

Xinjiang Must Unite, Not Divide, China and Turkey

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A controversy occurred earlier this month after two Turkish opposition politicians [expressed support](#) for separatism in Xinjiang. The Chinese Foreign Ministry condemned their counterproductive remarks, which in turn prompted Ankara to summon the Chinese Ambassador. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian then [said](#) that “We hope that people in Turkey from all walks of life can correctly, rationally and objectively view the firm position of China to protect its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.” Because of how sensitive the issue is both in general and for bilateral relations, it deserves to be discussed more thoroughly.

Turkey is presently rising as a regional power in accordance with its rich civilizational and historical influence. This has recently seen the country promote a hybrid model of secular and religious influence in order to broaden its appeal to traditional and prospective partners alike in North Africa, West Asia, and Central Asia. The last-mentioned region is comprised of former Soviet republics, many of whom are populated by Turkic people who feel a close kinship with their Turkish brethren. This ethnic outreach to what Ankara regards as the Turkic world is [natural and should be encouraged](#) by all so long as it doesn't take any threatening form.

The problem is that there are some in Turkey who flirt with radical interpretations of their country's newfound soft power strategy. Instead of respecting every country's sovereign interests to govern themselves however their legitimate leaders believe is best, they arrogantly think that they know better those states or their own people do. Therein lies the issue with the latest Xinjiang controversy whereby two opposition politicians made counterproductive remarks in favor of separatist forces there. Considering the growing closeness of Chinese-Turkish relations, these statements were unwelcome and could have caused trouble between those two.

Thankfully, bilateral ties have matured enough to the point where such comments won't affect those countries' expanding partnership, but they still deserved to be condemned in order to remind everyone of how unacceptable they were. The individuals that made them were clearly misled by the US-led global information warfare campaign against the People's Republic alleging that China is carrying out a so-called [“genocide”](#) against the Uyghurs, who

are mostly fellow Muslims related to the Turkish people. In fact, one can argue that Turkey is one of the prime target audiences of this American [Hybrid War](#) narrative.

The US hopes to mislead the world, and especially Muslim countries, about the situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The intended result is to pressure those states into distancing themselves from cooperating more closely with China, which could in turn provide a comparative competitive advantage to the US. In the Turkish context, American strategists want to manipulate influential Turkish figures into provoking more international controversies between their country and China over this manufactured fake news-driven issue. In reality, however, Xinjiang must unite, not divide, China and Turkey.

Upon learning more about the [socio-economic renaissance](#) of the Uyghur people and other minorities in the XUAR, more Turks will realize how badly they were misled by the US' information warfare campaign. China isn't "oppressing" the Uyghurs, not to mention committing "genocide" against them, but has unprecedentedly improved their living standards to the point where its efforts can objectively be described as the [most successful minority empowerment campaign](#) anywhere in the planet's history. Life expectancy and overall population numbers have soared, household income is at its highest-ever levels, and security is guaranteed.

In fact, Turkey could even learn from China's experiences with the Uyghurs to similarly improve the situation for its own minorities. This could in turn reduce separatist and terrorist threats in the same way as has recently happened in the XUAR. With this vision in mind, Turks should resist the US' external pressure to exploit this situation for the purpose of dividing their country from China. If anything, they should learn more about the reality of what's happening there in order to motivate them to take ties with China to the next level, including through more people-to-people interactions such as touring the XUAR once the pandemic finally ends.

It's sad that some Turkish individuals were misled by American propaganda about Xinjiang, but their own government nowadays knows that these narratives aren't true. That's why ties remain strong between China and Turkey despite the latest controversy. Both countries are in a mutually beneficial partnership with potential strategic implications, which no single issue - let alone an artificially manufactured one - can sabotage. As time goes on, it's hoped that more Turks will learn the truth about the XUAR, appreciate China's historic efforts in improving the Uyghurs' lives, and see Xinjiang as a natural bridge between their two countries.

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