do not fully subscribe to Western values and governance standards. Of course, should diplomacy through the OSCE fail, NATO remains the transatlantic diplomatic tool of last resort.

Moreover, the rise of unconventional challenges requires “out-of-the-box” thinking for solutions, and it is also important to have a coordinated transatlantic approach towards OBOR at a time when Europeans are nervous about a Trump presidency. Anachronistic Cold War paradigms, or legacy institutions (e.g., NATO), which demand U.S. taxpayers to continue underwriting 75 percent of their total budget, are no longer sustainable.⁵⁴

⁵¹ “Islamabad-Tehra-Istanbul Line boosts trade in Central Asia.” *Railway Pro*, August 31, 2012. <http://www.railwaypro.com/wp/islamabad-tehran-istanbul-line-boosts-trade-in-central-asia/>; Lin, Christina. “A New Eurasian Embrace.” Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.

⁵² Mediterranean partners include Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

⁵³ “Syria, Israel and Egypt willing to join SCO's activity—president's special envoy.” *Interfax*, June 23, 2016. <http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?id=683491>.

⁵⁴ “Indefensible: Europe cuts NATO spending while the US pays.” *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, March 2, 2015. <http://www.post-gazette.com/opinion/editorials/2015/03/02/Indefensible-Europe-cuts-NATO-spending-while-the-U-S-pays/stories/201502280081>; Froma Harrop, “Must America Pick Up Everybody's Defense Bill?” *Real Clear Politics*, March 31, 2016. http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2016/03/31/must_america_pick_up_everybodys_d

As German Marshall Fund's Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer observed, there is a transatlantic conceptual gap with Europeans looking for a responsible U.S. leader to defend democratic values, while the U.S. is asking Europe to be a responsible partner with stronger military capabilities.⁵⁵ At a time when the Trump administration is requesting burden sharing among U.S. allies, and Americans are worried about their own jobs and want to focus on counter-terrorism, the OSCE could serve as the middle ground where Europe can meet with new U.S. policy trajectories to maintain transatlantic coordination.⁵⁶ Otherwise, if the EU—and especially the U.S.—do not adapt to these changes, the transatlantic rift may continue to widen.

Conclusion—a Joint Transatlantic Pivot to Eurasia

Given Turkey's ongoing internal security problems with terrorism, economic woes, a falling lira, tensions with the EU and a need for immediate infrastructure, investment and trade, China's OBOR offers quick economic relief. And as a December 2016 Clingendael Report observed, Turkey's multi-vector policy "should not be interpreted as Turkey's quest for an alternative to the West, with potentially revolutionary implications such as the rejection of its NATO membership."⁵⁷ Rather, it is an evolving policy for greater diversification and engagement with more economic partners, similar to other countries in the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean.

Thus, Sino-Turkey relations are not of significant concern to the EU or the U.S., especially given their ongoing tension over the Uyghur issue, and economic cooperation will have limited impact on transatlantic ties. However, in the longer term, if Turkey becomes more dependent on Chinese trade and investment, this may broaden their foreign policy options, which may not always support transatlantic interests. Additionally, if

efense_bills_130148.html.

⁵⁵ De Hoop Scheffer, Alexandra. "Impressions of Partnership in a post-Western World Order from Munich." German Marshall Fund Blog, February 20, 2017. <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2017/02/20/impressions-partnership-post-western-world-order-munich>.

⁵⁶ Valori, Giancarlo Elia. "Opportunity within Constraints: The OSCE and its Next Italian Presidency." *Modern Diplomacy*, January 23, 2017. http://moderndiplomacy.eu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=2175:additional-considerations-on-the-issue-of-osce-and-its-next-italian-presidency&Itemid=132.

⁵⁷ Montesano, Francesco Saverio. "The Role of Turkey and Cyprus in OBOR" in Frans-Paul van der Putten et al eds. *The Geopolitical Relevance of Piraeus and China's New Silk Road for Southeast Europe and Turkey.* Clingendael Report, December 2016, p. 40.

China's security relations with the EU, the U.S., and Russia becomes strained or competitive, it may destabilize the Euro-Mediterranean region. As such, the OSCE could provide a timely cooperative template to mitigate that risk through dialogue, confidence building, and crisis management.

Admittedly, there may be resistance from the U.S., which likes to take a lead in various international institutions, and tends to see a binary option between Washington and Beijing for the international order. As former senior State Department official David Sedney observed, there was a "strain in U.S. political thinking that says if we are not in the lead role, we should not be part of it—but I think that has been a mistake." This view is shared by U.S. allies when it comes to Washington forcing them to choose between the U.S. and China.⁵⁸

One example is the attempted U.S. boycott of China's AIIB to address a legitimate 8 trillion dollars' worth of infrastructure investment gap in Asia for the next decade.⁵⁹ Neither the World Bank nor the Asian Development Bank are able to fill that development finance gap. Thus, despite the U.S. boycott, allies stampeded to join the AIIB, much to the Obama administration's chagrin and embarrassment.

An Asian diplomat, whose country is a founding member of AIIB, revealed that "The truth is no one in the region wants to choose between the United States and China," but U.S. hostility to the bank actually prompted many countries to choose in China's favor. Another scholar at Belgium's Egmont Institute noted that "China is too big to avoid, deny, and difficult to embrace," so it is important to partner with Beijing where interests overlap. In short, Washington needs a better response to China-led initiatives than attempting to lead a boycott, especially when allies see benefits in participation.

As such, Turkey, which is excluded from the EU as well as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), sees benefit in cooperating with China for much-needed economic growth, similar to many

⁵⁸ Denyer, Simon. "China gloats as Europeans rush to join Asian bank." *The Washington Post*, March 18, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-gloats-as-europeans-rush-to-join-asian-bank/2015/03/18/82139f88-9915-4a81-81af-ae6eacaf528c7_story.html?utm_term=.0ce37ac4bf44.

⁵⁹ "Who will pay for Asia's \$8 Trillion Infrastructure Gap?" Asian Development Bank, September 30, 2013. <https://www.adb.org/news/infographics/who-will-pay-asias-8-trillion-infrastructure-gap>; Kanwal, Ajay. "Plugging Asia's \$11 trillion infrastructure gap." *Strait Times*, March 31, 2016. <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/plugging-asias-11-trillion-infrastructure-gap>.

Asian countries. Indeed, both TTIP and the now-defunct Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) are emblematic of misguided U.S. policy of forcing a binary option on allies of choosing either the U.S. or China. However, forging an economic NATO that excludes the second largest economy in the world and largest trading partner in Asia, as well as ignoring China's multi-trillion-OBOR project in Eurasia, was a non-starter for many Asian, Mideast, and European allies. In contrast, China's inclusive AIIB has an open invitation for Japan and the U.S. to join, although both have declined. This in turn prompted James Woolsey—former Trump advisor and director of the Central Intelligence Agency—to criticize Washington's boycott as a “strategic mistake.”⁶⁰

Woolsey indicated he “expected a warmer response from Trump” on the AIIB and China's OBOR project, which could provide a platform for cooperation and perhaps a chance for renewed transatlantic coordination via the OSCE. As such, a Trump presidency, and U.S./Europe cooperation with Turkey and China via the OSCE on OBOR may actually provide an opportunity for a joint pivot to Eurasia and a silver lining for renewed transatlantic coordination.

⁶⁰ Zhuang Pinghui, Wendy Wu, and Kristin Huang. “US opposition to AIIB ‘strategic mistake,’” says senior Trump adviser.” *South China Morning Post*, November 10, 2016. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2044829/us-opposition-aiib-strategic-mistake-says-senior-trump>; “Belt and Road Initiative offers new opportunity for U.S.-China cooperation: ex-Trump adviser.” *Xinhua*, February 22, 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/22/c_136077381.htm.