

The Impact of Erdoğan's Victory on Türkiye-India Bilateral Relations: An Analysis



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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is to analyse the possible consequences of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's 2023 electoral success in Turkey on the bilateral relations between Türkiye and India. Since 2003, Erdoğan has been an influential figure in Turkish politics, known for his assertive leadership style and nationalist policies. The outcomes of his recent electoral victory have sparked noteworthy curiosity regarding its implications on Turkey's foreign policy, particularly in the context of Türkiye-India bilateral relationship. The research methodology employed in this study is qualitative in nature, and it involves an extensive examination of scholarly articles, news, reports, and official statements from both nations. This paper analyses the fundamental elements of the bilateral relations between Türkiye and India, encompassing political, economic, and cultural aspects. Additionally, it evaluates the potential impact of Erdoğan's victory on each of these domains. The firstly, Erdoğan's victory can further strengthen his power in Turkey. So, it is possible that Erdoğan's views on Kashmir, Indian Muslims and Palestine may effect Turkey's foreign policy towards India. Secondly, trade and investment between Turkey and India has grown significantly for the last few years. However, Erdoğan's victory could lead to economic uncertainty in Turkey, which could affect bilateral trade and investment, economic experts said. Lastly, cultural and people-to-people contacts have strengthened Türkiye-India relations. However, Erdoğan's domestic policies promoting Turkish nationalism and conservative beliefs may alter Turkey's social and cultural dynamics. While Erdoğan's victory could transform Turkey-India relations, domestic and international variables will determine their fate. The study recommends that Indian policymakers closely monitor Turkey's foreign policy under Erdoğan and engage in active diplomacy to maintain constructive dialogue to ensure that potential differences do not undermine historical ties and mutual interests.

KEYWORDS: Türkiye-India relations, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish nationalism, Middle East, south Asian region, economic relations, cultural relations.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the victory of presidential and parliamentary election 2023 (the AK Party and its allies won 323 of 600 seats, in first round voting on May 14), Erdoğan was also able to deliver on the promise of stability by controlling both the legislature and the government. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has won Türkiye's presidential election for 2023, extending his rule into its third decade despite facing the closest fight of his career. According to the Supreme Election Council, Erdoğan won Türkiye's president in a runoff election with 52.14% of the vote (World, 2023).

Following his Turkish presidential election 2023 victory, Erdoğan has acquired congratulations from leaders all across the globe for his historic triumph, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, British PM Rishi Sunak, German PM and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In this regard, here I will discuss about how this triumph will play an important role international politics as well as how it will impact the relations of Türkiye-India (India T. T., 2023).

So, the issue that suddenly comes to mind is: Will Erdoğan rethink his foreign policy? Dr. Omair Anas (Assistant Professor at Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University, Türkiye) states, "I do not think that Erdoğan is going to change his policies because he has already made a lot of changes. In the earlier time Türkiye was called pro-Western, which he removed from that, and turning toward the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia and East Asia more than the European countries and sees himself as the leader of the Muslim world." Apart from this, during his election campaign Erdoğan had also been seen saying that we would get Türkiye out of the dependency of European countries.

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Türkiye has also expanded its diplomatic goals and interests under President Erdoğan, spanning the Mediterranean, North Africa, West Asia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Horn of Africa, and the Red Sea, and shaping out a position for itself in the developing global desires to multifaceted framework.

He recently resolved a significant issue between Azerbaijan and Armenia that had been remaining for many years, making him a significant friend of Russia. Additionally, Turkey has a strong position and emerged as a crucial mediator in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War (Serhan, 2023). He also played a key role in Sweden and Finland's accession to NATO as a trump card to show his leadership to the Western world. Despite being a NATO (North Atlantic Treaty of Organization) ally Erdoğan want to continue to work with Russia because European nations dictate more and collaborate less, which has several advantages. This clearly relates to Erdoğan's early political career since, when he was a pro-American and pro-European in the past, he has been fully aware of these kinds of falsehoods. Over the next five years, we will see the Erdoğan-Putin relationship grow more than ever (Anas, Is India-Turkey rapprochement in the offing?, 2022).

Furthermore, Turkey's strong ties with Qatar look set to grow further, while Erdogan aims to enhance ties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as Ankara's rapprochement with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi intensifies. Therefore Turkish people believe that Erdoğan will be more successful in this area since he is better at foreign politics and diplomacy. We can see that Erdoğan has elevated Türkiye to the world stage by examining headlines and coverage from various media outlets around the world. There are undoubtedly both good and bad reasons can be for this, but we can say that Türkiye is now a country that cannot be ignored on the international stage. Without Türkiye, we would not be able to operate in many countries including Azerbaijan, Syria, Libya and many others; under these circumstances, Türkiye's geographical position is more essential. Apart from that, Türkiye has shifted its focus to Central Asia since Central Asian nations are also considered to be of Turkic origins. Malaysia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and other tiny economies have also received increased attention in recent years (Milliken & Cafiero, 2023).

2. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The aim of this study is;

1. To analyse the impact of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's 2023 election victory on Türkiye-India bilateral relations.
2. To know India-Türkiye bilateral trade and investment
3. To know about the growing role of Turkey-India in the Middle East and South Asia as a global power
4. To know the historical and cultural relations

3. METHODOLOGY

This research work, as part of a social science study, is an attempt or comprehensive analysis of possible consequences to formulate or examine theories through data analysis aimed at the 2023 electoral success of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey on bilateral relations between Türkiye-India. Research has been done through secondary data through newspapers, magazines, internet etc.

4. IMPACT OF ERDOĞAN'S VICTORY ON INDIA-TÜRKIYE RELATIONS

At the start, it should be noted that Türkiye is situated at the junction of Asia and Europe, making it a vital spectator in the region's unpredictable geopolitical situation as well as an economic centre for exports from other nations, especially as an entry point into the EU market. The countries relationship have been generally friendly and mutually beneficial with occasional conflicts coming from Türkiye's support for Pakistan and statements on Kashmir. Despite having distinct histories, demographics, economies, and people, Türkiye and India have many characteristics. The Turks had a significant influence on India's language, civilization, art and architecture, as well as its clothing and cuisine (Mitra, 2023).

Dr. Omair Anas, an assistant professor at Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University, said in an interview aired on The Lallantop that the victory of Erdoğan and the entire Türkiye emerging as the great opportunity for the India because Türkiye is a western country but now it is emancipating itself from western clutches because it has an its own power, population, and it is a very important in the region, in a location where more people can get affected, so in this way it is a golden opportunity and it will be more beneficial for India to make strong bilateral ties with such emerging country" (Anas, Impact of Erdogan's Victory on India, 2023). It's true that several attempts to keep the balance on these subjects from the previous time had been made, but how would it be attainable if both nations have larger political disagreements on foreign concerns.

In 1994, both countries agreed on a common ground that Türkiye would not raise the Kashmir issue and India would not discuss the Cyprus issue, but that compromise was recently broken, but in diplomacy there is a rule of give and take, which is currently in a very good position because trade transactions between both countries have crossed 12 billion dollars, and India has become Türkiye's second largest trade partner after China, which is a big deal. So the trade relations of both the countries are in excellent form and many other concerns should be resolved soon. As a result, we can look forward to a major discussion meeting between the leaders of both sides, and hope that these issues will be resolved soon. Meanwhile, ties between Delhi and Ankara have deteriorated when Türkiye sided with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue during his address at the UN General Assembly (Marjani,

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2022). Gokhan Cinkara, a Turkish political expert with Türkiye's Necmettin Erbakan University, said earlier this year in the *Times of India* that "Erdoğan may open a new chapter in ties with India in his next term, owing to Pakistan's continued political turmoil."

5. HISTORICAL ASPECT OF INDIA-TÜRKIYE RELATIONS

The Chola Emperor of Tamilakam bestowed a colony at Koothanallur to the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, a Turko-Persian dynasty, in 1212. Rowther, a Tamil-speaking population, is the ancestors of the Turkic merchants (India-Turkey Relations, 2023). Turkey and India have a long history together, with the first diplomatic delegations exchanging places with regard to the Ottoman sultans and the Muslim rulers of the Indian subcontinent in 1481 and 1482. Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi's Sufi thought resonated with the Sufi traditions and Bhakti movement of the Indian subcontinent. Both the Turkish language and the Hindustani language share a significant terms of vocabulary (Andrabi, 2014). The medical expedition to Türkiye in 1912 during the Balkan Wars, headed by the famous Indian freedom fighter Dr. M.A. Ansari, represented the most recent historical connection between India and Türkiye. In the 1920s, both the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye and the Turkish War of Independence were supported by India. At the end of World War I, Mahatma Gandhi spoke out personally against the injustice meted out to Türkiye. In 1960, the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made the first visit by a Prime Minister to Türkiye. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Türkiye and India began working together to improve bilateral and diplomatic relations on the global stage. Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal visited India in 1986, and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Türkiye in 1988 (India E. o., 2017).

After that, in September 2003, Prime Minister Atal Bihar Vajpayee visited Türkiye to drive the relationship between the two countries in a positive and new way. During the visit, Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the Strategic Research Center of Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs focused on both countries to encourage trade and cooperation to expand capitals. In addition, both sides agreed to set up a high level committee to resolve and counter the violence. Bilateral relations have been strengthened recently through exchange of visits by the leaders of the two countries. These include the visits of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to India in 2008 and Turkish President Abdullah Gul in 2010 (Sirin, 2023).

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated in the G20 Summit in Antalya, Turkey, on November 15-16, 2015. The Indian Prime Minister met with his Turkish counterpart, President Erdogan, on the margins of the Summit. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu paid a two-day visit to India on August 18-19, 2016. During the trip, officials from both ministries collaborated to draught a road map for future cooperation. Foreign Minister Cavusoglu also sought a sit-down with Vice President Pence. After the failed coup attempt in Turkey on August 29, 2016, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi contacted President Erdogan to express his solidarity with the country and its leadership (Gujrati & Uygun, 2020). On September 5, 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi spoke in Hangzhou, China, outside of the G20 Summit. On October 4, 2016, outside of the 26th Universal Postal Union Congress in Istanbul, Shri Manoj Sinha, Minister of State for Communications, met with Mr. Ahmet Arslan, Minister of Transport, Maritime Affairs, and Communications. In November 2016, Mr. Lutfi Elvan, Minister of Development, visited the Minister of Home Affairs while attending the Asian Ministerial Convention on Disaster Risk Reduction 2016 (AMCDRR 2016) in New Delhi. On December 4 in Amritsar, Foreign Minister Cavusoglu addressed the Sixth Ministerial Summit of the Heart of Asia Process on Afghanistan (Trigunayat, 2022).

Bilateral relations between Turkey and India are an independent institution in which both sides should directly monitor each other. Instead of emphasizing differences, bilateral relations should be driven by convergence of views. Turkey has previously supported India's observer status in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as well as India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Furthermore, Turkey has been a staunch supporter of the expansion of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and as a result, India's demand for reform effectively echoes the "world is bigger than five" motto of the Turkish President (Bayram, 2022).

6. INDIA-TÜRKIYE BILATERAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT

An instructive aspect of the bilateral relationship is the economic and commercial cooperation between Türkiye and India. An agreement for the setting up an India-Türkiye Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation (JCETC) and a bilateral trade agreement were both signed in 1973. According to this Agreement, JCETC meetings rotate between India and Türkiye. The tenth JCETC session, which was co-chaired by the trade ministers of the two nations, took place in New Delhi in January 2014 (Cyrill, 2022). India exported commodities worth \$4.14 billion and imported goods worth \$776.94 million in 2015–16, totalling USD 4.9 billion in bilateral commerce. It goes without saying that the amount was down 27% from the total international trade of USD 6.8 billion in the 2014–15 period. In 2022, with a substantial growth in commerce between India and Türkiye, which has just surpassed USD 12 billion, India's economic engagement with Türkiye has gained fresh pace in recent years (Banerji, 2022). Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas, travelled to Istanbul from 9-12 July, 2017 to attend the 22nd World Petroleum Summit. Shri Pradhan held discussions with Energy Minister Berat Albayrak on the side-lines of the Meeting. A protocol acknowledged in April of 2000 institutionalised Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) at the level of Secretary. The last round of consultations was conducted in Ankara on April 17, 2015. On November 28, 2014, Foreign Office Consultations at the extent of Joint Secretary/Director General were convened in Ankara. On March 11, 2015, the Joint Working Group on Counter-

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terrorism conducted its third meeting in Ankara. The Turkish Naval Ship TCG Gediz visited Mumbai and Chennai on April 20-23, 2015 and July 2-4, 2015, respectively. From August 22-26, 2015, representatives from the National Defence College visited Turkey. The INS Trikand docked in Istanbul between 4 and 6 October 2015 (India E. o., 2017).

According to the Central Bank of Turkey, Indian firms have invested around US\$ 126 million in Türkiye, whereas Turkish investment in India is about US\$ 210.47 million. Turkey's total FDI inflow into India from April 2000 to September 2022 was US\$ 216.11 million, placing it in the bottom 46 in terms of FDI equity inflows. The Indian Embassy reports that Turkey has invested \$223 million in the country. Many Turkish businesses have set up joint ventures with Indian businesses to make investments in India. Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) projects include Turkish parties who participate as engineers, technical consultants, and constructors, respectively. According to a news release from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs from June 2022, Turkish firms are active in India's infrastructure and engineering sectors while Indian companies are active in the automotive, pharmaceutical, and IT sectors of Turkey (Foundation, 2023).

Businesses from India may use Turkey as a springboard into the European Union, Central Asia, and the Black Sea Region, as well as the developing opportunities in the Middle East. On the other hand, Turkish businesses may take part in India's infrastructure and logistics initiatives while also taking advantage of the country's manufacturing aspirations by establishing a production base there. Construction, medical tourism, and automotive components are all promising areas for Turkish investment in India.

Affiliated with the Turkish business association TUSKON, the Turkish Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (TICCI) maintains representation in the metropolitan areas of Bangalore, Chennai, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai. TICCI's mission is to connect businesses for the sake of export, collaboration, and partnership. Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) have also signed a MoU with TICCI (Foundation, 2023).

7. HUMANITARIAN AIDS INITIATIVES

According to the Turkish news station Anadolu Agency, Türkiye first delivered India medical help in the Covid-19 epidemic during the oxygen crisis, which comprised 50,000 boxes of pills, 50 ventilators, 630 oxygen tubes, and 5 oxygen generators. Ibrahim Altan, the director-general of the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) stated that, "India offered assistance to our nation throughout both the Balkan Wars and the War of Independence and has always stood by us in tough times," alluding to the long history of friendship between Türkiye and India. We are delivering help to them today.

After the earthquakes on February 6, 2023, in southern Türkiye, India launched "Operation Dost" [Operation Friend], a humanitarian aid initiative that included search and rescue teams from India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and a mobile field hospital established by the Indian Army. Six C-17 military aircraft were used to transport over 250 trained Indian personnel to Türkiye. These individuals actively participated in search and rescue operations and offered medical care through a self-contained field hospital that was equipped to carry out even life-saving surgeries. Operation Dost was among the first international aid missions to arrive in Türkiye. In these difficult circumstances, India also sent medical equipment and relief supplies to Türkiye as a show of solidarity with the Turkish people. The death toll from the earthquake, which was the worst, was officially 59,259: 50,783 in Türkiye and 8,476 in Syria. Since the earthquake that struck Antioch in 526, this earthquake in what is now modern-day Türkiye has killed more people than any other natural calamity.

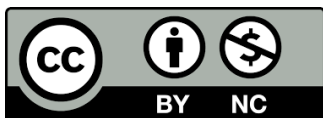
8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, now Erdoğan has been re-elected as the president of Türkiye, it will be too hard for India to rely on pragmatism and common sense to improve relations with Türkiye. It will be very challenging for India to normalise ties with Türkiye due to its anti-India sentiments on Kashmir issue, but this can only be accomplished if it serves their goals and political aims, even if it means temporarily rejuvenating or softening it. To be sure, it is difficult to assume that ties between Türkiye and India will improve under his rivals, but it is more probable that they would be foreseeable and less tense even if Ankara does not abandon its blatantly pro-Pakistan stance. Türkiye is also very important due to its geopolitical location as a bridge between Asia and Europe, particularly with its young population. In short, the expansion of Türkiye-India commercial links would benefit both nations tremendously. However, the worldwide slump in trade and commerce was primarily cause for concern. Both Türkiye and India, are now G-20 countries attempting to strengthen their business ties and perceive a huge opportunity to increase bilateral trade as well as investments. It is clear that both India and Türkiye have a sincere desire to take advantage of the opportunities for trade, commerce, and investment. Naturally, it can be argued that the connection has already gained dynamic impetus from the perspective of trade and commerce, and it is anticipated to ascend to a higher level ahead. Lastly, if India and Turkey want to be natural partners, they should stop making divisive geopolitical remarks. India should remain neutral on Cyprus and the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, while Turkey should refrain from promoting the Kashmir issue at international forums and independently handle its bilateral relations with India and Pakistan. After building trust, India and Turkey should deepen economic engagement through both bilateral and multilateral means to strengthen India's ties with the Middle East and South Asia, allowing each side access to the other's market. To follow the secular ideals of Gandhi and Atatürk, this partnership will bring lasting peace in the region.

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