



By: **Emre Alkin**

Is India the Rising New Enemy of Turkey?



Some may wonder, "Why would countries so far apart from each other adopt hostile attitudes?" However, the root of the issue is historical.

Among the only victories against imperialism in the world is Turkey's War of Independence (1919-1923). The contribution of the people of Pakistan, who even went as far as to remove their gold teeth to send aid to Turkey, is unforgettable.

Meanwhile, during the Cyprus Peace Operation, few realise that the bottleneck caused by the US embargo was primarily overcome with support from Pakistan.

For this reason, India's reaction, which appears to be more of a Bollywood-style response while ignoring the historical roots of the strong relationship between the two countries, seems normal to us.

Of course, having nearly the same number of nuclear weapons as Pakistan is another source of tension. For now, I will analyse the economic and political impacts of this situation.

Recently, regional political tensions between Turkey and India have caused a significant slowdown in their economic relations.

The total trade volume between the two countries was around 45 billion dollars, but this figure appears to have decreased by about 5-10% as tensions rose.

Additionally, tourism and direct investments have been negatively affected. While around 220,000 tourists from India visited Turkey in 2019, this number has fallen by 20% to approximately 175,000 in 2023. This year, there are few India's tourists **visiting** Turkey.

On the eve of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, it was known that India was **trying** to prevent Turkey's participation. From what we understand, India's rising new enemy is now Turkey.

Within the framework of the historical

closeness related to the crisis with Pakistan, Turkey's clear stance seems to have provoked India's hostile attitude. India's citizens no longer visit Turkey for tourism, familiar weddings are no longer held, and Turks wishing to travel to India are being told "don't come."

Economically, especially in energy and construction sectors, negative impacts are evident. Turkey's imports from India are about 20 billion dollars, while exports are around 25 billion dollars.

If this tension continues, it could disrupt trade cooperation and investment flows between the two countries and delay regional energy projects.

Also, due to regional security and economic balance, while Turkey is trying to increase its proximity to other Asian economic powers, rising political tension makes this strategy more difficult.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Regional Developments

Let's go back to the beginning of the escalation: After 2023, SCO members became more active in regional security and economic integration. Led by China and Russia, new trade and energy projects gained momentum, increasing the total regional trade volume by about 12%.

Particularly, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Central Asian projects received approximately 8 billion dollars in investments in 2023.

During Erdoğan and Xi Jinping's official meetings in 2024, they discussed regional cooperation and economic development

While India preferred to stay more neutral

within the organisation, regional countries continued to strengthen their structural and economic ties.

Countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar increased their economic relations and participated in regional projects.

Relations between Ankara and Beijing, especially through government-to-government talks, saw new agreements in 2023 involving China's investments and technological cooperation.

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Dialogue Between Erdoğan and Xi Jinping

At the Turkey-China summit in 2024, President Erdoğan and Chinese President Xi Jinping **discussed** regional and global developments in detail.

Erdoğan stated, "We will continue to build strong relations with China to ensure global economic stability," while Xi Jinping said, "We are taking our economic and cultural cooperation with Turkey to new levels. We are ready to strengthen our joint initiatives for regional peace and development."

During Erdoğan's official visit to China, both sides approved new trade and energy projects and signed approximately 7 billion dollars worth of new investment agreements

The core of their dialogue focused on increasing regional stability and economic integration. Additionally, China's new "North-South" and "Belt and Road" projects involving Turkey seem to be significant turning points geopolitically and economically.

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The Equation: US, Israel, and Pakistan

Since the US is a key player in global economic and geopolitical balances, it intervenes in these matters with various strategies. During 2023-2024, due to rising tensions involving China and India, Washington strengthened its strategic relations in the region.

The US has regarded India as a "Strategic Partner," with about 90 billion dollars in defence and trade agreements signed in 2024. During the same period, joint projects with Turkey in energy and security were also established.

While the Trump administration hadn't yet adopted an aggressive stance towards Turkey, it decided to **impose** sanctions on India related to its trade with Russia.

Pakistan focuses on energy and infrastructure projects aligned with regional stability and economic development goals, with around 5 billion dollars of investments within the **framework** of CPEC in 2023. The country approaches relations with the US and China cautiously, prioritising regional security measures over economic growth.

The trade volume between China and India reached about 1.5 trillion dollars in 2023

Pakistan emphasises regional cooperation on energy and water resources, trying to alleviate energy shortages with new energy projects. Additionally, international financial institutions are involved through economic reform packages and aid programmes to stabilise the economy.

Due to historical ties, Turkey continues to

support Pakistan in all matters. Recently, Turkey's stance during the Pakistan-India tensions drew attention; in response, India accused Turkey of 'treason' for planning to visit for weddings or holidays, escalating tensions.

During this period, regional and global tensions caused fluctuations in energy, food, and technological product prices. The trade volume between China and India reached about 1.5 trillion dollars in 2023, but regional conflicts and geopolitical tensions disrupted supply chains.

This also increased energy prices and contributed to a persistent global inflationary environment.

In the global economy, supply chain issues and high prices resulted in a growth rate of approximately 2.8% in 2024, marking the lowest level in two years. International organisations emphasise the need to strengthen cooperation among regional countries.

A new power game is on

The political tensions between Turkey and India negatively affect economic relations. Meanwhile, power dynamics in the region and the attitudes of major countries complicate these effects.

The comprehensive dialogues between Erdoğan and Xi Jinping have advanced China's relationship with Turkey, strengthening economic and strategic cooperation.



The political tensions between Turkey and India negatively affect economic relations - Emre Alkin

Developments centred around China, the US, and Pakistan shape global trade and security policies. Increasing tensions, especially in energy and technology sectors, are reflected in prices and supply chains.

China's "Belt and Road" initiatives are playing a significant role in regional integration efforts involving Turkey and neighbouring countries.

At this critical juncture, discussions about the Nagorno-Karabakh-Zangezur corridor, which might come under US **control**, remain important. Both Azerbaijan and Armenia have expressed their opposition to foreign military presence in the region.

This situation is frustrating for Russia but suggests the US aims to use this corridor to halt Chinese goods' flow. The EU members are also displeased with this, as they do not want supply chains to break or prices to rise again.

Meanwhile, it is known that India is working on a new trade **corridor** to completely exclude Turkey and is trying to garner support for it.

However, given that the traffic of goods passing through the Turkish straits exceeds even that of the Panama Canal annually, there is currently little interest in this project. As I mentioned earlier, "Bollywood" reactions are part of these developments.

Furthermore, India's government seems likely to continue testing these measures by

elevating their policies towards Turkey, especially while aligning closely with Israel and Greece to escalate their activities related to Pakistan.

Note: Let's also briefly look at the impasse at the SCO summit: India **vetoed** Azerbaijan's membership, and Pakistan **blocked** Armenia's application. The reason is clear—Azerbaijan's support for Pakistan. Both Azerbaijan and India also have close cooperation with Israel and the US. Things are quite complicated, but one can also interpret India's internal political discontent as an attempt to vent the pressure indirectly.