

February 6, 2024

Beyond “Axis Shift” and “Client State” Sensationalism: Potential and Limits of Sino-Turkish Relations in the BRI Era

12:15PM - 1:15PM / 70 VERNON STREET, FIRST FLOOR

This presentation investigates the trajectory of Chinese investments and their impact on Turkey’s economic development. It assesses the broader context of Chinese investment beyond the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), acknowledging BRI’s significance yet stressing that it is one component in the broader Chinese investment spectrum. Utilizing two novel

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datasets, the presentation reveals that while Chinese investments have significantly increased post-BRI, they remain modest in Turkey's FDI context and far from challenging Western economic influence. Chinese investments also have not significantly bolstered high-tech and R&D-intensive sectors. The limitations of Chinese FDI are less a result of Western influence in Turkey and more due to Turkey's structural weaknesses in terms of labor force quality, scientific infrastructure, and bureaucratic capacity. These weaknesses hinder Turkey's ability to attract high-quality, transformative FDI irrespective of the country origin of FDI, ultimately shaping the trajectory of Sino-Turkish economic cooperation.

Burak Gürel is an associate professor of sociology and co-director of the Center for Asian Studies at Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey. Gürel earned his PhD in sociology from Johns Hopkins University in 2015. He is currently a visiting scholar at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Gürel's scholarly interests include political economy, comparative-historical sociology, rural development, social movements, and welfare politics, focusing on China, India, and Turkey. His recent work focuses on Sino-Turkish relations and the trajectory of Chinese investments in Turkey. Gürel's publications have appeared in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, *Modern China*, *Rural China*, *Review of Radical Political Economics*, *Social Policy & Administration*, *European Review*, and *New Perspectives on Turkey*.