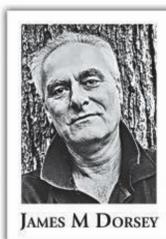


Turkey and China tie themselves in knots over Syria and Xinjiang



JAMES M DORSEY

TURKEY'S ambassador to China, Emin Onen, didn't mince his words this week when he took his Chinese hosts to task for failing to support Turkey's military campaign against a Kurdish militia in Syria.

Speaking in Turkish through a translator at a news conference at his Beijing embassy, Mr Onen implicitly put China on the spot by calling on it to stand with Turkey in its fight against political violence.

In doing so, Mr Onen was laying bare long-standing strains in Turkish-Chinese relations as well as contradictions that link Turkey's long-standing refusal to fully recognise Kurdish rights to China's brutal crackdown in its troubled, north-western province of Xinjiang.

Calling the crackdown an "embarrassment to humanity," Mr Aksoy demanded that Chinese authorities respect human rights of the Uighurs and close what he termed "concentration camps."

Chinese officials have long sought to prevent Turkey from speaking out on the crackdown by privately arguing in discussions with their Turkish counterparts that China's massive effort to fundamentally alter the belief



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Chinese President Xi Jinping attend a signing ceremony ahead of the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, China May 13, 2017.

PHOTO: REUTERS/JASON LEE

system of Turkic Muslims, packaged as a fight against political violence, was no different from Turkish attitudes towards the Kurds.

Turkey has justified its decades-old policy in predominantly Kurdish south-eastern Turkey and its more recent interventions in Syria as a struggle against the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) that has been designated a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, and its Syrian affiliate, the People's Protection Units (YPG).

The PKK has waged an insurgency in south-eastern Turkey for more than three decades. Tens of thousands have been killed in PKK attacks and Turkish military operations.

The YPG, which has not been designated by either the US or the EU, served in recent years as the United States' ground troops in the battle to defeat the Islamic State's Syria-based Caliphate.

"What we hope for is that China, whether internally or externally, is an

anti-terrorist nation. They are a member of the (United Nations) Security Council, so they should understand our present situation," Mr Onen said.

"Certainly, we know that China is a country that is fighting against terror ... We are also fighting against ... (political violence) and it's one of the most important issues," Mr Onen went on to say.

Mr Onen was responding to what amounted to a Chinese condemnation of the Turkish incursion into Syria when Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, urged "Turkey to halt military action and to return to the right track, resolving the issue with political solutions."

China had earlier called on Turkey to "exercise restraint," insisting that Syria's "sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity must be respected and upheld."

The stakes for both Turkey and China are high.

Both are likely hoping that Russian execution of an enhanced ceasefire

initially negotiated by US Vice President Mike Pence on a visit to Ankara last week will enable them to avoid a further deterioration in relations. Russia took ownership of the Syrian process during talks on Tuesday between presidents Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Turkey, home to the largest Chinese Turkic Muslim exile community, and long a supporter of political and cultural rights for Uighurs, the predominant Turkic Muslim ethnic group in Xinjiang, has on occasion breached the Muslim world's wall of silence about the Chinese crackdown.

If Turkey, one of the Islamic world's most powerful nations that competes with Saudi Arabia and Iran for leadership, were to revert to sustained criticism of the Chinese crackdown, it would make it more difficult for other Muslim states to maintain their silence or, in some cases, endorsement of Chinese policy.

It would ironically align Turkey with the United States, which last week imposed sanctions in a bid to force Turkey to halt its Syrian military campaign. The US, unlike the Muslim world, has been vocal in its condemnation of the Chinese crackdown in Xinjiang.

Taking China to task on Xinjiang is risky business, certainly for a country that has seen its economy falter.

Turkey has been counting on China to help it resolve its economic problems.

China transferred in June on the eve of Turkish elections USD 1 billion to Turkey as part of a Turkish lira-Chinese yuan currency swap. China, which sees Turkey as a key node in its Belt and Road initiative, has further pledged USD 3.6 billion in funding for energy and telecommunications infrastructure projects.

Deng Li, China's ambassador to Turkey, warned in March that public Turkish criticism of China's Xinjiang policy "will negatively affect mutual trust and understanding and will be reflected in commercial and economic relations."

Mr Li issued his threat after Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and his ministry spokesman, Hami Aksoy, in a rare expression of anti-Chinese sentiment used harsh language to condemn events in Xinjiang where some one million Turkic Muslims are believed to have been incarcerated in re-education camps and/or pushed into forced labour.

Calling the crackdown an "embarrassment to humanity," Mr Aksoy demanded that Chinese authorities respect human rights of the Uighurs and close what he termed "concentration camps."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called on Turkey two months later to support China's policy in Xinjiang in a bid to "safeguard the overall situation of the strategic cooperation between the two countries."

The strains in Turkish-Chinese relations were put on public display in July when China's state news agency Xinhua quoted visiting Mr Erdogan as saying that people in Xinjiang "live happily."

Turkish officials insisted that Mr Erdogan had expressed the hope that people in China would "live happily in peace and prosperity," not that they were living happily.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, clearly believing that this time round it would be Turkey rather than China that blinks first, insisted on Tuesday that "we called on Turkey many times to stop its military action. We hope all sides will form a synergy to combat terrorism, advance the political settlement process of the Syrian issue, and jointly safeguard peace and tranquillity in the region."

It's a synergy built on sand as long as Turkey and China cloak their refusal to come to grips with minority rights in counterterrorism terms that are opportunistically called into question whenever they contradict their geopolitical ambitions.

Dr James M. Dorsey is a senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, an adjunct senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute and co-director of the University of Wuerzburg's Institute of Fan Culture.

Celebrating a 'Chattal Darodi'

NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

MUHAMMAD Yusuf Chowdhury, a philanthropist who is still enshrined in the hearts of the people, has risen above his own life. Over decades, he has captivated individuals and communities.

An entrepreneur, celebrated across the community, he has been blessed with a distinguishing chequered career. His fascination for printed matter goes back to his post-matriculation days when he opened Chhatra Bondhu Library at Raozan's Fakirhat village market. Encouraged and determined, his next business venture Orient Store was in Chattogram's Jubilee Road, selling stationery, books and newspapers. In the year 1949 his iconic book stall *News Front* saw the light of day as his passion began to take shape.

Ground-breaking business ideas have been the secret of his success. In 1964, he moved the offices of *News Front* to newly constructed Chattogram's Biponi Bitan (shopping mall). By then, he acquired selling rights of several periodicals from beyond the province and later, overseas. *The Illustrated Weekly of Pakistan* was first, and then came *Newsweek*, *Readers' Digest*, *Time* and *The Daily Dawn*. He never had to look back. *News Front* became the hub of intelligentsia and progressive cultural

activists. Triggered by *Little Magazines* that resulted from the *adda*, he quenched his thirst for publishing by instituting fully automatic Signet Press Limited in 1954. He knew how to combine business with his passion.

Heedful commercial banks acknowledged his business acumen and financial reliability. Some pursued him to undertake larger ventures. The characteristically slow and steady, but successful man required prolonged persuasion, backed up by his own feasibility study, before launching Signet Box Industries Ltd for packaging in 1984.

A visionary is admired for the lasting impact of their vibrant philosophies. The state-of-the-art Signet rolled out a newspaper that was able to compete in qualitative content with time-honoured dailies of the port city overnight. From its inception in 1986, *Dainik Purbokone* gradually flourished into a vehicle of reform. His gifted marketing proficiency enabled the newspaper to gain broadsheet readers, old and new.

A ground-breaking dairy farmer, being revered long after he stopped caressing the grass he cherished, speaks volumes of his merit. In 1950, he developed his own dairy farm, Super Dairy Farm & Food Products, an idea that soon spread across the country. Leading from the front, two years later he founded the Chittagong



Muhammad Yusuf Chowdhury 1921-2007

Dairy Farm Association. He further spread his wings when in the first year of this millennium, the family took over United Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals Ltd, to which he was perhaps inclined due to his youngest son being a medical doctor.

His success story on self-employment is included as a case study in the HSC textbook published by the National Curriculum and

Textbook Board (NCTB) under the Ministry of Education, a testimony to his extraordinary contribution to free enterprise.

In 1995, he established Chittagong Veterinary College. Despite a decade of proven success, he had to spearhead a popular movement to upgrade the college in 2006 to Chittagong Veterinary & Animal Science University. Not a nationally favoured topic in tertiary education, the university has developed links with the international scientific world.

A dreamer's creativity is weighed by his dreams that live on when he treads no more. He was always a step ahead in carrying forward any agenda for the benefit of the people, to mould public opinion, and steer popular campaigns. As the befitting Chairman of the *Brihottor Chattogram Ummayan Sangram* (Greater Chattogram Development Movement) Committee, he was in the forefront. Among other undertakings, he was instrumental in advocating for developing a modern system to ease the city's traffic congestion. The city's water shortage situation, its diabolical sewerage disorder, the vulnerable fish population of Halda River, and the polluted Karnaphuly River will perhaps see better days as a result of his intervention.

A modern, liberal man, and a devout Muslim, who shunned communalism, he was a humanitarian citizen of the

world. Quietly ambitious, mentally robust, and blessedly diligent, he was a self-made institution. Apt political awareness lifted him to the pinnacle of the society without the tag of any controversy. Perseverance, simplicity in lifestyle, and humble low profile were the forte of the man's character. A man of few words, rung by rung, he moved up the ladder, unchallenged because he was resolute in his purpose, and his focus was on the good of the society.

For almost half a century, he had been the key businessperson and social reformer for the port city, earning him the accolade *Chattal Darodi* (Chattogram Sympathiser) from his colleagues and admirers. Villagers around his birthplace, his gratified associates from various fields in greater Chattogram, and beyond, remember him solemnly with much fondness and admiration.

Born 19 September 1921 at Raozan's Dheua Haji Bari, Muhammad Yusuf Chowdhury (paternal uncle) lies buried in the faraway holy city of Makkah, where he breathed his last twelve years ago (September 9, 2007) while performing *Ummrah*.

A national recognition would be an appropriate tribute to this regional herculean personality.

Prof Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed is a practising Architect, a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

October 24, 1945
UNITED NATIONS ESTABLISHED

The charter for the United Nations—the world's premier international organization, established at the end of World War II to maintain world peace and friendly relations among nations—entered into force this day in 1945.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Shopping meccas
- 6 Ghana's capital
- 11 Musical set in Argentina
- 12 Takes it easy
- 13 Actions
- 14 Newspaper essays
- 15 Company abbr.
- 16 Brood watcher
- 18 CBS series with spinoffs
- 19 "Gross!"
- 20 Hot blood
- 21 "—a Rebel"
- 22 Chance to relax
- 24 "Blast it!"
- 25 Nonpaying tenant, perhaps
- 27 Theater award
- 29 Brewing need
- 32 1040 org.
- 33 "— appetit!"
- 34 One, for Juan
- 35 DC baseballer
- 36 Important age
- 37 Arthur of TV
- 38 Public outburst
- 40 Fizzy drinks
- 42 "Adam Bede" author
- 43 Fiat
- 44 Advances
- 45 Splinter groups

DOWN

- 1 T size
- 2 Pay back
- 3 Austria neighbor
- 4 Company abbr.
- 5 Thin-sliced fish
- 6 Unaided
- 7 Upper limit
- 8 Austria neighbor
- 9 Suze Canal outlet
- 10 Help out
- 17 Crane, e.g.
- 23 Wall climber
- 24 Narc's org.
- 26 Bridge combinations
- 27 Tree trim
- 28 Answer source
- 30 Short play
- 31 Drinks to
- 33 Sugar source
- 39 Sign of approval
- 41 Lyric poem

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

S	A	D	A	T	H	A	T	E	D		
A	B	A	S	H	O	H	A	R	A		
M	A	R	I	E	W	O	R	R	Y		
	K	N	O	T	T	Y					
A	S	H	R	I	O	P	A	L			
C	H	O	S	E	N	D	A	D	A		
M	A	R	K	E	M	Y	W	O	R	D	S
E	L	S	A	T	A	C	K	L	E		
S	E	E	F	I	R	P	E	R			
			M	A	M	M	A	L			
L	A	P	A	Z	S	N	A	I	L		
A	G	A	T	E	U	N	C	L	E		
B	O	R	E	D	P	E	E	L	S		