

BRIEF THOUGHTS ON A MOVING JAPAN - TURKEY RELATIONS

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Japan and Turkey, with the Asian land-mass in between, are far apart physically. Do not let this mislead you. We are much closer than many of our peoples think. What does history say ? Mainland Asia is where forefathers of Turks and Japanese were born and flourished. Review their cultures and traditions, in short the BUNKA, various national and family norms and social behavior, simple practices in the flow of daily life; you will see notable similarities. Structurally, our languages resemble; in fact, some words we still share.

From ancient times Japanese and Turks are distant relatives. Here lie the neighborly sentiments and deep-rooted friendship between the Turks and the Japanese. This has the basic ingredients of a relationship from people to people, from nation to nation. It also explains why Japan-Turkey relations are totally free of any distressing issues. Let us keep this lively and strong. In thick lines you will see this in the book of Prof. Toshihiko Izutsu, from Keio University, titled "A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism: Ibn'Arabi and Lao-Tzu Chuang-Tzu". He tries to investigate and define the secret of WISDOM and draws some similarity between Turkish and Japanese mentalities. I strongly recommend this valuable research to all those who wish to develop Turkey-Japan relations.

In ancient times local circumstances, the flow of history, or call it destiny, pulled our forefathers apart. Actually, Asian landmass does not push us apart. It is an old, but lasting bond between Japan and Turkey. This may well become an over-riding factor as the Asian politics unfold. We shall all see.

Moreover, the flow of contemporary history left its marks upon this unique past:

- * The well known ERTUGRUL incident in 1890 at Kishimoto added a tragic human dimension to our relations.
- * The Ottoman rule and the people were very pleased to see Japan's victory over Tsarist Russia, in the sea war of 1904-1905. This led Japan into the league of major powers.
- * The nuclear holocaust which Japan suffered in WWII deeply hurt the Turkish nation. The tragedy will always remain as the darkest page of the human history.
- * The Japanese recovery from the ruins of WWII can only be described by the word MIRACLE; a perception shared by Turkey and the entire world.

Since the 1990's a new political and economic geography is shaping. With September 11 attack on the United States, the global political atmosphere became highly uncertain and the stage of world politics very slippery. Today, more than ever, we need to think and assess globally while continuing to act nationally. Only in this manner can we see the global road map ahead and fully appreciate the magnitude of future challenges and opportunities. This is very important. It may well be a turning point in our relations, if the views of our respective governments correspond. I personally believe, their move is in this direction.

All these changes cast Eurasia to the center of global politics.

This breath-taking transformation offers numerous prospects to both Japan and Turkey. Japan, with its huge economy, equipped with most advanced technology, is to the immediate east of this area while Turkey, with its young, dynamic generation and highly motivated business circles, occupies a pivotal location in this vast region. We together have the potential and the capacity to build on this fertile ground. We should, together introduce a new vision, forward looking, comprehensive and mutually beneficial to our bilateral relations.

I wish to explain very briefly my vision of the future stage of Japan-Turkey bilateral cooperation.

- * Trade is fine, it is growing; we need much more of it. A reasonable balance in bilateral trade will make it grow further. However, let us look beyond this traditional exchange.
- * Turkey must transform itself from a technology consuming to technology producing country. This is urgent and inevitable for us. Japan, which has turned modern science and technology into an art of daily life has outstanding capacity in this respect. As Turkey moves in this direction, Japan is destined to advance into newer stages of technology.
- * Turkey must absorb, with its young generation, computer science and technology; develop into an information society. Japan and Turkey need such qualified individuals to compete in global scales more effectively.
- * Execution of major projects, both in Turkey and EURASIA, as well as Middle-East, North-Africa, Eastern Europe and even beyond, is of great importance. In all these regions Turkey's construction sector today has already proved its high qualities with the execution of numerous important projects to the full satisfaction of the employer. Japanese engineering in this respect has been most impressive all over and a living example for Turkey's construction sector.

The sector of construction can be the engine in this frame. In simplest terms, the market is huge and still unsaturated. Time has come to join forces and where feasible, act together. A major synergy, as well as increased competitiveness are embedded in such cooperation.

- * Turkey's natural resources offer wide range agro-businesses and fisheries. Turkey and Japan hardly looked into the possible prospects therein.
- * Turkey's tourism potential is second to none in Europe. It offers numerous possibilities.

You may wonder; why Ersin Arioglu is so concerned with Japan - Turkey relations! The answer is short and clear:

- * I am a member of the Japan - Turkey Business Council. Thereafter, we have,
- * Shared history;
- * Cordial sentiments and deep - rooted friendship between Japan and Turkey, from people to people;
- * Complementarity between the respective state of socio-economic composition;
- * Trust in the conduct of Japanese business, admiration of its ever-growing science and technology, confidence in its advanced engineering;

To me these are the building blocks of a new, durable and growing bilateral cooperation between Japan and Turkey. Such a relationship will be a very positive contribution to civilization, peace and security in Asia, in EURASIA and beyond. We should always work for these objectives.

If I may add, these personal thoughts are, by and large, shared by Turkey, its people and the Turkish Government.

Thank you for your attention.

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Japan, 29 June - 7 July 2002